

The
VICTORIA
NATURALIST

Vol. 6, No. 9

March, 1950



Forbidden Plateau, Vancouver Island.

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



A. Glaucous-winged Gull; scale, $\frac{1}{8}$
Adult in winter



B. Bonaparte's Gull; scale, $\frac{1}{8}$
Adult in winter (flying)
Summer adult
Juvenile

Franklin's Gull; scale, $\frac{1}{8}$
Adult in winter (flying)
Summer adult
Juvenile

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Glaucous-Winged Gull

This is the typical bird of the Victoria district, one with which everyone sooner or later becomes intimately acquainted. It is the largest and most common of our gulls, and is found here throughout the year.

In the fall and winter season it frequents the city, our gardens, parks and other open spaces, where it is ever on the watch for a "handout". With very little encouragement it will become so tame as sometimes to be a nuisance.

Not only does the Glaucous-Winged Gull visit us in its gay and irresponsible moods, but it remains at other times as well. When the breeding season approaches they do not wing their way to regions far removed as do so many of our other gulls, but they merely resort to some secluded islet nearby and there make a token nest of grass, lay their olive-green, brown-blotched eggs, and later bring forth the dappled fluffy chicks. In course of time the chicks develop into full-sized gulls, but bear the drab dress of immaturity. Not until their 3rd or 4th year of life do they assume the sea-blue colouration of the mantle and snowy head and breast of the mature gull.

Bonaparte's Gull

Bonaparte's Gull is well known to bird lovers of Victoria for large flocks of this dainty little gull are evident in quiet bays along the shore during the autumn months. At this season they may be seen peacefully resting on a log-boom or gracefully skimming the water with a dancing tern-like motion.

The birds we see here are migrants on their way south for the winter, and are in their winter or immature plumage. To see this bird in the glory of its neat

spring dress, it would be necessary to follow it to the breeding haunts in the northern and interior muskegs and sloughs where it often associates with Franklin's Gull. Indeed the two birds can at first only be distinguished in the field with some difficulty, though the smaller size and tern-like flight of Bonaparte's Gull is most distinctive.

Franklin's Gull

This beautiful bird is a rare visitor in British Columbia for its home is on the prairie east of the Rockies. There it may be found nesting among the swamp and sloughs or rarely high up in a spruce tree. When not attending to the duties of parenthood these birds are often to be seen following the plough, greedily pouncing on any upturned grub or other insect before it is able to get under cover again.

In the region where the writer was familiar with the bird, it was very seclusive during the incubation period. Occasionally one of the parents would be seen sitting watchfully on the top of a fire killed aspen tree or resting on the water of a nearby slough. As soon as the downy young were out, the solicitation of the parent birds knew no bounds. This was particularly evident when leading the young from one place to another which was observed on several occasions. The whereabouts of the chicks could be readily ascertained for on the near approach of man or beast the old birds would attack with fearless courage, swooping down on the head of the unwary offender and at the same time uttering a nerve-shattering scream. During these treks overland from one body of water to another the parent birds are never far away, leading the chicks by calls as they hover over their freckled babies amid the grass. In one case observed, when night came on the young were herded on to tufts of rushes that grew in the centre of a small pothole. Soon after daybreak, the female was observed hovering and circling about a hundred yards away in the direction of a large lake.

In British Columbia there are records for Alta Lake, Okanagan Lake and Tupper Creek where the birds observed were summer transients.

As will be seen from the illustration the black hood is replaced in winter by a dark patch on each side of an otherwise white head, while the first year birds are grey in colour.

G. A. Hardy.

Mr. A. R. Davidson of Cadboro Bay spent two days before Christmas among the birds in his area. He counted 1998 birds of 52 species. Most interesting items were: Western grebe 132, widgeon 440, harlequin 14, robins 160, cedar waxwing 23, golden-crowned sparrow 2, skylarks 20, pipits 80, siskins 200.

During the recent cold spell, Mrs. Borden, Forshaw Road, counted 23 Canada geese (honkers) around the water-hole at that point of Gorge Waters. On another occasion 29 were reported by Mr. William Adams in the same area.

It is reported that a western willet was collected by Mr. Hamilton Laing at Comox. This record tends to substantiate Mr. Clay's claim dated April 1945, of having seen 50 of these rarities off the Oak Bay Golf Links waterfront.

European Starlings

Mrs. A. H. Ford of 2064 Hampshire Road reports seeing a single European starling in her garden on February 4th and again a few days later. Mr. and Mrs. H.G. Wyatt, 2072 Hampshire Rd., also observed these birds on these dates and a group of five on February 13th in company with robins. These appear to be the first sight for this species on Vancouver Island.

Some Butterflies which normally hibernate in the
Victoria Area of British Columbia

J. R. J. Llewellyn Jones,
Cobble Hill, B. C.

With the approach of spring, on warm sunny days, it is by no means unusual to see a gaily coloured and rather large butterfly flitting about in enjoyment of the genial sunshine, as it strikes some sheltered spot in garden or woodland.

If the insect is observed quite early, say in February or during the first two weeks of March, it is almost certain to be one that has spent the winter with us hidden away in some nook or cranny or perhaps the wood-pile or out-house.

That many butterflies which emerge from the chrysalis in the fall hibernate in British Columbia is quite well known, and no special significance can rightly be attached to this fact.

It is to be regretted therefore that so often in the press and in radio broadcasts some undue significance is attached to the early appearance of butterflies. It may be a claim for a certain area to possess exceptional weather conditions, or it may simply be a statement that now spring must be approaching, or sentiments of that sort. The butterfly is often referred to as "Amos" by which the writer presumes that the Mourning Cloak, (the Camberwell Beauty of British writers) is intended. This is one of the earliest butterflies to reappear in the spring and it is by no means unusual to see it abroad in the early months of the year.

The Mourning Cloak, Nymphalis antiopa L., is a striking insect with its dark brown wings, spotted on the edges with blue and bordered with primrose yellow, which, after hibernation, often fades to creamy white. It feeds, in the larval state, on willows and sallows, also on poplars and elms and is gregarious in its habits, spinning a web over its food plant, and not separating from

its companions till almost ready to pupate. The larva is black with spines of the same colour and has a row of red spots along the back. It is easily reared to maturity, the chrysalis stage being of short duration, only a few weeks.

Other butterflies of similar habits and which are also among the first to leave their winter quarters are the so-called "Comma Butterflies" by reason of marks on the underside of the underwings resembling a comma. In this area there are four species, all of which may be easily obtained. In general terms they are brown with wings heavily indented and notched, giving them a somewhat ragged appearance. They are spotted and marked with shades of orange and red brown and are quite conspicuous insects. The species are as follows:-

The Brown Comma, Polygonia satyrus Edw. The larval food plant of which is the stinging nettle.

The Green Comma, Polygonia faunus rusticus Edw. The larval food plant being sallows, Salix spp.

The Variegated Comma, Polygonia zephyrus Edw. The larval food plant being red flowering currant, Ribes sanguineum Pursh.

The Western Comma, Polygonia oreas silenus Edw. The larval food plant being various species of wild gooseberry.

These insects are easily bred from the larvae, which should be sought on the food plants indicated in the early months of summer. They enter the chrysalis state about the middle of July.

Mention also should be made of the Tortoise-shells, of which we have two in our locality.

The California Tortoise-shell, Nymphalis californica Bdv. which in some years appears in the late summer and fall in swarms hibernating later and reappearing very early, sometimes in February. It is not known to breed

on Vancouver Island, though it does so in the interior of our Province. The larval food plant is reported to be Ceanothus.

The American Tortoise-shell, Nymphalis milberti Godt. is a nettle feeding species and is smaller than the preceding insect. Both are brightly marked insects, being spotted and marked with reds and browns.

At this point it may be mentioned that these butterflies are among the groups that spend the longest period of any butterflies as a perfect insect. It is not uncommon to see very worn and tattered specimens flying briskly around only a few weeks before the new generation of imagines is to be expected. This would give a range of life as a butterfly of practically twelve months. The normal length of a butterfly's life varies according to species, but a rough estimate would be about three or four weeks.

On seeing a butterfly therefore in the early spring, the observer should, if possible, ascertain the species to which it belongs, before he makes any deductions. If it belongs to the aforementioned kinds which normally hibernate with us, there is little significance to be attached to the incident. If however it should be a member of a species which defers its emergence from the pupal state till the spring, such as an Orange-tip, a Cabbage White or a Blue, then there might be justification for calling attention to the fact of its early appearance and expressing a hope that the rigours of winter were past and that spring was around the corner. Always ask what sort of butterfly was seen and try to get a definite identification.

CROW ANTICS

The remarkable social sense that crows seem to have developed make them probably the most detested and also the most interesting of our feathered residents. If one can forget their predatory, marauding proclivities, their ability to take care of themselves and their apparent enjoyment in doing so, crows can be a source of considerable amusement. Our Ross Bay crows seem to be a particularly able and raffish crew. During the cherry season the ownership of every cherry tree is proclaimed abroad by the line-up of crows on the nearest house ridge and by their raucous conversation as they raid the tree for every available cherry.

I often sit at the front window and watch half a dozen black tormentors bully the neighbor's cat out of the boulevard trees in front of its home. They perch on the telephone and light wires and hop from there to the outer branches; they swoop down over the cat's head and jump towards him and back again till the poor cat is so confused that he just turns tail and runs for the house. I wish the robins and other small birds could learn the same technique. This gang also used the same wires and tree as launching platforms last summer, when teaching their young to fly.

The most amusing stunt they have perfected so far is a "dunking" technique for hard bread crusts. Across on the next street is a rocky lot with a natural basin that the owner keeps filled with water; she also throws out some very hard bread crusts. The crows were not slow to take advantage of both these facts. The first crow to tackle one of the crusts found it just a little too tough, so he hopped over to the water hole, placed the crust in a shallow place and retired to a position high on the rock. After a few minutes he went back and tried the crust. Not finding it yet soft enough he took it to a little deeper place and repeated the procedure. This time the crust was apparently soft enough for his

liking so he took it back to his rocky perch and proceeded to eat it. By the time he had eaten about half the crust, he had reached his capacity, so, instead of just leaving the remainder exposed to the raids of other food hunters, he took it down to a hollow where there was a little grass and after carefully putting it down proceeded to cover it over with small stones. Incidentally, he remembered where it was and later retrieved it for another meal. This procedure has been going on for two years now.

Another amusing incident involving crows or more probably rooks, took place in Cornwall, England. On the golf links near King Arthur's Castle at Tintagel where the wind was blowing as only a Cornish wind can, a wind-sock, used as a green marker, was blowing stiff and straight, as though it was made of tin. A friend who happened to be crossing the links noticed a crow flying around this marker, so he stopped to see what the crow was doing. To his surprise he found the bird was using it for a slide much as children use the metal slides in their play-grounds. He would fly around to the front of the sock and then dive right in, slide down the outside of the sock and swing around for another turn. I would have taken this story as a bit of a "leg pull" if it had come from any other person than the one who related it. He was quite incapable of that type of joke, particularly with his family, to whom he related the experience when he returned home.

W. Tildesley.

Skylarks: During the long-continued spell of frost and snow in January and February fears were felt regarding the survival of skylarks in the Victoria area. A quick survey through the ooze of four close-in Saanich stubble fields on February 9th reassured five local birdmen. Fourteen skylarks were seen, an average of about three to the acre. Needless to say the most likely fields were visited. In the same area were 12 meadow-larks and 16 snipe, all strong in flight.

REPORT OF THE FEBRUARY MEETING

The regular meeting was held on Tuesday, February 7th, 1950, in the Provincial Library at 8 p.m. The meeting was called to order by the president; minutes of the previous meeting were read and adopted.

The secretary read a letter from Mr. Ernest Smith, now stationed at Penticton, in which he expressed his regret at not being able to carry on as vice-president as his work would necessitate an absence from Victoria of at least 18 months more. A letter was also read from Commander Kingscote resigning his membership as he and his wife were moving to New Zealand.

The president asked for an expression of opinion as to carrying on the Audubon lectures for another season. Mr. Stewart reported that the finances of the present series were in a satisfactory condition, with sufficient money on hand to defray all expenses; after discussion it was moved by Mrs. Stewart, seconded by Mrs. Gore and carried, that the Audubon Screen Tours be sponsored for the season 1950-51.

The president named Miss Perry, Mrs. Leveson-Gower and Miss Grace McDonald to be the nominating committee for the 1950 election of officers.

Mr. Whitehouse showed an ammonite discovered near Medicine Hat; the specimen had been cut in two to show the beautiful markings of the interior.

Mrs. Aiken displayed two very encrusted pieces of iron discovered near the cable at Telegraph Bay.

Mr. Clay brought in a piece of apple-tree bark with a curious gall-like growth at the base of a circular scar. Dr. Gussow explained this by pointing out that the cambium layer had died around the remainder of the cut and the small portion that remained alive had no where to go but had just kept on growing into this round bulbous structure. If all the cambium had remained alive the wound would have grown over.

Dr. H. T. Gussow, retired Dominion Botanist, as guest speaker, stressed the great need in Canada for a National Botanical Garden. The tendency to turn the few gardens that had been started into amusement parks was greatly deplored. The speaker demonstrated that, while still maintaining its position as a scientific institution, the garden can be a great source of pleasure and increased botanical knowledge to the general public. After viewing Dr. Gussow's coloured slides of the numerous botanical gardens he had visited in the Commonwealth no one could doubt the truth of his argument. One can not help but feel, considering the importance of our agricultural and forestry industries, that we are lagging very badly in this particular field.

Secretary.

BIRD NOTES: On December 22nd I made a count of the birds in the Cadboro Bay and Ten Mile Point area, and noticed a fair number of robins, about 200. Since then the weather has turned cold and considerable snow has fallen over the Island, one result being that wave after wave of robins are flocking into this district. To-day, January 5th, every tree at the north end of Cadboro Bay is full of robins, their calls fairly making the air ring. A conservative estimate of their number would be 3,000, the largest concentrated winter flock I can remember. The arbutus trees are still covered with berries, so there is ample feed.

This bird count also included about 100 American pipits mingled with a possible dozen skylarks in the old air field above Cadboro Bay. This seems rather late for pipits to be in this district; too late in fact, as they require open fields for feeding, so the present snow-covered countryside will make it difficult for them to survive.

A. R. Davidson.

JUNIOR PAGE

An Owl Adventure:

It was on the morning of February 1st I shot the owl. It was about ten to nine and I was just going to school when I remembered I hadn't fed and watered my pigeons, so I rushed into the pen and was just picking up the feed tin when I saw Swifty, who was my pet pigeon, lying in a dark corner dead. Then I looked up, and there was an owl sitting on the perch. I yelled for someone to come and kill it. Then I remembered my BB gun, so I dashed upstairs with snow and all, and got the gun from under the chesterfield (the gun was supposed to be taken away from me for a while for shooting in the basement when a car was there). I rushed out and nearly fell downstairs, and took aim at the owl's chest, because I wanted to get him alive. He was half asleep on the perch when I hit him, but he woke up very quickly as if a bomb had hit him, but I was so mad, the second shot went through his left eye. That finished him off, and he is now a specimen in the Museum. He was a Kennicott's Screech Owl.

Swifty's mate had two eggs, and they were hatched the day after he was killed.

Christopher Stevenson.

How Insects are Reproduced

Most insects reproduce in one of three ways.

(a) Complete metamorphosis. This development has been attained by most of the higher insects like the bees, ants, butterflies, flies and beetles.

All these begin life in the egg stage then the egg hatches into a larva. In this stage the insect eats most, after which it turns into a pupa when it is dormant. Then the adult emerges.

(b) Incomplete metamorphosis. In this life history when the eggs hatch the young look like small adults, eg. grasshopper.

(c) Parthenogenesis. In some groups of insects young are born from unfertilized eggs which hatch in the body of the female. This is known as parthenogenesis and is found frequently among aphids or plant lice.

Marion Patterson.

Note: (c) In these groups one or more generations produce fertile eggs.

NOTICE OF MEETINGS

TUESDAY ANNUAL MEETING, Provincial Museum at 8 p.m.
 Mar.14th: Business: Presentation of Annual Reports;
 Election of officers.
 Speakers: Members' Night:- Mr.G.A.Hardy:
 Wild Flowers, illustrated. Miss E.Collen:
 Collecting Rocks by a Beginner. Mr. H.
 D. R. Stewart: Birdwatching - An Amateur
 starts out.
 (Note change in meeting place)

TUESDAY AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR, Prince Robert House
 Mar.21st: Auditorium at 8 p.m. Speaker: Howard
 Cleaves, "Midnight Movies in Animaland".

TUESDAY BOTANY GROUP MEETING at the home of Mr.
 Mar.28th: and Mrs. Tildesley, 118 Wildwood Avenue,
 at 8 p.m.

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ANSWER TO JUNIOR CROSSWORD PUZZLE which appeared in
 February: ACROSS-- 2.We. 4.Ape. 7.Apple. 8.Spoon.
 9.Tease. 11.Red.
 DOWN: -- 1.On. 3.Elephant. 5.Bro.
 6.Glass. 10.Eye.

JUNIOR NATURALISTS - will continue to attend the
 Museum Movies being offered at
 the Museum on Saturday mornings
 during March. The first group
 meeting will be on SATURDAY,
 April 15th at 10 a.m.

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To