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Mature Sitka spruce forest, Graham Island.

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A. Blue Grouse (Sooty Grouse); scale, $\frac{1}{8}$
 Female Male (hooting)



B. Sora Rail; scale, $\frac{1}{4}$
 Juvenile Summer adult

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NOTES ON BLUE GROUSE

by Chas. Guiguet

As most of the blue grouse taken from the high, wooded areas are larger and darker than those seen in the burns and slash areas of the lower areas, some of the expert hunters can not be persuaded that there are not two "kinds" of blue grouse on Vancouver Island.

Though a lot still remains to be learned about the habits of this species, much has already been established as fact. Pertinent to the question of races or "kinds" is their migratory habits. For the large part they nest in the low lands and winter in the heights. The vast area of logged over country on the Island is ideal blue grouse breeding ground and the breeding hooters may be heard booming away as they congregate there in the early spring. Most of these hooters return to the high ridges sometime in July or early August, long before the hunters enter the field. Consequently, most of the birds shot in the lower reaches are the hens and their broods of that year. Climatic conditions may send these family groups up to the high lands before the legal shooting season opens, resulting in small bags. This lack of grouse is ascribed by the uninformed to everything from over-shooting to foot rot. Once in the timber on the old ridges, blue grouse are not as easily hunted as in the slash. They remain in the trees throughout the winter, feeding on coniferous buds and needles, descending to the low lands again to resume breeding in May or June.

From the above facts it would seem probable that the hunters other race is simply the big old hooters that went to the higher ground in July, or possibly, non-breeding birds that have stayed up there all the year round. The age at which blue grouse reach sexual maturity is not certain but I suspect that they breed in their third year.

Four geographic races or subspecies are known to occur in British Columbia. On Vancouver Island and the adjacent

mainland we have the Sooty Blue Grouse of our illustration, Dendragapus obscurus fuliginosus. This is a large dark bird with a more or less rounded tail bearing a distinctly lighter terminal band. On the side of the males neck there are large yellow air sacs which are most prominent in the spring.

The Queen Charlotte Islands and other islands in the Queen Charlotte Sound have a bird similar to the sooty grouse but more red in colour, especially in the hens. This is the Sitka blue grouse, D. o. sitkensis. In the dry belt of the interior we find the pallid blue grouse D. o. pallidus. This bird is pale in colour. The males have practically no yellow air sacs and the tail bears a very indistinct terminal bar or none.

The dusky blue grouse, D. o. richardsoni ranges from the south east corner of the province on a rough diagonal to the north west corner. It occupies that part of the province lying east of this line but sweeping west of it for an unknown distance about the 54th parallel. This bird closely resembles the pallid grouse except in colour. It is much darker, has indistinct or no terminal bands on the tail, reduced air sac, a different hoot and a more square cut tail than the sooty grouse.

At points of contact the subspecies intergrade and are difficult to ascribe to one race or another.

It seems unlikely that there is more than one race of grouse on Vancouver Island but if some of the enthusiasts will bring in specimens we may resume the controversy with specimens in hand.

Sora Rail (Porzana carolina) a short-billed, chunky, little rail without any reddish colouration. It is about the same size as the Virginia but measuring less because of its short bill which is yellow in comparison with red of the Virginia. Both these rails are summer residents in this area.

W.T.

OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING

At 8 p.m., October 9, Mrs. Hobson, President, called the monthly meeting of the Society to order. After Miss Kirby had read the minutes of the previous meeting it took only a few minutes to dispose of routine matters and the business of the meeting began.

There were a number of most interesting specimens on display. Miss Kirby had obtained a most unusual piece of natural sculpture which looked exactly like some of the more grotesque modern specimens of that art. The peculiar shape had been developed in the swirl and eddying of stream backwash which had left this "Prone Figure" à la Epstein!

Mr. Whitehouse showed a section of a mason wasp's nest. This is a structure of dried mud, almost half an inch in diameter and built to a depth of two to three inches and perfectly shaped inside. This was one section of eight which Mr. Whitehouse's grandson had found firmly attached to a rock.

Mr. Taylor showed a specimen of the brightly coloured ruby or cuckoo wasp, which Mr. Hardy was called upon to describe. The name ruby was obvious from the insect's bright colours but the name cuckoo, he explained, came from its habit of laying its eggs in the nest of various species of solitary bees and wasps. The ruby wasp will wait while a mason wasp or carpenter bee builds its nest and fills it with food for its young, and just before the nest is closed it will skip in and lay its egg. Upon emerging from the egg the infant ruby wasp does not bother about the stored food but proceeds to feed on the young solitary bee that happens to be its host.

There were no reports from section chairman except the announcement of the fungus foray and the correction of the editor's rather ambiguous note regarding refreshments. You will be able to get a cup of tea even if you do not bring a lunch! (I hope that clears that up.)

Mr. Clay described some of the highlights of his trip to the interior but a full write-up of this trip will appear in a later issue.

As main speaker for the evening Mr. George Hardy gave a most aptly named talk on "Floral Gems", for his coloured slides of native plants were gems indeed, as also were his

concise descriptions of habit and habitat. Starting with Saanichton Spit and Witty's Lagoon, the pictures pointed up his observation that the salt-tolerant species of these areas tended to grow in monospecific groups. Golden-flowered four o'clocks Abronia latifolia, pink Convolvulus soldanella, and the large-headed sedge Carex macrocephala all grew in isolated masses with almost no intermixing of species. This was also true of the crabapple Pyrus diversifolia on the slightly higher sand ridges and the tall longheaded wild rye grass Elymus Vancouverensis and knot weeds Polygonium sp. of the dunes. Mr. Hardy was not so absorbed in plants that he failed to spot a pair of night hawk's eggs that had been laid amid the resembling stones of the shore. These and the newly-hatched chicks, which he photographed later at the same spot, were almost indistinguishable from their surroundings.

On the way to Duncan there occurs a colony of a newly established weed from the Balkans Linaria dalmatica. This is a close relative of the common toadflax L. vulgaris differing mainly by having a broader leaf which clasps the stem and a longer spur below the bright yellow snapdragon-like flowers. Among the pictures taken near Duncan is a very interesting study of the genus Arctostaphylos or bearberry. In the foreground is a mass of the common bearberry or Kinnikinick A. urva-ursa and behind this are masses of the tall shrub A. tomentosa, but between these extremes is a dense growth that is entirely intermediate in character. This actually is a hybrid between the other two and is so well established that it has been given the specific name of Arctostaphylos media. From around Mt. Beacher there were some lovely mass effects of fields of sea blush Valerianella congesta, and yellow snow lily Erythronium grandiflorum. Although these were long past blooming around Victoria, the high altitude telescopes mountain plants into a much shorter but more intense period of blooming. As this photographic tour proceeded up the island to Comox and the Forbidden Plateau, the scenery began to vie with the flower pictures in interest, and the long-distance shots of Quay Lake from Mt. Albert Edward and Castle-craig made one ponder the possibilities of a summer camp for the V.N.H.S. in the near future. In this area a

number of heaths besides the everpresent bearberry are noticeable. The sweet-scented white heather Cassiope Mertensiana, copper bush Cladanthamnus pyrolaeiflorus, and mountain laurel Malmia polifolia are among the members of this family commonly found in the mountains. Among the acres of burnt-out timber land in this area, fire weed comes into its own and provides miles and miles of bee pasture. A picture taken between Comox Lake and the Plateau shows a sea of purple Epilobium angustifolium as far as the eye can see. In the wooded areas, that dwarf relative of the dogwood, the bunchberry Cornus Canadensis flourishes, the flower-like bracts long since gone and now the insignificant flowers have developed into a bunch of bright scarlet berries a few inches above the ground. Here also was seen masses of false hellebore Veratrum viride. Why this poisonous and rather colourless orchid should be associated with hellebore or Christmas rose no one seems to know. The local Indians have been able to overcome the poisonous properties and by a special process to make a powerful concoction called "Skukum Drunk". It sounds interesting!

Travelling still further north Mr. Hardy showed pictures of some of the flowers which have been able to withstand the storms and exposure to which the Scott Islands are subjected. Here were pictured masses of chocolate lily Fritillaria, Indian paintbrush, Columbine and a thick-leaved strawberry Fragaria chiloensis. While these were the same species that we know they showed varying amounts of adaptation to their exposed position. From the exposed northern islands Mr. Hardy took a quick trip through the Manning Park area and showed some lovely pictures of the sage brush country around Osoyoos. The most noticeable aspect of this area is the association of the three to six foot high antelope bush Purshia tridentata, a grey, small-flowered member of the rose family, and rabbit bush Begonia graveoleus, a six to eighteen inch grey shrub of the composite family. Despite the dry and barren look of the sage brush country there are lovely flowers to be found for the looking, such as the white evening primrose Oenothera pallida always with one large flower open and two developing buds to the stem. Among the large numbers of the pea family adapted to dry conditions is to be found loco weed Oxytropis Lambertis growing in yellow masses, and

purple masses of Phlox. Found in more solitary splendour is the lovely sandhill rose Lewisia rediviva - although not a true rose this picture shows the reason for the special application of the name. A number of bright and showy members of the sunflower family are also common including Gaillardia aristata which we are more used to thinking of as a garden species.

With a few pictures of the road from the typical interior scenery to the heavier timbered conditions at the eastern entrance to the park Mr. Hardy completed a most comprehensive review of our native flora. Mrs. Hobson expressed the thanks of the whole meeting and our appreciation of the services that the speaker always so readily gives to the Society.

W. T.

TWO RECENT PLANT ADDITIONS TO VANCOUVER ISLAND

by George A. Hardy.

While the native species of plants of Vancouver Island have been fairly well determined and few new ones are likely to be found, there is always the possibility, and indeed, certainty of new ones arriving from other parts of the world, especially in these days of easy and extensive travel. Most, if not all, of these hardy immigrants are classed as weeds by the practical gardener and farmer, but from the botanists' viewpoint they are wild flowers that possess great adaptability to varied terrain and climatic conditions and in this sense are most successful representatives of the plant kingdom.

Linaria dalmatica (L.) Mill. Dalmatian Toad Flax. The presence of this plant on the island has apparently been noted only recently. The writer came across two or three separate colonies near Saanichton in July 1951, and since then Mr. N. Putnam of the Department of Agriculture has brought in a specimen from Duncan where it was collected by Lois Murray. The species is closely related to the well-known Toadflax or Butter-and-eggs, Linaria Vulgaris L.

L. dalmatica can be at once distinguished from L. vulgaris by its larger size (higher by 2 feet or more), by its much broader, glaucous green leaves, which closely

clasp the stem, and by the longer spur of the flower. In addition to seed production it increases by underground stolons which send up a plentiful supply of new shoots; It is a native of the Balkan regions of Europe. Elsewhere in British Columbia, it is recorded only from Wynndel near Creston, so far as is known.

Senecio jacobaea L. Ragwort is another native of Europe whose presence has only recently been ascertained on Vancouver Island and indeed in British Columbia, although it is mentioned as from the "Pacific Coast" in the 8th edition of Gray's Manual. It was first reported by E. G. Anderson, weed commuter from Ottawa, who together with E. Hughes, collected it in July 1950 near Nanaimo and deposited a specimen with the Museum. This year the writer visited this locality and found it in a flourishing condition along the roadside. It is quite a handsome plant with many heads of star-like yellow flowers in massed profusion. Since the species is usually avoided by grazing animals, it is allowed to increase at the expense of more useful forage plants.

WANTED !!

Offers of hospitality for group meetings.

Requirements:- A living-room which will seat, on chairs or cushions, twenty to twenty-five enthusiastic group members. Refreshments served should be kept to tea and biscuits. We need meeting places for 8 to 10 group meetings. Phone a group convener or myself (G.4683) if you are able to help the Society in this way.

Pianist:- A volunteer to play a national anthem at the close of each Audubon lecture is required. Will any member willing and able to oblige get in touch with me or Mr. Stewart (B.6458) before the next lecture, Friday, November 30.

It has been decided to form a social committee to be responsible for introducing our new members to the other club members and for helping newcomers to the city in finding the homes at which group meetings are being held.

R. Hobson,
President.

SCREEN TOUR NOTES

In answer to a number of requests it has been decided to sell season tickets to students for the remaining four lectures. The cost will be \$1.00 and the tickets are obtainable at the Marionette Library, Provincial Museum, at the lecture hall on the night of the lecture or from Mr. H.D.R. Stewart, 110 Wildwood Avenue.

Drivers who have parked their cars at the west side of the school will find it more convenient to leave by the exit at the rear of the hall.

SITKA SPRUCE (*Picea sitchensis*)

This the largest of the spruces reaching an extreme height of 250 feet and a diameter of 12 feet. It gets its second common name; tideland spruce; from its habitat which is seldom more than 50 miles from the sea or at an elevation of more than 1000 feet. Because it characteristically has a greater area of timber clear of blemish than any other spruce, it is particularly valuable in the construction of aeroplanes and was the main structural component of the renowned "Mosquito" fighter-bomber. The greatest areas of pure stands of sitka spruce are in our own coastal areas and particularly on the Queen Charlotte Islands although the species is found from Alaska to Northern California. W.T.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN NOVEMBER

Birds: All during the month of October the sea birds were returning to their winter feeding areas in the numerous bays, coves and sheltered beaches around Victoria and to the marshes, lakes and wet grasslands in this district. Every day their numbers are increasing, and will continue to do so during November.

Still to appear (written Oct.19th) are the American Goldeneye, Bufflehead and Ruddy Ducks, also the male Red

Breasted Mergansers, the female and immature birds having arrived a few weeks ago. The beautiful Hooded Merganser also generally returns about the middle of October. The largest and most graceful of the Grebe family, the Western, arrived in force in the waters off the Uplands on October 13th. There were about 230 of these birds busily feeding there on that date.

The most numerous and important of the smaller birds arriving to spend the winter here are our beloved Juncos. Small flocks have been around since September, but the month of November will see these birds in every garden. Also to be looked for are the Fox Sparrows, the Golden Crowned Sparrows and the Hermit Thrushes. All these birds are here in greater numbers than is generally realised, but they are shy, the Hermit Thrushes in particular. These are very similar in appearance to the Old Country Thrushes, having the same shape, a heavily spotted breast and a brown and russet back. If you hear a low soft whistle coming from the bushes bordering the road, look out for a Hermit Thrush. We will also have with us the best dressed birds in Canada, the Cedar and Bohemian Waxwings. Their smooth silky feathers and erect crest put them in a class by themselves. The Purple Finches and the Siskins are now collecting in flocks and it is to be hoped they will be as abundant as they were last winter.

November Flora: Besides the wonderful variety of fungi that is now so evident the most prominent features of the November flora are fruit and seeds. An interesting feature of this time is the various methods that plants have developed for distributing their seed. As one watches the fall of the seeds of maple, ash, basswood, and pine one realizes that the helicopter idea is no new invention of man. Nature was also somewhat previous in the invention of balloon and parachute as can be seen by the long distances and safe landings of such seeds as dandelion, thistle, fireweed and dozens of others. It is probably as hitch-hikers though, that plants accomplish most in seed distribution. After coming in from a walk through the woods or long grass one does not have to be reminded of the outside hikers as the sweet cicely, sand burr, wild barley and annual brome seeds are removed from the clothing. The inside hitchers are not so conspicuous but get much greater mileage, even crossing the sea. The seeds hidden in berries

are often carried great distances in the stomachs of birds. We also have a few seagoing plants such as the corky seed of Glehnia littoralis which drops off the plant and is floated away on the high winter tides.

W. T.

FIELD TRIPS 1951

BOTANY: The first field trip for the Botanical group was to Walbran Park on the top of Gonzales Hill on April 21st. Twenty-three members and friends were present. Owing to the long dry spell of weather previous to this day many of the plants which are usually found here had dried up. Never the less twenty-five species were found in flower. In some moist sheltered spots the last Satin flower, Easter Lily (Erythronium) and Monkey flower (Mimulus) had survived the drought. Camassia quamash and Western Buttercup were in full bloom, and the two Stonecrops, Sedun spathulifolium and S. stenopetalum, were beginning to bloom. After a short discussion concerning the plants seen the group accepted the kind invitation of Mrs. F. C. Bogart to have tea in her beautiful garden.

C.W.L.

The outstanding field trip of the Botanical group was on May 12th to Mt. Douglas on the Blenkinsop Rd. side of the park. Around thirty members gathered at the home of Mr. G.A. Hardy who guided the party along the winding trails to the top. At the beginning of the trail the vegetation was definitely mesophytic changing slowly with the elevation to a characteristic xerophytic flora at the top of the mountain. At the foot were numerous herbs and shrubs in a profusion of blossom, the broom coloring the landscape with gold. On the ground there was a thick carpet of English Daisies. Climbing through the shrubs were quantities of Nuttall's Sweet Pea, the orange Honeysuckle, and some of the Vetches. Altogether over sixty species of flowering plants and a few ferns were listed. Some of the more noticeable plants were the Chocolate tips, Saniculas (2sp.), Bedstraws (2sp.), Miners' Lettuce (2 sp.), Forget-me-not (2 sp.), Sea Blush, Woolly Sunflower, Indian Consumption Plant, and Menzies Larkspur. After descending the mountain the group returned to the home of Mr. & Mrs. Hardy who entertained everyone to tea and delectable confections in their lovely garden.

JUNIOR PAGE

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Ass't Editor:

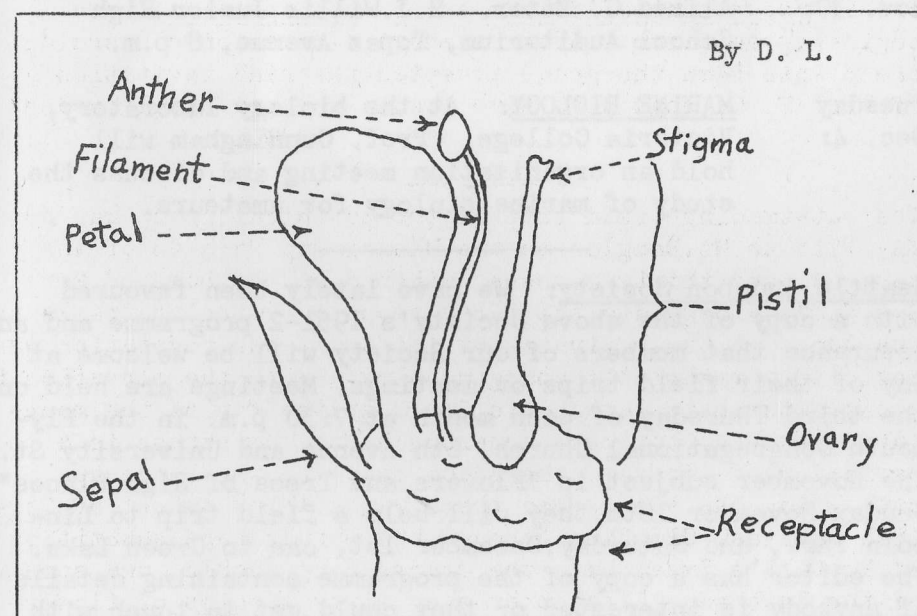
Peggy Carl.

Notes taken by Diana Livesey from a lecture given by Mr. Hardy to the Junior Natural History Society, October 13, 1951: -

THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF A FLOWER

Flowers consist of the stalk, receptacle, sepals, petals, pistil and some other little parts.

The seed of a flower is stored in its pistil, and it cannot develop unless the sperm cell of the pollen unites with the egg cell of the seed. This pollen falls on the stigma and starts working down in the ovary. The stamens are the part of the flower that hold the pollen. The corolla consists of the petals and the calix consists of the sepals.



Junior members should take notice that their annual fee is now due and this is the last issue of "The Victoria Naturalist" that will be sent to members who are in arrears.

NOTICE OF MEETINGS

The JUNIOR NATURALISTS will meet Saturday mornings at the museum.

1951

- Tuesday
Nov. 6: BOTANY GROUP: At the home of Mrs. Edgar Stansfield, 1274 Topaz Avenue, 8 p.m.
- Tuesday
Nov. 13: GENERAL MEETING: Reading Room of the Provincial Library, 8 p.m. Dr. L. C. Coleman, C.I.E., Director for 26 years of the Department of Agriculture for the State of Mysore. Subject: "Rural Life in India". Illustrated.
- Wednesday
Nov. 21: BIRD GROUP: At the home of Miss Kathleen Panton, 2114 Central Avenue, 8 p.m. Mr. E.R. Patrick will speak. Illustrated.
- Friday
Nov. 30: AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR - "Ozark Idyll". Alfred G. Etter. S.J. Willis Junior High School Auditorium, Topaz Avenue, 8 p.m.
- Tuesday
Dec. 4: MARINE BIOLOGY: At the biology laboratory, Victoria College. Prof. Cunningham will hold an organization meeting and discuss the study of marine biology for amateurs.

Seattle Audubon Society: We have lately been favoured with a copy of the above Society's 1951-2 programme and an assurance that members of our Society will be welcome at any of their field trips or meetings. Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the Plymouth Congregational Church, 6th Avenue and University St. The November subject is "Flowers and Trees of High Places". Sunday, November 18th, they will hold a field trip to Lincoln Park, and Saturday, December 1st, one to Green Lake. The editor has a copy of the programme containing details if anybody is interested or they could get in touch with Mrs. Bernice Ann Jennings, Second Vice-President Seattle Audubon Society, 203 North 58, Seattle 3, Washington, U.S.A.

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