

The
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NATURALIST**

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April, 1953



Forest association: Sitka spruce, hemlock, and salal (Lanz Island).

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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
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REPORT OF THE 1952-1953 ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Victoria Natural History Society was held on Tuesday, March 10th at 8 p.m. in the Provincial Museum. The President, Mr. J. A. Cunningham called the meeting to order. The minutes of the last annual meeting were read and adopted.

The slate of officers, prepared by Miss K. Panton and Mr. John Nutt, was presented, showing that the new officers proposed were the Honorable Mrs. T. J. Rolston as an Honorary President, Mrs. W. H. Stevens as Secretary, Mrs. F. A. Sherman as Programme Convener and Mr. A. R. Davidson as Editor of the Naturalist. The slate was accepted unanimously.

Mr. C. P. Lyons, of the Parks Division of the B. C. Forest Service, was introduced by the President. He showed his own coloured slides under the heading of "Believe it or not in British Columbia". These included some taken in Manning Park, the Okanagan Valley, Mount Robson, and flowers, lakes, mountains and glaciers of Garibaldi Park. They showed artistry, drama, and the beauty and wonder of the British Columbia interior. Mr. Grant expressed the thanks of the meeting to Mr. Lyons for the privilege of seeing his wonderful slides.

The President's report was as follows:-

The past year, during which I have had the privilege and honour of being your president, has been one of very great pleasure to me. There are so many that I wish to thank for their endeavours on behalf of our society that space prohibits me from naming them all. Very reluctantly, I shall be compelled to adopt a "classificatory" system. May I, then, express my indebtedness to the following: The members of the executive - - ever ready to meet, no matter how inadequate the notice; the conveners of the various groups - - each eager to make his section a success; Dr. G. Clifford Carl, who has placed the Museum and his office at

our disposal, shown untold good nature in looking after Audubon lecturers and attending to the projection of films, etc.; the staff of the Museum, willing to help on all occasions - - and especially Mr. King, who so cheerfully attends to our needs at meetings; Miss Lenora Panton and her committee, for their labours in attending to the public at the Audubon Screen Tours; Miss Eugenie Perry, ever solicitous with regard to new members and visitors; Mrs. Kenneth Drury, that unobtrusive planner of programmes and of transportation for others on field trips - - trips which would be impossible otherwise; the editors of the Victoria Naturalist - - a publication meeting acclaim from beyond Victoria - - and the contributors to this bulletin; Miss Betty Newton, for taking charge of the Junior Section of the Society; the various lecturers, who have given us both entertainment and food for thought; Mr. Willard E. Ireland, for making the Reading Room of the Provincial Library available to us, and Mr. Small of his staff, always so helpful at our meetings.

The sole innovation of the year - - one dear to the heart of our immediate past-president, Mrs. James Hobson - has been the presentation of the Audubon Screen Tours in a number of our schools. The Greater Victoria School Board and the principals of the schools have done their utmost to facilitate this. To continue the work next year is beyond our finances, but if upon the conclusion of the tours we can obtain statements of appreciation from the school principals we should be upon firm ground in soliciting aid from outside sources with a view to presenting the tours once again.

Jeffree A. Cunningham.

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOTANY GROUP

The Botany Group held a very successful field trip on May 3rd last to Thetis Lake and again on June 14th when it visited Island View Beach, Telegraph Rd. The more interesting features of these excursions have been reported in the October and November numbers of The Victoria Naturalist.

The ninth annual fungus foray took place in the Hudson's Bay woods on November 1st. Owing to the excessively dry summer and autumn relatively few fungi were found as compared with other years.

On December 3rd the chairman gave an outline of the history of the naming of plants, the development of a system of natural classification of plants, the formation of the International Botanical Congress and the rules and regulations of the Congress for the naming of new plants. An interesting discussion which lasted for thirty minutes concluded the meeting.

On January 27th Dr. R. E. Foster, Chief Pathologist to the Forest Biology Branch of the Department of Agriculture, Ottawa, gave an address on "Some Problems in Forest Pathology." The Dutch Elm Disease and the White Pine Blister-rust were taken as typical examples. A number of colour slides were used to illustrate these diseases and control methods. There was a good discussion after which those present had an opportunity to examine a number of exhibits which Dr. Foster had prepared.

Chas. W. Lowe.

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ORNITHOLOGY GROUP

On May 17th 26 members drove by way of Esquimalt Lagoon to Metchosin. The warm dull weather proved suitable for watching birds. A stop was made to inspect the great spreading Douglas fir trees scattered near the corner of the Lagoon Road and Metchosin Road. Another stop was made at Mr. T. Taylor's residence. Here a pair of western bluebirds nesting in an oak was an attraction. Beyond Metchosin our party reached the shore via Taylor Road. A wide circle was made through several farms. Thirty-one species were noted during the day.

On May 31st 30 members met at John Dean Park. The after-

noon and evening were sunny and visibility was good. As usual not many species (18) were noted in the area. Those heard and seen however were typical of the dry woods of Saanich. The following birds were noted: western tanager, violet-green swallow, olive-sided flycatcher, Townsend's warbler, red-breasted nuthatch, chipping sparrow, brown creeper, russet-backed thrush, Audubon warbler, red-tailed hawk, western robin, ring-necked pheasant, rufous hummingbird, California quail, pileated woodpecker, chestnut-backed chickadee, barn swallow and song sparrow. Three and a half hours were spent in the Park.

On the 21st of June 14 members left Randle's Landing by launch and visited nesting seabirds on Bare Island. The sea was calm and visibility good. At our approach herons left the trees. The usual number of double-crested and Baird cormorants, glaucous-winged gulls, oyster catchers and pigeon guillemots were seen. About 80 nests of the double-crested cormorants were counted, these being separated by the Baird cormorant colony of the more precipitous ledges. Crows were busy moving or devouring cormorant eggs. Not seen on previous visits, but seen on this day offshore was one harlequin duck and two fast-flying tufted puffins.

On the 13th of September, 35 members went by launch from Sidney to Sidney Island. 14 species of birds were seen; the weather was clear and sunny.

On January 17th a field meeting was held covering the shore line from Beacon Hill Park to Clover Point, the latter being an excellent place for the observation of black turnstones, Aleutian sandpipers and different species of gulls.

On February 14th about 20 members motored to Sidney, meeting at the wharf, where old squaw ducks were the chief attraction, travelling thence by way of the coast line to Shoal Harbour, where many ruddy ducks, canvasback ducks, green-winged teal, western grebe, surf and white-winged scoters, greater scaup, buffleheads, red-breasted and hooded mergansers were seen, as well as two red-throated loons. Considerable time was spent on the beautifully landscaped grounds surrounding the large residence known as 'The Latch'.

On January 6th a lecture on orthinology was given at the Provincial Museum by Mr. Frank Beebe.

J. O. Clay.

Four indoor geological meetings were held during the year. The group was very fortunate in having Dr. Hayes, Dr. Gray, Mr. Chas. Sternberg and Mr. Winkler to address them with all their wealth of experience and knowledge on the subjects chosen. All the lectures were well attended.

Three field trips were made during the summer. Permission was obtained from Dr. Sargent for a visit to the Mineral Museum. This was educational as well as interesting and deserved a larger attendance.

On July 26th a boat trip was made to Portland Island, taking in Black Island and Pier Island enroute. This was a most enjoyable affair, everybody taking part in the search for fossils; some of which were found. Dr. Hayes and Mr. Winkler explained the various formations and deposits.

Later in the year Sept. 20th a field trip was made to Gordon Head with Mr. Marrion in charge. This proved very interesting as Mr. Marrion described the effect of the glacial periods on the formation of the island, with the panorama around to illustrate his talk.

The hope was expressed that Mr. Marrion would conduct another trip when possible.

J. H. Whitehouse

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MARINE BIOLOGY GROUP

I regret that owing to my absence from the city in July and August there were but three meetings of the Marine Biology Groups during the year.

At a meeting held in the Biology Laboratory of Victoria College on March 25th, the second lecture on that fascinating "aberrant" phylum, the Sponges (Porifera), was given. It was noted that while we have a great variety of sponges on this coast, much -- in fact, almost everything -- remains to be done on their identification.

A field trip to the Breakwater was made on April 25th. Tidal conditions were excellent, but the weather was threatening, with a breeze just sufficient to make it uncomfortable for those proceeding along the lowest tier of granite

blocks. This is an extremely interesting area, where the life conditions are intermediate between those of the open coast (high wave-shock, high salinity, high oxygen content, low temperature) and those of more protected regions.

At the highest level were observed those forms most resistant to dessication - - minute acorn barnacles (Balanus); the aptly named littorines (shore dwellers), of which the checkered littorine (Littorina scutulata) was most abundant, the Sitka littorine (L. sitchana) less numerous; the small limpet, Acmaea digitalis; and the "fuzzy" little red alga, Endocladia muricata. Several specimens of the large and active isopod or "pill-bug", Lygida pallasii, were observed scuttling about in damp crevices. In the shallow rock-pools the tube-like green alga, Enteromorpha, and the hollow and cylindrical brown alga, Scytosiphon, were found.

At a lower level the rocks were covered with larger acorn barnacles - - Balanus glandula, with a calcareous base.

Intermingled with these in many spots were the small and flattish Chthalamus dalli, (about 1/8 inch in diameter) with a large oval orifice and the six plates of the shell often quite apparent. Balanus cariosus, with a membranous base, and in typical specimens a "thatch" of spines, is more common below this level. The foregoing characteristics may serve in field identification when our three common intertidal barnacles alone are involved. Valid identification of barnacles requires the dissection of specimens, and is a matter for experts - - one of whom we have with us in Victoria in the person of Mr. I. E. Cornwall. Along with the barnacles were numerous mussels, mostly the large and ribbed California mussel (Mytilus californianus) of open waters, but also the bay mussel (M. edulis) of quieter stretches. Among the red algae at this level were great patches of the encrusting coralline, Lithothamnion, masses of the beautiful Polysiphonia, and in the rock-pools the "tamarack-like" Rhodomela larix, and the "leathery" Prionitis lyallii. Clumps of the beautiful green alga of wave-swept regions, Cladophora arcta, were also common.

Between the blocks of stone the wrinkled purple (Thais lamellosa), the channeled purple (T. caniculata), the blue top-shell (Calliostoma costatum), and the black chiton (Katherina tunicata) were abundant. Here also were clusters of goose barnacles (Mitella polymerus) and colonies of the white sea-anemone (Metridium dianthus). Not so plentiful

were the blood-red starfish, Henricia leviuscula; the purplish sunstar, Solaster stimpsoni; and the common star (Pisaster ochraceus) of which purple, brown, and orange specimens were found. All these starfish are really invaders from the sub-tidal zone, the region of their greatest abundance.

The lowest blocks of the intertidal zone were covered with specimens of the broad-leafed brown algae, the Laminarians. Among these were the common bladder-kelp (Nereocystis), the many ribbed Costaria, the wrinkled Laminaria, and the single-ribbed Alaria. Compared with species from other areas these specimens for the greater part are stunted and "leathery". To advance reasons for their abnormality would be pure conjecture, since we do not know enough about the factors determining their normal development. We have little knowledge of the distribution -- the region of maximum and minimum abundance - - of our common dominant species, and still less of the factors - - physical, chemical, biotic - - determining this distribution. Money is spent on "economic problems", but the ecological fundamentals upon which all such problems depend for their solution are largely left alone. At this lowest level several interesting finds were made - - the leafy horn-mouth (Purpura crispata), closely allied to the Murex of tropical seas; the exquisite banded top-shell (Calliostoma annulatum), with pink foot and yellow shell bearing a spiral band of purple; the giant sea-cradle or "gum-boot" (Cryptochiton stelleri), the largest of all chitons; the cushion star (Pteraster tessalatus) and the rose-star (Crossaster papposus) -- both migrants from deeper waters; the brown and "hairy" Oregon triton (Argobuccinum oregonensis) -- another invader from the depths; the brachiopod (Terebratalia); and the black abalone (Haliotis kamschatkama), a denizen of wave-swept coasts.

A trip to the shore near the Chinese Cemetery on May 10, proved most enjoyable: the tide was very low, the sea glassy, the weather perfect. This is an area verging more towards the protected type than does that of the Breakwater.

Rocks covered with the "cabbage-like" brown alga, Hado-phyllum sessile, together with tide-pools and rock-crevices filled with the narrow-bladed eel-grass (Phyllospadix scouleri) afforded a fine hunting ground for the "pea-nut worms" or sipunculids (Physcosoma agassizii); terebellids (tube-worms with a membranous covering) such as Amphitrite; green

sea-anemones (Cribrina elegantissima), which owe their colour to symbiotic algae; and our three common species of sea-urchin -- the long-spined and large Strongylocentrotus franciscanus, the shorter-spined and smaller purple sea-urchin (S. purpuratus), and the common green sea-urchin (S. drobachiensis). All these urchins are invaders from deeper water. It was most interesting to see specimens of the kelp resembling a "featherboa", Egregia menziesii, fully exposed; it is usually found only in deep water. A search for the limpet Acmaea insessa, whose habitat is restricted to this plant, unfortunately failed to reveal any specimens.

Jeffree A. Cunningham

SKYLARK

Oh, skylark, loved of poets, and the dream
Of exiled millions, do you never long
For England? Do these fields quite alien seem
When mad with spring you trill your spiraled song?

Were he who loved the birds, St. Francis, here
And footloose in this stubbled field of grain
Or grassy upland meadow, buff and sere.
His joy like mine might tempered be with pain.

What fate awaits you, stranger, and your tune?
Will twice a thousand years of changeful stress
Make dull the notes that Shelley loved in June,
Or touch with gold your tawny earthiness?

Suffice it that on these bright summer days
You still pursue your immemorial ways.

Marie L. Weldon.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Year 1952-53

-- Income --

Bank Balance from previous year	\$202.83
Membership dues received	286.46
Membership dues received from Junior section	27.00
Receipts from Social evening	10.01
Donation from Mr. Hart, Nanaimo	1.00
Bank Interest	3.94
Repayment of rent of Crystal Garden from Audubon Account	55.00
Received from Audubon account for advertising in the Naturalist	25.00
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	\$611.24
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-- Expenditures --

Printing and mailing the Naturalist	\$205.95
Petty cash to Treasurer	6.00
Gift to Museum Staff	1.29
Expenses Social Evening	13.71
Printing 1200 membership cards	12.35
Paying the rent of Crystal Garden for Audubon account	55.00
Balance in Bank	316.94
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	\$611.24
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Total paid members including family memberships	125
Last year	113
Increase of membership over previous year	12

Our membership is comprised as follows:

Family	40	New members, family	6
Single	85	New members, single	14

(Signed) Edwin W. Adshead,
Treasurer.

Examined and found correct
(signed) G.C. Carl

March 5, 1953

CRIPPLED BIRDS

My bird table is close to two windows, so one can obtain a good view of the birds feeding there, and keep track of each visitor.

This winter I have been keeping a lookout for a crippled Junco, which for the past three winters has visited the table. This bird had a shrivelled foot which apparently did not inconvenience it very much.

In looking over my notes I find this notation dated October 24th, 1950 - "Crippled Junco which was around last winter appeared today". It arrived last year (1951) on November 30th, but up to date this winter I have not seen it, so possibly it did not survive the summer.

Another crippled Junco has been a steady visitor this winter, its left leg is drawn up under the body for the most part, which forces it to use its tail to keep balance; in size it is smaller than the others that feed every day.

I have also noticed a crippled Fox Sparrow feeding nearly every day, and it has also a shrivelled left foot which it uses when standing, but I imagine would be useless in perching.

It will be interesting to see if either of these crippled birds returns next winter.

Capt. W. Redford.

GROWTH OF THE SOIL

Here lies a broad terrain -- a level page
 As yet unsigned -- sand or volcanic crust:
 Magnet for particles that soon engage
 A thousand aids. Dewdrops, granules of dust
 Wind-borne from rotting trees or weathering rock,
 A mound of bleaching bones, flower or leaf-wilt,
 Even a feather from a circling hawk,
 Fuse with torrential rains and river silt.
 Cycles of insects leave the debris;
 Then frost and air, the sun's remedial round
 Transform -- in league with nature's subtlety --
 The arid waste to friable fertile ground.

The years have won, inscribed the page, and now
 the soil is ripe for man's insatiable plough.

M. Eugenie Perry

Previously published in The Ottawa Journal.

JUNIOR PAGE

Editor: Alex Peden. Phone G.7518.

News from a letter received from George Merrick, a member living in Portland, Oregon.

"On a camping trip I caught two Pacific coast newts and one large salamander. I have quite a collection of stuffed birds now. Last September I saw the fish hatcheries at Bonneville dam. I am planning to visit Victoria this summer. I miss Victoria and my friends and enjoy seeing the magazine each month. Portland has a big zoo at Washington Park. They have five species of bears, three timber wolves, three coyotes, four foxes, a dingo, three cougars, three wildcats in one cage, a lion, a lioness and another lioness in another cage. They have an ocelot, a civet cat, baboons, monkeys of all kinds, beavers, skunks, rabbits, mice, badger, kangaroo and young, sloth, chinchilla. Birds of every kind, five golden and one bald eagle, a macaw, canaries, other tropical birds, horned owl, pheasants and many many more. That roughly covers only part of the zoo. Another section has larger animals such as buffalo, deer, antelope, elk and mountain sheep, camel and a llama family. I forgot to tell you that the mother baboon had a baby a week ago.

Gerry Skinner, the member who made the cardboard dinosaurs on exhibit in the Junior case, reported that the two-inch-long grub of the California prionus beetle he acquired is still alive after two weeks. He keeps it in the dark with some wood in the jar for it to eat. It may become the large beetle after first turning into a chrysalis.

NOTICE OF MEETINGS

1953

Tuesday MARINE BIOLOGY: Biological Laboratory, Victoria
April 7: College at 8 p.m.

Professor J.A. Cunningham will give the first of three lectures on the Coelenterates. (There is no tide low enough for a field trip in this month.)

Tuesday GENERAL MEETING: Provincial Museum at 8 p.m.
April 14: An illustrated lecture by Dr. G. Clifford Carl of the Provincial Museum. Subject "Birding in Haidaland".

Tuesday BOTANY GROUP: Biological Laboratory, Victoria
April 21: College at 8 p.m. Miss Winona Bethune on "Pollination".

Saturday GEOLOGY GROUP: Mr. A. H. Marrion will conduct
April 25: members to Gordon Head to continue the studies on the Glacial Age. Members will meet at Mount Douglas Park at 1:30 p.m.

Saturday BOTANY GROUP: Proposed field trip; details to
May 2: be announced.

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Saturday JUNIOR GROUP: Meet at Museum at 10 a.m.
April 11:

The Editors will welcome articles from members of the Society on any matter pertaining to natural history coming under their own observation in this district. The observed fact is the important thing. Any conclusions to be drawn from that fact can be left to the scientists. These articles should be short and concise. Please do not be diffident in sending in your notes on anything you have seen in the realm of nature which you think will be of interest to the other members.

Victoria Natural History Society

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Vice-President:

C. W. LOWE,
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Editors:

A. R. DAVIDSON,
2541 Killarney Road, Telephone E 6602.
G. CLIFFORD CARL. J. NUTT.

Secretary:

MRS. W. H. STEVENS,
1580 Kisber Avenue,
Telephone B 2041.

Treasurer:

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1973 Crescent Road,
Telephone B 2834.

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Programme: MRS. F. A. SHERMAN,
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Botany: C. W. LOWE,
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Ornithology: J. O. CLAY,
Telephone E 3101.

Marine: J. A. CUNNINGHAM,
2474 Hazel Street.

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Telephone B 4975.

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To Mr J. R. Grant
614 Marifield Ave
Victoria. B C