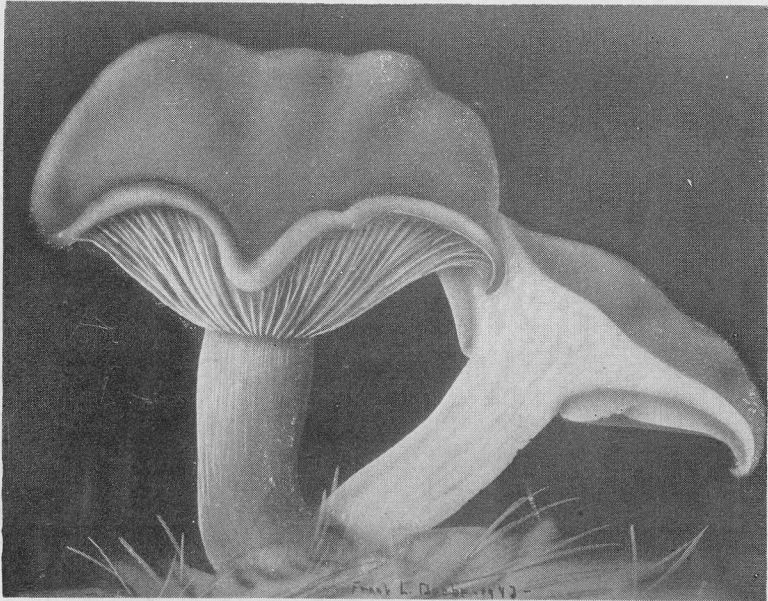


The
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NATURALIST

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Blue bonnets (*Tricholoma personatum*).

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A CHALLENGE

by Miss Ellen Hart,

former Secretary of the now extinct Society for the Preservation of Native Plants of B. C.

Less than half a century ago, the nature-lover, with little difficulty, could find a shady brook within a few miles of the centre of Victoria, where he could gather yellow violets, or watch a deer come down to drink. If he took a walk somewhat closer to town, he could spot a game bird in almost every hedgerow and thicket. In the holiday season, he could choose his campsite from a variety of secluded places along the roadsides and beaches.

Today all is changed. Suburban homes and small shops dot the areas where once forest trees sheltered flowing water, gamebirds have been driven to the hills, motor traffic dominates the highways and the seafront is fenced and barred by private owners.

As a country becomes urbanized, its people must depend more and more on parks and open spaces between blocks of buildings to provide the recreation and spiritual refreshment which only nature and the out-of-doors can give. Vacant property which has heretofore served as undeveloped parkland and playingfield in the Victoria district is fast disappearing. Our Parks Superintendent, Mr. Herbert Warren, warns us that our park areas are already inadequate. Last year the historic old Pemberton Estate, with its fields and woods which have been for so many years a joy to children and nature-lovers, was subdivided and put on the market. It, too, would have completely disappeared had not the Parent-Teachers' Association and one or two other groups petitioned the City Council to reserve a portion of it for the public enjoyment. A by-law was then presented to the ratepayers, who voted to set aside a small four and a half acre park.

The seashore of Victoria, with its Gorge Inlet and its countless little bays and beaches and gently-sloping ledges

of rock, which should be a joy to all, bears the marks of our indifference and neglect. The "Gorge", which might be developed into a world-famous water ribbon of beauty and historical interest, has been made an outlet for sewage, and uncontrolled construction, industrial and domestic, has scattered untidy and badly-placed buildings along its sides.

Our beaches are often rendered unsavory with oil waste and rubbish which float over the water: broken glass cuts the children's feet, and, on those portions of the shore where there are gravel banks, erosion is wearing away the precious seafront. Even the shore-line of Beacon Hill Park, which constitutes one of the most unusual features of our famous park, is being eroded at an alarming rate.

Authorities report that vandalism in the parks is on the increase, and that the lovely spring wild flowers of our natural parks are being more wantonly destroyed than ever.

On the outskirts of the city, many of our highways, which used to be so fresh and fragrant with the growth of wild roses and spirea, dogwood and Oregon grape, and which provided such an ideal cover for birds, have been turned into bleak stretches of monotony and ugliness by the poisonous insecticides, now being used by certain road engineers, which kill the plant life as well as the insects.

There is a great need for an organized effort to halt all these destructive tendencies, and to conserve an adequate part of the natural beauty with which our Island has been endowed. Such organizations as the Natural History Society, the Chamber of Commerce, the Parent-Teachers' Association should consult with the Town Planning Commission, the Victoria Parks Superintendent, and the Municipal Authorities and work out a long-range plan of Park Reservation and Development. But the main task is to educate the public. Men, women and children must be taught the value of their natural heritage, and must be shown how they can conserve it, so that they will understand and be ready to make whatever sacrifices are necessary, before it is too late.

One organization is needed to give the lead for others to follow. The Society for the Preservation of Native Plants of B.C., which for many years carried on a heroic fight in Victoria for the preservation of natural beauty and the setting aside of adequate park areas is no longer in existence. Former members of the Society look to the

Natural History Society to carry on the work which they pioneered. They are convinced that the challenge will not go unheeded.

NESTING BEHAVIOUR OF THE RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH

By J. A. Munro,
Okanagan Landing, B. C.

In May, 1947, a pair of red-breasted nuthatches nested in an aspen, 12 inches in diameter at the base, on the shore of Lac la Hache. The nest entrance was five feet eight inches above ground in an old scar that was partly decayed and in process of being sealed by new growth. On May 7, and on several days following, the female was watched from a distance of six feet or less as she worked at excavating the nest cavity. She worked continually, 10 minutes or so at one time, sometimes pecking at the hard wood around the circumference of the entrance and apparently dislodging little or nothing there, but more often entering the cavity, where the wood was softer, and emerging shortly with a fragment of wood in her bill which she dropped to the ground. The male appeared occasionally, on the nesting tree, or in one nearby, but did no excavating. On June 1 it was observed that work on the nest had ceased and that the wood below the entrance was smeared with particles of liquid Douglas fir gum. In this locality, at least, the red-breasted nuthatch normally nests in a conifer and it is usual for the nest entrance to be coated with gum from the nesting tree, but here the nearest source of gum was 300 yards away. When I visited the nest in the evening of June 6 the female came to the entrance and remained there nearly motionless, her head framed in the small aperture. It was noted that fresh gum had been added to the lower edge of the entrance. Later it was determined that the gum was renewed frequently.

During the following 10 days the pair was silent and, for the most part, invisible whenever I happened to pass by. Apparently the eggs hatched on June 17, for on that day the female was first seen carrying food to the young. She made many trips back and forth; the male appeared once only and did not enter the nest.

On June 27 I remained on watch from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.

During that time the female made 15 trips carrying food to the young. Each time she alighted on the trunk directly below the nest entrance and immediately dived through it to remain below about 20 seconds. The intervals between visits were from one to five minutes. Once when emerging she carried a faecal sac in her bill. Her foraging ground comprised the cottonwoods and aspens in the vicinity. Sometimes she climbed up and down the main trunks; again, she hunted among the upper branches. During this one-hour period the male visited the nest but once.

Several times a female tree swallow flew to the nest entrance, too small to permit her entry, and clung to the bark below it. These visits took place both while the nuthatch was on the nest and while she was absent. Once, while the swallow clung to the tree, the nuthatch alighted just below and quickly dislodged her. On another occasion when the swallow was perched on a branch close to the nest the female nuthatch swooped down and drove her away.

The young still occupied the nest on June 26 and on this day both parents carried food continually. On the day following a young bird appeared at the entrance, completely filling its small circumference, and called with the familiar yank, yank cry. The sound seemed softer, less strident, than that made by an adult. Here one of the parents fed it numerous times and while doing so clung to the tree below the nest entrance and put food directly into the young bird's mouth. Neither adults nor young were seen the following day so it was assumed the brood had been led elsewhere, probably at an early hour in the morning.

Another pair of red-breasted nuthatches nested in the vicinity and the young had left the nest earlier. On June 19, in a grove of cotton woods about one quarter-mile from the nest described above, a female was accompanied by one young that followed her from tree to tree and, upon alighting, fluttered its wings and cried continually with a weak version of the yank, yank call until such time as the female fed it.

OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK

A trip to the higher latitudes of the Olympics in July or August is an investment which will repay in pleasant memories a lifetime of dividends. With an environment similar to those of the Forbidden Plateau and Garibaldi Park, their beauties outrival the far-famed Swiss Alps and Austrian Tyrol.

Following suggestions made by Mr. Gunner Fagerland, Chief Naturalist of the Olympic National Park, during his illustrated talk to the Victoria Natural History Society last winter, a visit was made to Hurricane Ridge, which although only 21 miles from Port Angeles is nearly six thousand feet above sea level and commands superb views away inland over the Olympics and back across the Juan de Fuca Straits to Victoria. Before leaving Port Angeles a call was made at the Park Headquarters, where a courteous officer explained the route and exhibited a fine contour map of the whole Park.

Leaving U.S. Highway 101 a few miles west of Port Angeles, an excellently graded road follows the Elwha River and runs alongside some beautiful rapids before reaching Lake Mills, whose lovely milky-jade colouring betrays its glacier-fed origin. Passing Whisky Bend one ascends rapidly, soon leaving the last Arbutus far below and reaching the Hudsonian (highest timbered) Zone. Here the principal tree species are the Alpine fir (a "balsam"), Abies lasiocarpa (Hook.) Nutt; the Mountain hemlock, Tsuga Mertensiana (Bong.) Carr; and the Yellow cedar, Chamaecyparis nootkatensis (Lamb) Spach. The two former have developed at this altitude a crisp alert appearance reminiscent of the spruces. Their leaves curl upwards and are thicker than those of their relatives growing in lower and warmer locations, and the Abies particularly, is much bluer in colour. The very heavy snowfall of this region accounts no doubt for the steep spire-like crowns and the strange "full-skirt" of foliage which spreads over a large area of ground at the bases of many of the trees.

A good place to have lunch is on the Ridge near the turn-off to Idaho Camp. Here, overlooking an alpine meadow covered with brilliantly coloured flowers one can

see, from a height of over 5,000 feet, between awe inspiring crags, the blue of the straits, Victoria, and the mountains of Vancouver Island. In the timber fringing the meadow were a family of deer, the mother with twin one-year-olds and a spotted fawn. Turning ones head one could see the snow-covered peaks around Mount Olympus. From the distance came the whistling of marmots.

The sparkling air and the abundance and variety of the flowers are an exhilarating combination. It is as if to make up for the short growing season (because these meadows are buried beneath great depths of snow for about nine months of the year) all the species hold carnival and vie with each other to produce the greatest number of blossoms and to make the brightest splashes of colour - gold and pink, purple and orange, white and red, and many shades in between. The Erythroniums were just finishing, but acres of their stems and seed pods, with an occasional pink-tinted corolla, showed what a sight they must have been a week or two earlier. Many familiar flowers and shrubs were in bloom and many not so familiar. Among the species identified were the following:-

- Rhododendron albiflorum Hook. (White rhododendron)
- Castilleja oreopola Greenman (Pink Indian paint brush)
- Lilium columbianum Hans. (Wild tiger lily)
- Polemonium columbianum Rydb. (Jacob's ladder)
- Campanula rotundifolia L. (Harebell)
- Erythronium montanum Wats. (Dog-tooth violet)
- Smilacina sessilifolia Nutt. (False Solomon's seal)
- Vaccinium deliciosum Piper (Mountain huckleberry)
- Sorbus cascadiensis G.N. Jones (Mountain Ash)

A climb to the Hurricane Hill Fire Lookout, where we were made welcome by the officer-in-charge and his wife, added further interest to a memorable day.

J.N.3/9/53

NESTING OF THE MOURNING DOVE ON VANCOUVER ISLAND

by

George A. Hardy, Provincial Museum, B.C.

As I have been unable to find any record of the Mourning Dove nesting on Vancouver Island, these notes may be of interest.

On July 16th, 1953 I found the nest and eggs of a Mourning Dove near Mount Douglas, a few miles north of Victoria. The nest was built in the crotch of a small Garry oak about ten feet above the ground where the main branches diverge from the trunk. It was made of thin dead twigs of Douglas fir and lightly lined with dry grass. The nest was of very flimsy construction with a slight dish or hollow, barely enough to prevent the two eggs from rolling off.

The bird was sitting closely, flying away only upon my near approach and then not going far off; the conspicuous white outer tail feathers made identity certain.

The nest was visited again on July 18th, when I took a series of photographs.

I made yet another visit on July 25th and found everything in good order with the bird sitting closely as before.

On August 9th I again visited the site but found only the empty nest without a sign of eggs or birds. I can only presume that the eggs met with an untimely end, either from a crow, raven, squirrel, or Homo sapiens, as there was hardly time for the eggs to have hatched and for the young to be reared between my visits.

BIRD GROUP:

On Saturday morning, September 5th, a field meeting of the Bird Group met at Sidney, covering the area around Shoal Harbour, and from there to the East Saanich Indian Reserve off Mount Newton Cross Road. The weather was perfect, the birds were numerous (58 species) and the members had an enjoyable and profitable time. I have taken the liberty of listing below the birds

identified, in the hope that other members of the Society will be interested in the variety of species to be seen at this time of year.

J.O.C.

Common Loon	Rufous Hummingbird
Horned Grebe	Kingfisher
Western Grebe	Northwestern Flicker
Double-Crested Cormorant	Pileated Woodpecker
Baird's Cormorant	Harris Woodpecker
Heron	Western Flycatcher
Mallard	Violet-Green Swallow
Pintail	Barn Swallow
White-Winged Scoter	Cliff Swallow
Surf Scoter	Northwestern Crow
Cooper's Hawk	Chestnut-backed Chickadee
Bald Eagle	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Osprey	Brown Creeper
Ring-necked Pheasant	Seattle Wren
California Quail	Robin
Coot	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Killdeer	Cedar Waxwing
Greater Yellowlegs	Lutescent Warbler
Least Sandpiper	Myrtle Warbler
Western Sandpiper	European Sparrow
Semi-palmated Sandpiper	Brewers Blackbird
	(500 plus)
California Gull	Western Tanager
Short Billed Gull	Purple Finch
Glaucous-winged Gull	Pine Siskin
Bonaparte Gull	Oregon Towhee
Marbled Murrelet	Savannah Sparrow
Heerman Gull	Goldfinch
Band-tailed Pigeon	White-crowned Sparrow
Kennicott's Screech Owl	Song Sparrow

MARINE BIOLOGY GROUP:

On Tuesday evening, March 17, 1953, in the Victoria College Biology Laboratory, members of the Marine Biology Group were privileged to hear, and see illustrated, by Professor J.A.Cunningham, a lecture on marine algae of

the British Columbia Coast. Professor Cunningham pointed out that considering there is apparently as much vegetation growing in the sea as is grown on the land, future generations will no doubt greatly supplement their diminishing supplies of land food and materials with those from the ocean. Much study will be required along various avenues such as the distribution - qualitative and quantitative - of marine growths, their succession, and their chemical content at different seasons.

In addition to being of value to the gardener and agriculturist, species of sea vegetation are rich in nutritional essentials such as mineral salts (especially those of iodine) and vitamins. The last two wars stimulated research into the extraction of potash and agar, etc., and technological progress has been tremendous. The cosmetic industry is particularly indebted and many a pretty face owes much of its beauty to the common seaweed. British Columbia's algae are of interest both in Britain and on the Atlantic seaboard and attempts are being made to introduce our two well-known species of kelp, *Nereocystis* and *Macrocystis*, over there.

In this lecture Professor Cunningham dealt chiefly with the one alga, *Nereocystis* (sea bladder). Like all kelps, it is a large broadleaved brown seaweed and those who walk along the sea's edge must often have watched fascinatedly the great leathery-looking masses rising and falling in the swirling waters around the rocks.

Nereocystis grows all along the coast from California to Alaska, the average length of the plants being from 50 to 100 feet. It is believed to be an annual, as young plants are found in the spring. These grow rapidly, sometimes at the rate of ten inches a day, and in July and August they fruit abundantly. At this time millions of zoospores are cast loose from the sporangia which form great patches (sori) on the blades. In the autumn, attacked by snails and bacteria, the plants decay, become loosened from their holds on the rocks and float away.

In describing, and illustrating with his lucid drawings, the structure of *Nereocystis*, Professor Cunningham explained, among other things, that it has not true leaves but laminae which start with one section and keep splitting to form others. It has not a true stalk either, but a stipe, and not even a true root, but a cluster of hapteres making a holdfast.

In an interesting and detailed exposition, he illustrated how the zoospores develop into minute branching filaments or rosettes, the gametophyte plants - some bearing antheridia which give rise to sperms, others to oogonia which bear eggs. From the zygote, resulting from the fusion of egg and sperm, arise the large and conspicuous sporophyte plants.

Following the lecture members examined specimens in the laboratory dishes, and some exquisite microscope slides loaned by the University of British Columbia.

All present expressed their gratitude and satisfaction in yet another clearly expressed and most informative lecture on Marine Biology.

J. N.

THE MULLEIN

Three summers ago there appeared on the edge of the gravel road in front of our house a strong growing plant with large smooth leaves growing from a common centre. I am not a botanist and was unable to identify it. Later in the year the municipal road scraper came along and sliced it off about an inch below the surface, and apparently eliminated it. However, in the Fall new leaves appeared, and by the next spring it had fully recovered, but before it had a chance to flower along came the scraper on its annual visit, and the plant disappeared entirely. That really gave it a shock, and it wasn't until early this spring that any new growth appeared. This time it was permitted to grow. A strike of Saanich workers delayed the machine, and when it did come around later the crown of the road only was touched. So the plant flourished unhindered, threw up a strong flower stalk and finally reached a height of seven and a half feet. All this summer it blossomed, primrose coloured flowers covering the main stem and the upward growing branches, and it glowed in the sun like a brightly lit candelabra. One day an observant member of the Society came along to visit us, saw the plant and exclaimed "Oh! what a beautiful mullein." So that is what it was. It still stands there, shorn of its glory, and covered with hundreds of small seed pods. Where it came from is not known. It is a cultivated variety, but I have seen none in any garden in this area.

A.R.D.

JUNIOR PAGE

Boys and girls of the Junior Natural History Society please let me introduce myself. My name is Bill Hubbard and I have only recently arrived in your fair city to assume my duties as botanist in the Provincial Museum. Perhaps you would be interested in hearing a little of the country I have just come from.

The Manyberries Range Station, which was my home for several years, is located in the extreme southeastern corner of the province of Alberta. The soil of the area is classified as Brown, due to limited amount of precipitation, (11.30 inches per year as compared with 87 inches for Victoria) which supports an arid type of vegetation commonly called the Shortgrass prairies.

This is the land, as the song goes, "Where the Deer and the Antelope play." South of the station the Lost River and the Milk River join before flowing into the U.S.A. At this junction, on the south facing slopes, are to be found many interesting things. The only known Canadian record of Yucca or Spanish bayonet is found growing profusely on the slopes. Here also are Hog-nosed snakes, scorpions, horned toads, blackwidow spiders and diamondback rattlesnakes.

I could tell you more but space in the magazine is limited. Perhaps at some future date I shall have the opportunity of meeting all of you personally at which time you can tell me of your experiences.

On September 22 Bruce Colvin and I, Wayne Begg took a trip to the brickyards on Douglas. We were looking under some logs for newts. We found under one log five newts and caught them all. Along a little ways in the eel grass I saw a frog. I reached out to grab it but it submerged. We saw some more and caught them. By now we had five frogs about ten newts. I spotted a piece of moist paper I thought it would be a likely spot for newts. I lifted it up and to my astonishment I saw about fifty newts. We scouted around and found five more frogs in a little sort of bay. I was walking along when I must have scared a frog about one and one half inches long. He leaped for the water and started to swim. There happened to be reeds around and he could not advance. When I caught him we left for home. The End.

NOTICE OF MEETINGS

1953:

Saturday BIRD GROUP: Trip to Witty's Lagoon. Meet at
 Oct. 3rd: the Monterey Cafe at 9:45 a.m.
 or at the Lagoon at 10:15 a.m. Bring lunch.
 Those unable to use public trail, please
 phone Mr. Clay. J. O. Clay.

Tuesday GEOLOGY GROUP: Meet at the Museum at 8 p.m.
 Oct. 6th: Speaker: A. H. Marrion.

Tuesday GENERAL MEETING: At the Museum 8 p.m. One
 Oct. 13th: of the staff of the B. C.
 Forest Service will give a talk and show
 films entitled "Web of Life" and "Three
 Little Bruins in a Canoe". *the Woods*

Tuesday BOTANY GROUP: Meet at the Museum at 8 p.m.
 Oct. 20th: Subject: "The Plant Cell"...
 Prof. C. W. Lowe.

Friday AUDUBON LECTURE at the Oak Bay Junior High
 Oct. 30th: School Auditorium at 8 p.m.
 Subject: "Wing Havens" by Alexander Sprunt,
 Jr.

OUR MEMBERS

Any errors or omissions in the list of members published in the September issue should be reported to the Secretary.

Mr. Llewellyn Jones' address has been corrected to box 105, R. R. 1 Cobble Hill, and the name of Mr. F. Scott Mason has been changed to Mr. & Mrs. F. Scott Mason.

THE COVER: This Toadstool, *Tricholoma personatum*, is one of the several varieties of this species, and is quite edible, being used as a vegetable in many parts of the world. It grows here by the roadsides, in the thinner woods and in the fields, and can be found from September to frost.

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