



# The Oystercatcher



Volume 2 Issue 1

The Newsletter of the Salt Spring Island Trail and Nature Club

Winter 1999

## ANDIAMO EN ANDALUCIA

*Andrea Rankin*

For four years, *Margaret Spencer*, myself (*Andrea*), *Fiona Flook* and *Marian Daubeny* of Vancouver had been muttering about hiking in Spain. In October we finally did it! Limiting ourselves to warm, sunny, rocky, hilly Andalusia, we rented a car, hiked around the white towns, visited the renowned nature preserve, the Moorish cities and Gaudi's Barcelona.

After exploring Malaga and its requisite Moorish ruins we headed for los pueblos blancos, the well known "white towns" that tumble down the mountain valleys in cascades of white cubes. Typically, the streets are pedestrian narrow and the houses are joined to each other in whitewashed rows surmounted by tiled roofs and enlivened by a profusion of blooming plants.

Grazelema was our base for a few days of hiking over the rocky, dry hills where we found, even in this season, many plants and flowers that kept us botanizing; crocuses, lilies, mallow, phlomis, cotoneaster, several kinds of oak, etc. not necessarily totally identified but always eliciting much study and discussion. Our time in the car was equally interesting as we stopped at farms where bulls are raised for you know what, or to gaze upon rows of cork oaks stripped of their bark exposing their chunky russet limbs for all to see. A highlight was Zahara, a picturesque village perched high on a rock pinnacle, accessible from Grazelema

over a twisty mountain road. Here we chatted with a couple of robust women who were loading their donkeys' panniers with rough hewn rock which the beasts carried up to the summit of the pinnacle where it was used in the restoration of an early Christian church.

Coto Donana, Spain's largest nature preserve includes a huge chunk of seashore near the Portuguese border, many acres of pine forest and some flat alluvial lands that are water covered or dry salt flats depending on the season. We were there in dry season. From our eco-bus we observed lots of black backed gulls, black and white oystercatchers, red and fallow deer and, glory of glories, Imperial eagles; two of the 19 pairs in the preserve.

In Gulachos, a dot on the map in the hills that border the sea near Motril, we rented a charming traditional house

with the old fireplace and wall bake oven still in tact. One of the most astonishing sights of this area was the acres and acres of pale green plastic, under which grows, so we were told, the veggies of the European Union. The Andalusians have come down from the terraces where they formerly grew almonds, to the flats where they tend their green houses. The almond culture was put to death by the importation of cheaper California almonds. These poor people have always adapted to the wave of agriculture.

To put the cap on our adventure we travelled over the Sierra Nevada, across the plains of La Mancha, through the Valencian orange plantations and onwards to Barcelona, a magical, phantasmagorical place where the influence of Gaudi is everywhere. We roamed the streets seeking out examples of his architecture. There was always something whimsical, a lopsided curving concrete pillar, a rough rubble vault for a pastoral crypt, broken glass shards creating a kaleidoscope of colour atop an air vent, fragmented tiles fashioned into the body of a magical lizard, hump-backed rooftops which simulate twisting dragons and the unfinished towers of the Sagrada Familia which is, after 100 years, still under construction. It is the ultimate symbol of all that is Barcelona. It is not surprising that our word "gaudy" comes from the name of this creative genius who worked in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

A very satisfying, eminently feasible month in the country - perfect for four fit ladies of a certain age.

## Calendar

### February 25th

Social, 7:30PM  
United church hall

### March 25th

Pot Luck Dinner  
6:00PM, Meaden Hall  
Speaker Dave Williams "Wells  
Gray Park"

### April 22nd

Social, 7:30 PM  
United Church Hall

## Trail Mix

**Welcome:** New Members *Trish Murray, Dennis & Susan Russell, Rohana Laing, John & Ruth Pankhurst, Joyce Maxted, Jean Redlich, Gary & Judith Sheridan, Ingrid Schinle, Vanina Katz-Lahiague, Jack & Dee Fitton, Rita & Denny Thomas, Hope Williamson, Denyse & Peter Erdos.*

**Recovering:** *Patti May-Lawson* from a broken leg suffered while hiking (not with T/N).

**Apologies:** To *Chris Pattinson* who is responsible for our photo archives. Credit was given to *Betty Kirk*.

**Donation:** Received from *Gillian Foster* for upkeep of the Jack Foster Memorial Trail.

**Last Hike:** *Ruby Alton*, a founding member of our Club passed away in November.

**Thanks:** To *Jean Howell and Ann Earl* for looking after the kitchen at the 1998 socials and to *Ginny Rush* for filling in, plus to all who brought goodies.

**Happy Trails:** To *Norma and Fred Eves* celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary on April 2, 1999.

## Hatching the 'Catcher

Putting together the fall issue of the *Oystercatcher* was an experience!!! First we heard from the Post Office... "completely seal it or use an envelope". Envelope it is! Oh for some labels. Then we heard from you... "the European Oystercatcher will never do"... It's gone to the taxidermist! A big oops for the Chris/Betty mix up. ....Ed

## Christmas Lunch

Approximately 100 members turned out to partake of the delicious buffet Christmas luncheon held at Meadon Hall. *Fred Howell* had elfeiful assistance in organizing from his wife *Jean, Bill and Ann Earl, Vaughan Walters, Joan Myers, Tom Cartwright Ian Chisholm, Keith Webb and Beth Ranney* The festive table decorations were organized by *Carol Williams*. Thank you to anyone we missed.

## The Federation of BC Naturalists Report

*Nancy Braithwaite*

**Christmas Bird Count:** The Christmas bird count took place on the 3rd of January and was very successful. The total bird count was 22,082 (the largest count since 1992 when the total was 22,259). There were 113 species and 157 people took part. Juncos were in the majority - 2,186 of them. The uncommon birds came in ones: a yellow-billed loon, a northern pintail, an Eurasian widgeon, a canvasback duck, a peregrine falcon, a blue grouse, a ring-billed gull, a pigeon guillemot, a great horned owl, a Hutton's vireo, a yellow-rumped warbler, a Townsend's warbler and a Lincoln's sparrow.

## FBCN

The FBCN and the Canadian Nature Federation are holding a joint conference and their Annual General Meetings in Qualicum Beach From the 13th to the 16th of May inclusive. A number of very fascinating seminars are to be put on by both organizations as well as various receptions, a banquet and eleven field trips. More information and registration forms will appear in the BC Naturalist shortly!

Please call N. Braithwaite (537-9335) for a copy of the daily schedule of events. This unusual event would be well worth attending.

## Annual Membership Dues

Annual Membership Dues for the calendar year 1999 are now past due. Members who have not remitted are delinquent.

**Your club depends on its membership dues to operate.**

Please forward your payment of \$17.00 per person and your current address and phone number to: The Treasurer, Salt Spring Trail & Nature Club, Box 203 Salt Spring Island, BC, V8K 2V9. Cheques may also be given to April Steel.

## Your Executive

President	Fred Howell	537-11237
V. President	Linda Quiring	537-5116
P. President	Bill Earl	537-2674
Treasurer	April Steel	537-4207
Secretary	Ron Holcroft	537-2854
	Nancy Holcroft	537-2854
Membership	Lynn Thompson	537-1814
Walkers	Alan Robertson	537-9439
Ramblers	Joan Lott	537-2287
	Ann Fitz-James	537-9932
Hikers	Linda Quiring	537-5116
FBCN	Nancy Braithwaite	537-9335
Trails	Betty Kirk	537-9686

## Records

Archival	Joanne Cartwright	537-2489
Photographic	Chris Pattinson	537-9547

## Prescribed FIRE in Provincial Parks

*Source: BC Parks*

British Columbia incorporates a diversity of forested ecosystems as a result of varied weather, fuels and topography. Historically, natural fire played a major role in shaping this rich vegetation mosaic of grasslands and forest. Wildfire occurs everywhere but differing effects can be seen throughout the province. Fire (and the resulting smoke) is as much a force of nature as the wind and the rain.

BC Parks, the stewards of the provincial park system, is mandated to ensure that essential ecosystem processes are maintained to protect a variety in nature through conservation and management. So why is fire management such a challenge to the managers of provincial parks?

Fire does not always respect the human values that we place on wildlife resources. The BC Provincial Park System incorporates approximately nine million hectares in area and includes camping facilities, trails, representative landscapes and unique botanical, zoological and geological phenomena.

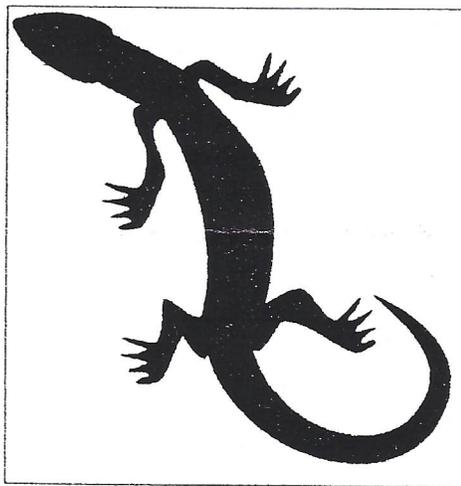
Fire management in these parks includes risks to the land base outside the designated boundaries such as human settlements and commercial timber resources. The challenges for BC Parks is to balance the use of fire for ecological integrity without compromising adjacent values.

### *Fire Ecology*

Prior to European settlement, the forests and grasslands of BC were subject to either wildfire or fire ignited by aboriginal people. Over the last 50 years successful fire suppression has led to less and less fire to

maintain our ecosystems.

In the interior of BC, branches and dead trees accumulate on the ground. This fuel becomes prone to fire with dry weather conditions. Many years of fire suppression has caused this fuel to build-up. Accumulations of surface fuel plus a dense forest set the stage for a very hot uncontrollable wildfire. Also, without periodic fires to reduce the fuel and tree density, tree species change from sunlight loving species such as ponderosa pine to shade tolerant species such as the Douglas-fir, reducing the diversity of species and the mosaic forest pattern. In the Northern boreal forests, wildfires can reach tens of thousands of hectares, even with aggressive fire suppression efforts being applied. These "stand replacement" fires may burn entire watersheds before being contained. The intensity and duration of a fire determines the extent of effects on the landscape.



In southern BC, fire renews, strengthens and restores habitats by thinning the forest cover enhancing grasses and shrubs. This provides forage, nesting and cover for mammals, birds and reptiles encouraging ecological diversity. Fire will reduce disease and insect infestations by creating variability in forest structure.

## *Prescribed Fire Management*

With the combination of current knowledge and modern technology, it is possible to manage and control fire to benefit forest ecosystem health. Goals and objectives for each park are determined by identifying significant natural and cultural values. A fire management plan determines zone boundaries and attaches a wildfire suppression response and prescribed fire parameters. BC Parks has an effective partnership with the BC Forest Service, other government agencies, universities, first nations and community groups to prepare and implement these plans.

Fire management in BC Parks strives to balance the continuing need for wildfire suppression with the clear need for increased use of prescribed burning to achieve ecosystem management objectives. In large wilderness parks, fire management plans may designate zones and conditions where wildfires are permitted to burn with little interference. In smaller parks near population centers, prescribed burns may not be practical. Other techniques (thinning, pruning) may be used exclusively or in combination with fire to reduce fuel build-up.

Prescribed fire is conducted by trained fire specialists. Control lines are identified, utilizing natural barriers where possible. Pumps, fire hoses, water tankers and trained fire fighters are strategically located throughout the area. Weather conditions are closely monitored and when the conditions are conducive to achieving the goals, personnel from the two agencies ignite the fuel in a pattern to accomplish a "controlled burn".

## Executive Notes

Plans are well underway to install a memorial bench on Channel Ridge, hopefully overlooking St. Mary's Lake. This will be a tribute to *Joy Newton* and several others who have taken their last hike. A future announcement will be made regarding dedication.

The financial year ended in the black with a surplus of \$654.00. Club assets are presently around \$13,000.



## Wanted!! Trip Coordinators

Your Club needs **Trip Coordinators** who once or twice annually select destinations, arrange for accommodations and meals, take club member reservations and coordinate daily outings and guest speakers if required.

## Ideas wanted

Suggestions for speakers and topics for the monthly socials are needed. If you have any ideas contact your executive.

## The Annual General Meeting

President, *Bill Earl* is replaced by *Fred Howell*, formerly VP. *Linda Quiring* is adding VP to Hiking Coordinator duties. *Lynn Thompson* is our new Membership Secretary. *Nancy Holcroft* will be assisting Ron as Secretary. *Al Robertson* is Walking Coordinator and *Brian Radford* will assist as FBCN Rep.

## President's Message

*Bill Earl*

"My time as president this past year has been enjoyable and I wish to thank the Executive for their help and cooperation.

On reflection of the past year, there were two significant accomplishments. One was the resolution of a contentious situation with Texada. Second was the agreement to build the Club memorial bench.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to the new Executive members"

## 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 for the upcoming month in the *Driftwood*. The fourth Thursday of each month except July and August 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.

## Hikers

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 may vary between 2:30 and 3:30 PM.

## Walkers

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 their breath along the way. Walks are generally less than 8km and end around 2PM.

## Ramblers

Ramblers enjoy walking without pressure to keep up speed. Members of any fitness level 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

## Membership Dues

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

## The Oystercatcher

Editors	April Steel	<del>567-44207</del>
	Linda Quiring	<del>567-9335</del>
Publisher	Gary Railer	<del>567-44447</del>

The Oystercatcher is published three times annually. Comments, inquiries, articles and photographs are welcome. Send submissions to the Editors Box 203 Salt Spring BC V8K 2V9 or e-mail to [grailer@saltspring.com](mailto:grailer@saltspring.com).