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# THE THRUSH

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Nanaimo  
District  
Naturalists





JANU. Y 1975, meeting

Allen R. Hawryzki

On Friday evening, January 24th, the Nanaimo District Naturalists held their first indoor montaly meeting of 1975 in room 108C, Malaspina College. Attendance was excellent with the meeting room being totally filled by the membership in addition to others who had heard of our organization and expressed an interest in joining.

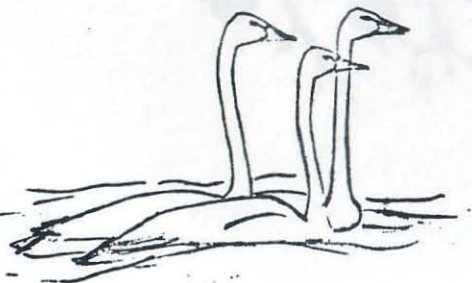
A short business meeting was first held with the prime concern being the problem of indiscriminate shooting on the Nanaimo River Estuary. It was decided that a joint brief with several other local environmentally involved organizations would be drawn up and presented to the Nanaimo City Council.

At approximately 8:30 pm the feature speaker of the evening, Mr. Ken Kennedy, formerly of the Marshall Farms National wildlife Sanctuary in Qualicum, presented an informative as well as most entertaining talk and slide show about various local and exotic birds of the world. As well as speaking about the well-known road-runner "beep beep" and the King and Humbolts penguins of the Antarctic and Galapagos Islands, he showed slides featuring various local species including the trumpeter and whistling swans, great blue heron, double crested cormorant, red tailed hawk, mallard, and tree swallow. In addition he supplied us with the "why" for many of their behavioral habits and structural adaptations to the environment.

The second half of his talk focussed upon a favourite bird of many naturalists; the owl. The various common species of our area were discussed in addition to a brief introduction to owl physiology. Finally, the highlight of the evening (next to Ken, of course), took place with Ken showing us his own pet great horned owl. After this, I think the owl stole the show!

Our thanks, Ken, for a most worthwhile evening.

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## A VISIT WITH DOUG AND MIDGE OFFERHAUS

Gwen and Angus Johnston

A former member of the club, Doug Offerhaus, has moved to Avola, which is 120 miles north of Kamloops on the North Thompson River, better known as the highway to Jasper. He and his wife have purchased a home on 22 acres about a mile off the highway. Doug and Midge are kept busy with their fair-sized garden and greenhouse and a few chickens. About five acres are cleared and the remainder is in its natural state. They enjoy nature walks through their own property.

We spent several days with Doug and his wife the latter part of September and enjoyed several drives to the various nearby towns: Clearwater, Blue River, and as far as Valemount, 30 miles north of Avola and nearing Jasper. On the route there were some lovely views of the North Thompson River and nearby mountains. The leaves were beginning to change colour--all of which added to the beauty of the countryside. We had a drive in Doug's camper truck along the rather rough, narrow river road and finally walked the last mile and climbed the hill as far as the C. N. tracks, which rewarded us with some beautiful vistas of the Thompson River and canyon.

A disastrous C. N. train wreck, in which two men were killed, when a southbound passenger train and a northbound freight collided head-on eight miles south of Avola, brought many local people, including ourselves to the scene the next morning. Grim, horrible tragedy! Cars were piled across the tracks in every direction, a terrible scene.

Doug and Midge tried snowsnoeing last winter and were interested in identifying various animal tracks. This winter they were planning on doing cross-country skiing. They are enjoying themselves immensely exploring the vast North Thompson country.

Doug wants to be remembered to all his friends of the Club.

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# 1974 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The annual bird count was held on December 23th, 1974. The weather was cool and ranged from 20°F. at inland spots in the early morning to 36° F. during the late afternoon along the coast.

Much of the freshwater had frozen during the night. This, of course, caused a displacement of waterfowl. Large numbers of freshwater ducks were found on the ocean. They had moved there during the night. Four members of the Duncan Club came to help us count--which is really appreciated. After a healthy day outdoors, everybody greatly enjoyed the get-together buffet dinner at the home of Marg and Dave Kerridge.

Following is the Day's bird count:-

Com. Loon, 29; Arctic Loon, 4; Red-necked Grebe, 17; Horned Grebe, 37; Eared Grebe, 1; W. Grebe, 377; Pied-billed Grebe, 2; Double-crested Cormorant, 123; Brandt's Cormorant, 29; Pelagic Cormorant, 62; Great Blue Heron 40, Whistling Swan, 4; Trumpeter Swan, 23; Canada Goose, 47; Mallard, 194; Green-winged Teal, 13; Am. Wigeon, 509; Wood Duck, 3; King-necked Duck, 33; Greater Scaup, 33; Lesser Scaup, 30; Com. Goldeneye, 73; Barrow's Goldeneye, 133; Bufflehead, 215; Oldsquaw, 6; Harlequin Duck, 43; White-winged Scoter, 82; Surf-Scoter, 283; Black Scoter, 134; Hooded Merganser, 10; Com. Merganser 39; Red-breasted Merganser, 21; Red-tailed Hawk, 5; Bald Eagle, 41 (15a, 111, 15u); Marsh Hawk, 1; Merlin, 3; Ruffed Grouse, 1; California Quail, 1; King-necked Pheasant, 4; Am. Coot, 155; Black Oystercatcher, 9; Killdeer, 34; Surf-bird, 130; Black Turnstone, 145; Com. Snipe, 11; Greater Yellowlegs, 2; Dunlin, 81; Glaucous-winged Gull, 3613; Herring Gull, 2; Mew Gull, 91; Com. Murre, 4; Pigeon Guillemot, 5; Marbled Murrelet, 27; Rhinoceros Auklet, 1; Rock Dove, 32; Anna's Hummingbird, 1; Belted Kingfisher, 21; Com. Flicker (red-sh.) 28; Pileated Woodpecker, 6; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 6; Gray Jay 1; Steller's Jay, 23; Com. Raven, 25; Northwestern Crow, 359; Chestnut-backed Chickadee, 145; Bushtit, 1; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 13; Brown Creeper, 7; House Wren, 3; Winter Wren 20; Bewick's Wren, 11; Am. Robin, 773, Varied Thrush, 62; Townsend's Solitaire, 1; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 163; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 4; Starling, 926; House Sparrow, 10; W. Meadowlark, 1; Red-winged Blackbird, 63; Evening Grosbeak, 36; Purple Finch, 100; House Finch, 13; Pine Siskin, 131; Am. Goldfinch, 7; Red Crossbill, 2; Rufous-sided Towhee, 67; Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco, 623; White-crowned Sparrow, 5, Golden-crowned Sparrow, 3; Fox Sparrow, 12;

Song Sparrow, 55; (Seen during week, but not on the day) Dipper; Northern Shrike.

Found during 1972 or 1973 count, but not this year:-

Red throated Loon; Ruddy Duck, Pintail; Goshawk; Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk; American Kestrel; Peregrine Falcon; Pigeon Guillemot; Band-tailed Pigeon; Short-eared Owl; Long-billed Marsh Wren; Northern Shrike; Brewer's Blackbird; Pine Grosbeak; King-billed Gull; Virginia Rail.

Found for the first time on our 3rd count in 1974:-

Whistling Swan; Old Squaw; California Quail; Surf Bird; Greater Yellowlegs; Rhinoceros Auklet; Anna's Hummingbird; Gray Jay; House Wren; Townsend's Solitaire; Western Meadowlark.





# NATURALIST & HUNTER CAN WORK TOGETHER

Peter van Kerkoerle

The shooting of a Trumpeter Swan on the Nanaimo river estuary prompted me to write a letter to the Free Press Editor on behalf of the Nanaimo District Naturalists.

Action came shortly after; when Mayor Frank Ney called a Council meeting and we got an invitation to attend. In preparation for this meeting the Fish and Wildlife branch, in close co-operation with the Rod and Gun Club, SPEC, and the Nanaimo District Naturalists, drew up a 4 point plan which we all felt would be a big improvement in protecting the estuary as a migrating bird habitat. The 4 points proposed to the City Council in regards to the estuary were:-

1. The hiring of a full-time enforcement officer during the 3 months duck hunting season.
2. Total closure of the area to all hunting for the remainder of the year. (Indians excepted)
3. Only shotguns allowed during season.
4. Erection of large signs on Maki road, River Road, and Duke point Road.

These 4 points were accepted by Council and it was hoped that a one-year trial period would show if things were improving.

It was felt by Dave Kerridge and me that by allowing hunting during the season we would gain more than by a total hunting ban.

We understand that the Local Rod and Gun Club is a club with over 450 members. This group of people has been working on many worthwhile projects which benefit not only the hunted species, but also many other birds and mammals. Just think about the cleaning of the Millstream River, or the colony of Vancouver Island marmots which was saved by the mutual efforts of the Rod and Gun Club and our own club. At present they are working to save the Dkes property. This is a beautiful 40 acres duck nesting area within the Vancouver city limits. This is a project which should have our full co-operation.

The old stand of many naturalists clubs to ban all hunting has brought a lot of distrust and useless fighting. On the Nanaimo river flats we have made a joint effort to stop the indiscriminate slaughter of wildlife by a number of slobbs which did a lot of damage to the good hunters' image. If it works it will be to the benefit of the legal hunter, but also very much to the benefit of the naturalists.

# HECATE STRAIT

Ken Campbell

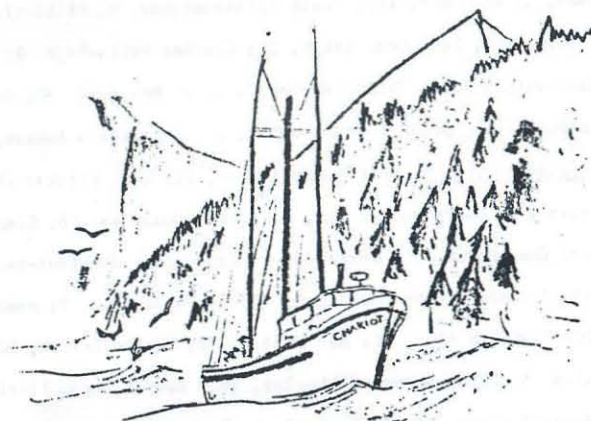
Hecate Strait is between the northern B. C. Mainland and the Queen Charlotte Islands. To a casual observer it is a big empty expanse of water. To a commercial fisherman, interested in the sea and bird life of the area, it is teeming with life.

The sea bottom consists mainly of a shallow shelf extending over half way to the mainland, then dropping into deep water for the rest of the way. (100 feet dropping to 300 to 700 feet). It is along this drop-off, or "edge" that most of the sea life I see exists. The up-welling of the sea, caused by the ebb and flow of the tide over this edge provides a feeding ground for many species.

On the bottom are Dungeness crab, halibut, and sole. Then grey cod and several varieties of "feed". These are needlefish, sand lance, herring, and occasionally great schools of small shrimp at the surface which make the water appear in pink ribbons. In some areas the dogfish is abundant and are very troublesome to fishermen. Also, fortunately, coho and spring salmon abound at certain times of the year on their migration from the open ocean to the streams where they will spawn. They linger and feed on the varieties mentioned above.

Especially the coho feed voraciously and gain weight quickly at this feeding time on the fishing spots.

These have been named by the fishermen "the Horseshoe", "the Spot", "Brandy Spot", "Shell Ground", "Venus Ground", "the Decks", and many more. None of which you will find named on a chart of the area.





occasionally a minke whale cruises past, a big, gentle mammal of 35 feet or so in length. They can come up very close to the boat without touching the trolling lines.

There are several varieties of jellyfish from small, clear ones,  $\frac{3}{8}$ " in diameter to large, red ones, 13" in diameter with stinging strings 10 feet long. Also, sometimes, small Portugese Man-of-War jellyfish about  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter with a sort of arid membrane on top, drift in with a stray area of the Japanese current.

There are great numbers of diving birds that are after the "feed". Mainly Murrelets, called "coho ducks". Shearwaters, called "whale birds", or "halibut birds", as they are crazy about halibut liver. They will fight over the livers like they are harring when fishermen are cleaning halibut.

And when anchored at night, they will come within a foot of the boat looking for handouts of fishguts, talking and clucking like a flock of chickens. They are very friendly and often seem to stay by the boat all night while I am anchored.

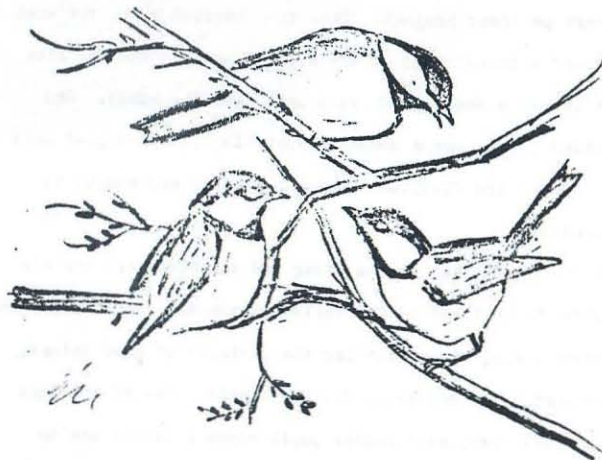
Flocks of Phalaropes wheel and dart to and fro, sometimes flitting just above the water or perching on a floating length of bull kelp. At different angles a flying flock seems to appear and disappear as their dark backs blend with the sea, or the light breasts suddenly appear as the flock turns.

There are about 3 varieties of gulls and occasionally an albatross is gliding close to the sea with scarcely a flap of its long wings. The gulls are very graceful in stormy weather--seem to lift effortlessly from the water as a breaker comes, then settle on the sea again, always facing the wind. The coho ducks carry a "spare fish" in their mouths and even when disturbed never seem to drop it. I always wonder if they are too full to eat the last needlefish as they have trouble getting airborne.. They can only get airborne up wind when it is blowing, and bounce off the wave tops with wings beating furiously, still carrying their "lunch".

I see no eagles far off shore, but close to shore they will be wheeling and diving over a school of "feed" that fish and diving birds are feeding on from below and gulls above. Also, they will pick up small cod that bloat while being hauled up on the fishing gear, which as they have no saleable value are thrown overboard.

The land on both shores is thinly populated with sometimes an uninhabited harbour having 30 fishboats in at one night and none for the next 3 days if the weather is good and the trollers are anchoring out on the grounds. In the Queen Charlottes most of the people live near Queen Charlotte City and Sandspit with smaller towns to the north at Port Clements and Massett. They were once well populated with Indian tribes. Almost anywhere you land there will be signs of a village. If it is a good spot to land it seems to have been a village at one time. The only place that I have seen totems from the boat is at Skedens, about 70 miles south of Sandspit Airport. Other places have revealed traces of old house totems and buried totems when you look around for them. The Queen Charlottes are a fascinating area and I haven't seen it all by a long way. There will always be more discoveries.

#### THE CHICKADEE



Piped a tiny voice  
hard by,  
Gay and polite, a  
cheerful cry:  
"Chic-chicadee-dee!"  
Saucy note  
Out of a sound heart  
And a merry throat,  
As if it said,  
"Good day, good sir.  
Fine afternoon,  
Old passenger!  
Happy to meet you  
in these places  
When January brings  
new faces!"

Ralph Waldo Emerson.



## A WINTER PICNIC

Mrs. G. W. Tribe, Victoria

The sight of snow falling on Vancouver Island has reminded me of a pleasant experience far away and long ago.

It was mid-February in the Highlands of Haliburton in Ontario and snow was no novelty there. That winter it lay more than three feet deep on the level and the ploughs had piled it head-high along the highways. The twenty-odd children in the one-room school had been playing snow games for long enough to have lost interest in them and it seemed imperative to have something new for Valentine Day.

So we planned a winter picnic. We had had picnics during all of the other three seasons, but this suggestion was at first greeted with some skepticism. How could we reach a picnic place in all this snow? Directly in front of the school, and across the highway, stood a spruce forest under whose great trees were shaded aisles and open spots known to all the children in summer but now thought to be inaccessible. However, the "big boys" suggested that they could penetrate those two walls of snow, make a path, and, once into the forest, build a fireplace where we could have a werner roast.

For the next two days those boys bolted their lunch and used every remaining moment to work on their project. Then they invited me to see what they had done. There was a tunnel through the wall of snow on the far side of the highway. From it led a deep trench as a path into the woods. And there, in a spruce-shaded glade, was a campfire ready laid, with a good pile of wood to one side. Around the fireplace were ranged logs and boughs to make seats for the picnickers.

The morning of the fourteenth dawned clear and sparkling and the air of anticipation was akin to that before the Christmas concert. At noon, in a bustle of donning winter wraps, and assembling the packages of good things, the girls had been preparing, we got ready for the picnic. Two of the boys had gone ahead to light the fire; each senior pupil chose a little one to "keep an eye on" and off we went, through the tunnel and the trench to the fireplace where wood smoke was rising to the blue above. After tramping around the open area to admire the arrangements, all found seats. One boy had used his "Christmas knife" to prepare a peeled wand for each picnicker. Soon each wand bore a sausage and the glowing fire was ringed with eager young cooks.



R.W.T.



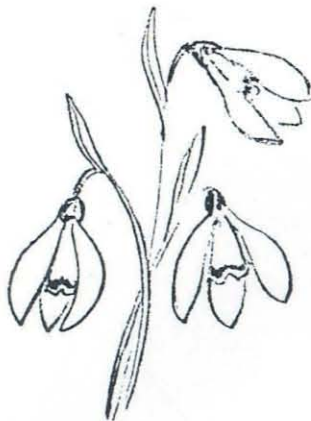
Of course, the blue jays, whiskey jacks and red polls appeared almost at once and had to be fed before we sat down to our lunch. There was talk and laughter. Then someone started a story which took many a surprising turn as the instalments unfolded. After the second round of hot dogs, we all felt like singing and song after song rang out under the quiet, snow-laden trees. Then there was the fun of making cocoa in a tin pail on the glowing embers.

Just as the picnic drew to a close, snowflakes began to flutter down. Quickly, the litter was burned, little ones took the hands of their older friends and we started back to the school, leaving two older boys to douse the fire with shovelfuls of snow. It was voted a successful picnic and certainly it became a pleasant memory.

## COOKING CORNER

Do not covet for the mouth and belly, and so slay  
beasts and birds without restraint.

勿貪口腹而恣殺牲畜  
Wu 'an Kou fu erh tzu sha sheng ch'iu.



## NANAIMO DISTRICT NATURALISTS EXECUTIVE OFFICERS 1975

Chairperson	David Kerriage	758-9727
Co-Chairperson	Mollie Byrne	758-9773
Plant Director	Jean Williams	754-6578
Rock Director	Ena Young	754-6933
Bird Director	Peter van Kerkoerle	245-2530
Youth Director	Kathy Soames	753-1470
Editors	Anneke & Peter van Kerkoerle	245-2530

*Secretary/Treasurer*

*Marg Kerridge*

### MEMBERSHIPS

There are three types of memberships available in the Nanaimo District Naturalists:

- \$5.00/year - Family
- 4.00/year - Single
- 2.00/year - Students & Old Age Pensioners

All new memberships and renewals are payable to the Secretary/Treasurer: Marg Kerridge, 3397 Stephenson Pt. Rd., Nanaimo, B.C. V9T 1K2

The following is a complete list of this years paid up membership:

Ed & Mary Barraclough	753-3577	Mrs. Ethel Layer	758-7160
Pat Boulding	754-5819	Mr. & Mrs. J. Morrison	
Dr. & Mrs. N. Bourne	758-5156	Mrs. J. Murdoch	
Ken Campbell		Phil Heaves	758-2856
Mr. D. Denis	245-3064	Joyce & Joe Ovenden	245-3677
Mrs. Elaine Doskotch	245-3289	Mr. J. Petershofer	245-2683
Mr. & Mrs. A. Flett	390-4331	Mr. & Mrs. L. Richards	753-0395
Mrs. D. Gailus	758-6847	Anna Samson	754-6873
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Mrs. Irma Grew		Lorothy & Fred Scofield	245-2798
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Mary & Ernie Jerome	758-9268	Jean & Sid Vivian	254-2856
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Dawn Ketcham	758-1010	Miss Elaine Macquell	758-7485
Mr. & Mrs. I.T.C. Larnder	754-2520	Mrs. Jean Williams	754-6578
		Miss Ena Young	754-6933