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Poles at Kitwancool.

(Photo by W. Duff.)

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THE VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETYVol.11, No.5NOVEMBER 1954OUR COVER

In the Indian village of Kitwancool, on a tributary of the upper Skeena River, stand twenty-six totem poles, more than can be found in any other village in British Columbia. Most of these tall, slender, carved monuments were erected between 50 and 110 years ago in front of the great community houses of the tribe. The houses are now gone, and the poles lean at odd angles on rotting bases, falling one by one to shatter and rot on the ground.

Proud and independent people, the Gitksans of Kitwancool have never allowed white men to remove any of their poles. In fact, until a few years ago, only a very small number of white men had been allowed even to photograph them. Although still the largest group of totem poles in the province, and of one of the most artistic tribal styles, the Kitwancool poles are rapidly decaying away. Unless steps are taken within a few years to preserve them, they will disappear completely, like other parts of British Columbia's unique native heritage.

Wilson Duff

WHOOPIING CRANES FACE ANOTHER TESTby Robert P. Allen
of the National Audubon Society

Another dramatic test awaits the world's last remaining flock of whooping cranes, when they leave their far northern breeding grounds early this fall and head for winter quarters in Texas. How many will return?

Last April all 24 birds, three more than the year before, made the long journey to the Canadian wilds and disappeared beyond the 60th parallel. So far as we know, all arrived safely. In early July, officials of the Canadian Wildlife Service reported that four of the birds were sighted, presumably on their long sought nesting grounds. For obvious reasons the exact location has not been revealed.

Now the short arctic summer is drawing to a close and already any young cranes that have been reared in the Far North are exercising their wings in preparation for the hazardous flight to the distant Gulf of Mexico. Although the natural dangers encountered will be considerable, the greatest threat will be from men and boys along the route who might shoot these birds despite their protection by federal law. In view of the disastrous losses that occurred during the migratory flights of 1950, 1951, and 1952 (when a total of 24 whoopers, equivalent to the number that survive today, failed to return), the National Audubon Society, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Canadian Wildlife Service, state and provincial conservation agencies, and various civic, youth, and conservation organizations made a special appeal to residents of states and provinces along the migratory route. In news releases, articles, nation-wide and local radio and TV public service announcements, and through other mediums, those living in the critical areas were asked to help by making the whooping crane's plight known to all friends and acquaintances who are hunters and outdoorsmen.

The effectiveness of this campaign was demonstrated by the safe return of all 21 birds that had flown north the previous spring, plus an encouraging dividend of three new youngsters, raised during the summer. This was the first season since 1949 that the whoopers made the long, two-way migration without a single loss, and much credit for this accomplishment must go to those individuals and organizations along the route who helped by bringing the need for protection to the attention of hunters and outdoorsmen in their neighborhoods.

Once again there is urgent need for all friends of the whooping cranes to come to their aid. There are those who view the slim ranks of this species with fear and headshakings. Some have even claimed that it is "too late" to do anything for them. The record belies this attitude. The whooping crane is once more doing better than average, the mortality rate of the wild birds is remarkably low, and as of last spring there were six more whoopers in the Texas-Canadian flock than 15 years ago when intensive protection began.

FUNGUS FORAY, 1954

The Eleventh Annual Fungus Foray took place on September 25th, at Thetis Lake. The weather was ideal, warm and sunny a marked contrast with the forays of the last few years. The early September rains had produced a large crop of fungus fruit-bodies and forty-one species were observed. Thirty-five members and guests were present including Mr. and Mrs. G. A. Hardy. Mr. Hardy did most of the identification and a list is appended of the species collected.

Amanita muscaria	Hypholoma fasciculare
Boletus chrysenteron	Laccaria laccata
" luteus	" " var. amethystina
" subaureus	Lactaria deliciosus
Clitocybe gigantea	" subdulcis
" infundibuliformis	Lepiota cristata
" multiceps	Lycoperdon gemmatum
Collybia dryophila	" pyriforme
" platyphylla	
Coprinus micaceus	Marasmius candidus
	" rotula
Crucibulum vulgare	Mycaena galericulata
Cryptoporus volvatus	Omphalia campanella
Entoloma strictus	Psalliota sylvatica
Flammula sp?	Polyporus Schweinitzii
Fomes pinicola	Polysticus versicolor
Ganoderma oregonensis	Russula atropurpurea
	" alutacea
	" foetidus
Gomphidius glutinosus	Spathularia sp?
	Stropharia ambigua
Hydnum auriscalpum	Stereum sp?
	Telephora sp?
Hygrophorus conicus	

R A S T U S

Rastus is a robin, a home-grown robin. His twenty foot fall from an apple tree at the estimated age of four days renders his "Family Tree" as obscure as his subsequent career has been transparent. Now at the age of seven weeks (Oct. 2nd) he comes and goes about the neighbourhood assisting whenever and wherever garden work is in progress, perching on his friends' heads, shoulders or wrists, then darting down to snap up every exposed earwig. (Fancy his popularity!) In semi-falconry style he will ride a wrist on a tour of the garden to search out earwigs hidden in the depths of nasturtium, godetia or dahlia blooms. Beetles, ants, moths and spiders are welcome food too, but definitely not earthworms just now. To all appearances a 100% diet of that food at the hand-feeding stage was relished, indeed during the first two weeks of rapid growth and development Rastus ate his own weight of earthworms each day. By precise count one day's menu totalled sixty-five three to six inch worms. And earthworms are still "fair game" because he is frequently seen to pull out a good long one, pinch it thoroughly in several places, then toss it aside to clear the way for a dash after a grasshopper or a low-flying moth.

During the period when Rastus had to be fed at least every hour, he had several short car trips accompanying "his folks" out for the evening. Life has really been quite exciting and not entirely without accidents either. Once there was a narrow escape from a crouching cat; once a sad pinch under a lowering window; and later an almost tragic tangle with silk thread that left him dangling by one leg among the raspberry canes until a kind neighbour found and rescued him. This mishap left Rastus lame for several days, and temporarily barred out any grooming of head feathers on that side. But with spartan grit he kept trying and by degrees regained full use of the injured limb.

His one continuing affliction is the distinguished ailment of hiccoughs; according to a pet-shop authority this is due to indigestion.

Several times a day Rastus comes into the house by door or window, eats a few raisins, has a drink out of his own glass cup (one inch in diameter), stands on the radio to listen to music, preens himself thoroughly and then goes out to chase away wrens and white-crowns or attend to other equally urgent business.

M.C. Melburn.

A FUR SEAL INCIDENT

The following incident was reported by Walter Thomlinson of the fishing boat "Bounty" which was based at Henslung Bay, Langara Island in May 1952.

A small fur seal, perhaps 2½ feet long was observed off Frederick Island near the west coast of Graham Island about the end of May 1952.

When first sighted the seal was swimming about one of the ship's stabilizers which rides 5 or 6 feet beneath the surface about 25 feet from the side of the boat. After apparently inspecting the stabilizer for a few minutes it moved forward to the bow of the ship. Just then two salmon struck the gear. As the first fish splashed while being hauled in, the seal turned back and showed interest. Before the second fish was boated the seal grabbed it by the small of the tail and hung on for a short time though Thomlinson shook the fish vigorously.

After the fish was hauled in and cleaned the seal was still astern. Thomlinson tossed the gills overboard. The seal seized them and seemed to play with them or chew on them. When the intestines and egg masses were thrown in the water the seal grabbed the offal and appeared to be feeding. The animal fell astern and was not seen again.

G.C.C.

W O N D E R

Forgetting the daily monotony
The great universe claims our attention.
What are space and time and gravitation
And all that moves and is, how could it be?

These gifts so rare are ever near and far
They are the entities of earth and star.
Mere man seems small and helpless and must grope
Slowly, but ever onward through the gloom.
His pride in progress stimulates his search
And wonder is a spur to work and hope.

The mind must ever humbly seek above
To sense a Spirit pervading the whole.
The great cosmos is in His control
And our wisdom will grow by faith and love.

Lorion, October, 1954.

A.O. Hayes.

CHRONOLOGICAL PLANT LIST

This list of the flowering dates of Victoria's plants, trees and shrubs compiled by Miss M. C. Melburn, a member of our Society, was commenced in the May issue, and will be continued in the December number.

1954

Flowering Date	Family	Scientific Name	Common Name	Location
May 20	Compositae	Tragopogon porrifolius	Goat's beard	Cranmore St.
" "	Ericaceae	Vaccinium caespitosum	dwarf bilberry	Sproat Lake
" "	Liliaceae	Streptopus amplexifolius.	twisted-stalk	" "
" "	Saxifragaceae	Saxifraga rufidula	saxifrage sp.	" "
" "	Liliaceae	Maianthemum bifolium	wild lily-of-the-valley	Humber Wd.
" 22	Orobanchaceae	Boschniakia strobiliacea.	poque	Sproat Lake
" "	Valerianaceae	Valeriana sitchensis	valerian	" "
" 23	Rosaceae	Rosa gymnocarpa	dwarf rose	C.H.X Road
" "	"	Geum macrophyllum	yellow avens	Humber Wood
" "	"	Rubus parviflorus	thimbleberry	Sooke Road
" "	Leguminosae	Lupinus nootkatensis	lupine sp.	" "
" "	Scrophulariaceae.	Castilleja angustifolia.	paint-brush	" "
" "	Ericaceae	Gaultheria shallon	salal	" "
" "	Ranunculaceae	Aquilegia formosa	wild columbine	" "
" "	Compositae	Chrysanthemum leucanthemum	ox-eye daisy	Cedar Hill X Rd.
" 24	Saxifragaceae	Saxifraga caespitosa	tufted saxifrage	Bedford Rd.
" "	Leguminosae	Trifolium microcephalum	saucer clover	" "
" "	Liliaceae	Allium acuminatum	wild onion	" "
" "	Cruciferae	Radicula curvisiliqua	water-cress sp.	Arbutus Rd.
" "	Scrophulariaceae	Orthocarpus hispidus	lesser paint-brush	10 M. Pt.
" "	Rosaceae	Rosa nutkana	nutka rose	" "
" "	Leguminosae	Lupinus arboreus	garden escape	Cadboro Bay
" 26	Rosaceae	Potentilla flabelliformis (?)	five fingers	Uplands
" "	Nyctaginaceae	Abronia latifolia	sand verbena	Oak Bay Beach
" "	Leguminosae	Lupinus grandifolius(?)	lupine sp.	Cattle Pt.
" 29	Cornaceae	Cornus stolonifera	red-osier dogwood	Swan Lake
" "	Cruciferae	Sisymbrium altissimum	tumbling mustard	" "
" "	Rosaceae	Potentilla anserina	silverweed	" "
" "	Boraginaceae	Myosotis laxa	water forget-me-not	" "
" "	Scrophulariaceae	Veronica serpyllifolia	thyme-leaved speedwell	" "
" "	"	Veronica peregrina	neckweed	" "
" "	Compositae	Sonchus oleraceus	common sow-thistle	garden
" 31	Plantaginaceae	Plantago major	common plantain	Pat. Bay Hy.
" "	Scrophulariaceae	Castilleja levisecta.	yellow paint-brush	" " "
" "	"	Rhinanthus crista-galli.	yellow rattle	" " "
" "	"	Veronica americana	brooklime	" " "
" "	Caryophyllaceae	Stellaria borealis	northern stitchwort	" " "
" "	Iridaceae	Sisyrinchium ida-hoense	blue-eyed grass	" " "
" "	Polygonaceae	Rumex crispus	curled dock	" " "
" "	Ranunculaceae	Ranunculus acris	meadow buttercup	" " "
" "	Leguminosae	Vicia gigantea	giant vetch	" " "
June 2	Ericaceae	Ledum groenlandicum	Labrador tea	Lost Lake
" "	Rosaceae	Crataegus Oxyocantha	English hawthorn	" "
" "	Cruciferae	Radicula nasturtium-aquaticum	water cress	" "
" "	Caryophyllaceae	Sagina stricta	pearlwort	" "
" "	Cruciferae	Brassica nigra	black mustard	" "

A TRIP TO SPECTACLE LAKE

Spectacle Lake is about a mile from the Island Highway on a rough logging road which leaves the highway about a mile past Fitzgerald Road to Shawnigan Lake. All this territory has been logged, the cut-over land gradually becoming covered by a second growth of Douglas fir, cedar, hemlock, jack pine and a few white pine along with an admixture of deciduous trees, alder, willows, and the like.

A group of bird students covered this territory on May 16th, going on past Spectacle Lake as far as Oliphant Lake. Practically all the birds seen were summer visitors only, resident birds being possibly song sparrows and Seattle wrens, and these are doubtful. We saw two flickers, but no other woodpeckers, no creepers, kinglets or nuthatches, and glimpsed one chickadee only. Yellow and lutescent warblers were common, and we also saw Tolmie, Wilson and Townsend warblers, and one Audubon warbler, which latter was nesting close to Spectacle Lake. There were three species of flycatchers present, the olive-sided, the wood peewee and the western. We had a good view of the most colourful summer migrant, a male western tanager. We saw and heard no winter wrens at all, very few Seattle wrens and one of the migratory house wrens. Thirty-one species of birds were seen in all.

The elevation is about 1,000 feet, and even this height eliminated the dogwood and arbutus trees, as none were seen. It is practically a plateau, as no hills of any consequence were climbed. A few small creeks criss-cross the road here and there, and it was in the vicinity of the water where most of the deciduous trees were growing and where most of the birds were seen.

A. R. D.

THE FIGHTING DUCKS

In the May issue of the Naturalist we recorded the glaucous-winged gulls killing the small grebes and buffleheads at Cadboro Bay earlier in the year.

The following is an eyewitness account of these gulls, at the same location, but with a different slant.

Many mallards stay at these pools and nearby beaches the year round and raise their young in the heavy growth of reeds and grass that surrounds many of the pools. Their chief enemy here, by the way, is dogs.

On this occasion a pair of mallards were proudly

escorting their three-week old young across one of the pools, when a glaucous-winged gull came down on to the water and swam in the direction of the ducklings. The parents, however, were on the alert, and hurried them off to a corner of the pool, where they climbed out of the water and hid in the reeds. The parents then made for the gull, stretching out their necks and menacing it with loud hisses. The gull took to flight, with both mallards on his tail. They then attacked the gull, tearing out quantities of feathers. When they had harried it well off the scene, they returned to their pool and sedately took charge of their young again.

Perhaps that particular gull will hesitate before interfering with mallards again.

A.R.D.

EROSION

by M. Eugenie Perry

A desert - where a splendid forest thrived!
 An interlocking lake and river coil
 Watered the rich plant-cover, and contrived
 The run-off, sparing humus-laden soil.
 Then rolled the settlers' caravans! A home
 Fathered this mound; there twined a boundary
 fence;
 Now winds unchecked by tree or river comb
 The earth of its least shreds of sustenance.
 For axe and fire and flood have closed the deal;
 No animal, no savage - civilized man,
 His mechanized device, insensate zeal,
 Dooms nature's delicately balanced plan.

A thousand years the land may fallow - bleak,
 Clean-picked of use as by a vulture's beak.

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NEW BIRDS

Most bird watchers list all the birds they have seen and identified, which list naturally increases each year until all the commoner species and some of the rarer ones are down; then, as the numbers of possible varieties become smaller, their enthusiasm intensifies and they are constantly on the outlook for new birds.

By this time, most of the birds seen can be recognized, and an unfamiliar one is given close attention; this spring two birds came our way which had not previously been listed, one of them, in fact, was not on the Victoria check list.

On May 2nd, a pair of solitary sandpipers were displaying and feeding on a small pond near Arbutus Road at Cadboro Bay. Sandpipers are notoriously difficult to separate, and these were no exception, but these solitaires had certain distinguishing characteristics which assisted identification, one of them being their habit of raising their wings until the tips meet when alighting. They also have an eye ring, and are greyer in colour than many of the shore birds.

The other birds seen were a pair of blue-winged Teal, which were at the same pond on May 15th and for about a week thereafter. The green-winged Teal is our common species, the blue-winged being rarely seen in this district.

A.R.D.

BLACK HORNET

The most impressive insect I have met
Is the black hornet with the bald face.
You might not like it for a pet
Around your place,
For it's no pacifist when vexed a bit -
And knows precisely where to hit!

It dotes on yellow jackets, flies and bugs
To carry to its hive,
And you should hear the bug it hugs
Yell, "Gracious! Sakes alive!"
A bug in trouble, losing poise,
Is apt to make a fretful noise!

-Continued on page 60.

JUNIOR NATURAL HISTORY PAGE

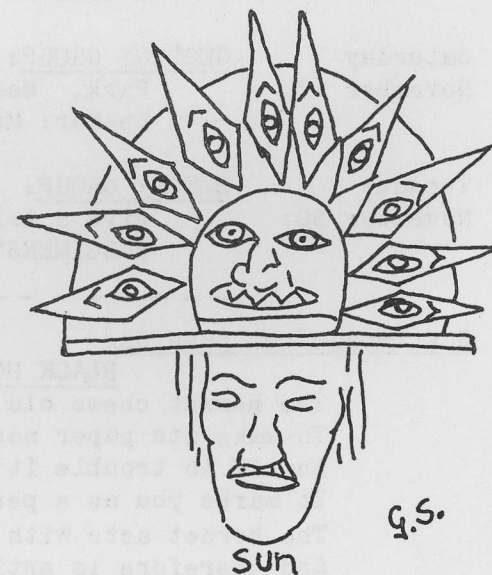
Editor: Gerry Skinner

Well, the last few meetings have been very unsettled. Our society has been like a mass production factory. We are making Indian masks; glue is from here to next week; paper mache is scattered throughout the museum! Pity the person who has to clean up. Down at the museum we have been seeing films on masks as well as making them. One of the most fantastic and beautiful masks I have ever seen starred in these films. It was a wolf mask; when manipulated with strings the watcher couldn't see the mask split in half. When the mask opened up it unfolded an almost impossible portrayal of a sun. Every notch in this beautifully carved head, every inch of gaily arrayed spectacle was a masterpiece.

We can truly say that the Indians on this coast are one of the finest mask-makers in the world.

We are hoping that some person would write an interesting little happening in their watching animals - I'm running out of them.

Gerry Skinner.



NOTICE OF MEETINGS

- 1954
 Wednesday
 November 3rd: BIRD GROUP: Meet at Monterey Cafe at 9:30 a.m. or at Esquimalt Lagoon (Belmont approach) at 9:45 a.m. If weather and other conditions are favourable, party will proceed later to Witty's Lagoon. Bring lunch. Leader, - Mr. J. O. Clay.
- Tuesday
 November 9th: GENERAL MEETING: Dr. Lewis J. Clark, Head of the Department of Chemistry, Victoria College, will give a talk entitled "PLANTS OF VARIOUS HABITATS". Talk will be illustrated by pictures taken at the Forbidden Plateau. Provincial Museum at 8 p.m.
- Wednesday
 November 10: AUDUBON LECTURE: "CANADA NORTH". Lecturer, Mr. Bert Harwell. Oak Bay Junior High School Auditorium at 8 p.m. Admission 50¢
- Tuesday
 November 23: GEOLOGY GROUP: Meet at Provincial Museum at 8 p.m. Mr. A.H. Marrion will give a talk on "SLATES".
- Saturday
 November 27: GEOLOGY GROUP: Field trip to Goldstream Park. Meet at Monterey Cafe at 2 p.m. Leader: Mr. A.H. Marrion.
- Tuesday
 November 30: BOTANY GROUP: Miss M.C. Melburn, M.A., will give a talk "COLLECTING BOTANICAL SPECIMENS". Provincial Museum at 8 p.m.

Continued from page 58:

BLACK HORNET

The hornet chews old wood, so we are told,
 To make its paper nest,
 And if to trouble it you're bold
 It marks you as a pest.
 The hornet acts with speed and with effect
 And therefore is entitled to respect.

-- Pisces.

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