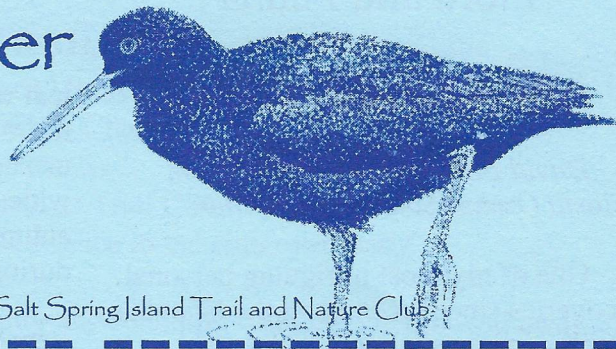


Spring 1999

Oystercatcher



The Newsletter of the Salt Spring Island Trail and Nature Club

The Baja: If you Can't Paddle It, You Hike It

Bill Harrington

I had not expected to write up my kayaking trip in the Baja for a hiking newsletter. But two days out, paddling south on the Sea of Cortez, we were hiking. El Norte created seven foot swells and we were stranded for two days on a beach.

I would not normally suggest anyone go hiking in the Baja, It is hot, dusty, and desolate. There are nasty dried up prickly things blocking your way and talk of scorpions and snakes. Fortunately we saw none.

However, the conditions that stopped us kayaking favour hiking. The strong north wind kept us from getting too hot as long as we were near the shoreline. We could stop anytime for a swim. There were steep hills and cliffs to be scaled and other stranded kayakers have created paths through the prickly things. The only plants over a foot tall are cacti standing out as well spaced spooky landmarks but giving no shade. Depending on the position of the sun shade can sometimes be found under a cliff or your kayak guide can erect a tarp for shelter.

One danger no one thought of was banditos. But as we trekked along a dusty track, six burly black clad Mexican men carrying big guns blocked our route. Too late to run. At the last minute we realized that their black garments were the navy blue of Mexican Marines patrolling the coast for what? Drugs, illegal American immigrants trying to get low paying jobs? Who knows because they spoke no English. They had us write our names and nationalities on a piece of paper and said adios.

And guess what? Back at camp, one of the tents had been entered and \$200 in cash and a set of binoculars were taken. Was it the Marines or was it the two beachbums that dropped in on us the night before displaying great (exaggerated?) friendliness and generosity leaving behind two crabs and a starfish?

The next day our luck turned. The wind went down. We launched the kayaks and there was no more hiking in the Baja.

Partridge Rescues Oystercatcher

Finding the perfect Black Oystercatcher for this publication was not an easy task. Rosemary Partridge, a Salt Spring artist came to our rescue with this drawing of the Black Oystercatcher -- a local bird with character and a gleam in her eye.

CALENDAR

May 11th, SS Conservancy Seminar, 7:00 PM, Lions Hall

May 27th, Social, 7:30 PM, United Church Hall

June 22nd, Strawberry Social, Noon, Ruckle Park



Flora and Fauna

Calypso, a Hidden Wonder

*David Bantrock, Reprinted from
Victoria Orchid Society Newsletter.*

One of my most intriguing personal discoveries since arriving on the Island is a fascinating species called Calypso Bulbosa, originally described botanically by Richard A. Salisbury in the 1800's. The genus was named after Calypso, daughter of Atlas, a beautiful nymph who was discovered by Odysseus while he was stranded on the island of Ogygia. It is quite a fitting name for many reasons. The name Calypso means 'concealment' and that is exactly how Calypso bulbosa is found: in moist coniferous forests, damp spruce-aspens forests, mossy woods, swamps and bogs from low to middle elevations.

During its dormant phase in mid-to-late summer, its presence is completely hidden. The orchid's habitat is not unlike Calypso's cave, which was sheltered by "a verdant copse of alders, aspens, and fragrant cypresses, which was the roosting-place of feathered creatures, horned owls and falcons and garrulous choughs." The clear springs running past Calypso's cave in addition to Odysseus' homesick tears shed further insights to the tiny orchid's liking of wet growing conditions.

Calypso bulbosa (also known as Fairy Slipper, Cytherea, Venus Slipper) is a terrestrial species found in boreal and temperate regions of North America, Europe and Asia. In this continent, it has been found in varying degrees of scarcity as far south as northern New England through Michigan in the eastern half, and Arizona to California in the west.

Calypso is a terrestrial, perennial plant which grows from a corm. It produces a single, egg-shaped, dark green

leaf which is heavily ribbed and often heart-shaped at its base. Leaves are usually between 3-5 cm long and 2-5 cm wide. The leaf, which is produced in the autumn, overwinters then dies back during the following summer.

The plant has a smooth, delicate stem which is yellow-purple to brown-purple in color and measures between 10-25 cm. This stem, technically called a scape, is covered with 2 or 3 membranous sheathing bracts and is produced during the early spring. From the stem arises a solitary, fragrant flower, with 3 narrow, pointed and often erect rose-purple sepals as well as 2 similar petals oriented above the lower lip (each 1-2 cm long). The flower's lip is slipper-like, yellow to whitish, with purple streaks and spots. The lower apron portion of the lip, which is almost transparent, is bearded with three rows of yellow hairs, and has a double spur at its extremity. Flower may open fully between April (on Vancouver Island) to July (in Northern British Columbia). The flower's column, which overhangs the lip, is oval and convex in shape. Calypso's fruit is comprised of an erect capsule between 1-3 cm in length.

While considered to be one of the most common and widespread of orchids in British Columbia (often found in large colonies), Calypso is currently being depleted in many areas due to trampling, picking and development. Calypso's survival rate after being disturbed is limited because its fragile root system is easily broken. In Northern Europe, during blooming time of this orchid special trips are made to witness this tiny plant, and no one is allowed to pick or dig them up. Such respect will hopefully ensure the continued presence of this hidden and captivating beauty.



TRAIL MIX

Welcome: New Members Nigel & Nina Denyer, Art & Marg Simons, Sue & Les Ramsey, Barry & Audrey Mountain, Chris Chapman, Iris Chapman, Ron & Diane Hall.

Stepped Down: Betty Kirk has resigned as Trail Coordinator. Betty is to be commended for her tireless efforts and service to the club over many years.

Last Hikes: Gerry Holland, an honorary and founding Club member passed away in March. Zella Madsen passed away suddenly in April.

Thanks: To Ian Chisholm for performing the 1998 financial review of the Club's records.

Coming Events

"Creating a Pond or Enhancing a Watercourse" with Chris Schmah and Ken Tara Managing and Conserving Water on Your Property Sponsored by Saltspring Island Conservancy, Tuesday, May 11th, 7:00-9:00 PM, Lions Hall, 103 Bonnet Ave

FBCN Spring Camp Sorrento Centre Retreat Shuswap Lake, May 31st to June 5th, Topics: Bats, Butterflies, Birding & Botany. For more information, contact Tammy Anderson 604-251-6046: FBCN 604-737-3057, or email: fbcn@intergate.bc.ca

Fall Trip to Wells, BC Sept 8th - 13th. Attractive package includes meals. Contact Bill Earl 537-2674. Minimum 18 people.

Annual Pot Luck Dinner

The pot luck dinner held in March this year was attended by 74 members who had plenty of wonderful food choices. Following dessert, Dave Williams entertained with a slide show of Wells Gray Park and the Park's study programs; Margaretha Nordine gave a reminder on the March CRD public meetings on the Future of Regional Parks; Nancy Braithwaite circulated a survey to determine interest in receiving the FBCN publication BC Naturalist by direct mail.

Reminders

Pick up the latest BC Naturalist from our box at the Cobbler's. Please return it when you are finished.
Trail Club badges are available from the Treasurer for \$4.00.
Car Pool wherever possible; suggested sharing of expenses \$1.00 per person per round trip (\$2.00 longer trips e.g. Musgrave Rd) on the island. Off island trips 20 cents per kilometer plus vehicle ferry fee shared by all vehicle occupants. Individuals are responsible for personal ferry fees. Minimize dirt in the vehicle by bringing your boots in a separate bag. Always keep the vehicle or person ahead in sight.

Constitution, Bylaws, Guidelines

A review committee made up of four Club members and one member of the Club Executive is looking at our constitution, bylaws and guidelines to determine if they reflect the current make up and operations of the club and are consistent with each other. Recommendations from the committee will be discussed with the membership at a future Special General Meeting.

Lynn Thompson, our Membership Coordinator, has drafted a terrific looking club brochure which incorporates the Club guidelines and activity information, the Membership Application and Waiver of Liability forms.

General Information

The Salt Spring trail and Nature Club features Tuesday outings September through June at three levels of ability. The monthly schedule of outings and events is published the final Wednesday of the month in the *Driftwood*. The fourth Thursday of each month the Club meets at 7:30 PM in the lower hall of the Ganges United Church. The Club is affiliated with the Federation of BC Naturalists.

Ramblers enjoy walking without pressure to keep up speed. Members of any level fitness are welcome. Ramblers have frequent "time-outs" for taking pictures, examining flowers, plants, stones, fossils, and hugging trees. Rambles start at 10 AM and usually end around 1:30PM

Walkers move at a relaxed pace taking time to smell the roses. Walkers usually try to avoid long steep climbs and will stop to catch the breath along the way. Walks are generally less than 8km and end around 2PM.

Hikers like long, adventurous and occasionally quite strenuous hikes, and like to gain a bit of altitude. Hikers need good strong boots and a good but not excessive level of fitness. They may smell the roses, but do it rather quickly. Hikes usually start at 10AM and finish between 2:30 and 3:30 PM.

Membership: Annual dues are \$17.00 per person. New members must sign a waiver. Send waiver form and membership dues to Membership Secretary, Box 203, Salt Spring Island BC V8K 2V9

Current Executive

President:	Fred Howell	537-1133
Vice Pres:	Linda Quiring	537-5116
Past Pres:	Bill Earl	537-2674
Treasurer	April Steel	537-4207
Secretary	Ron Holcroft	537-2854
	Nancy Holcroft	
Membership	Lynn Thompson	537-1814
Walkers	Alan Robertson	537-9459
Ramblers	Joan Lott	537-2237
	Ann Fitz-James	537-9952
Hikers	Linda Quiring	537-5116
FBCN	Nancy Braithwaite	537-9335

RECORDS

Archival	Joanne Cartwright	537-2439
Photographic	Chris Pattinson	537-9547

OYSTERCATCHER

Oystercatcher is published three times annually. Comments, articles or ideas are welcome. Mail them to Box 203, Salt Spring Island, BC V8K 2V9 or call Linda Quiring 537-5116 or April Steel 537-4207. Design 4th Line Design