

NANAIMO DISTRICT NATURALISTS

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Peter & Anneke van Kerkoerle

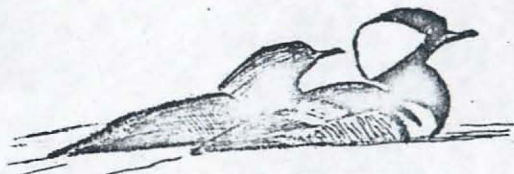
This winter was quite successful as far as our Club is concerned. There were more outings and some saw quite a few people taking part. This is undoubtedly due to the great efforts of Ken Knowles and Brian Wilkes, who spend so much time advertising our Club. Friday's Free Press contains our column "Tune into Nature." It is written by Ken Knowles and is avidly read by many nature-minded people and others, which we hope may become so.

January 18th saw a group of seventeen naturalists head for Newcastle Island in four canoes.

Lunch was consumed on the shore of Mallard Lake. The Lake was alive with ducks, Hooded Mergansers the most numerous species. Five otters gave a good show of themselves. Around mid-January an adult peregrine falcon was found, which had been shot on two different occasions. One fresh bullet hole through the wing. Another old bullet wound in the chest was festering and probably a week older. The bird died within two days.

On January 23rd Dr. Michael Bigg gave an interesting talk about killer whales and showed a movie of these beautiful creatures.

A walk around Buttertub Marsh was made on Sunday, the 25th. It was still winter, but the first red wing blackbirds were in the marsh. It was noted that many senior citizens from nearby homes take great interest in feeding the ducks and coots of the marsh.

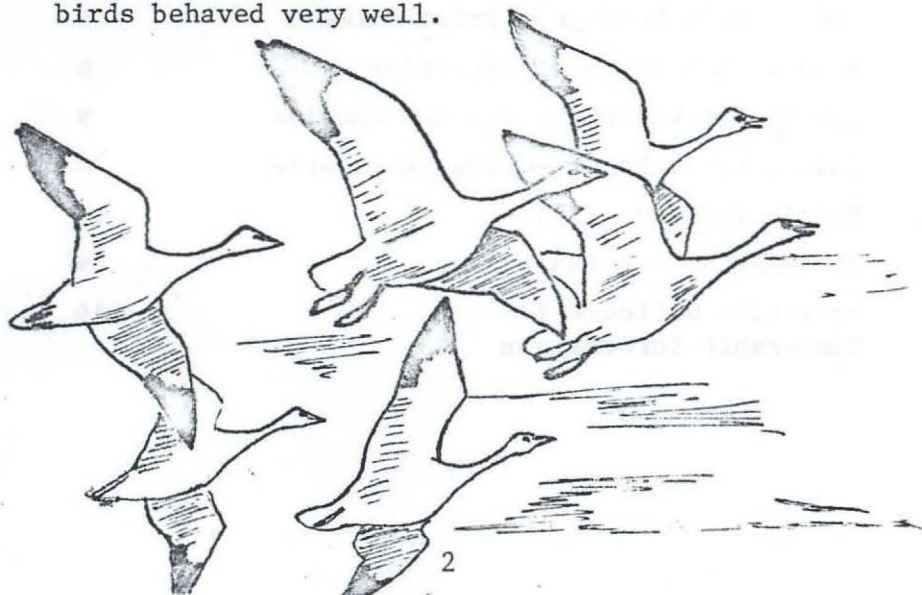


A count of the local flocks of trumpeter swans on February 15th netted 41 swans. Our February Club Meeting was cancelled due to snow. Our Club Meetings are always on the fourth Friday of the month.

Our Executive Meetings, which could be attended by interested club members, after giving notice to the Executives, are held on the first Monday evening of the month. On March 6th our Club was hosting the Annual Open Meeting of the Federation of B.C. Naturalists. It was held in the Nanaimo Library Building. Thirty-seven people attended, most from the different clubs on Vancouver Island. Neil Dawe of the Qualicum Bird Sanctuary was presiding.

March 7th - part of this day was spent by some members of our Club spelunking. Spectacular scenery, beautiful mosses, deep crevices.

March 26 - a beautiful slide show with excellent commentator was given by Neil Dawe, former Manager of the Reifel Bird Sanctuary. It made many anxious to see the refuge first hand. Our chance came on April 10th when Ed Barraclough, President of the Kla-How-Ya Travel Club invited our club members to join members of his club in a bus trip to the Reifel Bird Sanctuary. Eighteen members of our Club went and it was enjoyed by all as weather and birds behaved very well.



March 28th - walk to Mayo Point. A beautiful area, but badly spoiled by great amounts of bottles and broken glass and other garbage.

Spring has finally arrived ! The rocks are covered with the beautiful spring flowers. We hope everyone will be out to enjoy them.

During the early Spring Mollie Byrne gave up the job of our President. Mollie took over from Dave Kerridge when he went to Texas. Her intention was to help out only until a new President could be found.

We were fortunate to have a young man, like Brian Wilkes, step forward to offer his services to the Club. Brian is 26 years old, married to a lovely girl named Mary Anne. He is also a very dedicated conservationist with our aims at heart. We welcome him as our new President and we must extend our sincere appreciation and thanks to 'Mollie' for a job well done !

Your Editors



YELLOW WOOD VIOLET
VIOLA GLABELLA.

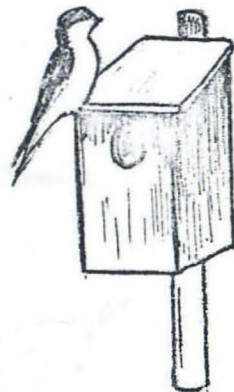
A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Brian Wilkes

The March 1976 Newsletter of the Federation of B.C. Naturalists carried an article on the B.C. Nest Records Scheme. It's important at the onset of spring to relate to our membership that the nest records scheme provides crucial information on bird biology and distribution.

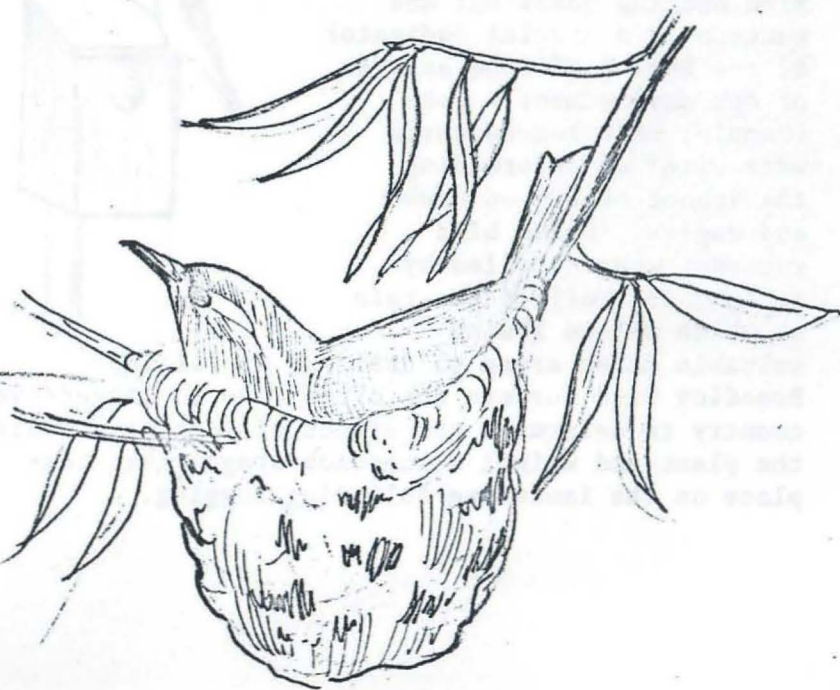
According to the article, the nest record cards on file at the Provincial Museum were used last year by undergraduate and graduate students, biologists from the Federal and Provincial Governments, and consultants doing environmental impact research. Here is an example of paperwork not becoming lost in the bureaucracy.

Bird nesting behaviour and success is a crucial indicator of the health of some aspects of our environment. For example, nest record cards were vital in determining the impact of DDT on hawks and eagles. Marsh bird records, when compiled by region, can reflect the rate at which we are losing valuable marsh areas to draining or filling. Breeding bird surveys are often done in logged-over country to determine the effect of logging and also the plant and animal succession stages that take place on the landscape following logging.



There are many more examples of the usefulness of these nest records. It's also refreshing to learn that the nest record cards are being used. Therefore I want to encourage their use by our membership. Even if you only find one nest of a very common species, your card will be a valuable addition to our knowledge of British Columbia's biology. In this respect, the small investment of time you put into it results in a large return in personal satisfaction. Cards are available from Brian Wilkes, Ken Knowles or Peter van Kerkoerle. Please obtain a small supply and submit what you can.

Brian Wilkes



NEWS FROM TEXAS

Dave & Marg Kerridge

Hi ! Y'all from Texas. Here it is spring on the high plains of Texas and we are rapidly coming to the end of our Texas sojourn. We find ourselves thinking of home and our friends in the Nanaimo District Naturalists more and more frequently as the time for our departure grows nearer. We have gained much and had many exciting experiences while here, but there is still no place like home - especially if it is like Vancouver Island.

We are living in the city of Lubbock which is located in the center of a high plateau (3400 foot elevation). The land is given over extensively to agriculture leaving very little wild land, if any. The important crops in the area are cotton, sorghum, sunflowers, and of course, cattle. What a magnificent sight it is to see acres and acres of sunflowers all facing east. It is extremely flat and dry and with a lack of natural vegetation due to farming, it leaves the countryside very bland. In most places the winter brings the rains but on the high plains, the winter is the dry part of the year. Since September of last fall we have had exactly one brief rainfall. Yet, during the summer months there are frequent thunder showers that bring forth torrential downpours that regularly cause flooding as there are no drains. We can now appreciate the full meaning of desert flash-flood. Mind you, the summer rains bring forth much greenery and after a long, dry, burned up and dusty winter and spring it is a great relief. The spring is made particularly unpleasant due to the usually high winds (25-30 mph) which make the most delightful dust storms imaginable. We would take rain or snow storms over dust storms any day.

If one really wants to appreciate Texas as it should be, you must go down off the high plains, or caprock as it is called, to the lower plains of Texas. This caprock or plateau is approximately 600 miles in diameter but Lubbock is situated about 35 miles from the edge of it. We have taken a few trips down off the caprock to enjoy the rolling countryside which abounds in Junipers, Cholla Cactus, Prickly-pear Cactus, Mesquite and many other desert-type plants. We have enjoyed collecting the fruit from prickly-pear cacti and making a very nice jelly out of them which we hope to bring home and share with some of you - if we can keep from eating it all ourselves. We also have a number of slides of the area as well as slides from several field trips taken by David which we also hope to share with you.

We have got to know the area quite well as we have been active in making insect collections for some of David's classes as well as collections of other animals. Our personal pride and joy has been our cactus collection. Cacti are fairly abundant in the area and David has made a couple of trips to the Sonoran Desert in Arizona at which time he was able to add to our collection. We are looking forward to the next couple of months as the cacti are about to come into bloom and we hope to get some good pictures of the desert in bloom. We are intending to bring our cacti home with us.

David is being kept busy at Texas Tech University and The Museum which is part of the complex. Texas Tech is a large university having approximately 23,000 students - so just slightly smaller than U.B.C. On the other hand, the city of Lubbock is about the same size as Victoria, so you can see that it is university oriented. As David's studies are mainly about biology and the operation of museums, he is hoping to bring home some good ideas for the development of a small natural history museum on the new campus at Malaspina College.

The time is dragging a little more for Marg, particularly during the winter months as the kids are both at school and there has not been a great deal to keep her occupied during the day. During the summer and early fall, the swimming pool in our apartment complex was put to good use and both boys can now swim. We are looking forward to its opening again in early May, after the dust has settled. In the meantime, we are not letting Marge become too lazy as we are keeping her busy typing reports, writing letters as well as keeping up on her sewing, knitting and other household activities.

As you can see by our earlier delightful description of the general surroundings, we are definately homesick for mountains, trees and water, especially trees as they are so few and far between here. But we must not leave you with the feeling that we have not enjoyed our stay in Texas. We will all be coming home with good drawls, especially the two boys. As previously mentioned, we hope to be able to share many of our experiences with you during the next fall and spring meetings.

See y'all soon and y'all have a nass day !

Dave & Marg Kerridge

HOW PEOPLE VALUE BIRDS

Ken Knowles

A recent study in Saskatchewan shows that migratory birds provide residents of that Province with \$222 million dollars worth of recreational benefits annually.

Obtained from a survey of rural and urban adults, conducted by the Fish and Wildlife Service, the participants were asked to translate into monetary terms the benefits they felt they received over and above expenses, from observing, studying and hunting birds.

Hunting accounted for only 7 million or just over 3% of the estimated benefits.

The information was obtained from the mailings of 12,000 specially designed questionnaires sent to people 18 years of age and older.

The researchers feel that because of the monetary benefits, policy makers, and resource managers should seriously consider the needs of birds and their habitats.

The conclusion of the survey was that birds are an important part in the outdoor recreation of 59 % of rural and 53 % of urban adults in Saskatchewan. In the 240 page study it was noted that a relatively small percentage hunted game birds, whereas the majority observe or study birds. In view of this, bird management program should be revised.

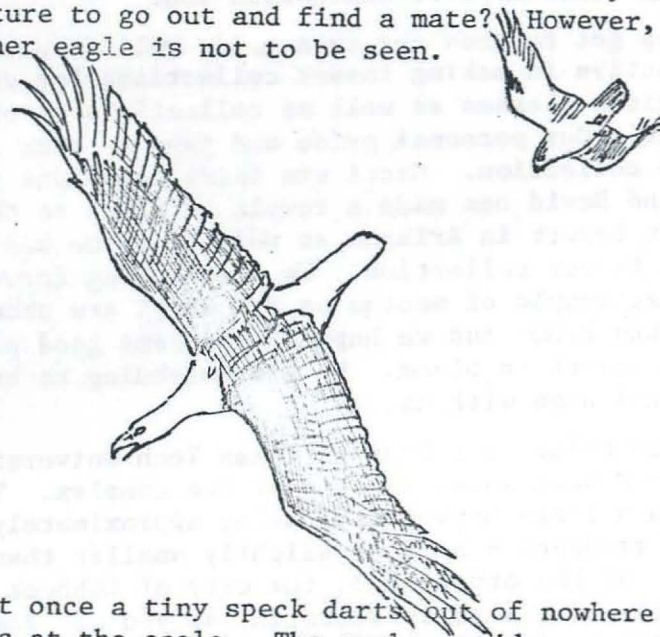
My conclusion I wonder why all the laws concerning waterfowl are in favour of the hunters, who represent only 3% of the people concerned.

Ken Knowles

JUST A LUNCH BREAK

Peter van Kerkoerle

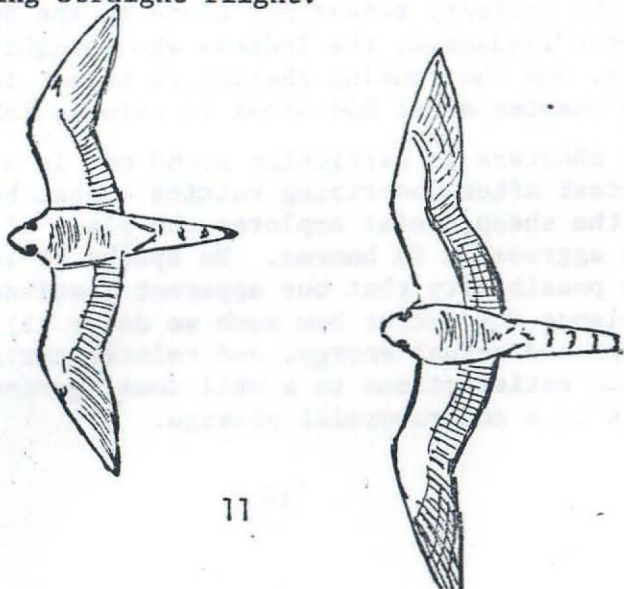
It is twelve o'clock and time to have a bite to eat. Outside the sun is shining so I decide to have my lunch on the back steps of the Harmac Laboratory. In the sun and out of the wind it feels a bit like spring. In the sky, great billowing clouds rise all around, but the sun is brilliant and blinding. High up towards the clouds an eagle soars on straight-held wings. Higher and higher he rises in steady upward circling flight. He is the true master of the sky. My eyes follow him. Is he out to survey his domain or has the early spring sun awakened in him that urge inherent in every living creature to go out and find a mate? However, another eagle is not to be seen.



All at once a tiny speck darts out of nowhere and sweeps at the eagle. The eagle avoids connection with a neat side twist. Several more attacks follow, but always the eagle is able to avoid being hit by that little dare-devil.

The red-tailed hawk, likely a male, is obviously trying to chase the giant intruder out of his nesting territory. Then the eagle heads North and the red-tail closes its wings and drops with an tremendous nearly vertical glide from the sky. This is always a most fascinating sight. Nearly always a long drop glide is broken by several fast up-turns, but this time the glide only stops just over the tree tops, where the hawk spreads its wings and starts circling. My eyes are still glued to the bird, so far away. I am lucky today, as within seconds the red tail is in turn buffeted by a pair of birds, which is far its superior in speed and strength. While one of the pair is in a dazzling dive towards the red tail, its partner rises upwards with strong wing beats to 100 or more feet above to get enough speed for its attack on the red tail. It is interesting to see these two birds work together in real team spirit to clobber our friendly red tail. But it is all fun and sports for the birds and connection seems to be always avoided. The red tail twists and turns zig-zags and flips but there is no way he can get away from these pirates of the sky than to dive between the tree crowns.

The two peregrines come now flying towards me in a long soaring straight flight.



Their wings are slender and pointed, more made for speed than soaring; but they do alright as I can see no wing beat for over a mile.

A few hundred feet above me they start circling. The male rises with a few strong wing beats above the female and comes down in a powerful dive which takes it a good fifty feet below its partner. The legs are stretched out at the bottom of the drop and with a smooth upward turn the two are back on the same level. This is possible the baltz flight of the peregrines and it may indicate that here they are within their nesting territory.

It is never tiring to watch the play of hawks. It is one of the most fascinating things of the spring.

I am still following their acrobatics when their flight takes them behind the buildings.

I finish my lunch. It is time to go back to work.

Peter van Kerkoerle

POETIC TRILOGY

???

Why You Seldom See A Sora

The Sora knows a way to die
That's neither cold nor harsh.

She bubbles out her last sweet breath
And sinks into the marsh.

Identification

See the Red Headed Girl by the Wild Black Cherry?
Would you say her arms are downy or hairy.

Glimpse

You hear an orange buzz
Go by as you're journeying?
Suspect a Warbler -
Perhaps Blackburnian.



SHOOTING STAR.
DODECATHEON
HENDERSONII.

BOOK REVIEW

Brian Wilkes

"Mountain Sheep and Man in the Northern Wilds"
by Valerius Geist. Cornell U. Press. 1975
\$10.00

Valerius Geist, a Professor at the University of Calgary, has written an engaging and important book. It is an easy descriptive narrative of the work he did on mountain sheep in the Spatzisi Plateau area of British Columbia and in Banff. The book contains two important elements. The first is a lay treatment of the fascinating behaviour and biology of Stone's Sheep. The second element takes this knowledge and extrapolates to the human condition, producing a refreshing and convincing argument on the evolution of human society from the "beginning" to the present.

There can be no doubt about Dr. Geist's authority in writing on mountain sheep. He has worked with the animals since 1961 and used his research as the basis of his doctoral dissertation of U.B.C. He describes the trials and tribulations of trying to study the sheep, and details the very individual personalities of his subjects. We also get an eloquent description of the terrain, the loneliness of the solitary researcher alone on the Spatzisi winter landscape, the Indians who thought he was nuts, and the amusing characters he met in the region. The chapter about Old Skook is unforgettable.

Two chapters in particular stand out in a human context after describing rutting combat behaviour of the sheep, Geist explores the place of violence and aggression in humans. He speaks at length about the possibility that our apparent fascination with violence (no matter how much we decry it) may be misplaced sexual energy, and relates certain basic human satisfactions to a well done aggressive act. This is a controversial passage.

He then goes further to describe human evolution in a periglacial climate, proposing that the human capacity for language and social organization stems from the necessity of hunting together in post ice age landscapes. This is carried further into a unique discussion of male-female roles and the nuclear family. Finally he explores how we have managed to become "anti-nature" in our behaviour. This is all very tantalizing for the armchair misanthropist, and clearly should not be missed by anyone with a keen interest in either sheep or human nature.

This book is a profoundly good read, and is highly recommended.

Brian Wilkes



NANAIMO DISTRICT NATURALISTS

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|----------------|---------------------------------|----------|
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| Treasurer | Ivor Larnder | 754-2520 |
| Editors | Peter & Anneke van Kerkoerle | 245-2530 |

MEMBERSHIPS

- \$5.00 per year - Family
- \$4.00 per year - Single
- \$3.00 per year - Pensioner's
Family
- \$2.00 per year - Students & Old
Age Pensioners.

All new memberships and renewals are payable to the Treasurer:

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V9R 5K3

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Notes



WHITE FAWN LILY.

ERYTHRONIUM OREGONUM.