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Comox Glacier from summit of Mount Becher.

(Photo by G. A. Hardy.)

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THE LEGEND OF THE 'BAD INDIAN'

An address to the Society given to the Society
by Dr. Frank G. Roe at their meeting on Tuesday
April 10.

The conception of the Indian as a creature dominated and obsessed by a devouring blood-lust, a killer for the sheer joy of killing, has become a legend. It scarcely requires evidence: its defenders would tell you, "Everybody knows that's what Indians have always done".

"Everybody knows" also that Indians have always been "savages". But a savage means nothing more than a dweller in the woods, and the early explorers of this continent used the term in that sense. They speak of the kindness, hospitality, good nature, and peaceableness of the "savages". This particular name was confined to the French and English. But white men of other nations say precisely the same about their first reception by the Indians. Without exception they were kindly welcomed. Yet in a few years the whites and the Indians were at war; and Indians were being described in the terms which we know only too well. What caused the change?

It is possible the Indians themselves were partly to blame. Their normal condition among themselves was one of tribal wars, and outside of a few confederacies such as the Iroquois or the Blackfoot, their names for other tribes signified cannibal, dog, snake, liar, murderer, thief, and the like. It seems to have been the case that the whites took these things literally, and applied them to all Indians; whether their conduct had furnished any justification for such judgments or not. Under such conditions, a well-behaved Indian would very soon become a "treacherous" Indian, waiting his time to strike!

The whites were also hungry for the Indian lands. When our own ancestors resisted the invading Romans or Saxons in Britain, or the Normans in England, we extol them as "brave defenders of their country". But when the Indians did the same we call them "bloody savages, who ought to be exterminated". It wasn't only bad men who said such things. The

Pilgrims in New England, who lived in the atmosphere of the Old Testament, saw in the Indians the Canaanites over again; and themselves as the Chosen People, who were commanded by Jehovah to exterminate the idolaters with the edge of the sword. Within half a century from the landing of the Pilgrims in 1620, the Indian had become a creature to be pushed back into the wilderness, and slain if he resisted. From then onward nobody could remember a time when the two races hadn't been enemies. Foul atrocities were committed on both sides. But the whites had the printing-press and could publish their side of the story, while the Indians had no such means of replying; and the Indian atrocities have been remembered, while the white atrocities have been suppressed, diminished, and forgotten. The men who coveted the Indian lands in the West took good care that the people in the East should hear nothing about Indians except what was bad; and the Eastern voters sanctioned annexation policies in ignorance of the truth.

Children in the Middle States, whose grand-parents had fought Indians, were brought up to hate Indians, a generation after the red men had ceased to be a danger. When the Oregon-California Trail was opened across the Plains, men from those parts went west "in the hopes of killing an Indian" and shot them down "for the fun of seeing them spin". Treaties were made with various tribes by the U.S. Government, setting aside certain areas; but when gold was discovered in the Black Hills, or when the buffalo retreated south of the Arkansas River, the miners and the hunters ignored the treaty. When the Indians resisted this the whites demanded "protection" from the Government; and the usual result was an Indian war. In these wars it was held quite legitimate to slay women and children, or to destroy their lodges and their winter's supply of food, and to cast them adrift homeless in below-zero winter weather. For such deeds men who called themselves soldiers received the official thanks of men who called themselves statesmen. When it became clear that so long as the buffalo remained to furnish food, and robes that could be traded for arms and ammunition, the Plains Indians would probably never be conquered in the field, the Government connived at the wholesale extermination of the buffalo; at the same time conniving at the lying legend that the Buffalo had already been brought to the verge of extinction by the Indians, and all that the "buffalo-butchers" really did was to finish off the "few that remained" -- some twelve or fifteen million or so!

Canada's record has not been by any means blameless. While there has happily been little or nothing of the personal brutalities, in point of bureaucratic stupidity and callous indifference we are in no position to assume any holier-than-thou attitude; and in respect of social exclusiveness and scorn, as recently as July 1955 the city of Calgary raised an uproar against one of its schools being named after a man whom all good Canadian citizens should be delighted to honour--Crowfoot, the head chief of the Blackfoot in the critical days of 1885. Had it not been for his willingness to hearken to two tried friends of the Indians, Revs. Dr. John McDougall and Father Lacombe, there might have been a terrible shedding of white blood in Western Canada in that troublous year.

* * * * *

A FIELD EXCURSION BY SEA

On Saturday, July 7th, a trip was made by launch from Deep Cove to the Ballingall Islets in Trincomali Channel. Thirty people were fortunate in enjoying the calm and brilliant weather. A landing was made on Wise Island at noon. Proceeding to the 'Twin Islets', the cormorants were found on guard perched high on their juniper trees. These double-crested cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus cincinatus*) have nested on the trees certainly for 23 years, probably more than that. Capt. G. D. Sprot and Mr. F. C. Barrow passed this spot in the early spring of 1934 and noticed the nests. They reported to Mr. W. A. Newcomb and returned later. The trees were half-dead at that time, probably already burned by the birds' excreta over several years. On our visit in 1954 the junipers were dead.

Several nests of both double-crested and Baird (*pelagicus*) were situated on the rocky crest of the islets. Again only a few glaucous-winged gulls and crows were noticed. In 1936 Capt. Sprot estimated the number of glaucous-winged gulls at 200. This year the estimate was a tenth of that number.

Returning by Charles Island, a few guillemots were seen watching from their rock crevices.

During the trip good views were obtained of bald eagles, pigeon guillemot, surf scoter, harlequin duck, tufted puffin, heron and kingfisher.

J. O. Clay.

PARENTAL SOLICITUDE

There was artful defense demonstrated one hot August afternoon on Sidney Spit by a nighthawk. Several observers watched the bird as it lay beating its outstretched wings on a sand slope not thirty feet away from us. When one of us approached, it flew some thirty feet farther with tail hanging vertically. It alighted on the pebbly beach to sit and watch the effects of these maneuvers upon its intruders. Mr. Davidson found one pebblelike egg laid nearby on a stretch of tuft-scattered sand.

J.O.C.

BIRDS ON SIDNEY SPIT

Six members of the society rented a boat with an in-board motor on the August day Mr. Clay mentions above to see what birds they could find on the waters off Sidney Spit. Many marbled murrelets were seen, pigeon guillemots, several groups of white-winged scoters, bonaparte and California gulls. On one large bed of kelp alone we estimated that there were about one thousand bonaparte gulls. Landing on the spit, the first birds seen were 65 western sandpipers, then a flock of 12 surf birds, while numbers of killdeer plover were scattered over the wet sand. On returning to the boat several savannah sparrows were noticed, then the night hawk referred to by Mr. Clay. Of special interest and delight to the party was a group of 12 black bellied plover, most of them in their summer plumage, and, the greatest find of all, a golden plover accompanying the black bellied plover. The golden plover is not often seen in this area. Returning via some rocky islets, we observed about one hundred surf birds, many black turnstones and 8 black oyster catchers.

A. R. D.

ENEMIES IN NATURE

by Irston R. Barnes
reprinted from 'Atlantic Naturalist'

Many natural history books, in discussing predator-prey, or food-chain, relations, sometimes use a verbal shorthand, referring to predators on a species as its natural enemies. The word enemy suggests the need for a continuing critical scrutiny of our nature vocabulary, for words carry false connotations from other fields and influence both our own thinking and our ability to communicate with other people.

If the prey species is a desirable song bird or game bird, as the bob-white, and the Cooper's hawk is its "enemy" then those who are for the bob-white are likely to be against the Cooper's hawk. Thus a semantics barrier is created to a popular understanding that both the bob-white and the Cooper's hawk are equally good citizens of the woods-margin community.

When predator-prey or other natural interspecific relations are seen in true perspective, the enemy concept is clearly inaccurate and inappropriate. Naturalists using the enemy figure of speech mean only some other form of life which is dependent in a particular way on the species in question. A robin may die of old age, starvation, disease or the strike of a hawk; yet only the last is casually designated as an enemy. Surely it is not reasonable to prefer the parasite, the maggot or the vulture to the hawk. The robin, if capable of a choice, might prefer the hawk. Nature knows no such preference, but finds opportunities in every form of life to support other life. From such interspecific relations, or food chains, come much of the infinite variety of life which we know.

The robin that eats the worm, the hawk that takes the robin, and the bob-cat that sometimes surprises the hawk are not severally the enemies of their respective food supplies. Neither the robin, the hawk nor the bob-cat, although it takes the life of an individual, poses any threat to the species. The hunter takes what is readily available, and when the abundance of one food diminishes, it turns to another food or moves to other hunting grounds. In general, man is the only predator so relentless in his hunting that he extirpates or extinguishes a species.

The true enemies of a species are those life forms, or inanimate forces, which destroy the essential elements of its environment or that by competition drive it from its

habitat or from access to food and shelter. Sometimes an introduced species, such as the rabbit in Australia, destroys plant life and alters the nature of a habitat. Sometimes an introduced predator, the mongoose in the Caribbean Islands, finds native species that are unprepared, by powers of escape or by reproductive capacity, to withstand its attack. Sometimes introduced competitors usurp the place of the native species, as has happened with the Hawaiian birds. More often, however, it is the unchecked multiplication of a species in the absence of normal predation that creates the disastrous competition. The deer of the Kaibab Plateau were a prosperous population so long as mountain lion and wolf preyed on them, but when the predation was removed, the explosion of numbers destroyed the food resources and wholesale starvation resulted. Robins, if unchecked, could be their own destroyers; the hawk is their protector.

Man is the great destroyer of habitats, the great force which by changing the patterns of land use, has brought some species of wildlife to extinction and opened the way for explosive expansions by others. Man is the nearly omnipotent enemy of wildlife; yet even here the word is misleading. Much of the harm that man does is unnecessary, unintentional and unwanted, but this is another subject.

OUR MERLINS

by Frank L. Beebe

Last year about the middle of July a man in Edmonton sent us two Richardson's Merlins. They were young birds just out of the nest and barely able to fly. Richardson's Merlin is very much the same size and cut of a bird as our Black Merlin of the coast, but instead of being very dark colored the prairie birds are very pale.

One of the two, the male, did not live long; just sort of fell off its perch dead one night without any good reason that anyone could see. The female, the larger of the two, was made of sterner material and lived. Her adventures and vicissitudes are the subject of this little account.

First thing she did was to try and eat her feet. On reading the old books on falconry this seems to be common practice with merlins. If they get a little cut on the foot so that blood shows they start tearing at the injury with the beak. Well, this one got started on a cut on the inner toe and made such a mess of it that the toe had to be amputated, then to keep her from doing further injury to herself the whole foot had to be taped and tied so that she couldn't possibly get at it until it healed. Heal it finally did, but she then started on the center toe and the process was repeated, excepting this time she did not lose the toe, only the use of it. The end result is that she now has one good foot, and on the other foot only two toes are of any use.

Finally, healed, her training commenced. Each evening she was set free and trained to fly and try and catch in the air a chicken head swung on a string. Before very long she became very adept at this and the problem was to keep her flying for any length of time before she connected with the bait. With the opening of the season on quail she was given a few chances at these and though she tried hard she never did manage to catch one. She could sometimes hit them but the loss of the best toes on that one foot made them too difficult to hold.

Throughout the winter she had a very bad time. She came down with a disease of pigeons known technically as *Trichomonas gallinae*, but known to pigeon men as Canker and long known to falconry as Frounce. Turkeys have a similar disorder known as Blackhead and for them a drug has been developed that is called Enheptin and is a sure cure. So the merlin became a patient, receiving daily doses of enheptin and fed by hand with very tiny pieces of meat for this loathsome disease fills the entire mouth and throat with a great cheesy looking growth that eventually causes starvation by so clogging the passages that the bird can no longer swallow. Three times throughout the winter and spring we thought we had it cured and three times it recurred. The last was the worst and there was close to a week when our merlin could not even keep its perch. But the will to live never faltered and slowly the drug won out over the illness and in the end it perched, resumed eating, and finally, with some misgivings it was again freed for flight.

Amazing as it sounds it performed exactly as though it had never missed a flight. But scarcely had it become accustomed to its regular evening flights when the moult, long

delayed by the illness, set in. Almost half the feathers in each wing came out all in a matter of a few days and again our merlin was flightless or nearly so.

We decided then that as soon as some of these feathers were regrown that, if she was still in good health, we would let her go if she wanted to, and accordingly did so. That was over a month ago now but our merlin will not get lost. She sticks right in her own home territory, she can fly again very well indeed and spends the day chasing the pigeons. Her technique is to sit quietly in the big oak tree that grows beside the pigeon-loft until all the pigeons get lined up on the roof then she drops from her perch and goes through them like a gunshot. Of course the pigeons take off wildly in all directions with the merlin hot after some one of them. I expect that if it were not for that one foot she would occasionally kill a pigeon; she seems to want to. I saw her catch one right by the neck in flight but the pigeon did a loop and was clear in an instant, the one foot by itself is not strong enough to grip and hold. Anyhow, comes evening, and she is quite willing to fly at the chicken head on a string and come in for the night.

She gives every evidence of being completely adjusted and seems to be thoroughly enjoying life. She loves to chase things and the pigeons give her something to chase. Sometimes the chickens get up on the roof too, but they don't stay there long. Out of the tree comes the merlin, goes off a little way to pick up speed and comes back around flying so fast she is a blur and she flies right into that chicken and knocks it off the roof, then towers and goes back to her oak tree. She sometimes manages to belt into a pigeon the same way but they usually see her coming and make haste to get clear; the stupid chickens never learn.

I suppose in the end she will disappear, but there is no sign of it. Her moult is almost complete, her health the best it has ever been, her spirits high and yet she is still so tame that she can be picked up on the finger any time she perches low enough down to approach her to do so. Altogether she has been most rewarding and interesting and I hope she is with us for a long time yet.

BIRD GROUP: FIELD MEETINGS

A field meeting was held in the Ten Mile Point district on Saturday, April 21st, which was attended by twenty-five of our members. The weather was fine and warm and without wind, which is an important factor in the success of these field meetings. Forty-eight species were identified, which included many of the sea birds which have not yet departed to their nesting grounds in the north. Also seen were varied thrush, Audubon, Townsend and lutescent warblers, golden-crowned sparrows, golden-crowned kinglets and ruddy ducks in their full nuptial plumage. The party had lunch in a sun warmed cove facing the sea, in the pleasant grounds of Mr. and Mrs. Howell.

On Saturday, May 5th, twenty-one members of the group motored to Metchosin for their second spring outing. The weather was fair in the morning; later, the sun broke through the clouds, making it very pleasant and quite warm. Mr. Clay gave us quite a walk - over the fields, through woods, and across some marshy ground on to the beach, where the party had lunch, then along the pebbly beach to other woods and the road again. The country around Metchosin retains its charm, being too far from Victoria to have its beauty marred by industrial development or too many new houses. Altogether fifty species of birds were listed, including the first black-capped warbler of the season, also Audubon, Townsend, yellow and lutescent warblers, Cassin's vireo, goldfinch and house wrens.

A. R. D.

BIRD NOTES

The editors of the 'Naturalist' always welcome articles from members of the Society on any interesting occurrence in the realm of natural history that has come to their notice.

How many of our members have seen purple martins in Victoria? On May 16th six of these birds were reported flying over the inner harbour. After then they were noticed on several occasions. On the 14th day of August fourteen were seen near Wharf Street, so apparently they had nested and increased. None have been seen since that date. Two community nesting houses were erected by Mr. J. O. Clay some years ago on the Gorge waters for these birds, but, so far

as is known, they have not been occupied.

This year three colonies of cliff swallows were discovered; one under the eaves of an old barn on the Rithet farm this side of Royal Oak with seventy nests, one on the school at the corner of Central Road and Willingdon Road at Patricia Bay airport containing sixty nests, and another on the school at Ganges, Salt Spring Island, with forty nests.

PLANTING YOUR GARDEN FOR WILD BIRDS

To those people interested in having birds in their garden we would like to recommend a small book issued by the Audubon Society of Canada, 181 Jarvis Street, Toronto 2, with the above title, same being priced at one dollar.

In it can be found details of what to plant in your garden to attract, feed and shelter the birds, whether you have a city lot or a farm.

The author, James R. Macintosh, has had twenty years practical experience as superintendent of Glendon Hall, which is a bird sanctuary of one hundred acres situated in the heart of Toronto.

To the plants listed, the following native plants of British Columbia can be added for Vancouver Island residents: The wild crab apple, the fruit of which is very attractive in the fall and winter to many birds. The twin-berry, the fruit, which ripens in June, might bring many waxwings to your garden. The red flowering current, an essential to the early arriving hummingbirds, while the fruit, which ripens in August, are eaten by all berry eating birds. The cascara, which, besides being a handsome tree, has large sweet berries in July and August, and eagerly sought by most birds.

A. R. D.

MY TOAD, FOKIE, by Diane Martin.

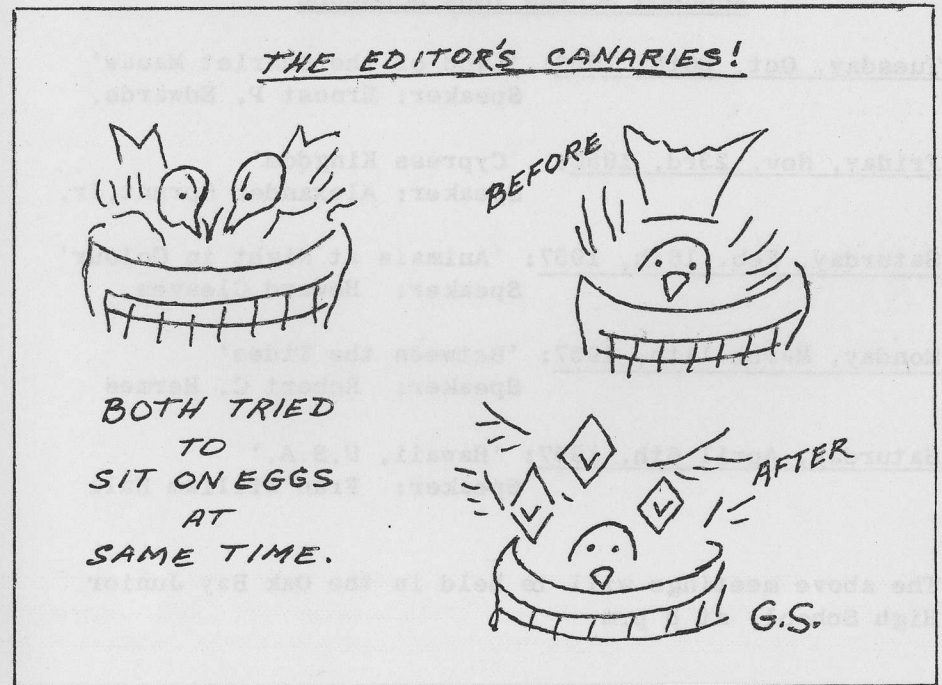
About four months ago I had a little toad I found in the basement. I named him Fokie which means 'little one' in Sagaga Wacha (?) Indian language. I gave him two meals a day. What he would eat was flies, spiders and bugs. He liked to kill the flies, spiders and bugs himself, so I had to catch them alive.

To catch a fly Fokie would let it fly around his big bowl until it would settle; then he'd jump on the big rock I have there and wait. When all ready he'd suddenly jump upon him.

First he would cut off his head and suck the juice of the fly. He would do something the same with the spiders and bugs. After three months of raising him I let him go; I couldn't get enough food and the poor thing looked so sad; but he's happy now with lots of food in our garden.

THE FIRST MEETING: SEPTEMBER 11, WITH DR. G. C. CARL.

- \$1.00 dues will be due. - -



NOTICES OF MEETINGS1956

Tuesday

GENERAL MEETING

Sept. 11:

In the Provincial Museum at 8 p.m.

Speaker: Dr. E. H. Strickland.

Subject: 'Why are insects'.

Saturday

BIRD GROUP

Sept. 22:

Meet at Monterey Ave. at 10 a.m.

Cars will proceed to Esquimalt Lagoon
returning about 3 p.m. Take lunch.

Tuesday

GEOLOGY

Sept. 25:

Provincial Museum, 8 p.m.

Speaker: Mr. J. H. Whitehouse

Subject: Crustaceous Period

Note:As the Annual Fungus Foray depends on weather
conditions, the date will be announced later.AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR SCHEDULETuesday, Oct. 30th, 1956: 'Land of the Scarlet Macaw'

Speaker: Ernest P. Edwards.

Friday, Nov. 23rd, 1956: 'Cypress Kingdom'

Speaker: Alexander Sprunt, Jr.

Saturday, Feb. 16th, 1957: 'Animals at Night in Colour'

Speaker: Howard Cleaves.

Monday, March 11th, 1957: 'Between the Tides'

Speaker: Robert C. Hermes

Saturday, April 6th, 1957: 'Hawaii, U.S.A.'

Speaker: Fran William Hall

The above meetings will be held in the Oak Bay Junior
High School, at 8 p.m.

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