

The  
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Natural reforestation of Douglas fir. (Courtesy B.C. Forest Service.)

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**VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**  
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THE VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETYVol.8, No.8.February, 1952PRESIDENT'S NOTES

In view of the concern expressed by some members over the export of trumpeter swans to England, I obtained from Mr. R. H. Mackay, Dominion Wild Life Officer, (Department of Zoology, U.B.C.; Vancouver), the following facts relevant to this matter:

A year or two ago, Peter Scott, (famous water-bird artist), who is director(?) of the Severn Sanctuary, wrote to Canada asking if it would be possible for him to receive several pairs of trumpeter swans for the Sanctuary. Canada agreed. She is now trying to accede to this request and Mr. Mackay is himself supervising the capture plans. He has recently been to Lonesome Lake on this business. At this lake residents feed the swans with barley. Five thousand pounds of barley is provided annually by the government for this purpose.

Mr. Mackay has several scouts who keep records of the number of trumpeter swans seen in British Columbia and the present estimated trumpeter swan population for the province is between 900 and 1000.

May I make a suggestion or two?

Firstly, that members wishing to introduce a motion of this kind give the President a few hours warning, so that he can obtain all relevant facts before the meeting.

Secondly, that the members of this society use their influence, wherever it will do the most good, to secure, somewhere on the mainland, a permanent and extensive sanctuary for water fowl. Mr. Mackay has expressed fear that one of the new power projects on the mainland will evict about 200 trumpeter swans.

Finally, that members also use their influence against inaccurate and misleading reporting in our daily papers, which now give rise to so many misunderstandings in matters which this Society has at heart.

R. G. Hobson.



JANUARY MEETING

The regular monthly meeting was held at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, January 8th. As Mr. Chester Bacon's sound equipment required more space than was available in the Provincial Library the meeting was held in the Museum. Setting up the equipment took some time so it was a little late when Mrs. Hobson called the members to order but from then on little time was wasted in disposing of business.

Some discussion arose as to the interpretation of a previous resolution allowing children free admission to the Audubon lectures when accompanied by an adult. It was finally agreed that there would be no restriction on the number of children which each adult might bring.

To reassure some of the members regarding the trapping of trumpeter swans to be sent to England, Dr. Carl explained that this was being done with the full approval of the joint Canadian-U.S.A. wild life officials conservation board. The birds will be transferred to the Severn Bird Sanctuary where they will have complete freedom under ideal conditions. Rather than losing half a dozen scarce swans we may be establishing a reserve from which may come the birds to restock our own depleted flocks. As an incidental note Dr. Carl informed the members that Severn Sanctuary has a specimen of every known species of swan except the trumpeter. To prevent further misunderstanding the executive asked Mrs. Hobson to write to the Federal Wildlife Officer at Vancouver to find out what procedure was followed in this particular case and ask for an assurance that interested parties such as our Society would be informed when other transfers were under discussion. On conclusion of the discussion on swans, Mrs. Hobson introduced Mr. Humphry Davy, a member who put forward a suggestion that the Victoria Natural History Society canvass the parties that might be interested in the adoption of an official Provincial bird. He remarked that this had been of considerable value in various States in focusing attention on this aspect of natural history, and might be one way of forwarding the aims of the Society. The names of Mrs. A. E. Sarratt, Mr. J.O. Clay, Mr. R.H. Davidson, were tentatively accepted to act with Mr. Davy as a committee with the final arrangements left in the hands of the executive.

With the termination of this rather extended business session The President called upon Mr. Chester Bacon, Apiarist,

to take over. This he most certainly did, for his fascinating sound picture "Harmony of the Bees" held the interest of his audience until the last bee had settled on the last D of THE END.

W.T.

CONSERVATION OF DOUGLAS FIR (*Pseudotsuga taxifolia*)

The cover of this month's Naturalist shows a healthy stand of second growth Douglas fir. This particular species has formed the basis of a great deal of the early wealth of the British Columbia coastal area and adjacent islands. The exploitation that produced this wealth gave little heed to the conservation of the species, even today some of the methods employed in logging seem calculated to discourage its perpetuation.

Mechanical methods of logging unfortunately result in destroying most of the younger trees during the removal of the mature timber, which often sets back reforestation of the area twenty or thirty years. Besides the natural type of reforestation illustrated, great areas of cut-over land are being seeded with Douglas fir and planted to seedlings. In this programme two difficulties face the Forest Service; seeds often fail to develop in this species leaving them without material for seeding and, after seeds are planted, they are eaten by the small animals of the forest, particularly mice. Experiments have been tried by dropping poisoned grain from planes in an effort to eliminate the small animals before the fir seed is sown. By colouring the grain green, it is claimed, birds are discouraged from eating the poisoned bait.

W.T.

COUNTING BIRDS AT CHRISTMAS

Across the Continent the regular counting of birds at Christmas has become an annual affair. It affords a healthful and interesting recreation when the whole country is gripped in cold weather. When a count is made over a number of years valuable data can be acquired regarding the movements of various species. Our territory and waters

adjacent to the city are the winter homes of many birds of the North and some from east of the mountains. Several varieties, summer visitants, which otherwise would migrate, are encouraged to stay and be fed. (Such feeding, however, should be encouraged only if carried out with regularity throughout the winter season).

Including Christmas, 1944, seven counts have now been made. Columns of figures are set out over two pages of the magazine dealing with Christmas 1950 and 1951. For the years preceding, the following notes of interest are given - the year and number seen are added:- 1944- Goose, w-f. 1; Wood-duck, 1; Vireo, Hutton's, 1. 1945 - Widgeon, European, 1; Wood-duck, 3; Mergansers, Hooded, 2. 1946- Goose, cackling, 1; Widgeon, E., 1; Wood-duck, 3; Canvas-back, 1; Hawk, Cooper's, 1; Gull, Herring, 1; 1947- Widgeon, European, 1; Teal, G.-w., 2; Canvas-back, 6. 1948- Swan, Trumpeter, 6; Goose, L-C., 6; Goose, W.-f., 2; Canvas-back, 2; Eagle, bald, 1; Jay, S., 1; Bushtit, 8; Hawk, red-tailed, 1; Sandpiper, R.B., 250; Surf-bird, 4; Sanderling, 2. 1949- Teal, G.-w., 21; Canvas-back, 51; Mandarin, 3; Gull, Cal., 2; Gull, H., 4; Hawk, Cooper's, 1; Thrush, H., 1.

Regarding the European widgeon drake, this bird was first seen in Beacon Hill Park at Christmas, 1945, again in 1946, and in 1947, after Christmas in 1949 and 1950 and one was seen at Cadboro Bay at Christmas 1951 by A.R. Davidson. Two Trumpeter swans were seen at Cherry Point before Christmas, 1951. A pair of bald eagles were seen by Mrs. Parris at Christmas.

The House Finch, or Linnet: The first winter record of this new Vancouver Island species, now nesting once or twice each season at Oak Bay, comes from Mrs. H.M.S. Bell of Transit Road. A flock of twenty finches were observed there on 6th January, attracted by crushed walnut and sunflower seed.

For the 1951 count on December 17th the weather was dull, cloudy, poor visibility; temperature at 2:30 p.m. 39°; wind S.E. to 30 m.p.h.

J.O.C.

CHRISTMAS COUNTS, 1950 & 1951

- G - West of city. Chas. Guiguet.  
 S - City and east to Gonzales Bay, H.D.R. Stewart.  
 C - Shoal Bay to Spoon Bay. J.O. Clay.  
 D - Cadboro Bay & district. A.R. Davidson.  
 H - Elk, Beaver, Swan Lakes & flats. Mrs. Hobson and Mrs. Blackden.  
 B - Blenkinsop Road & district, 1950. - G.A. Hardy.  
 Sd - Sidney harbour and wharf, 1950.

	G		S		C		D		H	B	Sd
	'51	'50	'51	'50	'51	'50	'51	'51	'50	'50	
Loon C.	10				1		8	6			7
" Pac.											2
Grebe, Hol.	4							2			
" H'dd.	25		13	11	19	38	76	12			26
" E.	1			2	4	20	1	1			14
" W.	3			38	58	147	110				40
" P-B.						1		6			
Cormorant D.C.	12										
" B't.	4										
" B'd.	50	6	31	7	20	50	100				38
Heron N-W-C.	5										
Swan, Mute (Int.)		11	3						1		
" W.		1									
Goose, L.Can.			390						42		
Mallard	400	159			43	41	147	105	12		
Widgeon, Eur.								1			
Baldpate	10	251	428	251	933	71		1295	12	210	
Pintail	12							23		22	
Teal, G.W.	4							6		32	
Mandarin (Int)		3	3								
Shoveller	6			35	100	2	35	47	1		
Ring-neck								50			
Canvas-back	6	7	14					100		19	
Scaup. G.	50	31	472	256	220	80	72			170	
Goldeneye, Am.		5	9	4	14	14	10			26	
Bufflehead.	50	14	86	19	41	35	35			74	
Old-Squaw	8	4		10		5	12				
Harlequin.	15	4	51	8	29	23	15				
Scoter, W-W.	30			2	1	80	41			115	
" Surf.	50	28	3	16	16	34	29			32	



## CHRISTMAS COUNTS, 1950 &amp; 1951 (Cont'd)

	G		S		C		D		H	B	Sd
	'51	'50	'51	'50	'51	'50	'51	'51	'50	'50	
Ruddy						33	3				108
Merganser, H'dd								2	2	1	5
" Am.	13		1							243	
" R-B.	25	5	3	5	14	12	12				21
Goshawk.	1										
Hawk, S-S.						1					
Eagle, B.	1										
Falcon, P.	1										
Grouse, R.	6										
Quail, Cal.						15	5				
Pheasant, R-N.	1		1	2		1	3			10	
Coot.	13					17	50	682			
Oystercatcher.						2					
Plover, Kdr.				4			12		1		
Surf-bird.				4							
Turnstone, B.	14	32	2	22	70	4	13				
Curlew, H.					2						
Sandpiper ) (Aleutian)				5							
Gull, G-W.	150	169	250	94	12	300	100		10		350
Gull, H.				5		50					85
Gull, S-B.	25		4	136			30		50		
Gull, Bon.	6										
Murre, Cal.				1							
Guillemot, P.						2					2
Murrelet, M.			1			2					
Owl, S.						1					
Kingfisher	12					1	1				1
Flicker, N-W.		5	4		4	11	20		5		
" Red S.	25										
Woodpecker, P.	2					2					
" H.	1					1					
" D.						3	4		3		
Jay, S.						1					
Raven.	2										
Crow, N-W.	4				3	40	50				

	G	S		C		D		H	B	Sd.
	'51	'50	'51	'50	'51	'50	'51	'51	'50	'50
Chickadee, C-B.	50					95	49		8	45
Nuthatch, R-B.	5					3	1			1
Creeper						2	2			
Wren, W.	8	2				16	13		2	3
" S.	4	1				4	4			2
Robin, N-W.	45					93	129		1	
Thrush, V.	2					2	3			
" H.							2			
Bluebird, W.						6				
Kinglet, G-C.	25					60	70			25
" R-C.						5	8			2
Pipit, Am.							35			
Skylark (Int.)							12			
Waxwing, B.						30				
Sparrow, Eng.						15	35			20
Meadowlark	2	2						1		
Redwing, N-W.				1						
Starling, (Int.)								3		
Finch, P.							23			1
Siskin.	250					150	100	250		50
Crossbill, R.	15									
Towhee, O.	3	1				14	6		4	3
Junco, O.	50		24			8	95	60	25	25
Sparrow, G-C.							4		1	
" Fox.	2					8	5		8	
" Song R.	10	1	4	3		11	3		1	
Total Species	54	22	23	24	23	55	50	15	17	33

NOTE:- The area covered by the last two columns was not counted this year and columns G & H cover new areas counted this year.

J.O.C.

FISH STORIES

GULL VERSUS COD: I was amazed recently by the proof of a gull's rapacity. A friend and I were standing on the rocks close to the sea when a Glaucous-winged gull swooped down close at hand and picked up a live tomcod — about 10 or 12 inches long. As soon as the catch was safely landed, the gull tried to swallow it. The huge head and spines of the still living fish made this impossible. Down went the cod on the rock and the gull pounded away at it with its bill until it must have been dead. Once more it raised it up and turned it to the right position, but still could not get it down its gullet. This was the last straw! The gull smashed it down time and again on the rocks and battered it with its beak until not only the rock but the gull itself was bespattered with blood. Picking the fish up once more, it carefully twisted it into the right position and then swallowed the whole gory carcass. Without more ado, the gull then flew to an adjacent rock where it proceeded to clean its feathers. A lot of gulls were watching, but strange to say, none interfered, which would seem to prove that this must have been a very old and wise leader, especially so, when one remembers that it all occurred within 50 feet of where we were standing.

J.H.W.

Abstract from "The Countryman":

A MUCH-DISPUTED FISH: On Vancouver Island I saw rooks and sea-kingfishers both hunting and fishing from the cliffs which towered up from high-water mark and followed the coast-line in jutting bluffs. A dead pine clinging to the cliff-face was a favourite look-out post for one of the hard-working black-and-white kingfishers. The rooks watched its fishing operations intently and, if it rose from the sea with a fish, hurled themselves on it in parties from the succeeding bluffs. In spite of its load the kingfisher could still outfly individual attackers. But their relay tactics, and the mobbing it got from each fresh gangster group, eventually wore it out and forced it to drop the fish, which was whipped away by a gull loafing along below the hunt. The gull was away out to sea before the diving and triumphantly clamorous rooks had grasped their loss, but was promptly chased, in its turn, by a screaming flock of its fellows. Meanwhile the kingfisher returned once more to its look-out and Chinese-cormorant-like labours. - Ruth Eaden.

WALL LETTUCE (Lactuca muralis(L)Fresn.)

Many years ago, when I was a young student at Edinburgh and making my first herbarium, I found on one of the castle ruins for which that region is famous, a plant new to me. Working it over with the help of what, at that time, was the bible of the British field-botanist, Hooker's "Students' Flora of the British Isles", I identified it as the above, and was delighted to find it described as "rare". In subsequent years I botanised in widely separated localities in both Scotland and England, but never met with it again, which would seem to justify this description.

I should have been much surprised, not to say incredulous, had I been told that one day I should meet with it again, thousands of miles from its native Europe, where instead of being "rare" it would be a prolific and aggressive weed, and instead of haunting old walls, as the Linnean name indicates, it would make itself very much at home in virgin forest.

It does not appear to have been recorded from anywhere in North America except British Columbia. Our first record is a specimen now in the Provincial Museum collected by J. R. Anderson at Kelowna, B. C., in 1895. My own earliest observations were made about 1937 when I found it so abundant in the woods at Goldstream that it was crowding out the native plants in many places. Later, I noticed it at Cowichan and Shawnigan Lakes, and in 1949 along the Island Highway at Union Bay and a little north of Merville. At this last point it was quite abundant in the woods, so it is probably that it has reached still farther north on Vancouver Island.

On the Mainland I found it abundant in the woods along the P.G.E. railway above and below Garibaldi Station in 1938, and still more so in 1942. Solitary specimens were collected nearer the Coast at Stanley Park, Vancouver; Hollyburn, West Vancouver; and Crescent; but the species did not seem to be multiplying into colonies as in the drier region of Garibaldi. However, any idea that the moist climate of the Vancouver area is inimical to it was dispelled in 1951, when I found an extensive and dense colony along the lower road between the two suspension bridges of the Capilano Canyon, North Vancouver.

Some years ago a specimen was brought in to me from



Saturna Island, and it is probable that examination will show its presence on most of the Gulf islands.

While the dense colony-forming habit of the plant is undoubtedly a threat to the native herbaceous vegetation of our woodlands, there does not seem to be any practical means of checking it. Its preference for shade will probably keep it from becoming an agricultural weed. There is no available evidence as to whether it can hybridise with garden lettuce and thus spoil crops grown for seed, but reasonable isolation from infested woodland would probably afford sufficient protection in any case.

J. W. Eastham.

#### FIELD TRIPS: 1951

BIRD GROUP - May 19th: This meeting was originally scheduled for Lost Lake but as new stretches of barbed wire made visiting this area impracticable the location was changed to Lansdowne and Nottingham in the Uplands. Meeting in brilliant weather the 29 members split up into separate groups and roamed the area for three hours during which time they spotted 25 species of birds. Among these was a Lewis woodpecker, a species which is rapidly being driven away locally by the increased house building and felling of oak trees. Another species of especial interest was the Seattle wren, which has a song of which the opening two notes pitched too high for some human ears to catch.

June 16th, 1951: Again this year a party of 23 left Herbert Corfield's boat-house, Sidney, to visit sea-birds on Bare Island. Weather was excellent and the sea calm. Opposite Sidney Spit several sooty shearwaters were sighted flying fast and low, and on approaching Bare Island a bald eagle rose from a low rock.

The season seemed to be late; eggs of glaucous-winged gulls were everywhere among the grasses and brush. Several double-crested cormorants were still wearing their long white nuptial plumes. The nests of these birds are fast increasing here at the expense, it seems, of those of the Baird's cormorant. Pigeon-guillemots were much in evidence but no nests were located.

By courtesy of Mr. Ruxton, All Bay Rd., Sidney, we were able to visit Shell Island on our return journey.

J.O.C., Convener.

#### JUNIOR PAGE

Editor:  
To be elected.

Ass't Editor:  
George Merrick

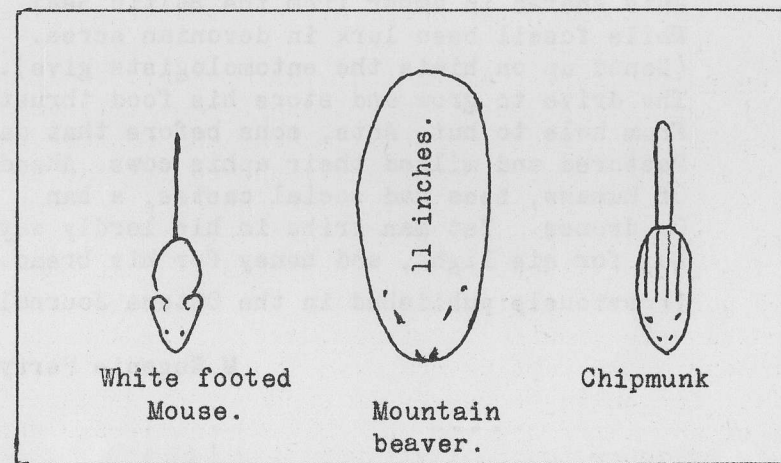
We are sorry that Marie Mitcham is unable to continue the job of Editor because of ill health.

George Merrick was not given any contributions for this page from the Junior Members this month. Help him by loading him up with bits about your pets or what you have collected or seen. Write a few lines and give it to him or to Dr. Carl any Saturday morning you come.

The Museum Movie Season starts on February 16th with a show at 9:30 and another at 11 A.M. Both last one hour. The last show will be on April 5th and after that the Juniors will study flower and insect identification until the season closes at the end of April.

Two excited butterflies went to a dance; imagine their disappointment when they found that it was a "moth ball".  
(Contributed by Mr. George Hardy).

Adrienne Esslemont, Wayne Begg, Bobby and Tommy Glenny, Diana and Derek Hamlet and Denis Gillespy were new members introduced during January.



Comparative size. Small B.C. animals.

NOTICE OF MEETINGS:1952

Tuesday  
Feb.12: GENERAL MEETING: Provincial Library Reading Room, 8 p.m. Dr. A.O.H. Hayes, 25 years Emeritus Rutgers University; carried on Geology work in Canada, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina. Subject: "Structural Geology".

Monday  
Feb.18: AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR: "Our National Parks". A sightseeing tour to America's National Parks. Leonard Hall. S.J. Willis High School Auditorium, Topaz Avenue, 8 p.m.

Tuesday  
Feb.26: BOTANY GROUP: First in a series by Prof. C. W. Lowe, Provincial Museum, 8 p.m.

Tuesday  
March 4: BOTANY GROUP: Second in a series by Prof. C. W. Lowe, Provincial Museum, 8 p.m.

Ant, Bee - And Man

Man in his vanity, his will to live,  
Assumes a vast superiority;  
Forgetting the ubiquitous ant and bee  
Were hatched and housed when he, a primitive,  
Crawled from the ooze; in proof the searchers sieve  
Ants snared in amber from the Baltic Sea;  
While fossil bees lurk in devonian scree.  
(Boned up on hints the entomologists give).  
The drive to grow and store his food thrust man  
From hole to hut. Ants, eons before that day,  
Pastured and milked their aphid cows. Ahead  
Of humans, bees had social castes, a ban  
On drones. Yet man cribs in his lordly way  
Wax for his light, and honey for his bread.  
(Previously published in the Ottawa Journal.)

M.Eugenie Perry.



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