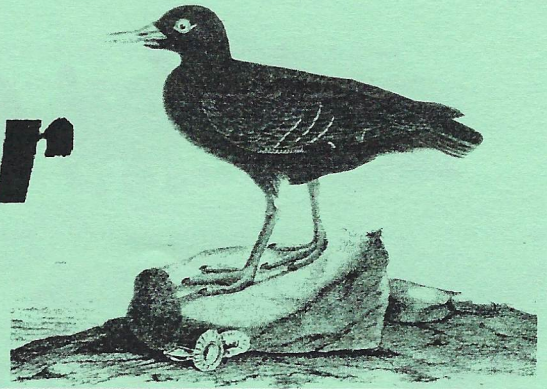


Oystercatcher

The Newsletter of the

Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club

Spring 2004



Calendar

April 22

Social in United Church.

Paul Linton, volunteer warden for Saltspring's eco-reserves, will show slides of ecological reserves and answer relevant questions about our eco-reserves. 7.30pm.



May 27

Charles Kahn will introduce his new "Hiking the Gulf Islands" book, relating some of his experiences that went into putting it together. He will probably be able to offer copies at a discount, and sign them to boot. United Church at 7.30.



June 15

Strawberry Festival at Drummond Park. Show up approximately 11.30.



Sept. 7th

10th Fall Trip at Strathcona Lodge, organized by Ron Hall.



Sept. 14th.

Blackberry Festival. Mout Park. Noon.

President's Message

Welcome to this edition of the Oystercatcher. As President, it is with some hesitation that I write the following list of concerns.

Volunteering your help with organizing this group of about 300 members is very important. Giving direction to about 100 or who come out weekly to walk the trails, view nature and socialize isn't a big deal.

What's the use of belonging and paying dues if you don't take part? We share the road (trail) so why not share the load? You could team up with a friend, if needed, or even take on a portion of the year's activities.

You all know by now that no one has come forward to organize a spring trip. A couple locales had been suggested, but someone was needed to take care of the details. We do have guidelines, easily available from your executive.

Our walking group has been stumbling along, looking for a co-ordinator to replace the able Ron Hall, who is now our vice-President. Thankfully, Ron consented to continue until June, when our former secretary, Janet Andersen, will take over, but only till December.

Another rather immediate need is for a minute taker/secretary for your executive that meets about nine times a year. Anne MCKerricher has had to resign due to family concerns. Our thanks to Anne for her fine work as secretary.

The monthly social/information meetings have been poorly attended. Too bad, as we have had some excellent presentations. Do try to come — 4th Thursday of the month at 7.30 in the United Church. The topic is usually in with the schedule in the Driftwood.

That's enough browbeating for now! See you on the trail.

Fred Powell



OYSTERCATCHER

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

<http://saltspring.gulfislands.com/lthompson/>



Trail Mix

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 George Wachmann wachmann@saltspring.com

FBCN Report

Nancy Braithwaite

The Christmas bird count for 2003 actually took place on the 11th January, 2004. 14,630 birds were counted. In 15 years of record keeping only last year were there fewer birds. There were 93 species and 144 counters. The most numerous birds were pine siskins at 1906, dark-eyed junco at 1362, chestnut-backed chickadees with 852 and Canada geese at 805 (about twice as many as the 15- year average).

There were 516 ringnecked ducks, compared to the average of 97; red-winged blackbirds had a count of 207 compared to the average of 79 and black oystercatchers were up - at 16 compared to the average of 11.

I am grateful to John Sprague for taking on the job after the co-ordinators had gathered the results; to Alix Granger who handled the data yet again and, of course, to everyone who took part. Next year we hope that Marion Porter, a professional bird biologist from the Fulford area may take on the count.

Three members of the club accepted the invitation of the Arrowsmith Naturalists to join them in Parksville for a planned Birding Field Trip on the 21st March at the Englishman and Little Qualicum River Estuaries. The herring run was in full swing and we had wonderful views of both sea and shorebirds as well as many eagles, a merlin and a shrike.

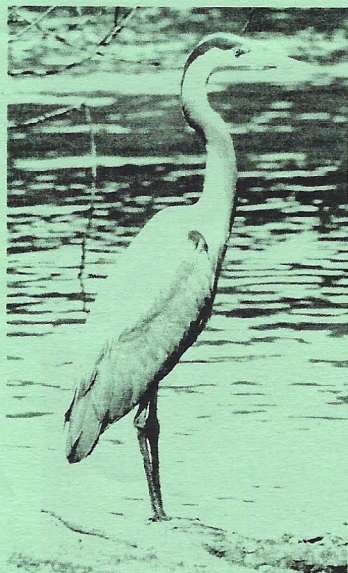
Ron Speller has recently resigned as the Regional Coordinator for the FBCN on Vancouver Island and Betty Collins of Arrowsmith Naturalists has taken on his job. Frank Hovenden of Comox Naturalists has replaced Elthea Dale as Secretary. The last regional meeting was in Nanaimo on the 6th March and the next will be on the 5th June.

Prior to the AGM at UBC in May there will be a Symposium regarding Marine Protected Areas of Canada's West Coast. You will find information about that and all events at the AGM in the B.C. Naturalist.

Comox Valley Naturalists are organizing an ALLCLUB outing to Paradise Valley on Sunday, 23rd May, if you are interested please contact Nancy Braithwaite in early May at 537-9335.

Dues Dilemma

For a while now the club has been running a deficit. It is not just that we have been giving great gobs of cash to help purchase various parcels of land on the island, which of course is a good thing. It is also because we don't actually take in quite enough each year to cover our expenditures. The Executive has talked for a couple of years about raising fees, but has so far decided against it. But at some point, we are going to have to bite the bullet. Part of our problem has been that we have to pay the FBCN, who carries our insurance, at the beginning of every year, but members don't always renew on time, so we often pay dues for someone who won't join, which of course is lost money. So your Executive has come up with a novel plan: move the dues date to the beginning of the activity year, which is of course the beginning of Sept. At the last Executive meeting, a motion was passed to make the fees due date Sept. 30th. Your Executive is asking you to deposit your fee in the Cobbler's box during Sept. We know that this will mean we will be getting a cash infusion early, but it will probably stave off the evil day when we finally have to raise dues.





Owen Benwell & George Hignell

IN THE LAST YEAR, members of the club have sometimes received a call from either Owen Benwell or George Hignell, the club's trails co-ordinators. "Are you free this Friday?" they ask. Well, you might well wonder what goes on on Fridays that has anything to do with the club. "We are fixing the trail up in Maxwell", comes the reply.

Owen and George have been doing sterling work monitoring and fixing the trails on our beautiful island. Once made, trails tend to deteriorate like anything else, and are in need of constant observation and care. To this end, George and Owen have found club members who are willing to be trail monitors. A person, or group of persons is assigned a trail to keep an eye on, and if there is work needing to be done, they contact the dynamic duo (that's George and Owen), and they organise a work party to fix whatever needs doing. These sorties often take place on Fridays. Last Friday it was thae Jack Fischer Trail, and the Friday before it was making steps on a particularly hazardous part of the Armand Way Trail on Maxwell. In the spring there was aa massive broom clearing effort on the Sir Echo entrance to Channel Ridge, and on Feb. 10th 32 club members spent hours pulling broom in Ruckle.

Apart from this these two energetic fellows spend several hours every week on their own doing something necessary on our trails, whether it is fixing the three log bridge in Maxwell, surveying trails in Channel Ridge or repairing the railings on Jack Foster.

As well, they take part in the many meetings that take place regarding Saltspring's Trails. PARC has a trail's committee, the Channel Ridge development has a trail's committee, B.C. Parks has the stewardship committee, and on all of these, George and Owen represent us and make sure that we have input.

So the next time you walk a trail, give a thought to the people who planned them, the people who built them, those who maintain them, and to George and Owen, who have become such a valuable part of our team. And when you get that call asking, "What are you doing next Friday", you now know it might well be Owen or George.

Simon Rook

Feedback wanted

As you all know, the AGM is normally held as a pot luck on the forth Thursday of January at 6 pm. However, you might have noticed that it is particularly dark in the evenings at that time of year, and that some of us are reluctant to tear ourselves away from our comfortable surroundings, even though the food is always of excellent quality, and we usually find a few ways in which to liven up the business part of the AGM.

Your Executive would like your feedback on moving the AGM to the lunch hour, although the format, namely pot luck followed by AGM, would remain the same. It was thought that more of us would be persuaded to attend if this were the case. So would you please tell your co-ordinators or other members of the Executive what you think.

2004 Executive

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HONORARY MEMBERS

| | |
|--------------|---------------|
| Bob Ball | Jean King |
| Loes Holland | Eleanor Lloyd |
| Jean Holmes | Joan Lott |
| Marc Holmes | Tony Pedersen |

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 their 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.

News

The Conservancy is organizing nature education tours for students on the recently acquired **Andreas Vogt Property**. They are looking for mature people with an interest in the outdoors and nature (that would seem to be us) who would be willing to assist in this project. Those willing to take part will take a short training session before actually taking students out. If anyone is interested, please call Jean Gelwicks at 537-4859.



Anne McKerricher, our secretary since Jan. 03, has resigned. If anyone would like to be part of a dynamic team, call Fred Powell at 537-4739. We generally meet about six times a year for about two hours each.



Joke of the month: Before you criticize someone you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way when you criticize them you are a mile away and you have their shoes.

Salt Spring Trail & Nature Club,
Box 203, Saltspring Island, B.C. V8K 2V9

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~~Paul & Diana Wray~~
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