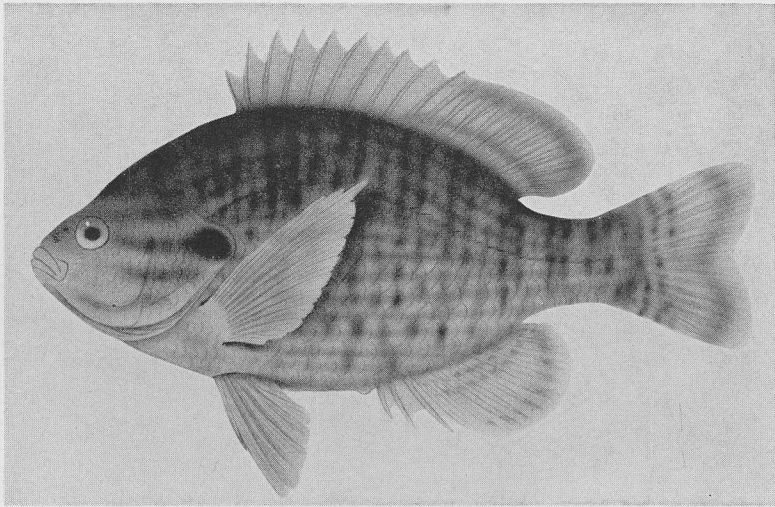


The
VICTORIA
NATURALIST

Vol. 7, No. 3

September, 1950



Pumpkinseed.

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



*Audubon
Screen
Tours*

presented by the

Victoria Natural History Society

and the

National Audubon Society of Canada

1950-51 Season

KARL H. MASLOWSKI
Beneath Buckeye Skies
Wednesday, October 11

G. HARRISON ORIANs
By Erie's Changing Shores
Monday, November 6

LUCIE PALMER
Underwater Kingdom
Monday, January 22

ALLAN CRUICKSHANK
Below the Big Bend
Monday, February 19

TOM and ARLENE HADLEY
America the Beautiful
Monday, May 7

Foreward . . . The Victoria Natural History Society and the National Audubon Society of Canada take pleasure in announcing another series of Audubon Screen Tours. To Victoria and to more than one hundred other cities both in Canada and in the United States, Audubon Screen Tours bring the finest natural history lecturers, who personally present the best in all-colour outdoor motion pictures on a variety of wildlife subjects. These programmes are offered in the interest of wildlife protection, wise use of natural resources and conservation education. We cordially invite your participation.

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Belleville at Douglas

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1019 Douglas St., or at the Provincial Museum

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Pumpkinseed

The pumpkinseed or sunfish (Lepomis gibbosus) is found in many of the lakes of the Victoria district, such as Elk, Beaver, Prospect, Langford and Glen lake and also in the ponds of Beacon Hill Park. While it seldom grows more than seven inches in length in local waters, it is notable for its bright colouration especially in the breeding fish. The body is greenish- or bluish-olive above with orange spots on the sides. The cheeks are orange with wavy blue streaks with a bright scarlet spot on the edge of gill-cover lobe. The belly and lower fins are yellow-orange; the upper fins are bluish with orange spots. It is by far the most colourful of our local fishes and makes an interesting inmate of the aquarium.

During the breeding period in early summer the brightly coloured male constructs a nest by clearing away all debris over a gravel patch in shallow water. The circular cleared spots can be seen quite readily in the lower ponds in Beacon Hill Park. The eggs and subsequent young are jealously guarded by the male who drives away all intruders.

The origin of the pumpkinseeds now found in lakes of the Victoria district appears to be unknown. Since the species is native to eastern North America the fore runners of the present stock may have been imported at the same time as the smallmouth bass which are now also found in many of our local lakes.

G.C.C.

Black-bellied Plover: Seven individuals passed Gonzales point flying low over the water in rapid flight on July 22nd. They disappeared past the south end of Trial Island.

SOME BOTANY NOTES: 1950

The unusually cold winter and backward spring set back the blooming time of most of our early wild flowers so that it was well on into April before many of them dared show their heads. As the season progressed it certainly made up for lost time; we were treated to a glorious display towards the end of April and right until the wild lands dried out in July.

Of course there were plenty of plants growing in the later part of the season that are as interesting as the better known ones of the early part of the season but they take a little more hunting for. The late summer beach-pea (Lathyrus maritimus Bingle.) of the sea-shore is one of these. It is a close relative of the sweet-pea and only slightly different from the perennial-pea which is so persistent in some of our local gardens. The west coast gum weed (Grindelia intricifolia DC.) makes a bright splash of colour along the cliffs and banks by the sea's edge with its sticky bright yellow flowers. Down on the sand, often slightly below high water mark, several very interesting plants flourish right on into winter in temperate years. The very showy, yellow calyxed, sand verbena or four o'clock (Abronia latifolia Esch.) may not persist that long but I have seen the sea rocket (Cakile edulenta Hook.) blooming in the sands below Clover Point in January while right beside it there were mats of still green and growing sand-burr (Franseria bipinnatifida Nutt.). What makes these last two interesting is not their general appearance which is rather insignificant but the fact that while they go unnoticed by the majority of people that see them, sea-rocket is often used as a food plant and is closely allied to sea-kale while sand-bur is the only one of the ragweed tribe that we have in this area. This is the tribe to which all the worst hayfever plants belong and which causes the devastating outbreaks that occur every fall in the east. When one considers to what lengths hayfever sufferers will go to get away from ragweed infested areas it is surprising that our local tourist bureau has not done more to acquaint the public with our complete freedom from this pest. What little

sand-bur that does grow in resort areas could be eliminated with a few cents worth of 2-4-D and a few hours work.

Well! to get back to the botany section and 1950, three very successful field trips were made and a fourth was rained out. The membership were very disappointed when they had to cancel their trip to the Saanichton Experimental Farm Arboretum with Mr. H. B. Binny. Remembering the very interesting trip he conducted last summer, they had been looking forward to a return visit.

We hope to get some of the members who attended the other excursions to write them up for later issues of The Naturalist.

W. T.

Double crested cormorants were observed on July 7 in a nesting colony on Channel Island at the south end of Captain Pass off the east side of Salt Spring Island.

Mr. A. A. Sherman, Federal Fisheries Officer at Duncan, B.C., who has patrolled this area for many years, reports that no cormorants were observed there previously. That the colony is a new one seems substantiated by the fact that the trees containing nests still bear foliage and, as yet are relatively unaffected by the faeces of the birds.

Due to boat trouble we were unable to make a close inspection, but 24 nests and numerous birds were counted from our point of vantage in the channel. A more detailed investigation is planned by the Provincial Museum.

Pelagic Cormorants were observed nesting on July 12 on the rocks on one of the islets directly north of Greater Chain in the Chain Island group off Oak Bay. cursory examination revealed 14 nests with eggs, in clutches from 5 to 7. The eggs were very pale, almost white, lacking the limey secretions characteristic in eggs of this species. This fact coupled with the late date indicated crow predation from nearby Chatham and Discovery Islands. One clutch of eggs was collected.

Some Wild Flowers of a Sandy Beach
in the Vicinity of Victoria, B.C.

Wild flowers exist on sandy beaches not because they have adjusted their constitutions to a salty diet but because they have solved the problem of acquiring and storing fresh water. The passage of water from a more concentrated solution, as in sea water, to a less concentrated solution, as in the tissues of land plants, is normally a physical impossibility. Only during heavy rains when the salt water is diluted to a greater extent than obtains in the plant tissues can water be readily absorbed. Hence in order to maintain an existence by the sea, land plants must adopt measures of water conservation, much as do those living in arid deserts, plains and mountain tops.

This is exactly what has taken place, for we find beach plants with such modifications as thick succulent leaves and stems, whereby moisture is stored in a mucilage-like substance within the plant; reduced or protected stomata or breathing holes, in order to lessen the loss from evaporation or transpiration; a covering of downy hairs, or gum; inrolled leaf edges; shrubby or woody growth; reduced leaves or various combinations of the above measures which serve to reduce the water requirement to a minimum. In addition some plants concentrate their growing and fruiting stages during the rainy season of the year when water is more accessible.

Another factor which plants living in beach sand have to contend with is the unstable nature of this material, which is subject to shifting and drifting by every wind that blows. Firm anchorage is a necessity; this is accomplished by extensive root systems, either tap roots, or underground stems with extensive fibrous rootlets. These features are well exemplified in most of our typical shore plants.

Close to high-tide mark the Sea-Rocket (Cakile edentula) grows in upright fashion; the rather widely spaced leaves are thick and coarsely toothed; small mauve or whitish flowers terminate the branching stems,

leaving behind them, as they successively ripen, a short chain of green bead-like pods that are quite a characteristic feature. Nearby may be found the compact clumps of the Beach Sandwort (Arenaria peploides) with many paired, closely set, oval leaves, that often overlap exposing sections of the thick succulent stem between. Small white flowers appear in due season among the upper leaves.

During the early summer the golden balls of the Sand Verbena (Abronia latifolia) each composed of several flowers, contrast with their thick round green leaves which stand close together in a vertical position. The leaves are very sticky and often have particles of sand adhering to them. Deeply penetrating tap-roots and underground trailing stems assure the plant of a firm hold in the shifting sands of its environment.

Close to the above the Sand-burr (Franseria bipinnatifida) will certainly be seen. The long trailing stems radiate from a common centre and are covered with an ample array of chrysanthemum-like leaves. The stems terminate abruptly in an upright spike of greenish flowers. These are of two kinds on the same spike, staminate above, the spiny pistillate ones below.

The plant gets its common name from the burr-like fruit. The Sand-burr often forms a large mattress-like clump 6 to 8 feet across.

Among the driftwood, or climbing above the shrubs at a higher level, the tangled sprawling stems of the Beach Vetch (Vicia gigantea) are usually a noticeable feature of the beach flora. The light green lattice-like foliage forms a pleasing background for the rather dull brownish-yellow flowers. With the Beach Vetch will be found the Beach Pea (Lathyrus maritimus) its broad, dark green leaves offset with a profusion of deep blue flowers. Less common, the silky leaves of the Shore Pea (Lathyrus littoralis) with similarly coloured flowers may attract attention.

Further back where the sandy beach broadens into wide levels the sturdy, squat Beach Silver-top (Glehnia littoralis) makes a determined stand. From a long stocky taproot

large broad-lobed leaves radiate in all directions to lie flat on the sand, while from the centre of the plant umbrellas of small white flowers appear in due season. It is the fruit however that is so noticeable, for this is thick, winged and corky in texture and of a creamy white colour, that gleams in the sunlight. Each head of fruit is surrounded by the dark green leaves, simulating the appearance of a flattened cauliflower or a cottage cheese on a green platter.

In favourable locations the lovely pastel pink trumpets of the Sea-shore Convolvulus, (Convolvulus Soldanella) stand out in dainty freshness above the many kidney-shaped leaves that grow in single file along the trailing stems, as they run along the edges of the driftwood or boldly advance into open stretches of sand.

Perhaps more noticeable than any other sand plant is the Gum-weed (Grindelia stricta). This robust species is well able to withstand the vicissitudes of its environment. The stout branching stems are well clothed with coarsely-toothed fleshy leaves, and are topped with conspicuous yellow daisy-like flowers, but most characteristic is the gummy nature of the burr-like involucre just beneath the outer ray florets.

Occasionally, drifts of the Thrift, (Statice Armeria) will be found enlivening patches of ground in a continuous carpet of pretty pink flowers, which stand well above the compact cushiony tufts of rush-like leaves. On the higher parts of the sandy shore the Indian Consumption Plant (Lomatium nudicaule) displays its narrow-lobed leaves and open umbrella-like head of small greenish-yellow flowers. A long taproot holds the plant firmly in the sand. Later the broadly winged seeds are very evident and are a source of considerable benefit to those who know the value of their medicinal properties in the alleviation of coughs and colds.

Near the quiet lagoon-like expanses where the land lies level and undisturbed by the shifting sand, the dark green of the Glasswort (Salicornia ambigua) covers the salt marsh flats with a uniform carpet of verdure,

sometimes of considerable extent. This plant has carried water conservation to an extreme, for though its roots are perennially covered with salt or brackish water, it is able to absorb so little of it that drastic measures for storage have been taken. The stem is thick and filled with a moisture-retaining mucilage, while the leaves and flowers are reduced to the lowest denomination - an excellent demonstration that appearances are often deceptive, for why should a plant living in water all its life have to be so parsimonious of its use? Probably only during a heavy rain fall is it possible to set the flow of the vital fluid into itself, for then the concentration of salt is low enough to allow this movement to take place.

One of the oddest and most remarkable flowers of the beaches is the Dodder (Cuscuta salina), which has become a parasite on the Glasswort. It is quite evident when in flower, for then the yellow-brown thread-like stems which twine about the Glasswort are gay with numerous white flowers. There is no root in the popular meaning of the term but the twining stem closely hugs that of its host and at intervals sends out small suckers which penetrate into the tissue of its "host" by means of which it is able to abstract all the nourishment necessary for its welfare. The leaves are reduced to minute scales, for as a parasite, the need for manufacturing its own food has ceased to exist.

One of the most important groups of plants of the sandy beaches are the grasses and sedges, one or two of which must be mentioned in any account of a beach flora, for they are important stabilizers of the loose sandy soil in which they flourish. One of these is sometimes very predominant, the Sand Rye-Grass (Elymus arenaria) whose tall stems reach a height of four to five feet and often form a forest of pastel green stems topped with what look like glorified heads of wheat. The creeping root-stocks are an important feature in the binding of the sand and so help to prevent drifting. In sandy hollows considerable areas may be dominated by the Large-headed Carex (Carex macrocephala). While the fruiting

head is very large in proportion, the total height of this sedge is only about one foot. It is very conspicuous nevertheless and cannot be mistaken for any other species.

Another common grass of the sea shore is the Salt-grass (Distichlis spicata) which often forms dense wiry carpets adjacent to the salt marshes or extending into new terrain by means of long underground runners. These send up spear-like leaves every inch or so apart often forming a pattern of criss-crossing lines on the surface of the sand.

Some areas are occasionally covered with compact masses of the Sea-side Knot-Weed (Polygonum paronychia). This Knot-weed is very shrubby with many small leathery leaves and numerous tiny parchment-like flowers. Its woody structure is one that requires a minimum of moisture.

Last but not least the Silver Weed (Potentilla Anserina) often forms continuous beds of bright yellow buttercup-like flowers set off against a background of many-lobed green leaves nestling close to the ground. The undersides of the leaves are covered with a downy coat of hair, which prevents a too rapid evaporation of moisture. This species is equally at home on the shores of freshwater lakes and in swampy places.

Scarcely half of the sandy sea-shore flowering plants have been briefly referred to, but perhaps enough has been said to indicate the specialized nature of these plants which have successfully filled this niche in the varied economy of nature.

George A. Hardy.

Heerman Gull - 97 individuals were counted resting on the kelp and rocks on July 15 in the area between Trial Island and the Oak Bay Golf Course. Very few immature birds were present. The gulls remained in the area for approximately ten days, then began to disappear gradually until August 11 when none was observed; subsequently on the 12th and 13th none was seen.

BIRD GROUP ACTIVITIES: SUMMER 1950

Encouraged by a recent report by A.R. Davidson of Cadboro Bay of 52 species seen in two days, 27 members met on May 6th at Killarney Road and proceeded to Telegraph Bay and Queenswood where twenty species were noted, eight of them sea or water-loving birds.

June 10th: Twenty members landed on Bare, Yellow, and Shell Islands. Seen en route were Pigeon Guillemots, a California Murre, a Marbled Murrelet, an Osprey, a Bald Eagle, a Heron and several Harlequin Ducks.

At Bare Island there were the usual large number of nests and eggs of Glaucous-winged Gulls and Baird Cormorants but this year colonies of the Double-crested Cormorant had been established at either end of the Baird-Cormorant cliffs. Forty-four nests were counted. This is eleven times the number counted two weeks earlier in 1945. No sucked eggs were found but a number of crows were noisily "ganging up" on a Horned Owl in a group of trees.

Three Black Oystercatchers were seen at the south end of the Island and several more on Yellow Island where there were also nests and eggs of gulls.

On our way home several unusually large Juniper trees (Juniperus scopulorum Sargent) 35 to 40 feet tall and 3 feet at the base, caught the eye along the shore of Knapp Island.

J.O.C.

TRIP TO THE ABANDONED MINE MAY 7

Some 27 members of the Natural History Society made the trip to East Sooke under the guidance of Mr. George Winkler and Dr. John Stevenson. The weather was fine and the road good so fast time was made to the appointed spot at the bottom of the hill. Here some little time was spent while the leaders rediscovered the old trail to the workings.

The cool weather proved a blessing when the party made the climb; it was quite a surprise to some of the younger members to find that practically everybody had made the grade and reached the mine. This was largely due to Mr. Winkler who entertained us all with many stories of the old mine and its various owners. The botanists in the group found some interesting specimens on the trail and somebody else saw a warbler and one enthusiast wanted to catch a few frogs for his pond, (but he didn't succeed). The geological students picked up a few samples on the road, most of which Dr. Stevenson turned down as -- Just rock! However, under Mr. Winkler's tuition a few good specimens were obtained, chiefly copper of course, but molybdenite, limonite and marcasite were also found and much appreciated by the amateur prospectors.

At the old mine both Dr. Stevenson and Mr. Winkler were very good in explaining the methods used in discovering and working such a mine which incidentally has had quite a checkered history. For a long time it has been known as the Johns property. It is comprised of the following mineral claims: Copper King, King Fraction, Eureka and Margaret. The workings we saw were on the Copper King. Lunch was partaken of at the bottom of the hill when it was unanimously agreed that although tired, everybody had enjoyed a glorious trip and a hearty vote of thanks was made to Mr. Winkler, Dr. Stevenson and the owners of the cars.

J.H.W.

Bonaparte Gulls arrived in numbers in Oak Bay on July 22, but had previously been observed in Saanich Inlet. Both young and adult birds were still present in numbers on August 13. Many interesting plumages were to be seen, young of the year through to moulting adults. Periodically large concentrations at the sewer outlets permit close observations of this species.

JUNIOR PAGE

Are you a paid up member? Do you wish to continue coming to the meetings? Do you still wish to receive the Victoria Naturalist? The senior editors are revising the mailing list and plan to drop the names of persons, both senior and junior, who have not kept up their membership. Take a look at your membership card to see if you are still "in good standing". If you wish to continue as a member send your dollar to the Treasurer (his name and address is on the back of the cover) or bring it to the first meeting of the Juniors on Saturday, September 23, at 10 a.m. at the Museum.

G.C.C.

Sabine Gull: One adult individual was observed with the Bonapartes on July 22; this bird flew past the boat at approximately 30 feet.

Short-billed Gulls arrived in numbers with the Bonapartes on July 22 but have since dispersed; scattered individuals were observed on August 12 and 13.

Herring Gull adults and immature birds were observed at Oak Bay in small numbers on July 22. They were still here on August 13.

Thayer's Gull: One was observed on three occasions in the Oak Bay area on July 22, possibly the same bird.

California Gull: One was seen on the rocks off Trial Island on August 12.

Black Turnstones arrived in numbers some time between July 12 and 15. Small flocks of 3 to 15 birds were present on all the rocky islets and headlands at Oak Bay. Flocks were still passing through on August 13; some will certainly winter here.

NOTICE OF MEETINGS

1950

- Tuesday
Sept. 12: GENERAL MEETING - Members night and inspection of Museum Study Collections. Meet in Reading Room of Provincial Library at 8 p.m. as usual.
This should be an unusually interesting meeting; members should make a special effort to be there.
- Saturday
Sept. 23: JUNIOR NATURALISTS first meeting will be held in the Museum at 10 o'clock. Bring prospective members and come prepared to make nominations for junior officers and to make suggestions for a winter programme.
- Wednesday
Oct. 11: AUDUBON SCREEN TOURS: Karl H. Maslowski will be the first speaker. Title "Beneath Buckeye Skies".

EDITORS NOTES: With this, the first issue of the new fall season, we would like to remind all members that we are dependent on them to keep this an active and interesting publication. If you know of anything that you think will interest our readers please mail it to 118 Wildwood Ave. or the office of the Museum. The success of The Naturalist depends on your contributions- we are just the editors.

We are very sorry to announce the resignation of Mr. J. R. J. Llewellyn Jones as assistant editor. For years Mr. Jones has taken the anonymous but very important duty of reading and editing manuscripts for the Naturalist. His expert assistance will be sorely missed but we hope his new surroundings will provide grist for future articles for this publication. The best wishes of the whole Society will follow him in his new venture.

If new members have not received the two previous numbers of the 1950 Naturalist they can be obtained by phoning the editor G.8544. W.T.

Beneath Buckeye Skies In the hills, fields, quiet streams and hardwood forests of his native "Buckeye State," Ohio, Karl Maslowski of Cincinnati, has recorded the comings and goings of "Old Needlenose," the woodcock; "Whitefoot," the deer-mouse; and "The Red Skeltons," a fox family, cubs and all. Many other birds and mammals, too, are portrayed and brought to life in this out-of-doors film.

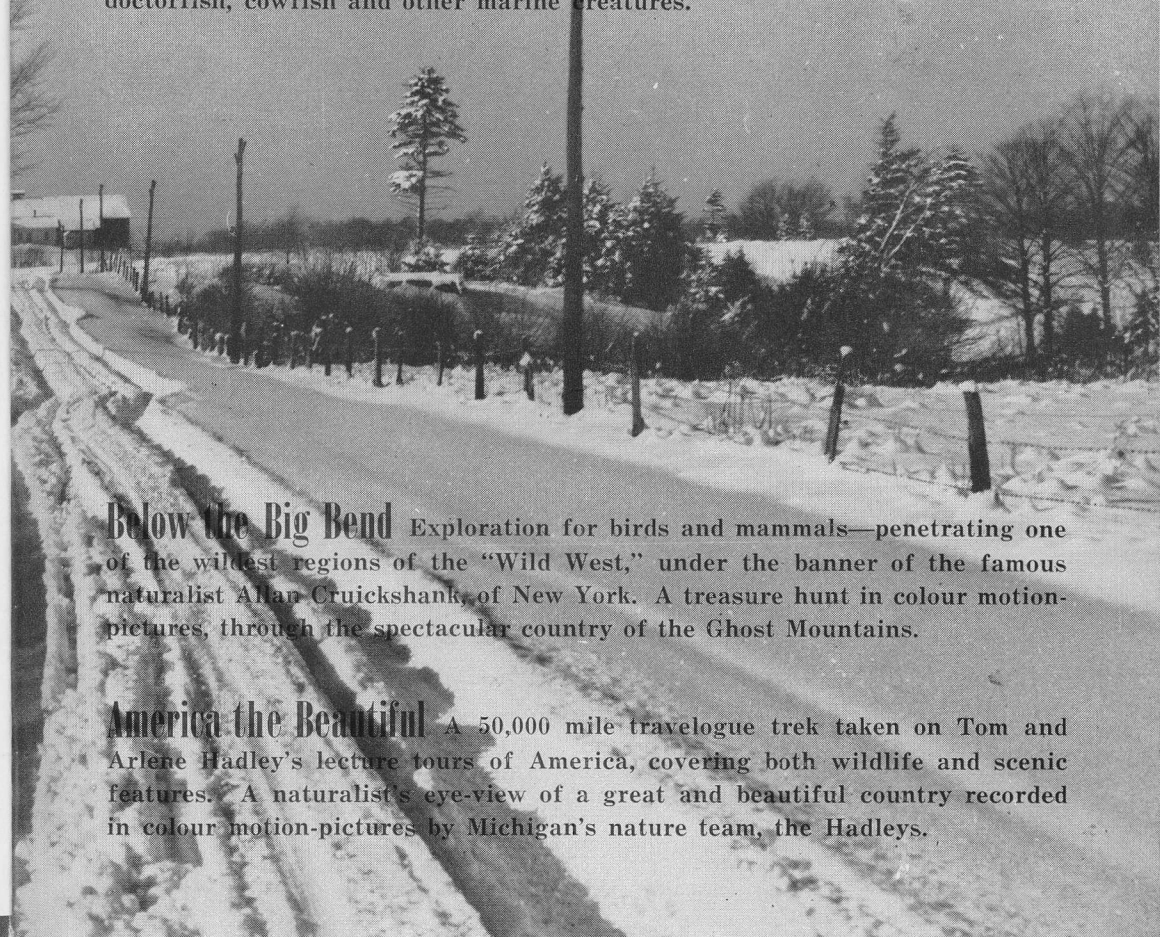
By Erie's Changing Shores Keen-eyed study of nature's clues along Lake Erie reveals eras when it was part of a great shallow sea—long before the time the Indians came to Maumeeland.

The wildlife there to-day—ducks, geese, shorebirds, and songbirds—are seasonal symbols of change... A colourful film account of this dynamic wildlife world is presented by G. Harrison Orians, of Toledo.

Underwater Kingdom Down to the sea in a diving helmet. Weird colourful creatures in a coral kingdom undersea. Through special camera equipment, Lucie Palmer, of St. Louis, presents underwater movies of many strange characters, including sea-horses, octopus using its ink barrage, giant jellyfish, doctorfish, cowfish and other marine creatures.

Below the Big Bend Exploration for birds and mammals—penetrating one of the wildest regions of the "Wild West," under the banner of the famous naturalist Allan Cruickshank, of New York. A treasure hunt in colour motion-pictures, through the spectacular country of the Ghost Mountains.

America the Beautiful A 50,000 mile travelogue trek taken on Tom and Arlene Hadley's lecture tours of America, covering both wildlife and scenic features. A naturalist's eye-view of a great and beautiful country recorded in colour motion-pictures by Michigan's nature team, the Hadleys.



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To