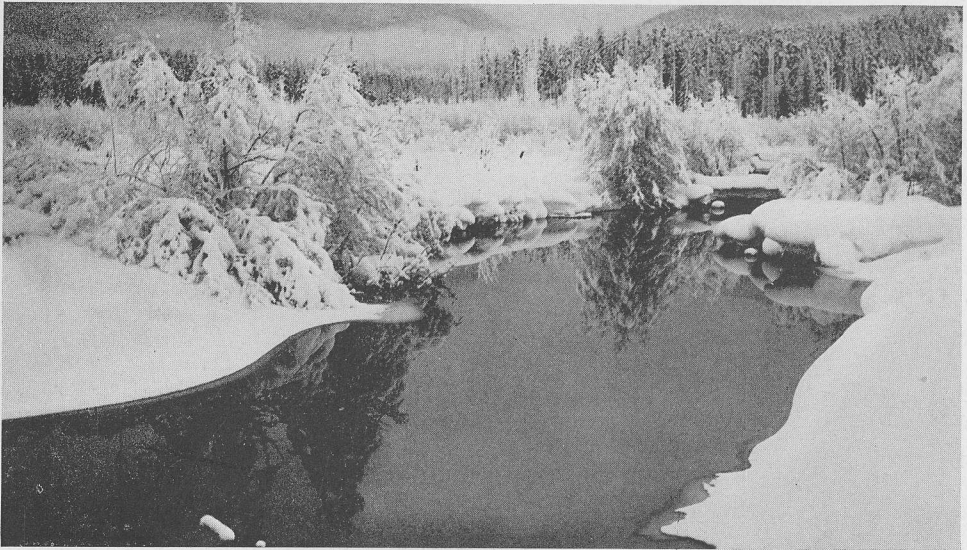


The
VICTORIA
NATURALIST

Vol. 6, No. 7

January, 1950



Winter on the Coast.

Published by the
VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
VICTORIA, B.C.



A. Great Horned Owl; scale, $\frac{1}{3}$
 Arctic Horned Owl Dusky Horned Owl



B. Rufous Hummingbird; scale, $\frac{1}{3}$
 Male
 Female

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Great Horned Owl

The Dusky Horned Owl (Bubo virginianus saturatus) is one of the subspecies of the Great Horned Owl. This magnificent bird is to be found in the humid Coast region from California northward. Standing two feet in height and with a wingspread of four or even five feet, it is one of our largest birds of prey. Except in bright moonlight, it is more often heard than seen. The slow and measured "Whoo, hu-hoo, whoo, whoo" is still a common sound in rural places. It is a handsome bird, with large head and pronounced ear-tufts. The plumage is dusky, barred horizontally with black and with a light area across the throat. The yellow eyes are set wide apart. The flight is noiseless. As many other predators do, this owl frequents areas where rabbits or other rodents are common. When the rabbit-cycle is on the wane, this bird takes heavy toll of game, and is a bold visitor among farm buildings.

The Arctic Horned Owl (Bubo v. subarcticus) is another of the subspecies of the Great Horned Owl found in the Prairie Provinces. It is much lighter in colour than the Dusky Horned Owl. It is a casual visitor from the north coming south in late autumn and returning in spring.

Rufous Hummingbird (Selasphorus rufus)

This species is by far the commonest throughout this Province. Other species are seldom, if ever, seen on Vancouver Island. The male bird may be expected to arrive in early April, sometimes even in the last days of March. At this time the Flowering Currant begins to show its blaze of bright red. The bird darts hastily through woodland glades or from garden to garden, gleaning nectar and insect food wherever flowers can yield them -- it may be that the sharp call and whirring wings are heard first. Afterwards the tiny traveller from New Mexico is glimpsed with his red back and flaming gorget. Not much less wonderful is his mate, when she arrives, for she shares with him the great

speed and marvellous agility of flight. It is not long until nesting commences. The female builds her beautiful nest of lichen and cobweb, placing it upon the upper side of a bough, and two white eggs are laid. For a short period the male apparently admires his wife and the wonderful nest, diving and zooming over her in ecstatic semi-circles. The mood passes and before long he heads away presumably to mountain heights, following the easy life of renewed spring-time.

In August he can be found enjoying himself among alpine flowers before returning to the lands of the south. The mother-bird leads a busy life among lowland flowers, feeding her young by regurgitation. They grow quickly to independence and then follow her to good hunting amongst flowering shrubs, the flowers of delphiniums, jasmine, beans, honeysuckles, fuchsias and other plants of middle and late summer. Green-backed mother and greenish-backed children remain until mid-September.

No better attraction for these birds can be found than the thread-like jets of a fine sprinkling system. They love to avail themselves of good bathing facilities. But let the nature-lover beware the crafty and patient feline that loves to lie in ambush for her prey! To protect the birds, it is a good idea to clear away from the garden the lurking-places close under flowering shrubs and remove logs or rocks that form places of vantage, or to throw down thorny twigs to discourage such predators.

The range of our Rufous hummingbird is from Alaska south to southern Mexico, and chiefly west of the Rocky Mountains. It is of real interest to recall that from October 10th, 1944, until February 3rd, 1947, three full winters, a large strong male bird was noticed feeding amongst yellow jasmine, or moving between jasmine. Seventeen persons on 22 different occasions vouch for the record. Observers included J. O. Clay, A. Protheroe, Mrs. Curtis-Sampson, Prof. J. A. Cunningham, Commander W. Redford, Compton-Lundy, J.N.Anderson, Mr. and Mrs. George Twist, G.V.Cross and V.Stevens.

J. O. Clay.

Agricultural Institute of Canada
Victoria and Islands Branch
Victoria, British Columbia
and
The Victoria Natural History Society
Victoria, British Columbia

October 28, 1949.

Memorandum

To:
The Royal Commission on National Development
in the Arts, Letters and Sciences
in support of the
National Botanic Garden Brief presented to the
Commission at the Ottawa Hearings by Section
Five of the Royal Society of Canada.

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The above organizations beg leave to bring to the attention of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, during their Victoria sitting, the wholehearted support they give to the brief of Section V, Royal Society of Canada, Urging the establishment of at least one National Botanical Garden in Canada.

The Commission is no doubt aware of the support expressed by the leading Canadian botanists in Dr. H. T. Gussow's memorandum of September 1936, to the Botanical Committee of the National Research Council. In addition, we would like to draw to their attention the opinion of one of the greatest botanists of his day, Sir Arthur W. Hill, Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, who expressed himself as follows: (Bul. Miss. Information Roy. Bot. Gard. Kew, No.3. pp. 139-140; 1927)

"The great Dominion of Canada unfortunately does not possess a Botanic Garden. Such an omission in this great country, where the universities have attained a world-wide reputation, especially in the domains of science, is a matter of deep concern and regret to the botanists of the Empire no less than to those of the Dominion itself. Canada does not appear to

"have realized the importance of Botanic Gardens, not only for their educational value in the proper display of the great wealth of the vegetable resources of the Dominion, but also as a center where researches in the sphere of genetics and in the introduction and improvement of economic plants can be prosecuted. It is to be hoped that the importance of this aspect of botanical knowledge has only been overlooked owing to the rapid development which has been taking place in other directions, and that the time is now approaching when the assistance which the science of botany can render to a country will be more fully appreciated and that time and opportunity will be found to consider the urgent needs of the science in order that she may fulfil her proper functions."

This statement from one of the world's best known botanical authorities summarizes the opinion held by all Canadian botanists, viz: on the world renowned Royal Garden of Kew is long overdue.

The practical aspects are fully demonstrated by some of the better known accomplishments of Kew. The propagation of the rubber tree and its introduction into the East Indies with the resulting development of the rubber industry is a story of big business that came from research. In medicine the introduction of Cinchona trees with the resulting mass production of quinine in Ceylon and India made life bearable in the tropics. The educational, cultural, and popular aspects do not need stressing to anyone who has visited Kew, one of the many notable Botanic Gardens in other parts of the Commonwealth, or any of the sixty-five that are supported in the U.S.A.

In Canada we have not begun to explore the possibilities of even our own flora and there is no place where a comprehensive collection of growing material is available for study. This lack of material was particularly emphasized by shortages of critical material during the late war. By the time collections of Asclepias and

other species for fiber studies had been established, collections of Digitalis and Solanaceous species for pharmaceutical study, and other species for rubber research, so much time had been consumed that very little time was left for research before the need had passed.

Another shortage we suffer from that can be directly attributed to the absence of botanic gardens is that of workers trained in the related fields of taxonomy, ecology, and plant geography. These are basic to fundamental research and can be fostered only by facilities provided by botanic gardens. To make good this lack of trained personnel, it is suggested that the Dominion provide assistance by employing promising undergraduate and graduate students during the summer recess. These students would be used on projects either at the Botanic Garden or as collectors with field exploration parties and survey groups. The universities would benefit from this arrangement by the receipt of duplicate material and the encouragement of gifted students to continue in their chosen field.

The short-term object of this presentation is the immediate establishment of one central National Botanic Garden with herbarium, museum, and buildings for the display of exotic plants. However, we consider that an adequate programme should eventually include at least five regional botanic gardens. Technical and financial aid for Provincial Botanic Gardens, particularly those established in conjunction with university botany departments, might well be a responsibility that could be shared on the federal level.

Considering the predominant place that vegetable resources have in our economy, it seems unfortunate that Canada should be practically the only country in the world without the facilities of a botanical garden. What this has meant to agriculture, forestry, and conservation in general is easily understood. In terms of floods, wind and water erosion, and denuded forest lands, abuse of our plant resources is painfully obvious wherever one goes in the Dominion.

One aspect of the problem of conservation that seems

to have been almost completely ignored is that of the role of botany in marine biology. What of the possibilities of producing agar from some of our native sea-weeds? What effect has the plankton supply on the location and quantity of fish runs? What has been the effect of the introduction of exotic species of marine plants in Canadian coastal areas such as Southern Vancouver Island? These are all basically taxonomic and ecological problems and their study should center around a botanic garden type of organization.

While the economic aspects of botanical gardens has been stressed, the cultural and entertainment aspects are of almost equal importance. Even as sophisticated a publication as the New Yorker recently sent a reporter to one of the outdoor courses at the New York Botanical Gardens. Though the course was for students, he found also a number of business men who made a habit of taking the course every year for the pure enjoyment of learning about plants in a natural environment. A group of pharmacologists were also included. They were interested in finding out what the plants they were used to seeing as uninteresting powders looked like when they were growing.

The possibilities of botanic gardens as tourist attractions are unlimited but in this direction lies the danger of over emphasis. The primary purpose of any Botanic Garden Programme must never be lost sight of -- this will always be to increase and broaden our knowledge of Botany through research.

Mr. R. H. Mackay, Dominion Wildlife officer for British Columbia, is seeking records of Trumpeter Swans wintering in this Province. Reports may be sent him, addressed to the Department of Zoology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B. C.

REPORT OF THE DECEMBER MEETING

The regular meeting of the Society was held on Tuesday, December 13th, at 8 p.m. in the Provincial Library with the President in the chair.

The minutes of the October meeting were read and on motion adopted.

The President welcomed Mrs. Grigg and Mr. Victor Noer as new members.

Mr. Clay reported what steps had been taken toward obtaining protection of the bald eagle, and suggested that the golden eagle be also protected. After discussion it was moved by Mr. Gray and seconded by Miss Perry that the secretary be instructed to contact similar groups such as the Vancouver Natural History Society, asking them to join with us in obtaining protection for the bald eagle and the golden eagle in this province. The motion was carried.

Mr. Stewart asked that members try to get into the next Audubon lecture before the "crush" in order that they could get seats. The President announced that the Executive had arranged that seats be held for ticket holders until 7:40 p.m. and that the balance of the season tickets be sold at \$1.75 each and that this would be advertised in the newspapers.

The meeting then proceeded to the examination of specimens and the President urged that this part of the programme be made of greater interest. Mrs. Heaton displayed horse chestnuts in varying stages of growth; Mr. Clay spoke of the habits of dowitchers. Amongst other exhibits were a piece of pipestone, some leaves of the Oregon crab apple, three varieties of winter moths, and a plant belonging to the daisy family found only in Victoria, in this province.

Mr. H. B. Binny then gave a talk on trees around Victoria and their relatives in other parts of the world,

profusely illustrated by lantern slides. A condensation of the lecture is given below. The speaker was warmly thanked by the President and members for his brilliant address and on motion the meeting adjourned.

Secretary.

"A TALK ON TREES"

(Precis of lecture given to the Natural History Society of Victoria, on December 13th, 1949.)

The importance and influence of trees and forests is as good as impossible to contemplate but it was recognised by both Hitler and Mussolini, the latter having a grand scheme, basically sound, to reduce the average temperature of Italy by the growing of forests and thereby to increase the energy of the population.

There have been forests for millions of years. Evolution has changed the genera and species but, as links with the past, we have the monogeneric "Ginkgo biloba", going back unchanged over 180 million years and the recently discovered "Dawn Redwood". There are also petrified cones, leaves and woods and such spectacles as petrified forests, among which that in Arizona is well-known.

The study of forest distribution today shows Canada and the United States as being about one-third forested. The greatest concentrations of trees occur in British Honduras, Malaya, the Netherlands Indies, Brazil and British and Dutch Guianas. There are some 2,500 species in Malaya and 5,000 in the Amazon watershed. Forest composition differs greatly as shown by a tropical forest in Malaya, Eucalyptus forests in Australia, a mountain forest in Nyasaland, a Cedar forest in Cyprus, Silver Fir in Switzerland, a virgin coniferous forest on Vancouver Island, a Rubber plantation in Costa Rica and a Pine plantation in the Southern States.

Trees are named sometimes for a characteristic such as "Silver" or "Bigleaf Maple" or for a product such as "Sugar Maple". Naming trees by their woods leads to considerable confusion as in the cases of Mahogany or Redwood.

Oaks have always been very important, especially in ship-building. Viking ships dating to 900 A.D. were of Oak as were the "Victory" and the U.S.S. "Constitution", "Old Ironsides".

Some illustrations in colour of oriental dwarf trees in Victoria were shown such as Larch, Maple and Cryptomeria, together with a "Hinoki Cypress" at the Arnold Arboretum.

Odd growth in Victoria appears in the "Weeping Witch Elm", especially two specimens on Craigflower Road, a "Weeping Ash" in Stadacona Park, twining "Douglas Firs" at Royal Oak and an Arbutus growing through a Fir at Patricia Bay. The Arbutus was first noted by Menzies who was also probably responsible for the introduction of the odd "Monkey Puzzle" (Araucaria imbricata) from Chile.

Some strange growth forms in other parts of the world include the "Dragon Tree" of the Canary Islands, the "Baobabs" of Africa and Australia, the "Bottle Trees" of Argentina and Queensland, the "Banyans" of India and trees with 'knees' such as the Baldcypresses and 'stilt' or 'prop' roots such as the "Mangroves" and "Screw-pines". The individual with the longest recorded history is the sacred "Bo-Tree" of Ceylon, 2,194 years.

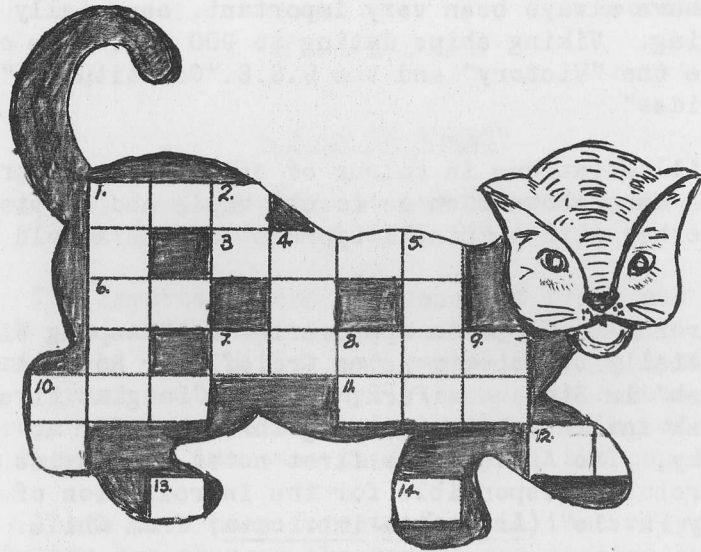
Victoria City's biggest tree is a "Sequoia", native to the Sierras of California where the species attain enormous size and age. The local specimen is at the corner of Moss and Richardson Streets and is likely about 90 years old. Victoria has many others but this is the tallest.

H. B. B.

 Mr. O. C. Furniss of Alberni reports seeing a Lewis woodpecker in his area in September 1949.

JUNIOR PAGE

Here is an easy puzzle for you this month -



across

down

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Feline | 1. Small hut. |
| 3. 1-12th of a foot. | 2. Note in Scale. |
| 6. Before Christ - abbr. | 4. Short sleep. |
| 7. Fruit. | 5. Outer covering of a seed. |
| 10. To finish. | 8. Post office - abbr. |
| 11. Ancient | 9. Boy's name - abbr. |
| 12. Note in scale | 10. Elevated - abbr. |
| 13. Five - Roman num. | 14. Second letter in alphabet. |

Solution to last month's Junior cross-word puzzle:-

ACROSS:

1. Blenny; 6. Seal; 7. Eel; 9. Park; 10. Awe; 11. Ark;
12. Up; 13. Raccoon; 16. Ova; 18. Willow; 20. DF; 21. Deer.

DOWN:

1. Bear; 2. Lark; 3. Elk; 4. Neap; 5. Yew; 6. Sparrow;
8. Leaf; 12. Uropod; 14. Avid; 15. Calf; 17. Ear; 19. We.

NATIVE TREES OF CANADA

Native Trees of Canada, Bulletin 61, Dominion Forest Service, Mines, Forests, and Scientific Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources, Ottawa. Price \$1.50. The new edition of this bulletin which first appeared in 1917 is brought up to date in all respects. Besides coloured plates as frontispieces and on the cover, the notes on each species are accompanied by pictures of leaves, bark, fruit, twigs or other portions of the tree concerned. Maps show forest classification and distribution of each species.

The Wise Gull and the Stupid Ones

A few days ago I saw a gull following a man who was putting the garbage cans out. The bird waited at each gate until the can came out and then went on to the next one. At the ninth house, a can arrived without a cover. This apparently was what Mr. Gull was waiting for; he was inside it in a moment and began flinging out potato peelings, tin cans, paper etc. on to the boulevard in the search for food. On Dallas Road some gulls were dropping clams from a height upon the road-way to break the shell. Sitting on the sea wall were six crows; as soon as a clam hit the ground one of these birds darted out and secured it before the gull could fly down. This went on for over half an hour. The gulls seemed to have no idea as to where their supper was going but wandered about seemingly completely mystified.

Northcote Dimoline.

Walking in Beacon Hill Park last week, I went to investigate a commotion at the aviary. I found the canaries frantic with terror as a sparrow hawk was trying to claw its way through the wire of their cage. I drove the hawk away and a little later it was shot by the foreman.

Northcote Dimoline.

NOTICE OF MEETINGS

Tuesday

Jan.10: General Meeting in the Reading Room of the Provincial Library, at 8 p.m. Speaker: Mr. C. P. Lyons, Assistant Forrester, Parks Division. Topic: "Milestones on the Mighty Fraser", illustrated.

Wednesday

Jan.18: Audubon Screen Tour, Prince Robert House Auditorium at 8 p.m. Alice and Harold Allen in "Sounds of the Sageland".

Tuesday

Jan.17: Bird Group meeting at the home of Mrs. R. G. Hobson, 2284 Windsor Rd., at 8 p.m.
Mr. Clay.

Tuesday

Jan.24: Botany Group Meeting, Provincial Museum at 8 p.m.
Mr. Tildesley.

Junior Naturalists

Saturday

Jan.14: First meeting in the New Year of the Junior Naturalists at the Provincial Museum at 10 a.m.

Spider Booklet: "Spiders" by T. B. Kurata, Handbook No.6, Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology, Toronto, Ont., 33 pages with several illustrations. Here is a booklet written in popular style concerning creatures about which we know so little. Sections are devoted to spider relatives, anatomy, life history, webs and identification. A key to the most important families is given and a general account is concluded with instructions concerning collection and preservation.

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To