

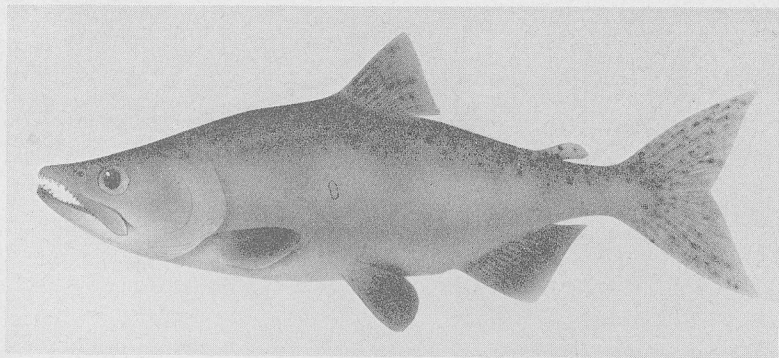
# *The* **VICTORIA** **NATURALIST**

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Vol. 6, No. 3

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Kokanee.

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THE VICTORIA NATURALIST

Published by

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The Shoveller

The distinctive marking of the male and the wide spatulate bill (see illustration) makes identification of this bird very easy. This duck is seldom seen about our shores in the summer but it is often numerous in the winter months, when it may be observed at Clover Point and at other places near Victoria. In November the males show complete plumage gradations from juvenal to full adult. The birds are easily approached, particularly at the sewer outlet, where they may be observed at very close range.

Normally however, this bird frequents shallow, muddy freshwater ponds and sloughs. It breeds throughout western Canada in all favourable habitats, and is common to both North America and the Old World. The shoveller, or "spoon bill", is not considered a good game bird by sportsmen due to the supposed inferiority of the flesh, a point accentuated here by their habit of feeding at sewer outlets.

The Pintail

The full plumaged male of this species (see illustration) is one of our most beautiful ducks. It is seen more often about the freshwater sloughs and in the fields than along our sea shores. Arrived in large numbers in the spring, full plumaged birds are easily observed at Lost Lake and surrounding fields in the Victoria area. In the early fall a few may be seen at the mouths of some of our island streams, notably the Cowichan and Chemainus. The early spring months, however is the time to observe this species in the vicinity of Victoria.

Speedy flight, and the habit of flying to the fields at dawn and dusk, coupled with beauty and edibility makes the pintail one of our leading game birds.

The pintail or sprig is found throughout the northern hemisphere, breeding in all suitable habitats on its range.

C. J. G.

### BOTANY GROUP MEETINGS

During the winter season 1948-1949 the Botany Group held four meetings devoted to the study of plant taxonomy. The first meeting covered a general introduction to the subject in relation to botany in general, including examination of a simplified key copied from "Henry". Mrs. Heaton kindly brought some of her excellent plant illustrations.

The second study was of the general large division particularly the Monocotyledons and Dicotyledons and an examination of the more common wild flowers of the first group. The third meeting was devoted to the second group and to the more detailed use of a key for a single genus, in this case Trifolium (Clover). Methods of collecting and drying plant specimens were also discussed. The fourth meeting was very well attended and was devoted to discussion of the coming summer programme and suggestions for the next winter.

Only two summer field trips were made this season but they were both very successful. On May 21st the group met at Cook and Hillside from which point Mr. Stansfield transported those who did not wish to walk up to the top of Topaz Ave. From Topaz a complete circle was made of the water reservoir. In point of numbers of species the yield was rather slight but as a number of species of one genus were present it was interesting to find out in what respects they were alike and where they differed. Some patches of one flowered cancer root were also found in full flower and proved very interesting to the members present. On completing the walk around the reservoir we arrived at the lovely home of Mr. and Mrs. Stansfield where we had been invited to tea; a most welcome interlude, particularly when served by such a gracious host and hostess. After tea Mr. Stansfield introduced us to some of the cultivated species he is developing in his rock garden.

The second field trip was made to the Saanichton Experimental Station where Mr. H.B. Binny conducted the fourteen members present on a tour of the arboretum. As they walked through this extensive collection of

shrubs Mr. Binny was called on to use his very extensive knowledge in answering questions. His remarks on the characteristics and history of the various species were both instructive and entertaining, and it all added up to a very successful field trip.

Early in September it is hoped to hold a get-together of all interested members for the purpose of planning a winter programme. The chairman would like some ideas and suggestions from members.

W. T. Tildesley,

Convener.

### Bird Group Activities, Summer 1949

On Saturday 7th May, a bird-hike was made around Messrs. E. and T. Raper's dairy farm, Burnside Road. The farm lies on a slope in a narrow valley surrounded by woods of oak and fir. At the upper end the pastures are well interspersed with belts of timber and underbrush. The red-flowering currant was still in good flower. To add to attractiveness a stream runs through this part of the property.

Migrants had not arrived in large numbers. Members, scattered widely over the farm, observed the following birds:- Cooper's hawk, red-tailed hawk, pheasant, north-west flicker, wood pewee, violet-green swallow, chestnut-backed chickadee, brown creeper, Seattle wren, skylark, yellow warbler, Townsend warbler, pileolated warbler, California purple finch, Oregon towhee, savannah sparrow, western chipping sparrow, killdeer plover, Puget Sound sparrow, rusty song sparrow. Twenty members were present. Cars were provided by J. A. Bland, J. O. Clay, V. G. Odling.

On Saturday, 14th May, members attending the geological field meeting noted the full song of the russet-backed thrush. This may be the earliest recorded date for this bird's singing. A sooty fox sparrow was



also heard singing at Milnes' Landing.

On Saturday, 28th May, a general field meeting was enjoyed through the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. K. E. Christiansen, Old Saanich Road. After a ramble through wooded lanes and tall trees to Swan Lake members returned to the Christiansen's garden which was filled with irises in full bloom. Here they watched young hummingbirds in the nest and young vireos leaving their nest. During the afternoon the following birds were noted and watched:- glaucous-winged gull, ring-necked pheasant, Harris' woodpecker, rufous hummingbird, Western flycatcher, Seattle wren, robin, russet-backed thrush, cedar wax-wing, solitary vireo, lutescent warbler, yellow warbler, black-headed grosbeak, chipping sparrow. Cars were provided by J. A. Bland, J. O. Clay, Mr. Davidson, Mrs. Parris, Mr. Stewart. Thirty members were present.

On Saturday, 13th August, cars met at Saanichton and drove to the East Saanich Indian Reserve, through the kindness of Chief Louis Pelkey. Members walked along the shore watching birds on the mud-flats, thence along the spit, returning to shore by wading. (We had hoped to see new waders on this trip.) Birds seen were herring gull, glaucous-winged gull, Bonaparte and Hermann's gull, pheasants, flicker, Lewis' woodpecker, barn swallow, meadowlark, belted kingfisher, heron, kildeer plover, least sandpipers and dowitchers. Cars were provided by J. O. Clay, V. G. Odling, Mrs. Parris, Ernest Smith, Mr. Stewart. Nineteen members were present. J. O. Clay, Convener.

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### Geology Group Field Meeting at Jordan River

Under the arrangement of Mrs. William Mathews about 25 members of the above group left Victoria at 12:30 p.m. by car for Jordan River to visit the workings of the Hedley Mascot Mining Company.

It was a perfect day for the outing.

On the Sooke Road at the crossing of the Canadian National Railway, a short stop was made to look at the basaltic rock found there. Mr. Winkler explained the nature of this and pointed out its age.

At Jordan River the autos were left at the flume and we walked along an old wagon road a few hundred yards to the mine building. Here the mine geologist awaited us, to show and explain the working of the diamond drill and the core brought up from the drill hole.

The head of the drill is set with diamonds, in such a way that as it revolves at the pipe end it cuts a core which moves up into the pipe. The pipe is in ten-foot lengths which can be joined by screw ends. The operator knows by the number of pipe-lengths how far the pipe goes down, and from his last depth just how much core he has cut, and is in the pipe.

Water, sent into the pipe, combines with the ground rock to make a mud mixture. The core, held in the pipe by the pressure of the mud, is hoisted to the surface. When laid out it shows the rock that has been cut through and gives a picture of the whole formation from the surface down. Holes drilled here and there around the field show the extent of the stratum, its inclination, and the probability of workable ore. Many questions were asked as to the mineral content of the rock as shown.

Next, the party went by the trail which followed the bed of an old railway line of earlier workings. We went about two miles on the trail, and reached a place where a tunnel was being driven into the hill side. Some picked up specimens of rock at the dump

to look for mineral ore. Mr. Winkler, Dr. Matthews and the mine geologist pointed out what was in some of the rock. A few went into the tunnel a short way with the guide. Others climbed down to see the falls, and one enthusiast unrolled his fishing line.

When our stay was up we returned on the same trail. The botanical members exclaimed on the variety of plant life noted along the wayside. It was a grand walk and several crossings on logs at a slope, too, tested some of the members in their footing and walking up in the air. On reaching the cars again, lunches were unpacked and a social half hour was spent.

The outing was a great success and our thanks are due to Mr. Winkler, the mine geologist for giving us his time, and to Mrs. Matthews for the successful way the day was organized.

D. R. Stewart.

#### Audubon Screen Tour -- Advance Notice

Word has recently been received from the National Audubon Society that the proposed programme and dates for Victoria for the 1949-50 season are as follows:

Wednesday Nov. 30, Bert Harwell, "Canada West";

Wednesday Jan. 18, Alice and Harold  
Allen, "Sounds of the  
Sageland";

Tuesday Feb. 14, Walter J. Breckenridge,  
"Paul Bunyan Country";

Tuesday March 21, Howard Cleaves, "Midnight Movies";

Tuesday May 5, Alexander Sprunt, "Coast to Crest".

Although this schedule is not yet confirmed we are reasonably sure no changes will be made so mark your calendars accordingly!

#### KOKANEE

While kokanee (see front cover) are present in most of the larger lakes on Vancouver Island they are seldom seen by the average angler because in local waters they do not readily take bait or a lure. On the mainland, however, especially in the Okanagan and Caribou districts, kokanee are a well-known sport-fish being taken in considerable numbers at certain seasons. In lakes of the interior of the Province they attain a length of 16 inches at maturity and appear in numbers at spawning time in the fall along the shore on the tributary streams. At such times in the past great quantities were taken for food by both natives and whites but regulations now govern this fishery in order to conserve the supply.

This fish is also known as kickinnee, little red-fish (from its colour at spawning time), Kennerly's salmon (after Dr. C.B.R. Kennerly of the Northwest Boundary Commission) and silver trout (mainly in the State of Washington). It is now recognized as a dwarf "land-locked" race of the sockeye salmon, which spends all its life in fresh water instead of going to sea. Recent study has shown that two kinds of kokanee are present in some lakes, "residual sockeye" which are offspring of sea-going sockeye and "kokanee" which are descendants of other kokanee. The two kinds differ slightly in size, colour and time of spawning.

On Vancouver Island kokanee are known to be present in Shawnigan, Cowichan, Nanaimo, Horne, Cameron and Campbell lakes and will probably be found to be present in most of the other lakes having access to the sea.

G.C.C.

Two flocks of Canada (?) geese were observed flying northwest over Gonzales and Ross Bay at 6 p.m. on April 26th.



### USING HIS HEAD

An ebbing tide was about to expose on a sandy beach the body of a dead fish about 18 inches in length. Gulls and crows circled above it. The water was too deep for either to wade in to get it. Eventually, as the retreating water shallowed, a large gull waded in. By strenuous tugging he brought it out. A dozen gulls and nine crows watched eagerly the efforts of the mighty one. Satisfied with his prize the stalwart gull commenced his meal by pecking at the neck. Two impatient gulls stole up from behind and began attacking the tail of the fish. They were chased off. Interruptions of this kind continued for a while until the lordly gull's patience became exhausted. He gave chase to one of the more persistent members of his tribe. In doing so his forced absence gave opportunity for the hungry onlooking gulls and crows; they closed in like a flash and began operations. The fish was now fairly well stripped on the upper side. Shrieking as he ran with outstretched wings his lordship hastily returned to the scene. Of course the feathered poachers scattered. Standing astride the remnants of his prize, he faced the ever-hungry bipeds and delivered a tirade against their actions. That finished, he lapsed into silence for a minute or two as if cogitating on some plan to outwit them. He did -- by pulling the remains of the fish back again into the water where he finished his meal unmolested!

Walter MacKay Draycot.

(Scene: Lasqueti Island.

Time: Summer of 1948.)

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### Report of the May Meeting

Following the adoption of the Minutes of the previous regular meeting of the Society and since there was no correspondence, President Hardy brought up the matter concerning Garibaldi Park administration. Dr. Mathews outlined the problem after which the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

WHEREAS Garibaldi Park, one of our outstanding natural resources, is to be made more accessible to the public in the near future, and

WHEREAS the Parks Division of the Department of Lands and Forests, by virtue of its greater facilities, technical training, finances, and enterprise, has shown itself to be more qualified in the administration of park lands than has the Garibaldi Park Board, then

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Victoria Natural History Society request the transfer of the administration of Garibaldi Park to the direct authority of the Parks Division.

A committee consisting of Dr. Mathews, Mr. Tildesley and Mr. Clay was appointed to look after the matter.

Mr. Hardy announced with regret the death on May 9th of Mrs. Hugh Mackenzie, President of our affiliated organization, The Society for the Preservation of Native Plants; the members stood in silence in tribute to her memory.

Mr. Stewart reported on two cases of abnormal growth in trees which had come to his attention; Mr. Clay reported that a colony house for purple martin had been constructed and was ready for erection. The sum of \$5.00 was voted toward purchasing a suitable pole.

The Chairman then introduced Mr. Lewis J. Clark, Professor of Chemistry, Victoria College, who spoke on "Plant Ecology on the Forbidden Plateau"; a digest follows:

Geologically the Forbidden Plateau area is of volcanic origin with three major outcrops dating from a later period. The types of soil which have developed from these rocks vary considerably and in turn govern the type plant cover which they support. Briefly the stages of floral development can be arranged in the following order on the basis of time: lichens (crustose, foliose and fructose types); annuals; perennials; shrubs; trees. Plants may be grouped in three associations according to water conditions, i.e. those of the xerosere, those of the mesosere and those of the hydrosere. Xerophytic plants include most alpine and rock species which are able to survive long periods of drought. Hydrophytic species include waterlilies, sedges and Kalmia growing in water, while mesophytic plants include those species requiring a moderate amount of moisture.

Plants growing at high altitudes have special adaptations including small leaves, short stems and large flowers. Trees such as yellow cedar and mountain hemlock have sharply tapering trunks and short bushy branches in order to withstand heavy weights of snow. Plants growing under climax forest conditions have long stems (no wind), large, thin leaves (reduced light) and white flowers (few insects).

The speaker showed a fine series of slides in natural colour as illustrations and also exhibited several specimens of typical plants.

G.C.C.

## JUNIOR PAGE

### The Northern Alligator Lizard (*Gerrhonotus coeruleus principis*)

This lizard is one of a large group of lizards occupying the western United States. Its range extends from Vancouver Island, British Columbia, east to Montana, and south to western California.

The total length does not exceed ten inches, the tail being about one and one half times the length of the body. It is from olive grey to brown on top, with black, brown and white specks extending onto the tail. Underneath, it is a bluish white or grey.

It lives chiefly upon small insects and spiders, although one in captivity was induced to eat an insect as large as a cicada. The skin is shed generally once a year, depending on the amount of food eaten. Unlike most lizards, the skin is cast in one piece, beginning at the lips and extending backwards over the limbs and tail.

Alligator lizards may be found commonly in the summer, sunning themselves on a rock or sometimes hiding beneath stones and logs. When one is frightened, he may voluntarily drop his tail. This protective measure is quite common among lizards, some dropping their tails more readily than others. The tail, after it has been dropped, wriggles, attracting the pursuer's attention, while the lizard escapes. In time, again depending upon the food, a new tail is regenerated, but it never attains the length of the original, nor does the vertebral column extend into the regenerated part. Occasionally, a tail is incompletely severed, and a tail grows through the fracture, thus giving the animal two tails in the form of a V. The tail is used for gripping, balancing and for storage of fat. In times of scarcity and during hibernation, this supply may be drawn upon for maintenance.

The lizard is viviparous, giving birth to living young from three to five in number.

Brian Ainscough.

NOTICES OF MEETINGS

1949

Tuesday General Meeting in the Reading Room of the  
Sept.13: Provincial Library at 8 p.m.

Speakers: G.A. Hardy, C.J. Guiguet and  
G.C. Carl.

Subject: Report on Triangle Island.

Tuesday

Sept.20 Botany Group Meeting in the Provincial  
Museum at 8 p.m. to discuss plans for  
a winter programme. W. Tildesley.

JUNIOR GROUP:

There will be no Junior Group meeting  
until October.

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Dues are again due

The Treasurer has a new type of membership card for  
this year featuring the crest of the Society. Have  
you received yours yet? Fees may be sent direct to  
Mr. Taylor or left in the Museum office.

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# Victoria Natural History Society

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Annual dues, including subscription: Single, \$2; Family, \$3; Junior, \$1.

## AFFILIATED SOCIETY.

### SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NATIVE PLANTS.

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*Treasurer:* JOHN WORTHINGTON, 247 Government Street, Victoria, B.C.

*To*