

The
VICTORIA
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(Photo by Knight's Studio.)

Erythronium oregonum.

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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
VICTORIA, B.C.



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Report of the Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Society took place in the Provincial Museum on Tuesday, March 9th, with Dr. Carl as chairman. After the reading of the Minutes of the previous Annual Meeting the Annual Reports of the Secretary and of the Treasurer were received and accepted. The Treasurer's Report which shows a satisfactory balance, appears in full in this issue. The passing of two active members, Mr. J. F. Palmer, late Chairman of the Botany group and Archdeacon H.A. Collison, was noted with regret.

The retiring President thanked the members and the executive for the splendid cooperation given during an unusually busy year. A vote of thanks was extended to him and to the retiring members of the executive from the membership through Miss Eugenie Perry.

The election of officers was carried on under Miss Marjorie Speed as acting-chairman; the new slate is presented on the back cover of this issue.

Mr. George Hardy, the new President, expressed his appreciation of being given the honour of the presidency for the ensuing year. He then introduced the guest-speaker, Mr. W. H. Turnbull, Provincial Apiarist, Department of Agriculture, who gave an address, "The Bees' Workshop". The talk was illustrated by an excellent motion-picture film featuring the life-history of the honey bee as follows.

Worker bees, which incidentally are responsible for most of the pollination, live about six weeks. Part of their time is spent in tending the queen who lays 1500 to 2000 eggs per day. The young are reared in the central part of the comb, the period of development being 26 days for drones (males), 21 days for workers (arrested females), and 16 days for queens.

Only one queen is tolerated in a hive; rival queens may fight until one is the victor or one (usually the youngest) may leave in company with large numbers of workers in a swarm to start a new colony. Evidence indicates that bees have a sign language; a worker who has found food communicates the news to others by means of a "food dance".

Work in the colony is divided. Field bees give up their load of nectar to nurse bees who transform the substance to honey and store it in the cells. Fanners provide "air conditioning" by assisting in ventilation. Drones are driven out at the end of the breeding season. Intruders are vigorously driven away from the entrance to the hive.

The success of the apiarist in handling bees depends upon his confidence as well as his method. A little smoke blown across the hive causes the bees to gorge themselves with honey, for fear of being burned out, and in this state they can be more readily handled. An experienced bee-man can determine the state of the hive by the sounds produced.

The longest distance known for a bee to travel in search of nectar is seven miles but a hive can not produce a surplus if the supply is beyond $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. An acre of clover is required to support one colony of bees. The average crop per colony for the various districts in the Province is as follows -- 51 lbs., Vancouver Island; 52 lbs., lower Fraser Valley; 115 lbs., Okanagan Valley; 300 lbs. Similkameen Valley; 225 (highest 450) lbs., Peace River area (where clover is grown for seed). The total crop for the Province last season was 1,800,000 lbs. of honey.

After a hearty vote of thanks to the speaker the meeting adjourned at 10 p.m.

G.C.C.

Victoria Natural History Society

Statement for Year Ending 29th Feb. 1948

<u>Receipts:</u>		Balance forward	\$ 79.66
	<u>Membership:</u>		
84 @ 2.00		168.00	
17 @ 3.00		51.00	
19 $\frac{1}{2}$ @ 1.00		<u>19.50</u>	238.50
	<u>Sundries</u>		
	Interest	.75	
	Sale of Magazines	2.00	
	" Bird Lists	<u>6.40</u>	<u>9.15</u>
			327.31

Expenses:

Printing & Postage 9 issues	186.00	
Printing Covers	<u>25.38</u>	
		211.38
Printing Check Lists	22.68	
<u>Sundries</u> Old a/c Diggon	1.00	
Typing Forms	.50	
Postage	3.00	
Stationery	1.00	
Loss on Excursion	<u>1.35</u>	
		<u>240.91</u>
Donation for prize (Junior)		86.40
Dues paid in advance		<u>10.50</u>
		28.00
Balance in Bank		<u>\$124.90</u>

(signed) A. L. Meugens,

Treasurer.

North American Waterfowl Inventory

The second annual Inventory to be taken here was made on January 8th, 1948, under the direction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Those in the field were as follows: Messrs. Carl, Clay, Munro; G. Hardy, Mrs. Hardy; Meugens; Christiansen, Nicholl. Areas visited were Elk Lake, Cordova Bay, Gonzales Point, Shoal Bay; Lost Lake and fields; Seafont Ross Bay to Breakwater; Swan Lake and fields, Beaver Lake and fields, Carey Road and fields.

Comparative figures for Victoria and vicinity are given as follows: (Those for year 1947 are bracketed). - Mallard 362 (204), Baldpate 1436 (1927), Shoveller 135 (350), Greater Scaup 599 (640), Bufflehead 149 (98), Canvasback 37 (1), Golden-Eye 30 (4), Coot 624 (67). Weather was mild and calm, visibility poor. Last year fields, ponds and lakes were frozen. The weather, do doubt, accounts for some of the disparity in figures between the two years.

Other species seen during the count were Ring-neck 31, Ruddy 7, Harlequin 19 (10), Red-breasted Merganser 43 (8), Hooded Merganser 2, Old Squaw 1 (1), Horned Grebe 25, Western Grebe 50, Pied-billed Grebe 8, Common Loon 2, Baird Cormorant 4, Glaucous-winged Gull 50, Short-billed Gull 70, Heron 5, Killdeer 21, Snipe 6, American Scoter 48, Surf Scoter 18, European Widgeon 1, Blue-winged teal 1.

J. O. Clay.

Bird Notes: Our travelling member, Mr. Lionel Taylor of Saanichton, has recently returned from a successful collecting trip to South Africa. We hope to hear something from Mr. Taylor at a future meeting.

Mr. P. Walker of Wilkinson Road, reports seeing four ravens during the first week in March. While the raven is not a rare bird it is seldom seen in the suburban areas in this part of the Province.

"The Black Gangster?"

by Morris Jackson

This is not an attempt to discuss the economic status of crows. Rather, it is intended as a plea for a more dispassionate attitude on our part towards our fellow inhabitants, both furred and feathered, to be found in -- at the very least -- our immediate neighbourhood. True, the stripping of our cherry tree, the loss of baby chicks, etc., are not calculated to inspire a tolerant attitude towards crows, and we are fully justified in taking any measures, short of extermination, which may seem advisable, and which will not endanger other, and innocent creatures.

There is little danger of extermination where crows are concerned. In 1921 the B. C. Government paid a 10 cent bounty on crows' heads. This writer, then a young man, collected \$30.00 worth, padded out with the heads of three owls at \$1.00 each, which I felt might possibly be -- or pass for -- young horned owls. The police officials who paid me the bounties shared my belief, but I now suppose them to have been long-eared owls, Asio otus wilsonianus. It is not a period of my life of which I am proud, but at that time all Coast logging-camps had been closed down, as had all employment agencies, and jobs were non-existent for thousands of us, just out of the army. My only reason for referring to it is because, during the nineteen years I have lived here by the sea, I have seen the ducks reduced to a vanishing point and the crow population remain at a steady level. The expensive programme of 1921 brought little results, if any. But it taught me to respect the crow in so many regards, that should I again be reduced to the stringent pecuniary circumstances of 1921, I could not possibly slaughter them and their little nestlings as I did then.

However, the crows are so bold -- "sassy", one might say -- that it becomes imperative at times to teach them a sharp lesson by shooting one or two. This will usually suffice. At this moment of writing, hard-frozen ground and high tides have reduced their

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available natural food, and about thirty of them are feeding on some frozen potato and carrot peelings which my chickens would not think of eating. So I let the crows alone. Either they will go away when the weather changes, or I shall have to move them by more drastic methods.

But "gangsters"? No, of course not! Gangsters carry on internicine wars -- crows never! Gangsters have no economic value at all -- they are entirely predatory. The crow has, across the continent, a considerable economic value, even though it may be more than offset at times by his bad habits.

The crows have attained, sufficiently for their own purposes, that ideal form of democracy now claimed by both the extreme right and left of human society, as well as the centrists. The individuals work together in organized harmony, retaining, at the same time, individual rights. The robins -- ill-equipped for fighting -- are continually at war with each other during the nesting period. The crows, powerfully armed and truculent, never fight each other. At least, I have never seen or heard of crow fighting crow.

Last summer I witnessed something that may well illustrate my respect for crows. A young fledgling had worked its way from the nest to an exposed position near the top of the fir tree that sheltered the nest. Soon it began to call in its juvenile voice. It was quickly answered by the screaming croak of a raven, perched about half-a-mile away. In an instant, the entire crow colony swept up from the beach and sat, silent, in the surrounding trees. Presently the parent crow returned with some food -- perhaps, alas, a nestling -- Fed his, or her, offspring and drove it down into the nest.

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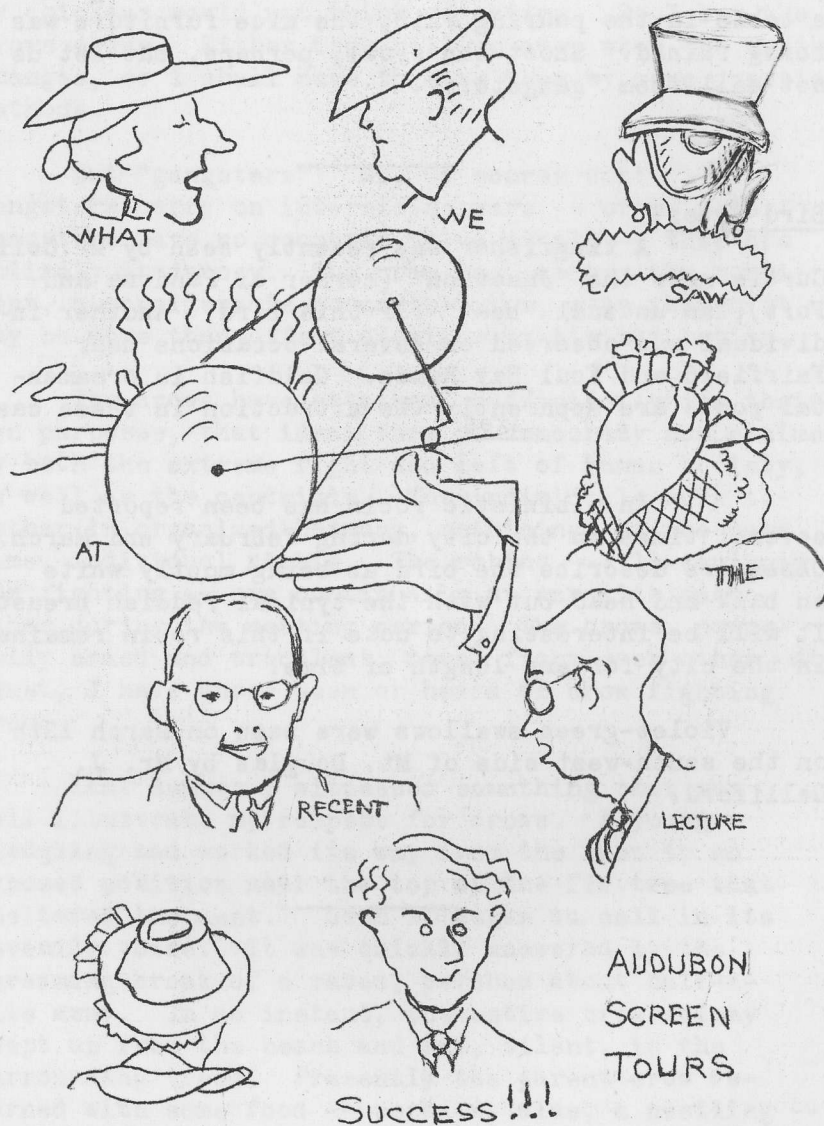
Shortly after witnessing this incident I saw a picture of an eviction. Children were sitting under a table in the pouring rain, the nice furniture was being ruined. Shoot the crows, perhaps, but let us not call them "gangsters".

Bird Notes:

A kingfisher was recently seen by Mr. Colin Curtis near the "Junction" (corner of Pandora and Fort), an unusual "beat" for this bird. Another individual was observed on several occasions near Fairfield and Foul Bay Roads. Goldfish in ornamental ponds are apparently the attraction in these cases.

An albinistic robin has been reported several times in the city during February and March. Observers describe the bird as being mostly white on back and head but with the typical reddish breast. It will be interesting to note if this robin remains in the city for any length of time.

Violet-green swallows were seen on March 13th on the south-west side of Mt. Douglas by Mr. J. Galliford.



Economic Geology of Saanich Peninsula

By R. Sibbald.

In Saanich Peninsula several types of deposits have been prospected for gold and copper, entirely without success. However deposits of other commercially valuable substances occur such as the following:

Coal:- Small seams occur notably at James and Coal Points, south slope of Coal Island and east shore of Portland Island. One or two attempts have been made to mine exposed seams but without successful results. No thick or extensive seams are known to occur and in spite of thorough prospecting no commercial coal has ever been found.

Lime, Cement and Fluxes.- In former years several quarries were in operation for the purpose of obtaining limestone for the manufacture of lime. Near the west shore of Esquimalt Harbour a quarry was operated by Rosebank Lime Co. and a quarry $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles west of Esquimalt Harbour was in production by the Silca Brick and Lime Co. The Tye Copper Co. had a quarry near the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway to obtain flux for their former smelter at Ladysmith.

Sand and Gravel: This material is obtained at the Producers Sand and Gravel banks at Royal Roads. In addition, McIntyre and Harding have a pit at Elk Lake and Butler Bros. have one at Keatings.

Diatomaceous Earth:- A bed of this material occurs in a wide valley north of Prospect Lake. The deposit is fairly pure and suitable for use as a polishing powder, absorbent, non-conductors, fertilizers and many other products. No company has made any real use of this as yet.

As a summary it might be said that the mineral resources of the Saanich Peninsula are entirely non-metallic.

Nature Note from Similkameen Valley

The following excerpt submitted by Mr. George E. Winkler is from a letter written on January 21, 1948, by H. D. Barnes of Hedley, B. C.

"An unusual winter visitor, we had here for several days, was a coyote. He (or she) used to feed on Wimpy's bones and the strange thing was that Wimpy never objected to it. Wimpy is Mrs. Wright's dog.

We never bothered the coyote and Mrs. Wright even tried to feed it. I never before had such a close-up look at a coyote. Seen through Mrs. Wright's kitchen window, it was not over 15 or 20 feet away. It was a beautiful specimen of a coyote too.

Am feeding about the usual number of birds this winter, my bird family consisting mostly of chickadees, both mountain and black cap, though there is an odd nuthatch and song sparrow. I have missed seeing the solitaires on our hillside this winter. They feed on juniper berries mostly, but pick up a few other berries left by the robins."

Later -

"There was a sad ending to Mrs. Wright's tame coyote. If it had been contented to play around with Wimpy it might have been all right, but it got to hanging around other places and one of our neighbors took a shot at it and wounded it. Nothing since has been seen of it so probably it died."

JUNIOR PAGE

Activities: From the 10th of January to the 7th of February we had a number of very interesting Saturday mornings. Mr. Taylor demonstrated the use of the microscope to observe the minute living organisms which live in the ponds about Victoria. At another meeting Mr. Hardy gave an extremely interesting talk on moths and butterflies. At one meeting Dr. Carl and Mr. Hardy told us about the "Museum behind the scenes", taking us on a tour of the building. Since February 14th the Junior members have been attending the series of Saturday morning lectures for children in the Museum.

Since taking on the job of Secretary for the senior Society Mrs. J. Bland is unable to continue as convener for our group. We would like to thank her sincerely for all the valuable time she has put in to make the Junior group so successful. We are indeed very lucky to have Mrs. E. J. Read as our new convener.

Charles Faulkner,

Junior Editor.

Members of the Junior Naturalists will continue to meet in the Museum at 10 a.m. on Saturdays.

NOTICES OF MEETINGS

1948

Tuesday

Bird Group meeting in the Museum

April 6:

at 8 p.m. Mr. J. O. Clay.

Saturday

April 10:

Botany Group field meeting. Gonzales Hill at 2 p.m. Mr. W. T. Tildesley. Take Gonzales-Victoria or Richardson bus to corner of Foul Bay and Fairfield (end of old No.6 car line.)

Tuesday

April 13:

General Meeting in the Museum at 8 p.m. Speaker: Dr. Wm. Newton, Director of the Dominion Plant Pathology Laboratory, Saanichton. Subject: "Factors Influencing the culture of Native Plants." Illustrated.

Tuesday

April 20:

Zoology Group meeting, 8 p.m., at the home of Dr. and Mrs. G.C. Carl, 410 Queen Anne Heights. (Take Gonzales-Victoria Ave. bus to Queen Anne or Richardson bus to Fairfield Rd. and walk up hill one block). Subject: "Amphibians".

Tuesday

April 27:

An Entomology Group meeting in the Museum at 8 p.m. Mr. George Hardy will speak on "Beetles and Their Place in Nature".

Thursday

May 6th:

Audubon Screen Tour, Robert House at 8 p.m. Mr. Telford H. Work, "Bits of Land along the Coast."

Saturday

May 8th:

Ornithology Group field meeting. B.C. Electric Park at the Gorge, (end of Victoria West bus line) at 2 p.m. Mr. J. O. Clay.

Victoria Natural History Society

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