Oct 2026
ISSUE 378

BURKE MOUNTAIN NATURALISTS

Promoting Nature Awareness in Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody and beyond

Grabenhorst Garden in Pitt Meadows

by Victoria Otton

Grabenhorst Garden is a new public garden in our area. For several decades, it was the private garden of Pitt Meadows resident, Rose Grabenhorst, who transformed the five acre site into a botanical showplace of exotic and native trees, ornamental gardens, and (especially) rhododendron plants. Rose Grabenhorst had a special interest in hybridizing rhododendrons and some of her hybrids are among the 700 rhododendrons in the garden today.

After Rose's death in 2020, the City of Pitt Meadows acquired her garden and created a new park named after Rose. Her garden was opened to the public in 2025.

In early September, I joined a tree tour at Grabenhorst Garden with members of Nature Vancouver. The tour was led by the author of tree books and blogs, Nina Shoroplova. Nina's focus was less on how to identify individual tree species and more on how to look closely at a tree's fundamental traits (shape, bark, branch structure, leaves, seed) to classify the tree at the genus-level. What makes an oak an Oak, for example. We examined several oak trees in the garden, but we couldn't find the specimen of BC's only native oak, the Garry Oak.



Two Giant Sequoia trees at the park entrance. Photo: V. Otton

Our tour began at the garden's main entrance, near two large Giant Sequoias. A small memorial stone to Rose is tucked under one of them. "Garden as though you will live forever" is inscribed on the stone. As you follow the meandering paths through the garden, you see evidence that this is something Rose truly believed in. Why else plant Sequoias or an entire grove of Bald Cypress that you will not witness maturing?



A portion of the Bald Cypress grove. Photo: V. Otton

"Grabenhorst Garden in Pitt Meadows" continues on the next page…

Upcoming BMN Club Meetings

BMN October Meeting (In person):
'The Oregon Forestsnail'
presented by Cassandra Harper

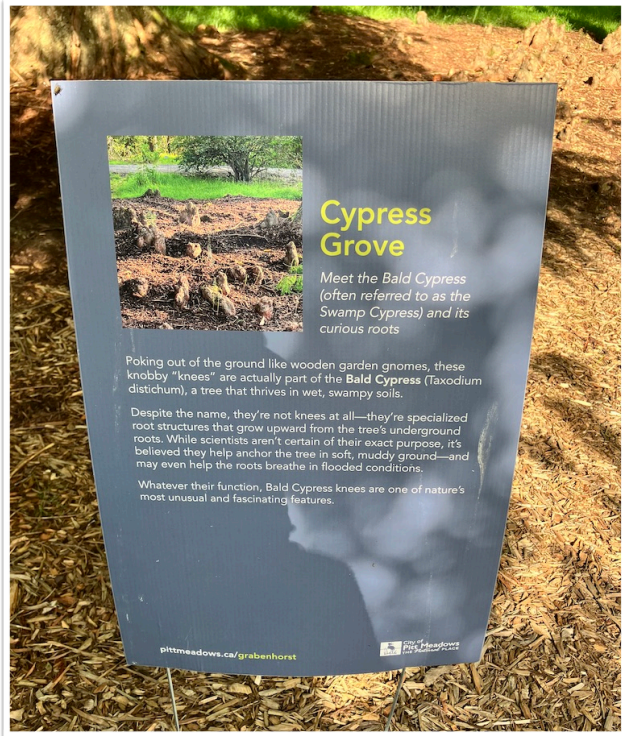
Tues Oct 13, 7:30pm – 9:00pm
At Como Lake United Church

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BMN November Meeting (in person):
Speaker TBA

Tues Nov 10, 7:30pm – 9:00pm
At Como Lake United Church

See Announcements for detail information



Sign. Photo: V. Otton

You'll find Grabenhorst Garden at 13895 Harris Rd, about 5 properties north of the gate to the Pitt Meadows Golf Club. Open 9am to dusk every day except Tuesday through Thursday. Admission is free.

Read Nina Shoroplova's blog post of the tour here. https://naturevancouver.ca/grabenhorst-garden-pitt-meadows/



A riot of floral colour. Photo: V.Otton

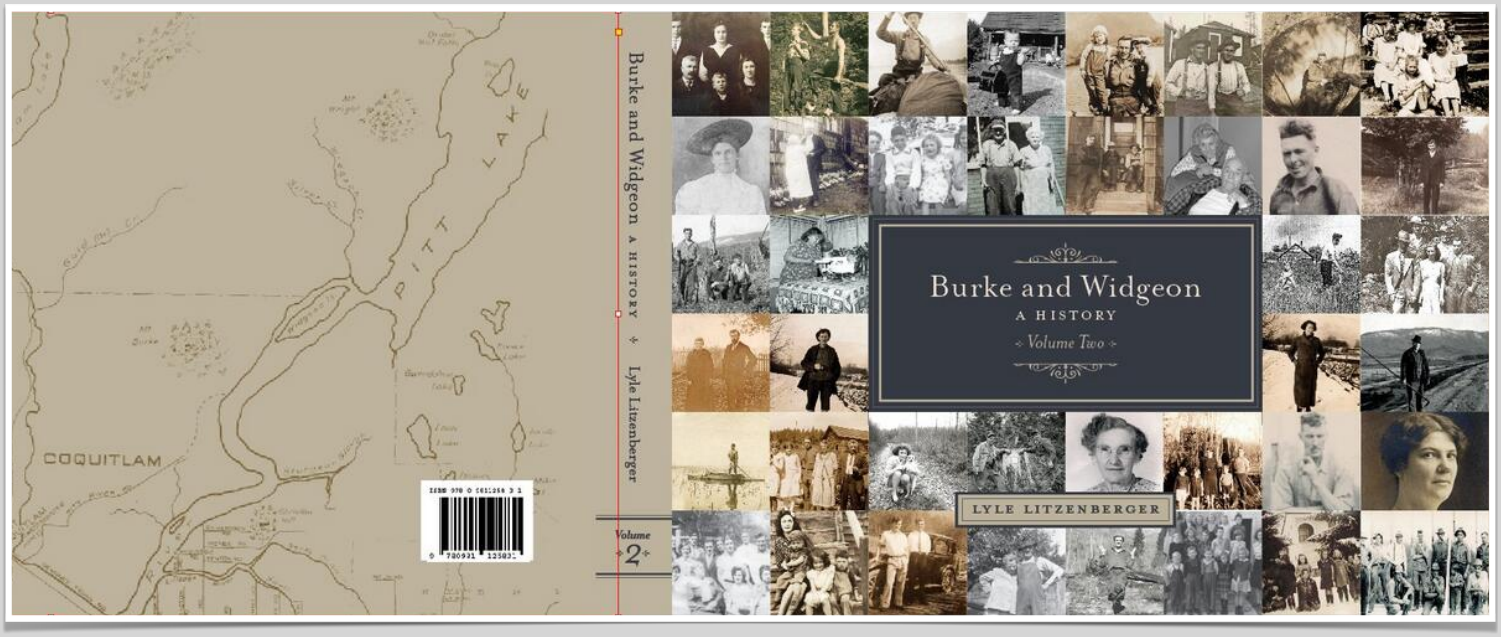
Volume 2 of "Burke and Widgeon - A History" is to Appear Soon

When Lyle Litzenberger was writing his popular "Burke and Widgeon – A Hiker's Guide" (2013), he considered including a chapter on the area's rich human history. However, initial library research and interviews with old-time residents of northeast Coquitlam soon convinced him that a full history of the area would require a whole book, much more than a single chapter in the hiking guide.

He started work on such a volume but found he had more material than would fit in a single book. Part One of his study appeared in 2019, "Burke and Widgeon - A History". This book covered the early settlement years, from the 1870s to the 1920s. It contains many stories and many never-before-seen photos provided by the descendants of settler families interviewed for the book.

Now, the years after 1920 are captured in Lyle's companion book "Burke and Widgeon – A History (Volume 2)" which is due to appear in print soon.

It's possible to pre-order your copy from Western Sky Books in Port Coquitlam, a local independent bookstore. Full details are on the store's website https://store.westernskybooks.com/item/V3xamOryLYZor49qgn_Gmw



Burke and Widgeon – A History (Volume 2) available at Western Sky Books in Port Coquitlam.

Hike to Munro and Dennett Lakes

Date of Walk: July 11, 2026

By Janet Rozanski



Photo Credit: Janet Rozanski

Five of us set out to hike to Munro and Dennett lakes on July 11. Rich, Janet, Sarah, Loren, and Karol (pronounced Karl) started from the Quarry road trail head. It had been raining in the morning so the bushes were wet but we were lucky and had reasonable weather.

We walked through a misty forest full of calls from the Swainson's thrush and made our way up to the plateau where we saw plenty of foam, bunch berry and queens cup flowers, as well as nice big cedars. Once we got to Munro, the vegetation was a spectacular show of Copper bush, blueberries, orchids, Sticky False Asphodel, One-sided Wintergreen, Mountain Heathers, Partridgefoot, Leather-Leaf Saxifrage, and the elusive sundew!



Bog Orchid. Photo: Janet Rozanski



Sticky False Asphodel. Photo: Janet Rozanski

The Munro Lake viewpoint was a great spot to enjoy the view, avoid the bugs, and eat lunch. Even though there were clouds, we could still see the top of Golden Ears and the valley as it stretched out beyond to the ocean.



Munro Lake Viewpoint. Photo: Janet Rozanski

We forged on to Dennett but alas, it was not really warm enough for a swim so we headed back down.



Dennett Lake. Photo: Janet Rozanski

Started at 9:00 am, back by 4:30 pm. Total elevation 1100 meters.

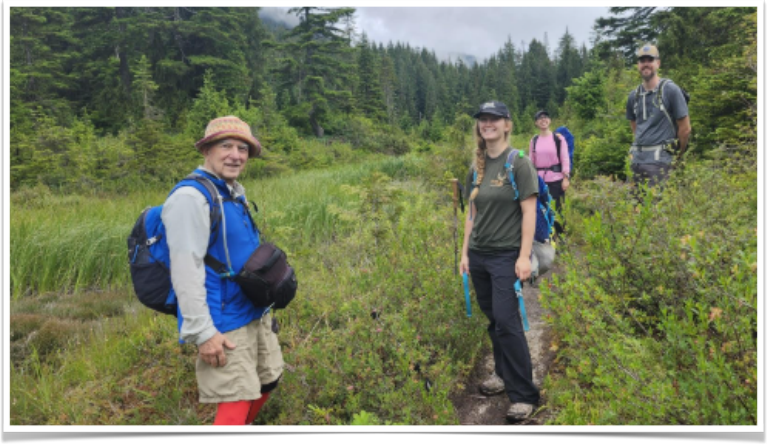


Photo Credit: Janet Rozanski

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BMN VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY:

Invasive Plant Removal at Blakeburn Lagoons

Tues Oct 6, 9am – noon, and Tues Oct 20, 9am – noon

Stay for the entire event or for a portion of the session. Bring along your friends! We'll be removing Himalayan Blackberry plants. You are welcome to bring your own gloves and garden tools (such as a shovel, loppers and a rake). These sessions will be hosted by the City of Port Coquitlam who will have some tools available. These sessions will be conducted rain or shine.

Meeting Location: South end of Elbow Place, Port Coquitlam (near the washroom)

https://maps.app.goo.gl/ZS2VSUtMayQeZxXi7

For more info, please contact Kathy Leko at mailto:kleko@telus.net.

BMN CLUB MEETING (in person):

'The Oregon Forestsnail' presented by Cassandra Harper

Tues Oct 13, 7:30pm – 9:00pm

We live in the northern-most range of the Oregon Forestsnail, and ƛ̓éxətəm/Colony Farm Regional Park is THE place in BC to see these rare and endangered molluscs. This species is listed as endangered both federally and provincially, and portions of ƛ̓éxətəm are managed to protect their habitat. But problems remain.

Cassandra Harper, project leader of the Kwikwetlem First Nation Environmental Stewardship Group will describe some of the work done (in association with volunteers from the Lower Coquitlam River Nature Association) to learn more about protecting ƛ̓éxətəm's population of Oregon Forestsnails and to provide education to park-goers on how they can help.

Held at Como Lake United Church, 535 Marmont St, Coquitlam.

SHOREBIRDING FOR BEGINNERS

Sat Oct 17, 9:30am – 11am

Port Moody is hosting this special session led by Judy Taylor-Atkinson and Jim Atkinson. Learn about the annual migration of shorebirds through the Inlet, and how to identify some of them. The tour will be along the new boardwalk at the head of the Inlet, which is a designated Important Bird Area. Learn what this means too! For ages 13+. Free, but registration is required.

FREE GUIDED TOUR OF THE TREES

səmiq̓ʷəʔelə/Riverview Lands in Coquitlam

Sun Oct 18, 1pm – 3pm

This is your last chance this year to enjoy a walking tour of the magnificent trees on the Riverview Lands, hosted by the Riverview Horticultural Centre (RHCS). These are family- friendly walks guided by a certified arborist who will provide information on the trees and their significance. Dogs must be on-leash. No advance registration is required. Just show up. This is the 34th year that RHCS has offered these walks that educate residents about the world-class collection of rare trees planted on the səmiq̓ʷəʔelə site. Please join the tour to show your support for preserving the priceless natural heritage of the səmiq̓ʷəʔelə/Riverview Lands.

Meet in the Serenity Garden down the slope from the Henry Esson Young (HEY) Building, which is roughly in the middle of the səmiq̓ʷəʔelə /Riverview Lands in Coquitlam. Watch for Tree Tour direction signs when you enter the site. Goes rain or shine.

For further information or for dates of other tours, call 604-290-9910 or see rhcs.org.

BMN VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY:

Water Quality Monitoring Projects

Sun Oct 25, 9 am – 10 am

The usual day for these sessions is the last Sunday of the month, but the date is weather dependent. Check with the leaders for meeting places, dates and times.

New volunteers are welcome! Monthly monitoring is done concurrently at two locations:

Como Lake – contact: Lori Austin at lorikaustin100@gmail.com .

Lost Lake and Mundy Lake in Mundy Park - contacts: Chris and Evelyn Thomson at ecco@telus.net.

SALMON COME HOME FESTIVAL AT THE HOY CREEK HATCHERY

Sun Oct 25, 11am – 3pm

The Salmon Come Home Festival is a free, family-oriented event to celebrate local salmon-spawning creeks. Visit the fish hatchery, see salmon fry, view a salmon dissection and learn about returning species. Other activities include the popular Nylon Zoo with the salmon mascot and costume parade, arts and crafts, musical entertainment, food trucks and an Explore Nature contest. All take place in and around the Hoy Creek Fish Hatchery, which is located in Hoy Creek Linear Park, just west of the Coquitlam City Centre Aquatic Complex.

BMN will be there with our displays and kids' games. If you want to help for an hour or two or more, please contact Edie Kernighan (mailto:ekernighan@gmail.com or 604.839.9823).

BMN CLUB MEETING (in person): Speaker to be Announced

Tues Nov 10, 7:30pm – 9pm

Held at Como Lake United Church, 535 Marmont St, Coquitlam.

SAVE THE DATE: CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Sat January 2 2027

Our local Count is called the 'Pitt Meadows Count', and coordinators for teams to cover areas on both sides of the Pitt River will soon be gearing up. If you've participated in the past, you'll be contacted again this year. If you've never participated in a CBC, but want to, please email mailto:BurkeMtnNats@gmail.com for more information. Details to follow in the November newsletter.

FREE 'STARRY NIGHTS' AT SFU'S TROTTIER OBSERVATORY

Friday Evenings, 8pm – 11pm

Canada's Largest Star Party! This is a free, all ages, in-person event every Friday night, with the last Friday of the month being an ONLINE only event.

Everything you need to know is at: https://www.sfu.ca/science/community/trottier-observatory---courtyard/starry-nights.html

See the BMN website for more events!

Tales from the Trail – Here a Sparrow, There a Sparrow!

ʔéxətəm Regional Park Bird Survey Date of Walk: September 13, 2026

By John Saremba

During our temporary suspension of our Sunday morning group bird survey outings at the park over the past month, I decided to venture on my own for a solo bird survey. Fortunately, I was able to find a spot in the reduced parking lot during the adjacent major culvert replacement project. Highlights from my solo foray are noted as follows.

- In leaving the parking lot and approaching Station 4 by the Labyrinth, I was very pleased to see our fall resident Great Blue heron perched in a very tall tree at the intersection to the Forensic Psychiatric Centre. Given I was not accompanied by others in our bird survey group, the heron likely decided it was not worth looking up from its nap/sleep time.



Resting Great Blue Heron. Photo: John Saremba

- Observations at Station 4 included a few American crows, a couple of Spotted towhees, a feisty Song sparrow, an American robin, two American goldfinches, and a Common Yellowthroat. It seems that that Yellowthroats are among the last of the summer resident warblers to leave our area on their migration. While I walked to the next station, the distinctive sounds of a few Pacific Chorus frogs were heard in the distance.
- It quickly became obvious that I would to work for today's bird observations as many of the typical bird songs and calls heard during June to August were absent. It felt almost like shoulder season at a tourist resort with the autumn-early winter bird visitors still to make an appearance at the park. Hopefully it won't be too long before we can expect to see a Northern Shrike or American kestrel grace the old field habitat, along with the melodic song of a Varied Thrush or two.
- Things were really quiet at Station 3 by the wetland with a Bewick's wren, Song sparrow, and Spotted towhee quietly announcing their presence. While at this station, it was interesting to see the development of the Beggarticks plants along the bottom of the wetland.



Beggarticks plants in the west side of the wetland. Photo: John Saremba

- Station 2 (i.e., adjacent to the Metro Vancouver Regional Park work yard), provided more bird activity. A family of White-crowned sparrows with an adult and several immature birds were perched near one another on the elderberry plants at this site. It is not surprising to see family groups of these sparrows as siblings can stay with each other for more than two months after fledging.



White-crowned sparrow partially hidden in the shrubs. Photo: John Saremba

- One of the immature White-crowned sparrows stopped long enough for me to obtain a photo. These immature birds have rusty brown stripes on a grayish head that will turn into its distinctive white color.



Immature White-crowned sparrow perched on a shrub. Photo: John Saremba

- Just after leaving Station 2 on my way to Station 1, it was a real delight to watch two rather young Columbian black-tailed deer grazing in the undergrowth next to the trail. In time the two deer decided to slowly cross the trail and bound off in the north side of the old field. Columbian black-tailed deer are a coastal subspecies of mule deer. Columbian black-tailed deer have large, mule-like ears, a white rump, and an all-black tail.



Female Columbian black-tailed deer. Photo: John Saremba

- I then observed six bird species at our first station of the bird survey, which is located at the southwestern end of the Perimeter Trail. Notable among these was the call of a Bewick's wren with a scolding call comprising quick, raspy notes. What I initially thought were four song sparrows that appeared near the trail likely were Lincoln's sparrows.



Lincoln's sparrow alongside the trail. Photo: John Saremba

- At a distance, a Lincoln's sparrow can appear similar to a Savannah sparrow. According to the All About Birds website, the following identification features are typical of the Lincoln's sparrow (Source: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Lincolns_Sparrow/id).
- This bird species is streaky brown, buffy, and gray overall with rusty edges to its wings and tail. Its chest and sides are rich buff with fine black streaking that fades into a white belly. Its face is marked by a buffy mustache stripe that is bordered by thin brown lines. A buffy eyering, a thick gray eyebrow, and a dark eyeline mark the area around the eye. Its crown is striped brown and black with a gray central crown stripe. In addition, while it has a rounded head like a Savannah sparrow, the back of its head often appears pointed or crested when it raises its crown feathers. A Savannah sparrow lacks the buffy wash on its breast typical of the Lincoln's sparrow.
- At Station 5 alongside ƛ̓éxətəm Road, a Song sparrow and a Common Yellowthroat were heard in the old field grasses.
- There was an unexpected flurry of activity at Station 6, with a small flock of American bushtits briefly foraging in a nearby tall tree before moving on. Several American crows and sparrows rounded out the observations here. Seems these sparrows were foraging on



Sparrow foraging along the trail. Photo: John Saremba

crane flies along the trail. Now at first I thought this was a small group of Lincoln's sparrows with a buffy breast. However, the somewhat yellowish strip about their eye was more typical of a Savannah sparrow. These could have been immature Lincoln's sparrows with their full color yet to be developed.

- To finish off the survey, a Common Yellowthroat and several Song sparrows were observed at Station 7.

As we enter the fall season, it will be interesting to experience the appearance of the fall-winter bird species seen in past years at the park.

DEADLINE for the next BMN Newsletter
Wednesday, November 4, 2026
Send articles to: bmnnewsletter@gmail.com

Burke Mountain Naturalists Membership (JANUARY TO DECEMBER)

Please email BurkeMtnNats@gmail.com for more information on our Student Membership option. We want to hear from you!

Our activities include:

☐ $33 for an individual ☐ $40 for a Family Membership

☐ NEW! Post-Secondary Student Membership — $10

- hiking
- bird watching and surveys
- invasive plant removal parties
- bat monitoring and conservation field trips
- nature walks
- attending local environmental/community events with informative displays
- monthly public meetings, except over the summer, with a guest speaker (most invited presentations are available on our YouTube channel)
- publishing 10 monthly digital newsletters (except over the summer)
- BC Nature quarterly magazine, Nature BC.



Please check our Events Calendar to see what's coming up!

MEMBERSHIP BE PURCHASED/RENEWED:

- Online at: https://www.burkemountainnaturalists.ca/membership/
- using Interac®, a credit card or Paypal®, under the tab named **"Get Involved"**.
- Mail a cheque to BMN, P.O. Box 52540, R.P.O. Coquitlam Centre, Coquitlam, BC V3B 7J4

If you are contemplating switching to "electronic" payment, we urge you to use eTransfer in preference to PayPal. It's easier AND saves your club money. There are NO charges incurred for you OR the club for these bank transfers.

BMN is a registered non-profit society with charitable income status.

Name(s): _____
(Family adults at the same address)

Name(s): _____
(Family children under 19)

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

The Burke Mountain Naturalists was formed in January 1989 and is a member club of BC Nature (formerly Federation of BC Naturalists). BMN is a registered non-profit Society with charitable income status.

Our objectives are:

- to promote the enjoyment of nature
- to foster an interest in, and an appreciation of, our environment
- to promote the accessibility and maintenance of natural areas, particularly local areas
- to actively pursue the conservation & preservation of the natural world

President: Ian McArthur, imcart@telus.net (604.939.4039)

Vice President: Brian Wormald, brian@wormald-online.com (604.537.3717)

Treasurer: Edie Kernighan, ekernighan@gmail.com (604.937.0958)

Past President: Phillip Buchan, pbuchan@mac.com (604.329.5537)

Recording Secretary: Vacant

Members-at-Large: Laura Dupont (lauradupont@shaw.ca), Elaine Golds (elaine.golds@gmail.com), Kathy Leko (kleko@telus.net), Victoria Otton (svotton@gmail.com), Jeff Rudd (rudd@sfu.ca), Helen Howes (helenhowes@shaw.ca), Sebastian Thomas (sebastian.thomas02@gmail.com)

Membership Secretary: Brian Wormald, brian@wormald-online.com (604.537.3717)

BC Nature Club Representative:
Victoria Otton, svotton@gmail.com (604.937.5379)

Education and Conservation Committee:
burkemtnnats@gmail.com

Nature and Feeder Watch:
Liz Thunstrom, elizabeththunstrom@telus.net (604.939.9571)

BMN-Friends of DeBoville Slough Committee:
2fodbs.bmn@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor: Michelle Andersen, BMNnewsletter@gmail.com

Newsletter Design: Catherine Ho, catherineymho@icloud.com

BMN Publications: 10 newsletters a year (except July and August)

"Discover Nature in the Tri-Cities" 2015, (40 pages) a children's nature guide; available on our website (40 pages) and from local libraries

Natural History Brochures: Miller Park Ravine, DeBoville Slough, Riverview Lands, Coquitlam River Corridor

Bird Brochures: Minnekhada Regional Park and Area, DeBoville Slough, Como Lake, The Herons of Colony Farm and our checklist for the Colony Farm Park birds

Plant Brochures: Colony Farm, DeBoville Slough

Wildlife Inventory of the Shoreline Park System: 1994, (121 pages) is available on our website

Our Backyard Wilderness: A Park Proposal, by Mark Haddock, 1992, (23 pages, plus appendices) available at Coquitlam Poirier Library

The Riverview Hospital Site: "Respecting Its Past, Realizing Its Future", by Elaine Golds, Victoria Otton and Lori Austin (2004), 26 pages available on our website.