

The
VICTORIA
NATURALIST

Vol. 11, No. 7

January, 1955



Beach at Lanz Island, Cape Scott.

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

THE VICTORIA NATURALIST

Published by
THE VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Vol.11, No.7.

JANUARY 1955

OUR COVER

Lanz Island is one of a group of five islands and associated rocks named the Scott Island Group. They are situated northwest of Cape Scott, the northernmost tip of Vancouver Island.

In June of the year 1950 a field expedition was undertaken to these islands by the Provincial Museum, represented by Dr. G. Clifford Carl, C.J. Guiguet, Geo. A. Hardy and F. L. Beebe, and from June 16th to 20th they camped on this island.

Lanz is about $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles long and $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles wide. The shore is rocky with occasional narrow beaches of boulders and rocks. The interior is covered by dense underbrush, which made exploration somewhat difficult. The highest elevation is 695 feet.

The expedition found fifty species of plants, three of mammals and eighteen of birds. The mammals comprised white-footed mice, hair seals and mink, the latter having been illegally introduced here in 1938 or 1939, the result being the elimination of the island as a nesting site for pelagic birds.

These islands lie in a very exposed position, and consequently wind storms of gale proportions are of frequent occurrence. Precipitation is fairly high (up to 72 inches), and the temperature cool even in summer; in spite of which the party daily observed hummingbirds, as well as western flycatchers and lutescent warblers, all of which apparently nested there.

A.R.D.

BIRDS OUT OF SEASON

On November 30th Mr. J.O. Clay saw a rufous hummingbird in his garden.

Miss M.C. Melburn has an adult white-crowned sparrow which visits her feeding table regularly.

A. R. Davidson watched two black swifts at his house for about an hour on November 25th.

GEOLOGY

by A. O. Hayes

One of the editors of the 'Naturalist', whose duty it is to read the manuscripts submitted for publication, told me that he would welcome more articles of a general nature dealing with the sciences. Also that it is desirable to have a back-log of various papers on special topics. A certain reserve of descriptive verse both serious and humorous was also welcomed. Some complaint was indicated, too, that writers tended occasionally to stray from their chosen field of investigation and diffuse their efforts to pioneer in other directions.

I think that one difficulty is evident. Each group of the membership consists of both beginners and well informed people. So to the tyro, a paper on basic principles is welcome - and to the informed, contributions descriptive of special topics is more welcome, and to hesitate to contribute because of the difficulty to interest all, is likely to end in an addition to the waste-paper basket and fuel for the fireplace.

In geology, it seems to me there is ample opportunity to write about current developments in the mining of uranium and of ore finding by geophysical methods, both of which are fairly recent activities. But most of the members know more about astronomy, ornithology, botany and zoology than they do about mineralogy and the principles of geology.

It is impossible to teach mineralogy in a short popular article and the minerals themselves can be studied in the museum without much understanding of their origin. On the other hand it seems to be a waste of time to give a lecture on geology, when so few have thought about the simple laws that have been slowly separated from the old notions about earth science.

Beginning with air, fire and water and the alchemists dream of the perfect solvent - and the mysterious transmutation of metals, seems silly perhaps, but by that beginning the facts have gradually been assembled until through experiments, when few, if any, still believed that the elements could be changed, the transmutation of uranium to lead is known to have been going on in nature since the molten magma first cooled into granite.

Now the physicist can hasten the slow work of nature by a concentration of radioactive minerals and high velocities

of certain atoms, and the mysterious beliefs of the old alchemists seem to have been justified. The systematic work of Roëntgen, the Curies, Lord Rutherford and other pioneers in radioactivity however, proceeded from accidental observed phenomena, such as the effect of radioactive action on the photographic plate. There was a definite basis of fact.

Geology developed slowly until certain gifted people began to observe without preconceived bias. As soon as certain simple principles were observed and understood, the system of earth science was solidly established.

Geology is the interpretation of the origin, structure and history of the earth and of its plant and animal life, as revealed in the rocks.

It is fortunate that geology as a science was interpreted in England, where nearly every succeeding change in the record of the rocks is preserved.

Doctor James Hutton (1760-1830) of Scotland built a sound foundation for the science. He interpreted the past by observing geological processes going on at present, and combatted the ideas of Abraham Gottlob Werner, first professor of mineralogy at Freiburg, that all of the crust of the earth, both sedimentary and igneous rocks were formed as ocean bottom deposits. Hutton saw volcanoes in action and thus knew that the lavas cooled from a molten condition.

William Smith (1769-1839) a civil engineer of England, the father of English geology, was engaged, during his active career, in supervising the construction of canals. Painstaking and systematic he observed that the strata from Wales to the North Sea inclined eastward towards Europe and that the great thickness of bedded rocks was not uniform but made up of two red sandstone formations separated by grey grits and clay shales with coal beds. In these different kinds of layered rocks he found remains of plants and animals, and observed that a particular layer or thickness of beds held forms not found in the other layers above or below. Tilted towards the east, the layers lie one above another like the leaves of a slightly inclined book, so that as he travelled from Wales to London he crossed from the underlying to the overlying strata. He thus learned that the Old Red Sandstone in the West of England dipped under the Coal Measures and that they in turn underlaid the New Red Sandstone, outcropping farther east. He mapped the location of the remains of the plants and animals and studied them until he could tell not only

to which of the three divisions each belonged, but could tell whether they indicated the nearness to coal or not. He then made a map in colours showing the extension of the formations at the surface, giving the map of England the appearance of being banded in a north-south direction. And this was the first geological map of England. Thus the colours signified the distribution of rocks at the surface in their chronological order of formation.

(This is the introduction to a series on local geology which will be continued.)

TENACITY OF NESTS

As the branches of the deciduous trees become bare in the Fall we see nests that have not been noticed during the summer.

Before the winter is over however most of these disappear, disintegrated by the gales and heavy rains.

One of these nests was seen in our garden up in the topmost branches of a small-leafed maple, about 18 feet from the ground in the fall of 1952.

It appeared to have been built by a robin but I think had not been occupied.

By the Spring of 1953 when the leaves returned the nest was still there and was rebuilt that season, but again did not seem to have been used.

All last winter it took the brunt of the strong southeasters, but part of it was still there this spring and to date there is still a trace of it. The construction of this must have been well woven into the thin branches to have survived this length of time in such a situation.

W. Redford.

THE TREE CREEPER

Most bird watchers know the tree creeper. It is to be found in all of our local woodlands, though it is often difficult to distinguish it from the trunks of the trees up which it climbs, its colour harmonizing so well with its surroundings. The creeper's note is very high pitched, so high, in fact, that some people do not hear it at all,

but when heard, the bird is generally easy to locate.

It is the hardest worker in the woods, and never seems to take time off. Most birds get some fun out of their activities, but not the creeper. Life is real and life is earnest. The robins, when well filled with food will select a tree branch in the sun and warble and shout by the hour. The purple finch takes the topmost twig on a high tree and fills the woods with his song. The chickadee works hard all right, but with an obvious light heartedness that appeals to us all, and most birds find time to play, to sing and to rest, but not the creeper.

The next time you come across one in the woods, just watch it for a while. Up the tree trunk he goes, nothing edible evading him, then down he swoops to the base of another one, and so on through the day. He has a song. Just recently one was in the garden; he gave his song of four clear notes, repeated over and over as he worked up the tree. He didn't stop work to sing, there really wasn't time for that, but it was spring, and his mate wasn't far away, and he sang as he worked.

Maybe, after all, we can learn something from the tree creeper.

A.R.D.

CONIFERS

In October the broad leaves slowly die
And glide gently down to rest in the grove.
The tall trees show their bare branches arched above
With rounded tops outlined against the sky
In graceful balloon shapes that please the eye.

At first the coming of ruthless winter
Brings a feeling of resentment and woe,
We hate to have the friendly summer go.

But nature compensates with conifers
That were out-shone by brighter foliage.
In fall the tall and shapely evergreens
Stand out in all their glory, stately queens
Reigning through the rough storms of snow and rain.

Symbols of Peace, they bring us joy again.

Lorion, Victoria, B.C. 1954.

A.O. Hayes.

CHRONOLOGICAL PLANT LIST

This list of the flowering dates of Victoria's herbs, 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 February number.

1954

<u>Flowering Date:</u>	<u>Family</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
June 21	Liliaceae	Brodiaea grandiflora	wild hyacinth	Mt. Douglas
" "	"	" lactea	fool's onion	"
" "	Convolvulaceae	Convolvulus sepium	bindweed	garden weed
" "	Leguminosae	Vicia americana	pea vine	Humber Wood
" "	Compositae	Centaurea Cyanus	corn flower	garden escape
" "	Liliaceae	Lilium grandiflorum	tiger lily	Ten Mile Pt.
" "	Saxifragaceae	Philadelphus gordonianus	mock orange	"
" 22	Compositae	Hieracium albiflorum	white hawkweed	Thetis Lake
" "	"	Lactuca muralis	wall lettuce (intro.)	"
" "	Apocynaceae	Apocynum androsaemifolium	spreading dog bane	"
" 23	Compositae	Franseria bipinnatifida	sand bur	Oak Bay Bch.
" "	Caryophyllaceae	Sagina saginoides (?)	pearlwort	City lawn
" 24	Ranunculaceae	Trauvetteria grandis	false bugbane	Goldstream
" 27	Caprifoliaceae	Lonicera hispidula	purple honeysuckle	Mt. Douglas
" "	Liliaceae	Allium cernuum	nodding onion	Uplands
" "	Onagraceae	Eqilobium angustifolium	fireweed	Ten Mile Pt.
" "	Polygonaceae	Rumex mexicanus	Tufted dock	Cattle Pt.
" "	Iridaceae	Sisyrinchium littorale	blue-eyed grass	Ten Mile Pt.
" 29	Compositae	Cirsium arvense	Canada thistle	Queenswood
" "	Orchidaceae	Habenaria dilatata		
" "		var. leucostachys	giant rein orchid	Cadboro Bay
" "	Labiatae	Stachys ciliata	hedge nettle	" "
" "	Rubiaceae	Galium aparine	cleavers	" "
" "	Liliaceae	Allium ampletens	onion sp.	Bedford Rd.
June 29	Labiatae	Micromeria Chamissons	verba buena	"
" "	Leguminosae	Lathyrus latifolius	perennial pea	Queenswood
July 2	"	Vicia angustifolia	common vetch	Humber Wd.
" "	Polygonaceae	Rumex obtusifolius	bitter dock	City lot
" "	"	Polygonum aviculare	doorweed	roadside
" "	Leguminosae	Melilotus officinalis	yellow sweet clover	Esquimalt
" "	Compositae	Anthemis cotula	mayweed	Pr. Mary Park
" "	Cruciferae	Hesperis matronalis	dame's violet	"
" "	Leguminosae	Medicago arabica	spotted medic	B. H. Park
" 3	Hypericaceae	Hypericum Scouleri	Scouler's St.	
" "			John's wort	Cattle Pt.
" "	Compositae	Seriocarpus rigidus	white-topped aster	"
" 4	"	Matricaria inodora	scentless mayweed	Pat. Bay Hy.
" "	"	Cichorium Intybus	chicory	Wharf area
" "	Convolvulaceae	Convolvulus arvensis	small bindweed	"
" "	Umbelliferae	Foeniculum vulgare	fennel (escape)	"
" "	Leguminosae	Melilotus alba	white sweet clover	"
" "	Polygonaceae	Rumex conglomeratus	clustered dock	"
" "	"	Polygonum amphibium	willow weed	Elk Lake
" "	Umbelliferae	Daucus pusillus	wild carrot	Pat. Bay Hy.
" "	Scrophulariaceae	Orthocarpus bracteosus	lesser paint-brush sp.	"
" "	Geraniaceae	Geranium Bicknellii	Bicknell's geranium	"
" "	Leguminosae	Trifolium incarnatum	crimson clover	"
" "	Compositae	Senecio sylvaticus	wood groundsel	"
" "	"	Cirsium lanceolatum	spear thistle	"
" "	Polemoniaceae	Gilia squarrosa	gilia sp.	"
" "	Juncaceae	Juncus bufonius	toad rush	"
" "	"	" ensifolius	juncus sp.	"
" 5	Solonaceae	Solanum nigrum var. villosum	nightshade	garden wd.
" "	Monotropaceae	Monotropa uniflora	Indian pipe	Blenkinsop Rd.

REPORT ON THE SWALLOWS

To try and answer my own question "Are the swallows diminishing in numbers", on the 28th of June we covered certain areas in and near Victoria, taking particular notice of these birds.

It is not safe to make definite statements, for who can count the swallows? They are constantly moving from one area to another, depending, of course, on where the insects are congregating. However, it does appear that their numbers are less than formerly.

The violet-green is our most abundant species, and can be found in good numbers all over the Victoria area.

The barn swallow are not nearly as numerous as the above, and favour certain districts only.

The tree swallow is rarely found nesting in Victoria. They can be seen on migration, but continue further north.

The rough-winged swallows are not common. They mostly nest in holes in clay or sandy cliffs, and can be seen on the Mount Douglas sea front and also at Cadboro Bay and the Uplands. In the old gravel pit on the marine drive at Mount Douglas Park, we found this swallow nesting in holes in the sandpit, these holes being created by tree roots having rotted, leaving the more enduring bark in position, forming a ready made nesting site for both rough-winged and violet-green swallows.

Cliff swallows, however, seem to be increasing in numbers here. They have been seen this year at Cattle Point, Cadboro Bay and other areas in the vicinity. On the day we made this survey, we returned via Blenkinsop Road, where we saw many cliff swallows flying among the violet-green and the barn, and at one point counted 60 of them gathered together on the power wires. There must have been at least 100 of these birds here and we formed the impression that they had finished their nesting season and were on their way south, as many of them were full grown young birds, also that they had not nested in this area, as the writer covers this road regularly, always looking for birds, and had not seen this species previously this year. Where then do cliff swallows nest in numbers near Victoria - has any member a clue?

Black swifts, of course, do not nest anywhere near Victoria. In fact, it seems that few of their nesting sites are known at all in British Columbia, but many can be seen on migration. Between June the 1st and the 17th the writer

saw them on six occasions, sometimes single birds only, the largest flock being about 50 which were seen at Ocean View Beach by Dr. Carl, Owen Clay and the writer.

Vaux swifts are more often seen on the fall migration, only two being observed this spring, on May 31st.

Purple Martins. The writer has yet to see one in the Victoria district, though I understand some are still to be seen at the Naval Yard and the Inner Harbour.

Night hawks, the king of the swallows (ornithologists, of course, put them in a different family) are most decidedly very much fewer in numbers than in former years. There is no doubt that the continual spraying of crops, orchards and forests is having its effect on some of our bird life.

A.R.D.

KINGFISHER

A rock-pool in a garden,
Kingfisher on a tree,
Four dainty little goldfish -
Soon there were three!

Three goldfish in a rock-pool
Adventured into view,
A darting flame of azure -
Then there were two!

Two heedless little goldfish
Illumined by the sun;
A blaze of lapis lazuli -
Then there was one!

One reckless little goldfish
Went searching for its mate -
And tried to dodge blue lightning
A trifle late.

Pisces.

THE SOLITARY VIREO

In the May-June issue of the Audubon Magazine, there appeared an article on the singing capacity of the red-eyed vireo. The author recorded the songs for one day of 14 hours, the bird's singing being confined to 10 hours. The total number of songs for this day, each averaging three notes, being 22,197.

On June 21st, just after I had read the above article, a solitary (Cassins) vireo started to sing in the fringe of woods adjacent to my garden. It started at 5 a.m., and continued until about 8 p.m., with occasional breaks, the actual singing time being approximately 12 hours out of its 15 hour day.

The song of our solitary vireo is generally a double note only, which it gave from 42 to 47 times a minute. I did not count the songs, as did the author of the Audubon item, but listened to it at various times of the day for a week, and estimate it averaged 30,000 songs a day for that period.

This vireo works over the tree tops all the time it is singing, feeding most of the time, so its energy is constantly being restored. I never saw it stop working to sing, as most birds do.

In my opinion the quality of the warbling and solitary vireo's songs has no superior among the western birds.

We in Victoria are on the extreme fringe of the red-eyed vireo's territory, and it is quite an uncommon bird here, but the other two vireos are quite numerous in their proper habitat here during the summer months.

A.R.D.

-- WINTER --

When winter comes unbidden to our door
 Gradually tightening its cold grip
 The roses lose their beauty, daisies droop,
 Chrysanthemums tenaceous of their blooms
 Are tossed and twisted by the twirling wind.
 Rain drenches all, the stubborn oak leaves fall.
 But look among the trees where mosses come
 With water's wondrous charm these hardy plants
 Parched gray and brittle by the summer sun
 Are now revived to form a carpet soft.
 The dead grass too standing stiff in bunches
 Wilts with the wet to let the new blades grow.
 The naked maple branches sweep the sky
 While restful Douglas firs stand friendlily.

A.O.Hayes.

JUNIOR NATURAL HISTORY PAGE

Editor: Gerry Skinner -- who wants you to send in contributions for him to put in. Send to him care of the Provincial Museum.

SNAIL'S TALES: Once I went down-town to buy a snail, and came home with a beautiful, crimson one. I had kept this healthy specimen for a few weeks when it started to lay eggs, and how it laid!

For weeks it laid little clusters of eggs on the aquarium side, and pretty soon the eggs hatched exposing snails the size of pin heads! These (the snails) grew up and multiplied. The numbers seemed to grow by the hour. So, pretty soon, every bowl, jar or deep-bottomed dish was overflowing with snails all shapes and sizes.

With few snail rations on hand, Mom went on the rampage and wouldn't stand it any longer. She ordered me to sell all the snails to the Pet Shop -- I wouldn't be surprised if a few thousand of them were living yet.

G.S.

THE SLUG: A slug wallowing in salad dressing popped its head out of my brother's salad. "What's this?" my brother asked Dad! As a result no one ate for the day.

Last month five crows were on the road. One of them had a large object in its beak. It was flying up and down, sometimes dropping it close to the ground.

Some of the other playful crows tried to take it from the strangely acting one. My Grandfather saw ravens doing the same thing. It might be food or fun, but I'll leave it up to you to find out.

G.S.

NOTICES OF MEETINGS

1955

- Tuesday GENERAL MEETING: Provincial Library, 8 p.m.
January 11: Dr. Frank G. Roe will speak
on the NORTH AMERICAN BUFFALO.
- Tuesday MARINE BIOLOGY: Meet at the Biological Laboratory,
January 18: Victoria College, at 8 p.m.
Prof. J.A. Cunningham. Subject: "CLAMS". This
will be a continuance of his lecture of October
19th.
- Tuesday BACKYARD GEOLOGY: No. 4. SANDSTONES:
January 25: Provincial Museum, 8 p.m.
Speaker: Mr. A. H. Marrion.
- Saturday GEOLOGY GROUP: Field trip, weather permitting,
January 29: to Goldstream Park. Meet at the
Monterey Cafe, 1:30 p.m. Mr. A.H. Marrion.
- Saturday AUDUBON LECTURE: "OUTDOOR ALMANAC",
January 29: Lecturer: Charles Mohr.
Oak Bay Junior High School Auditorium at 8 p.m.
Admission 50¢.
- - - - -

The recent concentration of oil at Victoria through a shipping accident caused a good deal of concern among local bird watchers, a concern that was greatly stimulated by newspaper reports and by publicity by the S.P.C.A. 3500 oiled birds are said to have been destroyed by gun fire. Some feel that this figure may well represent the number of cartridges supplied rather than the number of birds destroyed. Granting that the figure is correct, there is still no need for concern regarding the possibility of an appreciable decimating effect upon wintering water birds here through this accident. The mortality each year from combined natural and man-made causes is far greater than most people realize, running to 70% of the population in many species of birds. This spring will see as many birds on the breeding grounds as in previous years, and even now, in the waters of Oak Bay there is no apparent reduction in the numbers of kinds of wintering birds.

C.J.G.

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