



The Oystercatcher

THE SALT SPRING TRAIL AND NATURE CLUB - GANGES BC V0S 1E0

March, 1993

Editor -- Kacey Chee -- 537-1365

EXECUTIVE

PRESIDENT -	Jim Barber	TREASURER -	Sylvia Bristoll
1st VICE PRESIDENT -	Dick Duiven		
2nd VICE PRESIDENT -	Janet Duiven	SECRETARY -	Ken Strike

COMMITTEES

HIKE COORDINATOR	- Brian Radford	MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	- Joy Newton
WALK COORDINATOR	- Orpha Olm	APC REPRESENTATIVE	- Betty Kirk
SPECIAL EVENTS CHAIR	- Rob Denny	APC ALTERNATE REP.	- Nancy Braithwaite
FBCN DIRECTOR	- Glen Moores	TRAIL MAINTENANCE	- Dick Duiven

President's Message

On reflection, I feel it would be difficult for any of us to follow in the footsteps of our immediate past president, Fiona Flook, who has so many fingers in so many pies -- ecology, the environment, education, conservation, island wide trail network plan, Crown lands/ecological reserves etc. etc.

For many of us, the main interest in our club is the Tuesday walks and hikes, not to mention the June and September off island extended trips, which provide us with some good exercise, camaraderie/chatter and the joys of nature around us. If we, and future generations, wish to enjoy the natural history, flora and fauna, bird-life etc. that we experience on our Tuesday walks/hikes then we need "the Fiona Flooks" to show us what we can easily lose if we don't look out.

Obviously, trails are the means by which we can get some worthwhile exercise and enjoyment of this island's natural habitat. Consequently, I feel that our Club's main priorities this year should be the maintenance and completion of existing trails, the cutting of new trails and the planning of future trails. At the first meeting of your new executive, on Feb 18th, it was agreed that a priority is to establish a master plan for trails in Ruckle Park, with Provincial Parks Approval. Also, to develop, at least by identifying and marking, trail dedications in new sub-divisions. It goes without saying that we must see that the new southern portion of the Jack Foster trail is re-opened as soon as possible; hopefully the "red-tape" so far as the construction of a safe permanent way down the bank to the water's edge will soon be resolved.

Dick Duiven has kindly agreed to act as trail maintenance coordinator so should any hike/walk leader come across some bad spots please contact Dick (537-1221)

Work parties have been scheduled for March 23 and April 6 and we may well have additional work parties on days other than Tuesday. For the benefit of new members, I should add that these work parties are a lot of fun and chatter - whether clipping back salal, sawing off branches or removing small fallen trees across the trail.

Our 'Special Events' embrace all those activities other than the Tuesday walks and hikes i.e. monthly meetings/lectures, Tuesday 'off island' special interest day trips, June and September off island extended trips, semi-annual meeting/strawberry feast in Ruckle Park, Christmas luncheon, January pot-luck dinner etc.. These activities are too many for one person to coordinate. Bev Frankcombe is unable to continue as our Special Events Coordinator in view of her current work programme and thank you, Bev, for a job well done. To share this work load, six members have kindly agreed to be on our newly formed Special Events Committee -- Mary Chu, Rob Denny, Diana Floritto, Dorothy Morrell, Jim Spencer and Dorothy Thorson. Rob Denny has kindly agreed to chair this Committee and he has been coopted to serve on our Executive Committee as Special Events Coordinator. Basically, I feel that this committee needs to provide a varied programme for varied needs of our membership, within reason.

In closing, I ask for your support over the coming year. We are neither a pure walking/hiking club, nor are we a pure naturalist club. My primary objective is to have a happy compromise and have fun.

Jim Barber

JUNE 1993 OFF ISLAND TRIP

MAY 31ST - JUNE 2ND

Staying at Tsoona Girl Guides Camp, near Chilliwack, B.C.

A Variety of hikes, walks & Special Interest Outings are planned in this beautiful area which includes our Coastal mountains and flat lands of the Fraser Valley. Special interest & walks could well include Westminster Abbey, Minter Gardens, Bridal Falls and Dominion Agricultural Station.

Hiking outings will include (provisionally) Sumas Mt., Veddes Mt., Elk/Thurston Mt., Green Drop Lake.

And then there is the Centennial Trail for both hikers and walkers.

Depart from Saltspring 6:30 a.m. Long Harbour Ferry On May 31st.

Return to Saltspring Afternoon of June 2nd.

Sleeping Etc. Bring sleeping bags and towels.

Four (4) persons to a room.

Meals Bring pack lunch on May 31st. We are bringing food supplies and a cook with us. We will all help clean up after dinners only.

Cost & Reservation Finalized cost to be advised at March 25th monthly meeting. Should be about \$100.00 per person plus ferry fares.

Reservations and cheques must be received by no later than the April 22nd monthly meeting.

For reservations call Dorothy Thorson tel.(537-4671)

Please advise with whom you wish to share a room, if you have a preference.

Jim Barber

MT. BAKER TRIP - SEPT. 7 - 10, 1993

Leave Salt Spring Tuesday Sept. 7th 6:30 p.m. Long Harbour Ferry

Return SaltSpring Friday Sept. 10th - p.m.

Staying at Seattle Mountaineers Club on Mt. Baker. Dormitory accomodation, bring sleeping bag and towels. No showers.

Note: Anyone who wishes private cabin/bathroom could make their own reservation at Glacier Creek Motel, Glacier, Washington (tel. (206) 599-2991). Ap-

proximately 3/4 hrs. drive down the mountain from the Mountaineers Club. For those staying at the motel, restaurants in Glacier for breakfast/dinner.

Meals Bring pack lunch for Sept. 7th and your own pack lunch supplies for the 8th, 9th and 10th. Help in the kitchen, set tables, clean-up - camaraderie - youth hostel style.

Walks/Hikes Beautiful mountain walks/hikes, all are coordinated by our leader Hans Schroder.

Cost \$82.50 per person for accomodation/meals at Seattle Mountaineers Club.

Maximum persons 35 people.

Reservations Contact Hans Schroder (537-5155). Registration and payment deadline June 29th, at our 'semi-annual meeting'/strawberry feast, Ruckle Park.

Jim Barber

GEORGE C. REIFEL MIGRATORY BIRD SANCTUARY

Our trip in December to the Reifel refuge bird sanctuary which is at the mouth of the Fraser River and just a short drive from Ladner was a good "birding" day. 10 of us islanders arrived with binoculars, spotting scope, bird books, cameras and warm clothing. The weather was kind to us, a clear bright day, but a chilly wind was blowing which is quite common in this area at winter time. It was a day of discovery for some of us as we saw birds that we have never seen before, like the snowy owl and a pair of wood ducks. We saw 40 species of birds, hundreds of trumpeter swans in the potato fields, a few whistling swans and huge fields of snow geese, although it was not a good year for them. Bad weather in their nesting site on Wangel Island, Siberia, Russia caused the loss of many of their young. Approximately 40,000 young were produced and only 2,000 survived.



We were all delighted to see, from the tower, a snowy owl and the spotting scope brought it up closer. However, it was windy and very cold up there so we couldn't stay longer. The trails

seem to wander everywhere and different species of birds appeared around every corner

We had our lunch in the warming hut and then walked on quite a few trails. Then back to the hut which warmed up our bones again, then out for another walk. A sand hill crane, which is quite big, came to eat out of our hands and he could give your hand quite a peck. Everytime you put your hand out a chickadee would land on it.

I particularly liked a group of Long Billed Dowitches having their lunch and a rest on a small island before taking their long flight south. The most colorful was the exquisite pair of wood ducks and the Mandarin duck which is another foreign export not native to the area. The strangest were the Black Crowned Night Heron which held so still, they looked like a branch of the tree, but we could easily see their beady red eyes.

We can thank George H. Reifel, our Provincial Government and the B.C. Winter Fowl Society for this delightful 850 acre of reserve.

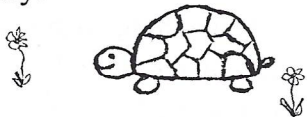
Patti May-Lawson

ANYONE FOR ADVENTURE TRAVEL?

At the AGM recently two possibilities were discussed for the 'spring trip'. One involved staying at a girl guide facility near Chilliwack, the other at a much more upmarket resort on Hornby. To my surprise an almost equal number favoured the dormitory situation.

The difference in cost may have something to do with choices, but obviously this is a pretty adventurous group of people in the Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club. Perhaps, I thought, you would like to consider some adventure travel such as I have recently experienced. Not wishing to selfishly horde the memories, I offer some high-lights to ponder - just for information of course, in no way an endorsement.

Having determined in September that I wanted to travel for several weeks this winter, I had my ear to the ground to find others with the same ambitions. Perhaps this wasn't the best position to find travelling companions, anyway I then decided to find an already organized group to join, not being quite bold enough to start alone. My student daughter knew of one possibility, so I phoned the appropriate number and eventually received the promised brochure from the Green Tortoise Adventure Travel company.



Having excitedly read the descriptions of some two dozen appealing trips, I chose the Southern Migration. Leaving San Francisco the bus would travel leisurely down through the Baja, ferry to mainland Mexico and then stopping at all the exciting places, including Mexico City, eventually drop its satiated passengers in Guatemala City twenty-five days later.

All necessary paperwork and preparation having gone smoothly, on December 9th I began my journey with full backpack in appropriate position and heart high. Two days later, with heart sinking, backpack and I boarded the 1978 school bus which would be home to thirty-two passengers and two drivers for the duration.

This company has been operating for eighteen years, I told myself, as we squished aboard and fought to maintain our foot-and-a-half of space on the 'back platform' where we would also be sleeping. They know what they're doing. Tentatively the passengers, who ranged in ages from eighteen to sixty-two, smiled at each other. For better or for worse we were in this together.

Soon after the bus roared itself into motion the alternate driver had the sad task of informing us that, due to faulty officialdom at the Mexican border, the Green Tortoise bus line had been told not to bring any more trips onto the Baja. The company owner was himself working on getting this straightened out, in the meantime, this bus was to use the Nosgales border crossing. Groans greeted this announcement, but it was a mild protest really. We were still excited at the travel prospects.

Three days later, having seen more shopping centre washrooms, deserts and cacti than I had ever hoped to, having learned that thirty-two people packed head to toe like sardines could indeed lie down if not sleep together on the bus, having had no chance to shower and having already been lost a few times, we were turned back from Nosgales. The bus could not get the proper papers to exit the other end of Mexico into Guatemala, the drivers explained, the officials here then told us to go to Juarez, another day's journey away, and cross there where the appropriate papers were available. Sullen rumblings greeted this news.

Finding a phone at yet another shopping plaza where we were turned loose to graze, the drivers conferred with head office. A bondsman seemed to be the favoured alternative for a while, but then suddenly, after some hours, the decision was reached to go through this border and worry about Guatemala at a later point. Hurrah! It was late at night, but we were now in Mexico and promised a beach in the morning. The only minor fly in the ointment was that the bus transmission was causing some concern.

The beach, after much delay, false starts and hours of wrong roads, was reached at sundown the next day. The transmission was getting rapidly worse and must have its fluids every few hours. We were beginning to learn, that what the brochure had stated was true. "A Green Tortoise trip is a unique travel experience, not a simple bus ride", and, "Flexibility is a Tortoise trait!"

The starter with little warning soon gave out and we pushed this incredibly filthy bus halfway across Mexico it seemed. A bandito shot out a tire when we would not stop for him. We got lost, we ran out of gas, the brakes failed to release. Instead of glorious days spend at wonderful places, it was limping in late at night only to leave within hours. Puerto Vallarta was reached at ten at night and exited at one, the seedy end of Acapulco was ours from eleven to two one night. Mexico City was skipped completely.

In spite of all this of course we had some fun. We enjoyed interesting and beautiful places. Strong bonds

were formed among some passengers and no-one actually came to blows in spite of long, hot days of jouncing frustration. The owner of Green Tortoise himself joined us to fix the starter and much else, and he rescued the balance of this fated trip by showing us some wonderful out-of-the-way places remembered from his own days as a driver.

One of my new friends, a working astrologer for the past fifteen years, said she had known beforehand the trip was not likely to be a smooth, pleasant experience, but she had decided to come anyway to see what she could learn from it all. I did my best to adopt this productive attitude, but have to confess that I was still seeking enlightenment in myself. Anyone envying me the personal growth opportunities I have enjoyed can give me a call and I'll be happy to pass the adventure travel brochure on. Really, I don't want to be selfish.

Ann Smart

ASKI AND NATURE TRIP

When I started my brief cross country skiing holiday in February with my children in Alberta, I didn't realize it was going to turn into a nature trip as well.

We spent most of the time in the Banff, Lake Louise & Kanaraskis areas, finding places suitable for Motler's level of skiing which is not, needless to say, very challenging. On the way to Johnson Lake one day we passed two separate flocks of mountain sheep grazing by the side of the road. During our short tour across the lake and round it, we came to a clearing of alders where the trees of about 6 feet above the ground appeared to have been carved with Indian designs. My daughter explained this was the work of Elk eating the bark and was becoming a concern of the Alberta Naturalists, as it was causing the death of many trees, due to disease setting in, making the wood rot. There were several fallen trees in the clearing. On further investigation we noticed claw marks on some of the trees, one almost to

the top. These were caused by bears climbing to get out of the way of some danger, human or otherwise.

The next day while lunching outside a cabin in the Lake Louise ski area, Canada Jays hopped around incessantly, obviously waiting for food. They were so tame, they would perch on ones finger, and although we were aware they shouldn't be fed, they didn't hesitate to snap up any crumbs that were dropped.



On the way home along highway A1, hoping to see some wild life, we were treated to the sight of two separate herds of Elk, looking down at us from the bank beside the road. There were 10 or 12 in each group, and were a magnificent sight.

Leaving Banff behind, my daughter remarked that wolves had been seen at the other side of the railway tracks. We looked in that direction and unbelievably saw a dog-like creature in the distance, eating something on the ground. It appeared to be larger than a coyote, but could it have been a wolf? We'll never know, as we were passing too quickly.

Nearer to home we passed a field where deer were feeding alongside a group of horses. There must have been a group of 10 or more deers or horses.

The third day in the Kanaraskis area, while skiing along Ribbon Creek, my daughter pointed out a flock of Bohemian Wax Wings. slightly larger than the Cedar Wax Wing and more colourful.

Back at her home, the bird feeder was visited by Blue Jays (not Stellars Jays) Canada Jays, Chickadees, with the occasional Mountain Chickadees, Nuthatches and a resident squirrel.

All in all a most memorable weekend.

Nancy Holcroft

Editor's Remarks,

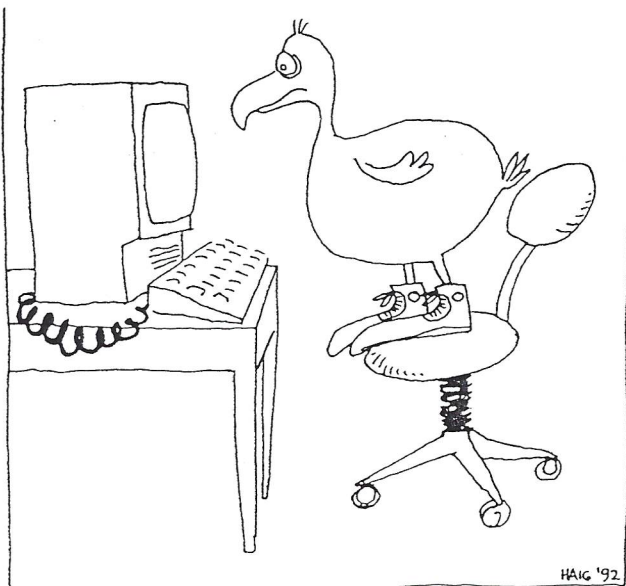
I wish to thank again the people who help by contributing articles for the November'92 and March'93 issues of the Oystercatcher. I hope that other readers will also try to contribute some articles. The article may be a wonderful trip that you had in the winter or summer vacation, or any funny stories that you experienced. I do look forward to hearing and reading some article from you for the coming October'93 issue.

Please recycle by putting the read Oystercatcher in the Cobbler's box so others can also have a chance to read the Oystercatcher.

Thank you very much.

Kacey Chee

Editor



RECYCLING