

The Oystercatcher

November 1992

Editor -- Kacey Chee
537-1365

THE SALT SPRING TRAIL AND NATURE CLUB · GANGES B.C. VOS-1E0

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We have a new editor for the newsletter -- Kacey Chee. Murry Shoolbraid and Patti May Lawson produced the Oystercatcher last year but are not able to continue their services. Murry Shoolbraid isn't a member in the club but he has generously helped Patti and together they have contributed many hours working on the Oystercatcher which most people may not realize. Thank you from the club for such a good job and thank you Kacey for offering your services. Kacey is new to the club and to the island, so she will need our assistance in producing the paper.

Update on the Trails Project:

A Contract has been signed with Linda Adams, a trust planner, to produce maps of existing trails, a conceptual island-wide trail system with linkages, and recommendations regarding a policy for trails and its implementation. We are fortunate to retain the services of Linda and she shares our desire to see a first class trail system on the island. Linda has almost completed the first phase of mapping. The contract can be seen at the monthly meetings and later on there will be opportunities to discuss and review how the process is progressing.

Update on Jack Foster Trail:

Unfortunately the trail had to be temporarily closed this summer. It will be reopened after the construction of a safe permanent way down the bank to the water edge. The club had written to the Ministry of Highways asking permission to build stairs. In their reply, they asked if the club would assume liability for any accidents. The club cannot assume this liability but have asked that the CRD via our Parks and Recreation Commission do so. We are now awaiting their reply.

Fiona Flock

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The main thrust of the executive's activities this year has been in pursuing the establishment of the Jack Foster trail, and the Island Wide Trail Network Plan, both of which have been reported on by our President in this edition.

Other projects have included:

- submission of comments on the SSI Proposed Parks, Recreation and Cultural Draft Master Plan, to the Parks and Recreation Commission.
- a letter to the Minister of the Environment expressing support for the establishment of a Revolving Fund for Land Acquisition.
- an enjoyable walk/hike at Ruckle Park in June, with the inevitable Strawberry Pic-Nic. It was here that we received the somewhat disappointing news that the formation of a "Friends of Ruckle Park" group had entered the uncharted seas of government bureaucracy. The Ministry advised that they hoped to have a draft plan available by September 25th. We have not seen one yet nor have been advised of its existence.
- requesting from Parks and Recreation that the Club be allowed to nominate two persons to the Lake and Ocean Beach Access Committee.
- staffing a booth at the Fall Fair, which was well utilised.
- setting the dates for the Christmas Luncheon - December 8th; the Pot Luck - January 20th, 1993; and the AGM - January 28th, 1993.

Ken Strike

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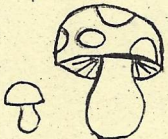
SPECIAL EVENTS REPORT from Bev Frankcombe

October: PORTLAND ISLAND

October the sixth was a wonderful day for our trip to Portland Island. John Parker our ferry captain, met us at the dock at Swartz Bay and ferried us to the island. He arranged to pick us up at 3:30 p.m. and with a hoot left us to enjoy ourselves. We divided into two groups, one led by Bob Andrews and a second group led by me. This allowed the photographers and walkers to go at their own pace and the hikers to stretch out and explore right around the island. We all arrived back feeling that we were lucky to have had such a great day.

MUSHROOMS

October 26, John Dennis gave us a talk and showed us slides about mushrooms at our monthly meeting. He brought a wonderful collection of different mushrooms to share with us. We were privileged to have such a knowledgeable person telling us about them. A walk followed this talk the next day. I was unable to attend but from all accounts it was a huge success. Thanks to Fiona for finding us such a fine speaker. Dare I pick and eat that huge looking mushroom breaking out of its cover of earth? I must admit that I'm still a little shy about picking and eating mushrooms but perhaps we should have more of these mushroom walks until we get more confident in our identification skills. Any offers?????????



Dates for the following events have not been finalized yet. Watch the Driftwood for more information.

COMING EVENTS:

- January: Hike to Horth Hill and visit to the Institute of Ocean Sciences.
 - February: Overnight trip to Steveston and Boundary Bay area.
 - March: Visit to Galiano Island
 - April:
 - May: Trip to Prevost Island
 - June: Spring Trip to the Fraser Valley
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*****SOCIAL NOTE*****

Many members of the club can remember celebrating the birthday of Mary Sylvander, now an honorary member, while on our September outings. To keep faith with the tradition, Noot Peel arranged a luncheon at "Tides Inn" to rejoice in Mary's 95th birthday. Helping Mary to demolish the decadent chocolate cake were Ilsa Foster, Ruth Hopping, Ruth Grunau, Joan Lott, Betty Kirk and Noot.

Our special guest enjoyed reasonably good health, was alert to all that was going on around her and was quite eager to hear news of the club affairs. We look forward to toasting her 100th year.

Betty Kirk

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**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

The following are new members since September 1992:

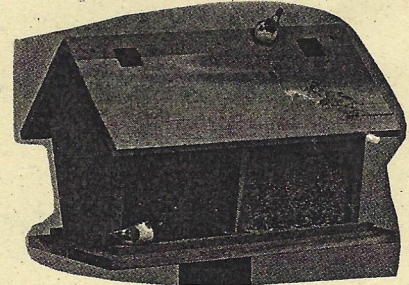
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|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Ballantyne, Sandi & Jim | Brawn, Bob & Adryce |
| Bruce, Amora            | Cotterall, Barbara  |
| Denny, Rob              | Fetter, Fred        |
| Fitzgerald, Venu        | Fletcher, Gayle     |
| Garrick, Bill           | Johnson, Doreen     |
| Johnson, Sylvia         | MacDonald, Annette  |
| McMahon, Eileen         | McQueen, Dorothy    |
| Parkinson, Harice       | Sebert, Adele       |
| Shaw, Kay               | Smith, Mary         |
| Smith, Lyda             | Tanti, Mary         |
| Thomas, Rita & Denny    | Welch, Elaine       |

As of October 25, 1992, SSI Trail & Nature Club has 250 regular members and 9 honorary members. I joined the club in April '92 and have enjoyed each of the hikes or walks. It has been quite inspirational to see John and Eleanor LLOYD participating in the hike with such cheery and positive outlook. As the saying goes, the older they get, the faster they get. Welcome new members and enjoy your hikes or walks with these wonderful people in the club.

Kacey Chee

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BIRD NEWS:

Why are there so many Stellar's Jays on the Island this year? Is it the mild winter, or the wet summer? Whatever the reason there is at least four jays where there was one before.

A couple of people have asked me how to stop the jays from dominating the seed feeders. The only answer that is humane is to put wire meshing around the feeders that allows the small birds in but keep the jays out. It does work but makes filling the feeders a chore. I have given up and just put more feed out for the jays and the other birds.

It is the season to get the feeders out and feed the birds. At present, I have five different types of feeders with different feed for each as follows:



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|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Table feeder             | Mixed seed (Foxglove)   |
| Silo feeder              | Black sunflowers        |
| Bench feeder (no roof)   | Hen scratch             |
| Silo feeder (small hole) | Niger seeds             |
| Log feeder               | Peanut butter mixture * |

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|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| * Peanut butter mixture | One part Natural Peanut butter |
|                         | One part Lard                  |
|                         | One part Flour (optional)      |
|                         | Four parts Cornmeal            |

I make up a large batch and freeze the mixture in margarine containers for later use. The log feeder is just a log with one inch holes drilled in the sides. I then press the mixture into the holes in the log.

Take note that the Christmas Bird Count is Sunday, December 13th. Why not join the fun and volunteer to count the birds. Contact your local coordinator or me at 537-4306 or Business 537-5557.

If you see any unusual birds please telephone. I would be interested in sight records for any birds that are marked as rare and accidental on the Salt Spring Island Check List.

Good birding  
Glen W. Moores

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MOSS, FERNS AND HORSETAILS

Seven moss and fern enthusiasts joined Fiona Flook on St. Valentine's day and walked through part of the Ecological Reserve No. 16, up the "Refrigerator Trail" from Isabella Point Road to Mountain Road. In that short distance, in the two hours, through our magnifying glasses, and with Fiona's clear explanations, we saw a whole new world of mosses, lichens and ferns (not to forget the lowly horsetails) many of which even the most observant of us could probably not have distinguished one from the other.



Did you know that even mosses has a sex life? They have fruiting bodies which produce sperm. The sperm is released upon stimulus of water.

Ferns, horsetails and club mosses, although all are sporebearing plants, are not closely related but they share a common antiquity and fossils which have been found in Devonian rock. Even 350 million years ago, the three groups were as distinct from one another as they are today.

A photographic field guide called MOSSES, LICHENS AND FERNS OF NORTHWEST NORTH AMERICA by Dale H. Vitt, Janet E. Marsh and Robin Bovey would be invaluable to anyone wanting to study this subject seriously.

Nancy Braithwaite

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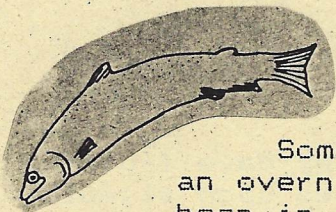
### TRAVELS TO THE SPATISIZI PLATEAU WILDERNESS

Six people from Salt Spring (myself, Fiona and Don Flook, Bev Frankcombe, Raymond Perks, and Grant Pearce) travelled to the Spatsizi for sixteen days, between the 9th and 24th of August. We went in a van, camping out on the way and taking the ferry from Port Hardy to Prince Rupert, then driving to Tatogga Lake Resort which is in the Stikine Plateau and Dease Lake area and close to the Yukon border.

The seaplane picked us up at the lake and in half an hour delivered us at Cold Fish Lake in Spatsizi. We set up our tents and explored the area. It was Tommy Walker's old hunting camp, with about a dozen rough cabins and a cookhouse. We studied all our maps and made plans for our hikes and an excursion in a Zodiac down Cold Fish Lake to the Gladys Lake Reserve. We did just about all the hikes in the surrounding area, including a magnificent hike up Airplane Canyon through sub-alpine country, and saw an incredible variety of wildflowers. The hike up Wheatear or the plateau area was a steep one. Unfortunately it was cut short by rain and clouds which hindered our vision and enhanced our fears of not being able to find the trail back down. We saw a rock ptarmigan hen and her babies (quite tame). We didn't see woodland caribou in this area, where they usually graze, as it was not the usual time of the year for them to be there.

The Gladys Lake trip was a nice boat ride down Cold Fish Lake, and a fairly lengthy hike to Gladys Lake. It rained plenty hard for us for most of that hike. Gladys Lake is in the ecological reserve, and is a glacier lake with typical milky blue colour. We saw lots of bear spoor, black bear and grizzly, and fortunately did not encounter any bear up close. We could see mountain goats through our binoculars way up on the high slopes and they were moving about the great cliffs with ease. In the Tahitan language, Spatsizi means "red goat" and in the Gladys Lake area are ochre or red cliffs. It seems that the goats roll about in this material sometimes and therefore take on a red colour, hence the name Spatsizi.





Some of us hiked up to Danihue Pass, and I had hoped to do an overnight hike, but we were told not to as our camp might have been in the reserve. The weather which included rain and snow was also not kind. Danihue is a series of high plateaux, an almost flat area (looking like a table top) cut in two by a great ravine.

Another day's hike or walk was to the upper lakes called Black Fox and Bug. During this pleasant day hike past these pretty lakes, we had the pleasure of seeing a young female moose and a huge beaver lodge. There is a hunting camp on Bug Lake and it is unfortunate that the park policy allows hunting inside this area except in the reserve.

The fishing was very good in Cold Fish Lake, and some of our group caught fine specimens of rainbow trout, arctic char and lake trout, delicious eating!

Our last hike was up into the North West Plateau area above Black Fox Creek. We were trying to reach the microwave antenna on the top of the mountain. It was a very steep climb, and we had to ford Black Fox Creek which was cold and about two feet deep. The trail disappeared halfway up the mountain, so we had to bushwhack through dense scrub willow and birch bush. Finally we made it to the top and were rewarded by seeing a golden eagle flying below. We could hear ... from a distance and saw lots of ground squirrels. Some of the ground squirrels' burrows were badly torn up by the bears looking for a meal. The view of the entire valley was really grand and although we really had to bundle up against the cold wind, our weather was warm and clear. The trip down was tortuous, going through the bush and following a steep animal trail or no trail at all. When we came to some high meadows, the tundra was soft and covered with wildflowers. We had to climb over windfalls where an old fire had gone through and the trees were still covered with charcoal. It was a really tough hike but we made it back just in time for dinner at 7:00 p.m. and one of our members had caught some beautiful fresh trout for dinner that night!

With good weather and good camping, the trip back down the Cassiar Highway #37 was a pleasant trip and we took a detour over to Kitwanga and Hazelton. We toured the Indian villages and saw lots of totem poles and luckily arrived on the evening of the last native dance of the season done by the Ksan Dancers inside their lodge.

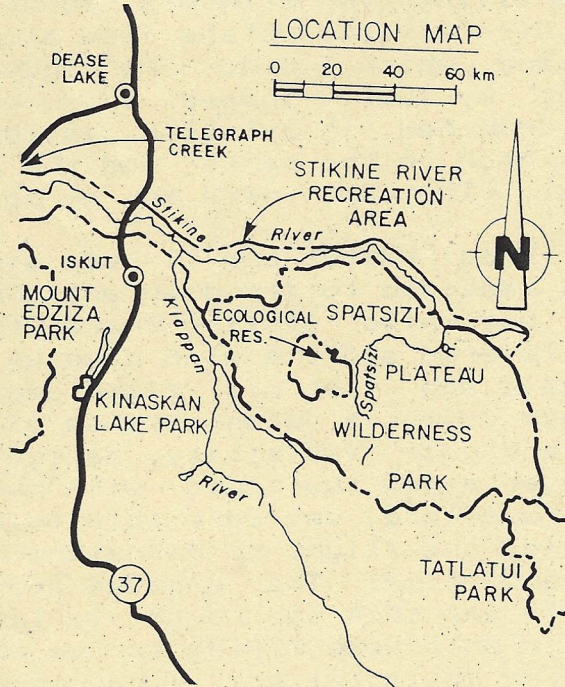
The whole family performed for us and the masks, the costumes, and the dance itself were good representations of the animals and birds of that area. The whole Ksan village (which is on the conflux of the Bulkley and the Sheena) was an extremely well done restoration of a village that has been there for thousands of years.

When we got home, we were all tired but exhilarated from all the exciting things that we had done and seen. The six of us crammed into the van with all of our gear and got along famously and even developed a sense of camaraderie.



The trip was rather expensive but certainly worth every penny and the ferry ride up the famous inland waterway was an added treat. All in all, it was a marvellous adventure for all of us.

Patti May Lawson



### How to get to the park

At Tatogga Lake on Highway 37, 361 kilometres north of the Kitwanga Junction on Highway 16, turn east onto the Ealue Lake road for 22 km, crossing the Klappan River where it then intersects the B.C. Rail grade. The grade parallels the south-western boundary of the park for 60 kilometres and is rough, but driveable for most vehicles. This access route is subject to change and should be checked before travelling. This is the closest vehicle access to the park. From here visitors proceed on foot, horseback or by canoe. The majority of visitors travel by float plane, landing on the major lakes. Aircraft may be chartered at Dease Lake, Eddontenajon Lake, Terrace and Smithers.

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### "MOMENTS OF DANGER"

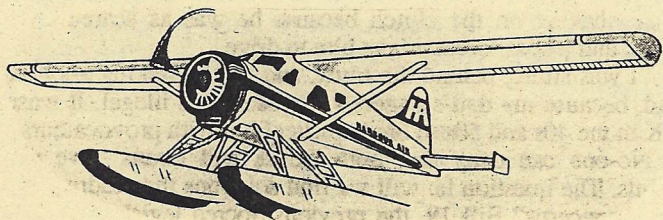
My most dangerous moments happened when I was piloting my Cessna 170 seaplane on the west coast of British Columbia. Shortly after obtaining my private pilot's licence, I was able to purchase a used seaplane and take instruction on it. Landing on the water is quite different from landing on land. On land the plane is brought down to the runway and as the speed falls off, the nose is pulled up and the plane litterly stalls onto the ground in a three point landing. Alighting on water is different in that you fly the plane down onto the water so that the floats will slide on the water. With my instructor, we were practising water landing on Harrison Lake. Having difficulty in judging the actual height above the water, I attempted a landing too high up in the air. My instructor shouted, pushed the throttle full on, and saved the day. It was quite a shock to my system realizing that we had nearly crashed. In the next few hours, we spent time flying up and down with my instructor asking me what the altitude was as we landed. I had to really concentrate on this and realized that landing on water was a lot different from landing on a runway. From that time onward, I always make sure that I know how far the plane is to the water and that it has to be flown onto the water and not stalled on.



Another episode that could have been fatal was when I was taking my wife Chris with me on a service trip from Alert Bay to River Inlet, a distance of about one hundred miles. I fueled the plane's tanks up at the fuel dock and was anxious to get going. We had taken off and were flying over Sointula, about five miles away, when an Alert Bay Air Services plane flew alongside and indicated that I should land, which I did. He landed alongside and said that I was losing my fuel. Indeed the whole aircraft from the wings back were drenched in aviation gasoline. I had forgotten to put the caps back on the tanks and the airflow had sucked out most contents. The caps were in my pocket!! We cancelled that trip.

In another incident, Fred Wastel and I had some property down in Pender Harbour and decided to fly down and check on it. The trip down was normal but while staying there, the weather deteriorated. The clouds lowered and the wind came up from south east. We decided to leave and took off right away. Pender Harbour to Discover Passage covers a wide expanse of open water and with the low ceiling and poor visibility, navigating was a bit difficult. We flew over a few tow boats with barges and by the direction they were travelling, we were able to confirm our course. With the high wind, the flight up Johnstone Straits was bumpy but we made it in good time. The problem arose when we arrived over Alert Bay. It was much too rough to land!!! Now, what are we to do? We couldn't keep flying so we went over to Beaver Cove and looked at the Kokish River. I had never heard of anyone landing on it before but we did. The wind was blowing into the bay so we had the wind against us when we touched down in the small tree lined stream. There was an old bachelor living there in a cabin and he was quite suprised to see us. Fred was able to walk over to the campsite and get a ride back to his home in Telegraph Cove. I stayed the rest of the afternoon chatting with Gene. At the end of the day, the wind decreased enabling me to fly back to Alert Bay. What a trip!

One fall, Chris and I flew up to visit our daughter who teaches school in Kitamat. I had made the trip a few times before and knew the way fairly well, that is, in clear weather. When we decided to return to Alert Bay a few days later, the weather had turned bad with south east winds, poor visibility, and low ceiling. There was one section of the trip that I did not have maps for. I was able to borrow one map but there still was a gap in the route which was not covered. We proceeded down the coast flying low along the waterways and keeping track on the maps. Visibility was very poor. At one spot where three channels intersect, another aircraft came out of the channel where we were going. We both circled around and looked at each other and then proceeded. Apprehension was gnawing away in my stomach because we still had to traverse a section where I had no map. In that area, I became disoriented and now had two choices





to land or to take a compass course to the outside coast and fly down outside of all the islands. I chose the latter and gone on that course for twenty minutes or so when a light house appeared which I recognized. We were close to Bella Bella and back on the map. What a relief! The rest of the journey, although slow bucking the head wind, was made with a more confident feeling.

Dick Pattinson

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### Suede Boots and Scotland

Last year, I spent a very short week in Scotland with a friend who has a cottage in Ballater on Deeside. Our intention was to walk as much as possible but she looked askance at my ancient suede boots; however, I was determined to do it in spite of them.

Our first hike was on the Balmoral Estate - along the shores of Loch Muick and up to the Dubh Loch. We were able to drive through part of the estate, thanks to Her Majesty, and leave our car in an official car park near a nature house which we later visited. The nature house contained photographs and stuffed animals and birds which we might have met on the trail. At the foot of the loch, we crossed the River Muick which rises on Lochnagar and is apparently one of the longest tributaries of the River Dee. According to Alex McConnochie in his book, "DEESIDE", written in 1895 (there is a reprint in our library), Lochnagar is "without doubt the grandest object seen from Ballater." With a good blanket of snow on it, it was indeed.

The loch was about four miles long and we followed a well-built rough road along it to the Glassalt Shiel which had been built for Queen Victoria. The windows were shuttered and several bicyclists were pressing their noses against the glass. It is still used by the Royal Family for summer picnics and a newly-painted dinghy lay on the grass near the loch waiting for Prince Charles to go fishing. From the Glassalt Shiel we climbed up a rocky pony trail, "made by the Queen", according to Mr. McConnochie, to the Dubh Loch (the black loch) lying at the base of Broad Cairn and 2091 feet above sea level. En route we had to cross a turbulent burn by leaping from boulder to boulder eventhough the snow was melting from above. The higher we climbed, the colder and windier it got. On one occasion we were literally blown of our feet and had to crawl around the bend on our hands and knees. The Dubh Loch lived up to its name and looked quite forbidding although the wind was whipping up whitecaps on it. The snow-level was not far above and it took us some time to find a dry and sheltered hollow for our picnic.

We returned to Loch Muick thankfully, with the wind at our backs, and rounded the head of the loch then walked down the other side on a narrow trail high above. Eventually it turned into a rough road used by gamekeepers and foresters - in Landrovs nowadays rather than on ponies, as in Queen Victoria's time. When we reached the meadows at the end of the loch a huge herd of red deer was grazing in the meadows below the nature house.



Another day, we walked up a much wilder glen into an even less inhabited area where we met only three people all day, one of whom was on a mountain bike. A more exciting encounter was with a red deer stag which was as intrigued by us as we were by him. We also caught sight of one cock grouse and then we tramped for weary miles back along the Dee to where we had left our car, with curlews calling all along the river and three enormous herds of red deer, one of which swam the Dee when they sighted us.

We also drove over the Speyside to visit the haunts of my forebears and went to Loch Garten, where the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has a huge nature reserve which is renowned for its ospreys. A nest site was visible from the official hide but the male, who was sitting on the nest, was so low down that he could only be glimpsed through a video camera hanging from a neighbouring tree. The guide book listed other birds that we might have seen, such as the Scottish crossbill, crested tit and capercaillie. In vain, we looked for even one small bird but there were too many of the common species - the humans; it appears that an average of 50,000 visit the Loch Garten reserve annually but, despite of that, the eyries there have produced over 50 young since 1958 and from this one site the Scottish population of ospreys has grown to over 50 pairs.

Nearby the Rothiemurchus estate, we walked through the forest of Scots or Caledonian pines, PINUS SYLVESTRIS; they can grow to over 120 feet in height and live for 300 years. Only 29,000 acres of this unique woodland survive and one-quarter of the mature pine forest has been lost within the last generation, largely due to the replanting with exotic conifers such as sitka spruce and lodgepole pine. The trees grew well apart so that the Forest of Rothiemurchus left a lasting impression of ancient trees and broad sunny glades. Although the Rothiemurchus visitor's Guide mentions that the forest contains one of the few remaining areas of naturally regenerating pines, we saw no young trees.

As we staggered into my friend's cottage at the end of the last day, the soles fell off my ancient suede boots.

Nancy Braithwaite

