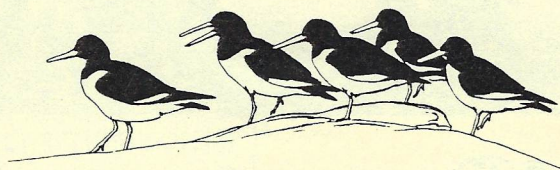


# Oystercatcher

The Newsletter of the Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club



## Palms to Pines

AH...PALM SPRINGS! BALMY NIGHTS, PALM TREES, CASINOS, HIKING...HIKING?

*Linda Quiring*

The desert has many secrets, including the amazing hiking adventures available around Palm Springs. We've been going south

for ten years, and continue to find exciting new walks and hikes.

Palm Springs lies at the base of towering Mt. Jacinto: at over 10,000 feet, the most steeply rising mountain in the U.S., and climbed recently by Bill and Gary. They began climbing at 7 a.m. and reached the 8000 foot level around 2 p.m. where the tram ends its spectacular journey. Cross-country skiers were surprised to see them pop over the cliff in shorts, and they got a free ride down in the tram. There are over 50 miles of trails accessible from the tram area, part of the Santa Rosa Mountains which flow south towards San Diego.

My favourite hikes are through the world-famous palm canyons: the beautiful and lush Palm Canyon; Andreas, Murray, and Taquitz Canyons. As the snow-melt from the Santa Rosa's finds its way to the desert floor, these unique canyons have been carved out and create cool, clear, springs filled with indigenous Washingtonia palms, and a variety of ferns, grasses and cacti. Thousands of birds twitter and chirp, and many small mammals, and occasionally cougar, inhabit these canyons, a ten minute drive from the Springs.

In less than an hour, one can drive from Palm Springs across the valley and climb 4000 feet to the High Desert where winter temps are a bit cooler. Here we find Joshua Tree National Park, home of the rare Joshua Tree, the Yucca and assorted cacti. Joshua Park is like no other place on earth, and we continually find new hikes and

trails. This year, we discovered a small oasis, 49 Palms, a three hour round-trip up a small mountain and down into the secluded oasis, fragrant even in winter and alive with birds. The Morongo Reserve, a newly created wildlife area, is 1/2 hour from Palm Springs, and trails wander through palms, willow, cottonwoods in a true desert oasis. This is a bird-lovers paradise, and many other hikers we met were birders in disguise! A checklist of birds wintering in the Morongo Valley included 266 native species plus 14 non-native. We just enjoy the warmth, the fragrant meadows, sunny dunes and spectacular scenery, and its all free!

Crystal clear springs sheltered by lush greenery, endless sand dunes that fall away from ochre-colored bluffs and mesas - this is the 17,000 acre Coachella Valley Preserve. Ten miles east of Palm Springs, the preserve boasts the Thousand Palms Oasis fed by continuously flowing waters seeping along the San Andreas fault, which can be seen as a sharp cliff west of the oasis. We've hiked here many times, and this year wandered off the trail by accident, then hiked ten miles over bluffs, dunes, palms, and cacti to find our way back: the most wonderful hike of our holiday.

Palm Springs boasts a fairly active hiking club, and if one tires of the magnificent scenery, there is always the Film Festival, over 200 golf clubs, and a first-rate museum where we enjoyed a Van Gogh exhibit. Restaurants, cafes, and fast-food outlets cater to every appetite and budget. The shopping is fabulous: one can buy flea-market junk, or an \$80,000 fourth-century wooden Buddha! Our favourite resort is quiet, clean and inexpensive, with full kitchen, pool, sauna and spa! See you there next January...

## Calendar

**May 27-30**

Spring Trip



**June 18**

Strawberry Festival



**Sept 17**

Blackberry Festival

## OYSTERCATCHER

Oystercatcher is published three times annually. Comments, articles or ideas are welcome. Mail them to Oystercatcher, Salt Spring Trail & Nature Club, Box 203, Salt Spring Island, B.C. V8K 2V9



## Trail Mix

### New Members:

Manfred & Marion Pape, Lyn MacDonald, Kathleen Darling, Ian Mitchell, Andrea LeBorgne, Ron Larson, Jack & Alice Fraser, John Baxter, Jean Knight, Alison Fenske, Caren Fennell, Carol Dodd, Richard Addison, Rosalind Vijendren, Sterling & Maureen McEachern, Barbara Mugridge, John Moore.



**Taxi Fare:** Remember, \$1 for a trip to North End, \$2 to South End, Ruckle Park, \$3 to Musgrave, etc.  
Day trips off-island, \$0.25/km.



**Email :** If you now have an Email address, send it to Membership Secretary Lynn Thompson at [lthompson@salt-spring.com](mailto:lthompson@salt-spring.com)



## Trailblazers: Betty Kirk

This is a new feature to pay tribute to some of the people who have done a lot for our club but received little recognition...that's because they were not necessarily on the executive or in the public eye but worked behind the scenes.

That's certainly the case for our first Trailblazer, BETTY KIRK, whose accomplishments are too much for this little space. Here are a few: A leader who led us on new trails. She worked with others to establish many of the trails in Ruckle Park. She's been on the job so long that some of the other trails she blazed have disappeared into private property. Others that she fiercely defended are still on the map. Betty set up a phone tree, was in charge of membership, then created a memorial book which, in order to include every member who has died since the club's inception, required her to research years and years of back copies of Driftwood obituaries.

She now serves on a BC Parks stewardship committee taking care of Maxwell and Ruckle parks. It is our hope that the stewardship committee, which Betty helped form, might serve as a model for community involvement in managing the new provincial park at Burgoyne Bay.

*Bill Harrington*

## President's message

Welcome to another year of rambling, walking and hiking, plus all the other social activities of your club. I hope you enjoy these activities as much as in the past. Your executive has been active in organizing some great events, including an exciting trip to Princeton in the fall. We have also been making sure our Club's interests are fully represented in discussions over the new park.

*Simon Rook.*

## Spring Trip to Ucluelet

We have now booked the accommodation at the Tauca Lea in Ucluelet for the Spring Trip, May 27th to 30th. We had many more singles than couples register, so have had to re-arrange the rooms to accommodate the numbers. The final cost for all people except the singles who have their own room is \$260, and includes all taxes and gratuities. Any surplus will be applied to buying park permits for the vehicles. Please pay the balance between April 27 and May 7th, by putting it in the cobbler's box or giving it to members of the executive (which includes the hike, walk or rambling co-ordinators).

The Tauca Lea is a first class establishment on the inner harbour in Ucluelet. To get there, go past the Petrocan station on the right, and take the next road left opposite the bowling alley. At the end of this road, turn left, and you will arrive at Tauca Lea. We will have allocated all the rooms, so just give your name, and they will tell you where to go.

Remember that three dinners will be provided, but you will have to make your own breakfast and lunch. You can also get these at the Tauca Lea restaurant. All suites have very fine full kitchens.

We are suggesting that people leave on the 8 or 9 o'clock ferry from Vesuvius, as this will give

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# FBCN REPORT

Nancy Braithwaite

The Christmas bird count took [place on the 15th December - as usual one of the worst days in the year.

The total count was 22,931 birds of 84 species with robins in the lead at 6489. 143 birders took part.

Thanks to all members of the Club who braved the weather, particularly the co-ordinators.

The Provincial Government has cut all Provincial Park Extension Services: 14 extension/interpretation officer positions throughout B.C. have been eliminated. Park information Centres have been closed.

Environmental education reached 800,000 campers every year in 23 Provincial Parks. This could have been saved by a province-wide camping fee of \$1.00 per camper per night. In the whole of North America, only two jurisdictions now have no education in parks: one is B.C. and the other the State of Mississippi. This means the end of education in Ruckle Park and at Goldstream, just to mention two. A letter to the Minister of Air, Land and Water Protection would not go amiss.

Of particular interest to birders and people with forested land will be a talk and video on the subject of "Wildlife Trees" to be given by Kerri-Lynn Wilson of B.C. Hydro in Nanaimo at the Club social on April 25th.

The FBCN is holding its AGM at the University of Victoria from May 9th to 12th: the theme will be "Discover Island Biogeography." The speaker at the banquet will be Dr. Neville Winchester of the University of Victoria whose doctoral work in the Carmanah canopy was instrumental in its eventual protection.

(see p. 29 of the B.C. Naturalist, Winter 2002.)

## BRITISH COLUMBIA NEST RECORD SCHEME

It's nesting time again! On the coast, **Anna's Hummingbirds** have been building nests since late January and **Barn Owls** are already on eggs. In the interior, **Great Horned Owls** have already been found near old nest sites.

Last nesting season hundreds of naturalists submitted over 8,500 nest cards. These have all been examined and are now ready for entry into our electronic databases. We hope to begin the enormous task of updating the 4-volume set *The Birds of British Columbia* in the spring and have some of the new information summarized and available on a web page in the autumn.

We are again **inviting naturalists** to join us in recording information on breeding birds in B.C. We must assure that after 47 years of dedication and commitment that information gathered on the nesting biology of birds remains in British Columbia and is not lost to other North American databases.

If you want to participate in this worthwhile endeavour please contact the address below for nest cards and an instruction booklet. We can also send you a copy of our 2001 nesting season report.

B.C. Nest Record Scheme  
P.O. Box 6218, Station C  
Victoria, B.C. V8P 5L5  
(250) 658-0999



## Current Executive

**President:**  
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**Secretary**  
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**Hikers**  
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**FBCN**  
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**Archivist**  
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**Photo Journal**  
Chris Pattinson 537-2547  
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## 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 1:30 PM

**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 8 km and end around 2 PM.

**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 10 AM 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

everyone a chance to do some activity on the first afternoon. We would like all hikers to catch the 8 o'clock, as we intend to climb at least part of Mt. Sutton on the way over.

Your co-ordinators will have some fine activities planned for you. For the hikers, we will be taking a water taxi over to Meares to climb Lone Cone Peak, which is 2800ft., and has spectacular views, weather permitting, and will also do a hike down from Radar hill to Scooners, which provides the opportunity to see one of the most famous wrecks on that coast. Any questions call me or Heather at 537-5180.

Simon Rook

## Parks Project

Myself, Bill H, Ian Fraser, Patricia Lockie, plus Brian Radford, have been very involved in decisions regarding the new Burgoyne Bay Park which will directly affect the activities of the club. Specifically, we have been formulating policy for the inclusion of trails in the area. On February 28th, we put forward a plan for the retention of trails in the Nature Trust Preserve which we consider to be pre-existing. These include the old safford trail, the trail up to the mine, and the trail from the first lookout the the north end to the preserve. We were also active in having the Town Hall Meeting called for March 14th. It is hoped that the club can establish new trails on the south side of the Bay that will link up with the existing trails on Mount Sullivan, plus, hopefully, some others. Rest assured that we are working hard to insure that the club is well represented in any decisions that are made.

Simon Rook.