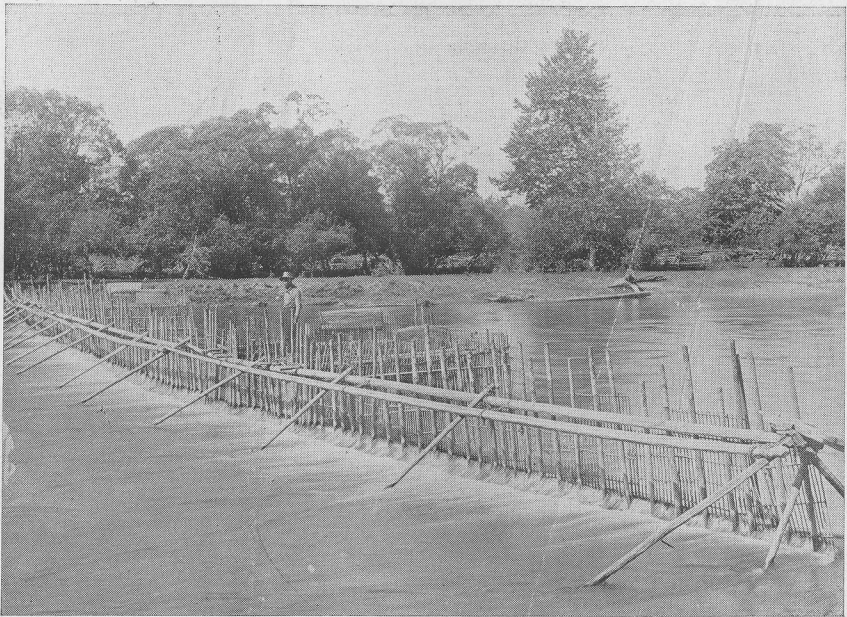


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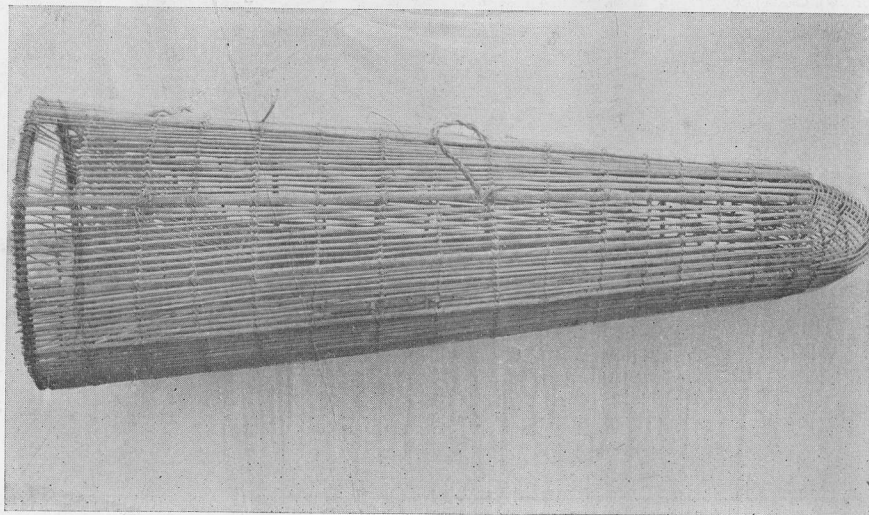
October, 1945



NATIVE FISH-WEIR COWICHAN RIVER, V. I.



FISH-TRAP, NOOTKA.



FISH-TRAP, BELLA COOLA.

THE VICTORIA NATURALIST

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The Victoria Natural History Society

The regular monthly meeting of the Society was held in the Reading room of the Provincial Library on Tuesday, 11th September. Mr. A.L.Meugens acted as chairman. The formation of a Junior Branch of the Society was discussed at length and it was decided to hold meetings for the junior members in the Museum from time to time provided the response was sufficient to warrant them. It was also decided to extend to Oak Bay and Esquimalt the same privileges as the Victoria schools, namely the donation of one junior membership for each school provided one membership is given by the school. Mr. Hardy outlined his ideas for a Fungus Foray to be held next month the same as last year. An interesting account of the activities of the Ornithological group for the summer was read by Miss M. E. Perry. The meeting was then turned over to Dr. Clifford Carl and Mr.G.A.Hardy who had recently returned from making a survey of the-

Natural History of Manning Park.

In introducing the topic, Dr. Carl recalled to the audience some of the remarks of Mr. Lyons at a previous meeting concerning the topography of the region covered by Manning Park. This area lies astride the watershed between the basins of the Similkameen and Skagit Rivers, and a peculiar feature of the drainage is the fact that the tributary creeks of the two systems alternate in such a way as to resemble the interlocking fingers of the two hands, rendering the topography somewhat confused.

The climate of the region is very changeable, and highly unpredictable, although that of the Western portion shows an affinity with that of the coast, while in the eastern section of the park, the weather resembles that of the Dry Interior.

The region was first penetrated in 1813, and was traversed by one of the early Brigade Trails of the Hudson's Bay Co. Since that time, it has been well known to the

trapping fraternity, and is soon to be opened up by a modern highway. The Museum party spent four weeks in the area, working chiefly in the neighborhood of the proposed road through Allison Pass.

Mr. Hardy took up the story, to report upon the botanical and entomological findings of the party. He pointed out that the flora is directly dependent upon the conditions of moisture and temperature which exist, and that this region is abundantly watered, as indicated by the extent and density of the forest cover. Three types of plant association were observed. In the higher levels were magnificent stands of Lodgepole pine, while lower down there was to be found the Englemann spruce forest type to the east, and a hemlock - cedar association in the west. Isolated individuals of the Yellow pine were found as far as fourteen miles within the park from its eastern boundary. In the higher levels of the park were to be found vast mountain meadows covered by exceedingly lush growth, and showing an enormous variety of alpine flowers.

The insect world was represented by great numbers of moths and butterflies on the alpine meadows, and many varieties of beetle, particularly the members of the Longhorn family, that infest timber. An interesting collecting condition was found in the powerful updraft on the windward side of the ridges, which carried up great numbers of insects which normally would be found much lower down, and deposited them in the lee of the crests.

Dr. Carl resumed with a description of the small mammals encountered, and showed a number of skins from that district.

As a more detailed description of these mammals will appear in this magazine in the near future it is advisable to omit his report at the present time.

The Last of the Graham Island Caribou:

The Queen Charlotte Islands are remarkable for the complete absence of certain animals one would naturally expect to find there, particularly is this true of the deer family. Deer are to be found on all the islands of any size along the British Columbia Coast; and the fact that they were not originally to be found on the Queen Charlotte Islands is all the more remarkable because of the non-existence of the wolf and the cougar-- the natural enemies of the Deer. There is a species of black bear, and this is the only large animal that is indigenous to the islands.

My Father, who lived at Massett for three years, 1876 to 1879, and who travelled far and wide over the islands, acquired a very accurate knowledge of the country. The suitability of the islands had impressed itself upon him, and the fact that they had never been found there had caused him considerable surprise. It was he who first conceived the idea of importing deer from the Mainland, chiefly as an economic measure. On one of his visits to the Mainland he offered to purchase a few of these animals from the Tshimshean hunters. Seven were obtained in this way, and another, which was captured by a steamer on the voyage up the coast, was afterwards added.

The Hudson's Bay Company carried them over to the Islands, free of charge. They were liberated, and for several years increased steadily under the protection of an officer of the Company, who succeeded the first trader. But after his death the Haidas shot them off until they were exterminated.

Another attempt, but on a much larger scale, was made about the year 1924. As these were strictly protected, they have increased to such an extent that in some areas they have become almost a pest.

But what was so strange was the existence on Graham Island, in a very limited area, of a distinct species of caribou.

The existence of such animals had been warmly debated for a number of years. In the extent of the country in which these elusive animals were supposed to be, only a strip of about 30 miles long by 20 miles wide, the wonder is that there should have been any doubt at all. One would have thought that the natives would have known every species of animal that ever existed in such a small space. But such was not the case.

The native hunters were just as vague about the matter as were the whites who resided on the island. The fact was that the Haidas were almost exclusively a race of marine hunters, devoting much of their time and skill to the hunting of sea-otter and fur seal, and the construction of their fine canoes. And as a diversion they hunted and trapped bear and smaller animals along the banks of streams, but hardly ever penetrated into the interior of the island. Besides, superstition had a lot to do with their aversion to the solitudes of the plains and forests.

A missionary who had lived on the Island for several years and who was recognized as a naturalist of distinction, ridiculed the idea that there were caribou on Graham Island. His two predecessors, on the other hand, were just as positive in their belief that these animals were to be found there. An old hunter whom I met stated that when he was a young man he had helped to pack out to salt water the flesh of a large deer that had been killed some miles inland, west of Naden Harbour.

I was naturally interested in the controversy, but never even dreamt that it would fall to my lot to help to establish beyond a shadow of doubt that caribou did actually exist in the Naden Harbour country between Naden Harbour and the Jalun River.

On the occasion of my first trip to Naden Harbour I was chatting one day in the cabin of our sloop with two Haida youths who made up my crew, as we lay at anchor off the village of Kung, when the conversation turned to the caribou, and the mystery which surrounded them. "By the way," I said, "where are these animals supposed to be?" "Not very far from here," answered one of the boys; "between Naden Harbour and the West Coast Mountains." They described the kind of country it was. For the

most part it was an undulating, open country, consisting of muskeg, dotted over with small ponds, separated by fringes of stunted red and yellow cedar and pine. I asked the boys whether, without taking up too much of our time, it would not be possible to make a trip to the fringe of this country, and see what there was to be seen. They said it would not take more than a day from where we lay at anchor. We decided there and then to make an early start the following morning. The weather was fine when the morning broke. We landed on the shore in front of the village, turned East, and followed the shore as far as the point which formed the entrance to the Harbour. After rounding the point we headed in a north-westerly direction along the shore of Virago Sound for a considerable distance until we came to a huge, isolated granite boulder.

Here the boys decided to leave the shore and strike inland. The way we took led up a gradual slope through some big timber, and about an hour after leaving the beach we emerged upon what appeared to be a rolling swampy country. We could not see very far on account of stunted trees.

What impressed me was the silence of these solitudes--a silence rendered more impressive by the distant sleepy note of the nightjar. It was not difficult to understand how these vast solitudes inspired these primitive peoples with awe.

We walked along the edge of the swamp, following what appeared to be a trail, not very obvious on the yielding moss. We had not proceeded more than a quarter of a mile when, right in our path, we saw quite fresh deer droppings. This clinched the matter as far as I was concerned; and as there were no deer on the island I was now most eager to see the animals for myself, and was prepared to wait until the evening, or early morning for that matter, when animals (of the deer tribe) usually come out into the open spaces. But I could not get the Indians to share my enthusiasm. They did not relish the idea of waiting for an indefinite period on the off-chance of seeing the animals--without food or blankets. They did not like the look of the sky, they said, so there was nothing for it but to defer to their judgment,

and with great reluctance I abandoned the search for the present. There would be another opportunity before I took my final leave of the Islands.

Soon after my return to Massett, I wrote a letter to the Victoria "Daily Colonist". My mind was made up and nothing could shake me in my conviction that there were caribou on Graham Island; how many or how few I was not in a position to say. It was a happy coincidence that about the time that my letter appeared in the Colonist, an American big game hunter on his way home from one of his expeditions stopped off at Ketchikan. He had heard about the caribou and as a boat was leaving that point for Massett, he decided to avail himself of the opportunity to investigate the situation.

After collecting all the information he could from whites and Indians at Massett, he hired two Indians and a young white man and set out in a canoe for Naden Harbour. From Kung as his headquarters he made several trips into the country west of Naden Harbour, penetrating as far as Jalun Lake, and climbing the mountains which border the lake on its western shore.

In addition to what he saw, he was fortunate enough to pick up some shed antlers, but the animals themselves eluded him. However, he arrived at the same conclusion as I did, adding the opinion that there were only a few and that the chance of seeing them would be when there was snow on the ground.

I made another attempt to see the caribou before I left for the Mainland, this time striking inland at the head of Naden Harbour, even spending an uncomfortable night on the swampy ground, but again the animals failed to materialize.

In the late autumn of that year (1906) after the first fall of snow, two young Haida hunters from Massett made a quick trip into the caribou country. They were not long in picking up the tracks, followed them, and there before them in a group of four, stood the sole survivors of what must once have been a noble and numerous herd.

It was their last stand, and what a pathetic spectacle it must have been: They bore the marks of their grim struggle against adverse conditions. Their horns were stunted and disfigured, and many of their teeth were missing.

One mystery had been solved, but there were others which perhaps never will be solved. Whence had they come, and what had brought them to the very brink of extermination?

The caribou is an animal of the Interior, and how had it come about that these animals of Graham Island were so far removed from their native habitat? Why had they become so reduced in numbers?

As we have already seen, the Haida natives had not hunted them and were scarcely aware of their existence. There are no wolves on the Islands, no cougar, nothing more harmful than the black bear. And although bear have been known to destroy sheep and young cattle, especially when hard pressed by hunger, yet this is very unusual. Their natural food is wild berries, salmon in the shallow rivers, and tender herbs, and these are to be found everywhere on the Queen Charlotte Islands in great abundance.

One regrets that the last of the Graham Island caribou should have come to such an inglorious end; but it is better thus than that they should have perished in some remote and unfrequented spot where their remains might never have been found, and the mystery of their existence on the island have remained forever unsolved.

The two hunters -- and I think it was fitting that the animals should have met their fate at the hands of Haida hunters, whose presence on these islands is just as mysterious as that of the caribou -- packed out the heads, skins and hooves. These were sent to the Curator of the Museum at Victoria. I saw them in one of the show cases a year or two later, and one cannot speak too highly of the skill of the taxidermist who made such a splendid job of the somewhat dilapidated material he had to work with.

H. A. Collison.

Indian Fish Traps

The culture of all aborigines is shaped by the particular environment in which their homes are located. Of all factors bringing their influence to bear in the shaping of culture the most important is, perhaps, that of food supply. Thus, in the Canadian Northwest, we find the life of the Indians of the Great Plains centering around the hunting of Bison. North again is the Caribou area, and in British Columbia the salmon area, embracing all the waterways tributary to the Pacific Ocean.

Under the natural urge to spawn, the salmon return from the sea to enter fresh water at the end of their life cycle. The "runs" of each species occur but once a year. Prodigious quantities of fish go to make up a "run" and the Indians were very busy during the short season in which the "runs" occur.

The fishing was done in many ways, depending upon the behaviour of the species and the nature of the waters in which they were found. Near the sea, dip-nets and harpoons were used in pools where the fish were most plentiful. In more difficult places the use of these methods was facilitated by fence-like constructions designed to divert the fish into parts of the river where they could be more easily taken. Where the fish were less numerous a natural outcome of the fencing was a more closely woven weir with high percentage obstruction to the progress of the fish. In places where the fish found their way higher up the river and were scarcer yet, there we find the fish trap more generally in use. There were many forms of these traps; the majority acted upon the principle of a funnel, or wedge-shaped opening into which the fish easily found their way but failed to escape and were easily taken. Some of the forms are illustrated in this issue.

The urge of aboriginal necessity overrode any rules connected with food supply and the Indians were quick to take advantage of the facilities which peculiar conditions afforded. Thus we find many variations of conditions.

A. E. Pickford,
Provincial Museum.

A FEATHERED FAIRY:

When first I met her she was prospecting, though I, in my ignorance, did not know this until later. She was floating about like a bit of iridescent thistle-down in the dogwood tree very near our bedroom window not more than four or five feet away. Her movements in the tree attracted my attention for two or three days and I imagined that she was finding food there even though the dogwood blooms were on the wane. Finally she centred her interest on the junction of twigs nearest to the window, became stationary there and continued a long stroking movement with her bill on the twigs, occasionally flying away and back again in no time and proceeding as before; eventually it dawned on me that she was bringing cobwebs for no other purpose than to build a wee house in which to raise her son and daughter. Scarcely able to believe my good fortune, I watched her spellbound for a while and then called the "man of the house" and he too was incredulous.

For eight days she worked diligently and it was marvelous to watch. It was almost two days before a small disc, less than a 50 cent piece in diameter was discernable, and from then on the "Fairy Palace" grew rapidly. Tiny flower petals, bits of lichen, moss, more cobwebs and even hairs had to be placed with the utmost care. Sometimes she would hesitate a second deciding, with her wee head tilted to one side and a bit of building material held carefully, then having decided would place it firmly, bringing next time a hair or cobweb and darning her material with the tiny needle which passes as her bill would literally darn her material. (We housewives could learn from her expert darning and weaving which stood the strain of two sturdy youngsters).

A dogwood leaf was also sewn scoop shape into the outer side of the nest (and fortunately for us, nearest the window) apparently to act as a safety verandah should the babies fall and it served its purpose later on. Every little while she would sit in the nest and shuffle vigorously then turn the opposite way and shuffle again until the shape fitted and suited her.

She often sat a moment and looked the wee nest over as though she loved it. Eventually she decided to place the two little "pearls" in that marvelous structure and then incubation commenced in real earnest. She was never away very long and one day we watched her fighting two ladies of her own kind who had dared to come into her garden for nectar, telling them in that little "tick" sound which is hummingbird language, that they were very unwelcome.

On the evening of June 21st, visitors came and unconsciously we had been less careful than usual of the light being used in the "hummingbird" room; it was a heartbreak to find the blind high and the light full on. We felt sure that she would have been scared away, but no, she was there and stayed there most of the next day; why? because the babies were there too. The following morning while watching her, a "Rufous" flash appeared for a second over and around the nest- Yes, it was he, the daddy Rufous and no other: We had many times been told that the male bird disappears before building commences and does not return. Mr. Shortt, a naturalist now residing at Cordova Bay, said to me when he heard of our nest "Now you will have a splendid chance to see if the mate returns". In my anxiety to retrieve the bird's reputation, I wondered if my imagination had run away with me, but fortunately Mr. A.L. Meugens and Mr. E.E. G. White came to see our wee bird that Sunday morning and the latter, on my mentioning about the Rufous, said that he saw one at the Bus terminus which is about 100 feet from our house.

The feeding of the babies was really something to behold; several visitors watched the performance with wonder as we did. The regurgitation having taken place immediately the mother alighted on the nest, she would vigorously jam her sharp bill down the throat of the baby, each carefully in turn, and would pack it in so hard one marvelled that she did not pierce their tiny throats. It was interesting to watch them grow. One day a butterfly flew over the nest and they apparently mistook it for their mother; two little eager, open bills popped up ready for afternoon tea but the butterfly passed on leaving no food.

The boy baby one afternoon, apparently intending to show his sister how clever he was, as boys so often do, climbed to the edge of the nest and was cavorting around when he lost his hold and had a very anxious time trying to regain it. Here is where the leafy verandah came in. We held our breath expecting to see him fall to the ground but his foot suddenly came in contact with the edge of the leaf and it being quite firm gave him the much needed help; he scrambled back into the nest and cuddled down low looking at his sister with a "don't you dare laugh at me" look.

We wondered how they who are so much on the wing would learn to fly. It was accomplished quite easily; they both flew for long spells, but with their feet holding tight to the edge of the nest. We hoped to see them finally take leave of their home and though we kept close and continued watch and were up at 5:30 a.m. they had already gone leaving behind them the beautiful wee nest and many happy memories. The young birds were around the garden for several days. They were easily identified because they tired so easily and would rest on the rockeries, something one never sees the adults do.

Living in Saskatchewan until last December we had often expressed a keen desire to see a hummingbird's nest someday; how little did we think such joy as this would come our way! There is a hummingbird's nest at the Layritz nurseries which Mrs. Layritz tells us has been used three successive years. We are keeping our fingers crossed: Maybe our little lady will come back.

(Mrs.) L. M. Kidson,
Cordova Bay, V.I.

I also have a report from Mr. E.J. Maguire that he found a "three decker" Rufous hummingbird's nest under the "overhang" of a gravel pit out near the Coquitlam River.

Editor.

BIRD NOTES

Trumpeter Swans: We note by a recent publication (No. 92, Emergency Conservation Committee, New York,) that practical steps are being taken in the United States to save the Trumpeter Swans from extinction. With the approval of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a number of sygnets have been transported to the Malheur Lake Refuge in eastern Oregon. Here it is planned to raise a stock of Trumpeter Swans to release within their former range.

G. Clifford Carl.

NOTICE OF MEETINGSMONTHLY MEETING

Tuesday
Oct.9th: Provincial Library Reading Room,
at 8 p.m.
Speaker: Mr. G. A. Hardy.
"Some Common Mushrooms of Victoria District."

FUNGUS FORAY

Saturday
Oct.20th: Meet at Mount Tolmie Bus Terminus
at 2 p.m.
Note: Bring paper bag or container to hold
specimens.

Wednesday Zoology Meeting - - - Dr.Clifford Carl
Oct.24th: at 8 p.m.
at Mrs. L. C. Sweeney's home,
1028 Park Boulevard.

I regret that the above is the only information I have at this time in regard to meetings, other meetings may be announced later.

Editor.



QUEEN CHARLOTTE CARIBOU.

To

Mrs R. G. Hobson
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NOTICE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Society will be held in
PROVINCIAL LIBRARY, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS
at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, the 9th October, 1945

