

Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2005



Present were: Jerry Azevedo, Cheryl Bastedo, Pam Frier, Mike Hoebel, Libby McClelland, Pearl Roberts.

Most of us had already gathered around the table when a stranger poked her head into the room and sang, in a clear lilting soprano:

*What group is this, who dares to meet,
in a room reserved for singing,
Tis fine for now, but we'll be back at two,
with hopes you folks will be ex-it-ing.*

And then she was gone. The room went deadly quiet as the Naturalists exchanged nervous glances. Under pressure of the two o'clock deadline, the Naturalists got straight to business...

1. "Species of the Month" project: Clearly shaken by the visitor, Pam too easily bowed to pressure to write the February article. She refused to commit to a subject, though we all knew from long experience that it would have something to do with sex. In her defense, if she needs any, let's all admit it: What else is nature but sex and death, and if you had to write about it, which would you choose.
2. "Galiano's Natural Areas Brochure" project: Eighteen months after Mike brought in that first crude mock-up and thirteen months after Jerry pocketed the grant money for producing a brochure "in the spring", Pearl reported that the newest version of the brochure has been transferred to a CD, as if that represented progress. What's next, a version we can view on our PlayStation 2? Regardless, Pearl seemed chipper about the whole thing, considering she now had the monkey on her back, and she promised – well, let's not go so far as to say 'promised' – that she would run the brochure through its pre-press paces at her office and get back to the group before the next meeting. There was some question about the color 'green', since no one had ever liked the current green and the one we did like has disappeared somewhere. Mike said he'd look for it. And then someone asked about Matthews Point. The turtle of parks acquisition by the CRD has somehow overtaken the rabbit of our brochure committee, and we find that our spiffy map is out of date, even at this 'pre-press' stage. And what about the Heritage Forest. There was a murmur in the room about going back to the drawing board, about needing another ten to fourteen months to finish the brochure, by which time there might be yet more parkland. The ghost of Mauritz Cornelis Escher peeked in the room. We quickly moved on to another subject.
[Note: After the meeting, Jerry confirmed that we would have word on the transfer of the third Matthews Point property by March, well in time for our spring release of the brochure. A revised map will need to be dropped into the project then. Also, a poll of other Naturalists produced general agreement that the Heritage Forest qualified as a "public natural area" and merited inclusion with other orange-outlined areas on the map.]
3. Bird stuff: Mike was bouncing in his seat, something to do with the Christmas Bird Count, which we all thought had been old news for three meetings now. The story that had Mike so excited was that he'd negotiated with Dick Canning (reportedly famous among birders but hardly known in the suburbs of Delta) for Galiano to be included as an "official" site in the 106th

Audubon Christmas Bird Count. The room erupted in cheers, and glasses of sparkling cider had been poured before Mike added sheepishly, "But there's a catch. Two catches, actually." The now-subdued crowd listened. "We've got to take part of Salt Spring, too." It seems that the Audubon group can only draw their maps with circles, specifically circles with a radius of 15 miles, and though Mike and Dick worked through the night, using a pie dish to represent the count area, they couldn't avoid including the north part of Salt Spring. If they'd actually made a pie, any kind would do, though at this time of year pumpkin would be traditional, they might have eaten a couple of slices and been inspired to develop a more suitable count area. But that didn't happen. I suppose we should be happy. And the second catch? "Five bucks a person to register." Really, this was too much. First Salt Spring, and now five bucks a person, not including the layabouts, those – ew! – feeder watchers. Then someone mentioned the Christmas season, Santa Claus, and the Parks and Rec Commission. Surely they would fund another Naturalist project, since we'd spent their last grant so well. Mike agreed to write the proposal. Jerry agree to put the money into his account.

In other bird news, Pearl reported that she saw a hermit thrush. Not to be outdone, Pam reported that she saw two swans. Jerry said he saw a robin.

4. A new Naturalists' project: Now that we are an official Audubon bird count circle, paying dearly for the privilege, Mike hinted it might be time for the island to have an official bird checklist, one of those little fold-out cards that obsessive birders carry instead of cookies in their day pack. Everyone liked the idea, though there was minority support for the cookies. After all, the Natural Areas brochure will be finished soon, and we'll need another project for the next several years. Perhaps the Parks and Rec Commission will front the money before they get suspicious.
5. Next meeting time and place: MONDAY, January 16th at 1 PM, Activity Center.

From outside the window, we heard a dozen voices in four-part harmony:

*Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat,
A choral group is on its way, the Naturalists must scat.*

Bolting for the door, we left a scattering of overturned chairs and turkey feathers.

Corrections and comments to:

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