

The
VICTORIA
NATURALIST

Vol. 11, No. 1

April, 1954



(Photo by G. A. Hardy.)

Alaskan paint-brush (*Castilleja unalaskensis*), Triangle Island.

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

ADDRESS OF RETIRING PRESIDENT

It has been a great pleasure to have had the honour of being your president for the past two years.

My duties have been greatly lightened through the efforts of many enthusiastic helpers, but space prevents me from enumerating them all. May I, however, express my thanks to the following: the members of the executive; the chairman of the various sections - among whom, although not listed as a group chairman, must be included Miss Betty Newton, who has taken charge of the juniors throughout the year; Mrs. F. A. Sherman, who has so successfully arranged for programmes; those who have provided transportation on field trips; Mr. A. R. Davidson, who has toiled so assiduously as editor-in-chief of the Victoria Naturalist, and his co-editors; Miss Lenora Panton and her committee, who have been in charge of the Audubon Screen Tours; those who have been so kind in entertaining, in their homes, the Audubon lecturers; Miss Eugenie Perry, for her solicitude on behalf of new members and visitors, and the social committee; Dr. G. Clifford Carl, for making the museum and his office available for meetings, and for rendering innumerable kindnesses for which he never receives recognition; the staff of the museum, for aid so cheerfully rendered - - Mr. King deserves special mention for never failing to have our meeting rooms ready; Mr. Willard Ireland, for placing the reading room of the Provincial Library at our disposal, and his helper, Mr. Wharton, for assistance at our meetings.

I deeply regret that during the year Mr. John Nutt, one of our co-editors, and Mrs. H.D.R. Stewart of our social committee suffered disabling illnesses, but rejoice that Mr. Nutt is making definite progress, and that Mrs. Stewart has made a remarkable recovery. It is sad that Mr. E.W. Adshead, our Treasurer for so many years, is compelled to remain in California on account of his health.

In conclusion, I wish to thank every member of our Society for loyal support: to me, my two years in office will ever remain a cherished memory.

"Jeffree A. Cunningham"

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Year 1953 - 1954.

The Victoria Natural History Society has just completed its 1953 - 1954 Season. The membership at present is 129.

Correspondence has been of a routine nature. We receive the monthly bulletin from the Information Service, Department of Agriculture at Ottawa, the 'Blue Jay' from Regina, the 'Wood Duck' from the Hamilton Nature Club, and the English nature magazine 'Country-Side'. These are available to any member interested in reading them.

It was with sincere regret that we recorded the death of one of our Honorary Presidents, Mrs. Tilly Rolston, and of a very esteemed member, the Rev. T. Taylor of Metchosin.

A general meeting was held each month except during the summer, special speakers and their topics being:-

Dr. Clifford Carl,	Birding in Haidaland
Mr. C.P. Lyons,	Believe it or not in British Columbia.
Mr. G.J. Alexander,	Problems involved in Conservation in B.C.
Mr. E. H. Garman,	The Web of Life.
Dr. H. T. Gussow,	Applied Mycology
Mr. G.A. Hardy,	Garden Insects
Mr. Frank Beebe,	Falconry
Dr. Ian McT. Cowan,	Natural History in Britain and Scandinavia.

There were five executive meetings and each month there were either indoor meetings or outdoor trips specializing in the following:

Botany; Ornithology; Geology; or Marine Biology.

The Junior Group is continuing and still flourishing in spite of having to change their meetings from Saturday morning to Tuesday afternoon. The meetings are held in the Museum under the Leadership of Dr. Carl, assisted by Miss Betty Newton.

The Society is sponsoring the Audubon Screen Tour Lectures, which this year were held in the Oak Bay Junior High School. These were well attended.

The Annual Meeting was held on Tuesday, March 9th. The President, Mr. J.A. Cunningham called the meeting to order and the minutes of the last annual meeting were read and adopted.

The slate of officers for the ensuing year was presented, same being as follows:

Officers:	President:	Dr. C.W. Lowe
	Vice-President:	Dr. Albert O. Hayes
	Secretary:	Miss Helen Baird
Group Chairmen:	Treasurer:	Mrs. G. E. Soulsby
	Programme:	Mrs. F. A. Sherman
	Audubon:	Miss Lenora Panton
	Botany:	Dr. C.W. Lowe
	Marine Biology:	Mr. J.A. Cunningham
	Geology:	Mr. A.H. Marrison
	Ornithology:	J. O. Clay
	Zoology:	Dr. G. Clifford Carl
Editors:	A. R. Davidson	
	G. Clifford Carl	
	H. D. R. Stewart	

A letter was read from the Vancouver Natural History Society who are sponsoring a plan to assist in solving the mystery of the meeting grounds of the Whooping Crane, and help save it from imminent extinction. They wish an air-mail stamp and cancellation to be made for Canada and the United States, so that by such public notice everyone may be aroused to this danger. It was moved by Mr. Lowe, and seconded by Mr. Meugens that this plan have the support and approval of this Society, the motion being unanimously passed.

Dr. A. O. Hayes, the guest speaker for the evening, gave a most interesting and informative address, well illustrated, entitled 'Across America', a précis of which it is hoped will be published in the next issue.

 W. H. Stevens

TREASURER'S REPORT - Victoria Natural History Society -
Year 1953-1954

INCOME

Bank Balance from previous year - - - - -	\$ 316.94
Membership fees received - - - - -	289.06
Membership fees " Juniors - - - - -	22.00
Receipts from Social Evening - - - - -	10.20
Bank Interest - - - - -	5.37
Proceeds First Audubon Lecture Sept. 26th (see contra) - - - - -	246.61
Received from Audubon Account Amusement Tax wrongly debited to Natural History Acc't on October 31, 1953 (see contra) - - - - -	5.38
	<u>\$ 895.56</u>

EXPENDITURES

Monks' Multigraph Letter Service: supplying postage, printing and mailing "Naturalist" etc. \$216.18 also supplying paper for same <u>28.33</u>	244.51
Petty Case for Treasurer - - - - -	11.00
Morriss Printing Co. - Paper and Envelopes - -	24.19
Expenses for Socials - - - - -	13.69
Flowers sent to hospitals - - - - -	8.83
Expenses Dr. Ian McT. Cowan - - - - -	11.30
Paid to Audubon Account Receipts of First Lecture, as above -	246.61
Amusement Tax, wrongly charged to Natural History acct. as above - - - - -	5.38
Balance in Bank - - - - -	330.05
Audited and found correct: H.D.R. Stewart.	<u>\$ 895.56</u>

Total paid members including family memberships 129
Previous year - - - - - 125
Increase of 4 over last year. Our membership
comprised as follows: Family 38
Single 91
There are 27 Junior Members.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

"Gladys E. Soulsby"
Treasurer.

REPORT OF THE BOTANICAL GROUP OF THE VICTORIA NATURAL
HISTORY SOCIETY 1953-1954

Since the last Annual Meeting there have been five lectures and two field trips for this group. The lectures were as follows:-

March 24th/53	"The Conifers" by the group chairman.
April 21st	"Pollination" by Miss Winona Bethune, M.A. of the Victoria College staff.
Oct. 20th	"The Plant Cell" the first of a series of three or four by the group chairman.
Jan. 26th/54	"The Work of the Manyberries Range Station, Alberta," by Mr. W. A. Hubbard, the newly appointed botanist of the Provincial Museum.
Feb. 23rd	"The Plant Cell" continued, followed by color slides of some Manitoba flowers.

The field trips were few in number owing to the absence from the city of the group chairman. On June 6th Mr. J. Nutt directed the members in a study of native trees in the Mt. Douglas Park area and afterwards entertained the group to tea in the park. On Nov. 7th the tenth annual fungus foray took place in the Hudson's Bay woods off Argyle Ave. Over forty species were identified. Mrs. J. Hobson served tea. The group also paid a very appropriate tribute to Mr. G.A. Hardy who had led all ten forays and had recently retired from the post of Botanist to the B.C. Museum.

The group lost an enthusiastic friend in the death of the Rev. T. Taylor on Oct. 18th. Mr. Taylor was the group chairman for the year 1950-1951. It is with pleasure we hear that Mr. J. Nutt is making progress after severe illness and we hope that it will not be very long before he is back in our midst.

Respectfully submitted,
C. W. Lowe
Chairman.

GEOLOGICAL GROUP REPORTfor the year April 1953 to March, 1954

Four indoor meetings were held and two field trips were made. All were well attended, except for one, Mr. J.R. Grant's, when the weather was too bad for the average person to turn out.

The Group was fortunate in getting such speakers as Dr. W.R. Bacon, and Dr. A.O. Hayes, each of whom gave a very interesting and a most instructive lecture. To them and all the others who contributed to the success of the year, we express our thanks.

The two field trips, one under the guidance of Mr. A.H. Marrion to Gordon Head and one to Sooke under the guidance of Mr. Geo. Winkler, were well attended and much enjoyed by those taking part.

On the whole it has been a good year and there appears to be a general interest in the work of the group.

J. H. W.

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MARINE BIOLOGY GROUP

In Marine Biology five lectures were given, and three field trips taken, during the year.

The lectures were illustrated by demonstration material, models, charts, and microscope slides. The first lecture dealt with the structure, life-history and factors affecting the distribution of our common kelp (Nereocystis). The others were a continuation of the series begun in the previous year, and discussed the structure, physiology and life-histories of selected examples illustrating the various groups included in the Coelenterates - - Hydroids and Hydromedusae, True Medusae (Scyphyzoans), Sea-anemones and Corals.

Field trips were made to Saanichton Spit, Oak Bay Beach near the Boathouse, and the Breakwater.

At Saanichton Spit we hoped to find numerous young sporophytes of our common brown algae - - Nereocystis, Alaria, Laminaria, etc. Winter storms at times of low tide, however, had resulted in young plants being torn loose and

destroyed, as we came to realize how heavy the odds were against survival. We also expected to find the beautiful sand-dwelling sea-anemone (Herenactis), but failed to do so, although this animal is quite plentiful on Island View Beach, not far distant. However, the weather was delightful, the scenery beautiful, our appetites were keen, we all developed a good tan - - so all-in-all we considered the day well spent.

At Oak Bay Beach we secured a number of piddocks (Zirphaea), molluscs which bore into the blue clay. They are difficult to secure intact, but one feels that his labour is well repaid when a perfect specimen is obtained. Efforts made to collect these in the previous year, when the tide was not low enough, had ended in failure.

The Breakwater, of course, revealed its usual wealth of material. Among the scarcer finds were the Oregon triton (Argobuccinum oregonensis), the black abalone (Haliotis kamptchatkana), the beautiful carmine hermit-crab (Pagurus galli), the rose-star (Crossaster papposus), the cushion-star (Pteraster tessalatus), and a large "prickly" starfish which I have not yet identified - - due to laziness. The weather was cold and windy, and even the most enthusiastic shore-hunters were glad when the rising tide made further work unprofitable.

"Jeffrey A. Cunningham".

REPORT OF THE BIRD GROUP MEETINGS

for the 1953-1954 Season

On Saturday, 9th May, a visit was made to Benacre, Metchosin, the property of Miss Houghton, comprising forest and field, hill and dell, lake, swamp and seashore, all charmingly associated. The following is list of the varieties seen, 17 in number:

BLACK BRANT: BUFFLEHEAD: OLD SQUAW DUCK: SURF SCOTER:
GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL: BAND-TAILED PIGEON: CHESTNUT-
BACKED CHICKADEE: RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH: CEDAR WAXWING:
SOLITARY VIREO: LUTESCENT WARBLER: WARBLING VIREO;
TOWNSEND WARBLER: PILEOLATED WARBLER: RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD:
OREGON TOWHEE: RUSTY SONG SPARROW.

Lingering on the way to Metchosin at Lagoon Road, two pairs of western bluebirds were watched with interest.

On Saturday, June 27th, the trip was made to Bare Island, where cormorants (two species) herons: oyster catchers, glaucous-winged gulls: pigeon guillemots: north-west crows crowded each other for space to nest. See our September issue.

On Saturday, 5th Sept., the group met at Sidney. A full list in our October issue was given of the 58 varieties seen.

On Saturday, 3rd October, a trip was made to Witty's Lagoon, on the Metchosin Road. A few enthusiasts turned out for this trip. Birds seen were chiefly pintail, mallard and red-breasted mergansers.

On Saturday, January 9th, our Bird Group travelled the sea coast from Clover Point to Cadboro Bay, particular attention being given to the shore birds, of which many were seen. In front of the Old Charming Inn at Oak Bay the group had the pleasure of observing 14 surf birds: 7 Aleutian sandpipers and many black turnstones at close range. Our localized Hudsonia curlew was also seen in the same company.

J. O. Clay.

HERRING PROVIDE A FEAST FOR BIRDS
and Ornithologists

by Theed Pearse, Comox, B. C.

One of the events that brightens the late winter, especially when it drags on as this year, is the arrival in the district of spawning herring; not from a culinary point of view as the herring are not worth eating, soft and thin, but from what their presence brings in the way of birdlife.

The time for arrival of the school is uncertain; sometimes herring appear in Comox Bay in January but then seldom stay, though some six years ago a big school stayed there all the winter and provided food for innumerable gulls and other birds.. This year the school came in but quickly moved out and selected the Point Holmes area for spawning, rather a favorite locality.

I was out there the end of February and since, on

various occasions and the sight was truly wonderful - gulls in masses on the shore and the air full of them, the former resting contentedly gorged and the latter hoping to do so. It is impossible to count birds on the wing like these were, in and out and crisscrossing all the time but, from very rough estimates, I feel convinced there were at least 50,000 gulls present.

In such a large number as this one would expect to find a variety of species, or, at least, the occasional variety, but this is not the case. From sample counts made nearly 90% were adult glaucous-wings, about 3% juvenile (brown) of the same species and the remaining 7% represented the two species of herring gull. It is not easy always to distinguish between the last two but some of the birds had primaries so black as to be undoubtedly the true herring gull and not Thayer's gull; again some of the latter are of such a faded out black that they are barely distinguishable from the glaucous-wing.

Among such a number of large gulls one would expect to find the odd western but I have yet to see an adult of this species in these flocks and during the many springs I have looked them over, I must have totalled into the hundreds of thousands. This year there was a very dark "brown" bird that suggested a young western; Comox is off the range of the western gull, it is quite a rarity.

The other gull present was the short bill but it goes for the herring eggs rather than for fish, quite a number, five hundred or more, were scattered about the sandy fore-shore where the spawn had been left by the tide. I could not see a single egg left; the gulls had combed the area very thoroughly. Of course the presence of the short bill is dependent on there being eggs washed ashore; it does not seem to have caught on to the ducks' habit of waiting, above the school for the eggs to float up.

It is not only the gulls that provide the show; there are the ducks and on the first time, this year, these must have run into the thousands of which, it would be safe to say that by far the big majority was scoters and these mainly surf. It was too rough to be able to distinguish the birds which were, mostly, rather far out but nearer in could be seen flocks of old squaws and American golden-eyes. The scoters, particularly, seem to keep over the herring school, picking up the eggs that, doubtless, are extruded.

Sometimes there will be large flocks of western grebe or

numerous Red necked, as we are to call the Holboell, presumably, also, after floating eggs. I have not seen any number of these and they have been scarce all the winter. Then there are sure to be some cormorants, sometimes in flocks, mainly pelagic, and Pacific loons which, also, have been below normal numbers this winter. Of course with the two last species it is the fish that is the food.

Quite apart from the spectacle these birds provide there must be some interesting ecological questions that arise. For instance: why were the old squaws and golden-eye only in numbers on one occasion? Then there will be numbers of Pacific loons one time and scarcely any the next; same with other species. There must be varying conditions that attract the different species, perhaps the depth the school is lying may be one. Of course when the prey is the fish the school must be near the surface to be within reach of the gulls' plunge though this should not make any difference to the cormorants or loons. Here is a great opportunity for a young biologist.

BIRD NOTES

This is the month in the year that most migrants are seen in the Victoria area. We bird watchers are out on every possible occasion to catch sight of the incoming birds, sometimes, I'm afraid, neglecting more essential duties to do so. The following are the dates of the arrival of the April migrants last year:

April 5th: Lutescent Warblers
 6th: Rufous Hummingbirds, female.
 13th: Chipping Sparrows
 15th: Savannah Sparrows
 18th: Myrtle Warblers
 19th: Townsend's Warblers
 20th: Band-tailed Pigeons
 22nd: Dowitchers
 25th: Western Sandpipers
 Barn Swallows
 29th: Cassin's (Solitary) Vireos.

On the 5th of March this year Mrs. Blackden and Miss Ewart saw three violet-green swallows at Cadboro Bay. This is an exceptional date. In fact, it is earlier than any date recorded in Munro & Cowan's 'Bird Fauna of British Columbia'. On the 14th numbers were seen by Miss Leila Roberts at Keatings and myself at Elk Lake, those at the
 (cont'd on page 12)

JUNIOR NATURAL HISTORY PAGE

Chairman: Bruce Colvin

Secretary: Marie Barr

Easter Eggs?

"What is an egg?" said the teacher. "An egg is a chicken, not yet" replied the little darky boy. Well, we hear lots about chocolate eggs this time of the year but have any of you Juniors ever read all the labels in the long egg case at the museum? I wonder if you older ones have. I had not until now! Here are some highlights of interest.

'THE BIGGEST EGG'. This belongs to the albatross and looks seven inches long. Only the ostrich egg, once in that case, was larger.

'THE SMALLEST EGG'. You all know this. The hummingbird lays two eggs hardly half an inch long.

'PRETTIEST COLOURED EGG'. Maybe the heron's. These four greenish-blue eggs were taken from the top of a fir tree seventy feet up. Mr. Walter Burton must have had quite a climb to get them.

'MOST POINTED EGG'. At Triangle Island, Queen Charlotte Sound, the murre lays its one egg on a rock ledge. I bet Mr. Burton was a good rock climber to get it also and he would know only to take what he needed and not be greedy.

'THE ROUNDEST EGG'. The horned owl loves her eggs "so round so firm and fully packed." These came from a nest of sticks fifty feet up in a tree.

'THE SHINIEST EGG'. The woodpeckers have these. They hide them away in holes, so it doesn't matter if the eggs are shiny!

'THE DARKEST EGG'. These loon eggs are mud-coloured. They have a few speckles on them and are dirty looking but the loon loves them anyway.

Mr. Guiguet saw violet-green swallows feeding at Langford Lake on March 10th. See if you can beat this record next year.

The violet-green swallows have come back this year. Every year they come back and into the house to a boarded-off place. They usually have five babies. Genevieve Whale.

My new magnet will lift two and a half pounds. It took a piece of metal along a piece of plate glass a quarter inch thick underneath the glass. It picked up a wrench. It cost 50¢.

(Please gather some natural history news -- Ralph Gustaffson. bring it the 1st Tues. after Easter holidays when we meet at 3:30)

NOTICE OF MEETINGS

1954

Tuesday April 13: GENERAL MEETING Mr. W.A. Hubbard, our new Provincial Botanist, will repeat his talk on Many Berries Range Station. This was formerly given to the Botany Group but it was a bad night and only very few were able to hear him. Pictures will be shown. Meet at Museum 8 p.m.

Saturday April 24: BOTANY GROUP meet at Mount Douglas Park picnic Grounds at 2 p.m.
Leader - Prof. C. W. Lowe.

Tuesday April 27: GEOLOGY GROUP meet at Museum at 8 p.m. "CLAYS"
Mr. A. H. Marrion.
Mr. A.H. Marrion, Chairman of the Geology Group, has planned a series of ten discussions entitled, BACK YARD GEOLOGY. The subjects to be dealt with will be: CLAYS; SANDS; GRAVELS; SLATES; SANDSTONES; CONGLOMERATES; LIMESTONES; LARVAS; ERATICS; FOSSILS, The Origin, kinds, uses, economic aspects, deposits of each will be discussed and specimens will be shown. It is planned to hold the meetings on the fourth Tuesday of each month at the Museum and in each case on the following Saturday, there will be a Field Trip in connection with the discussion.

Saturday May 1st: GEOLOGY GROUP meet at Baker's Brickyard, cor. of Cloverdale and Douglas at 2 p.m.
Leader: Mr. A.H. Marrion.

(Cont'd from page 10) Bird Notes:

latter place being both species (tree and violet-green). On this day also Miss Roberts saw five white-crowned sparrows on Martindale Rd., the first reported for this year. A.R.D.

FROM THE EDITORS: The Society's year ended with the Annual Meeting on the 2nd Tuesday in March, so may we remind our members that the dues for the ensuing year are now payable. Please send same to Treas., Mrs. Gladys E. Soulsby, 209 St. Lawrence St., City. The dues, including subscription to the magazine, are \$3. for family membership and \$2. for individual membership.

Mr. John Nutt is now making definite progress from his illness. He has been moved to the Marpole Infirmary, Vancouver, B.C., where he will receive occupational therapy and physio-therapy. He enjoys receiving letters from his old friends.

Victoria Natural History Society

OFFICERS, 1954-55

Honorary Presidents:

HON. R. W. BONNER,
Minister of Education.

J. W. EASTHAM,
Former Provincial Plant Pathologist.

J. A. MUNRO,
Former Dominion Wildlife Officer.

President:

C. W. LOWE,
1826 Hollywood Crescent,
Telephone 3-7037.

Editors:

A. R. DAVIDSON,
2545 Killarney Road, Telephone 7-2404.

G. CLIFFORD CARL,
Telephone 3-8524.

Secretary:

MISS HELEN BAIRD,
754 Richmond Avenue,
Telephone 3-4791.

Past Presidents:

ARCHDEACON ROBERT CONNELL.

G. CLIFFORD CARL.

GEORGE A. HARDY.

MRS. JAMES HOBSON.

JEFFREE A. CUNNINGHAM.

Vice-President:

ALBERT O. HAYES,
2925 Tudor Road,
Telephone 2-8401.

Chairmen of Groups:

Programme: MRS. F. A. SHERMAN,
662 Niagara Street, Telephone 4-9482.

Botany: C. W. LOWE,
Telephone 3-7037.

Marine: J. A. CUNNINGHAM,
Telephone 4-3897.

Geology: A. H. MARRION,
Telephone 4-1983.

Audubon: MISS LENORA PANTON,
Telephone 2-4450.

Ornithology: J. O. CLAY,
Telephone 3-3101.

Zoology: G. CLIFFORD CARL,
Telephone 3-8524.

Conservation: DAVID B. TURNER,
Telephone 2-4975.

Juniors:

Chairman: BRUCE COLVIN.
Vice-Chairman: GERRY SKINNER.

Secretary: MARIE BARR.
Editor: ROGER PORTER.

Annual dues, including subscription: Single, \$2; Family, \$3; Junior, \$1.

To