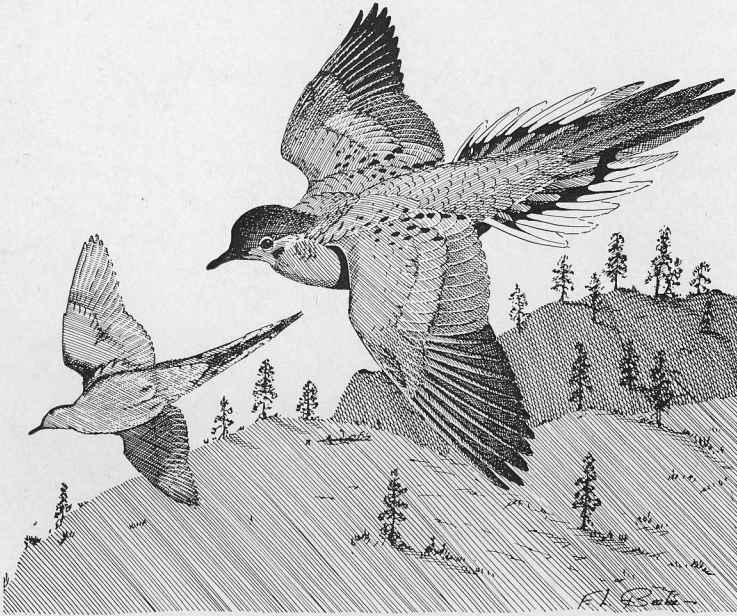


*The*  
**VICTORIA  
NATURALIST**

Vol. 15, No. 1

September, 1958



Mourning Dove

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

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Vol.15, No.1

SEPTEMBER 1958

OUR COVER

It is now five years since the first nest of the mourning dove was found on Vancouver Island. To be exact, the nest was discovered near Mount Douglas on July 16th, 1953, by Mr. George A. Hardy. Three years later another was found by Mr. and Mrs. G. J. Jackson in their garden on Cedar Hill Cross Road. In neither case did the doves succeed in raising any young in the nests found. Crows were presumed to be responsible.

On July 25th of this year Mr. Doug. Wood came across a mourning dove's nest on the ground near the road to Butchart's Garden. By August 1st the two eggs were pipped, and by the 8th the young were well grown. His final observation was on August 12th at which time the birds were fully feathered and apparently ready to leave the nest. One of the young was much larger than the other.

Mr. Wood states that at this time mourning doves can be seen in small flocks of six to ten birds on the Island View Beach Road, on the Downey Road, Deep Cove area, and occasionally on the fields near Dieppe Road.

So it is evident that several pairs have been successful with their broods this year. It is believed these mourning doves migrate in the fall and return rather late the following spring.

This will be a new bird to add to our list of summer residents. It is interesting that certain species are continually extending their territory, the other two in the Victoria area of late years being the bush-tit and the house finch.

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THE ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the Society was held this year in the cafeteria of the Douglas Building on May 13th, the President, Mr. P. M. Monckton being in the chair.

About seventy-five members attended this meeting, which was really more of a social gathering than a formal meeting, but a certain amount of business was transacted.

Some discussion was held on the forthcoming Audubon Lectures, details of which will be found in this issue.

The revised Constitution of the Society was adopted and a copy of same is being mailed to each member.

Mrs. Soulsby was appointed as our representative to talk over the matter of the Federation of Naturalists with the Vancouver Natural History Society, and to endeavour to have some action taken at an early date.

REPORT OF THE GEOLOGY GROUP

1957 - 1958

by A. H. Marrison

There was no group chairman during the past year. The following activities however were carried out.

Sept. 21st: The writer led a group of twenty members to the end of the Saanich peninsula along Lands End Road. An outline of the history of the local shales was given in the dining hall of the Baptist Camp 'Sylvan Acres'. This was followed by an examination of the cuttings along the roadway. Interest gradually grew as fossils were found. Dr. Hayes later obtained identification of one type of fossil, the extinct *Inoceramus*, two species of which have been reported from the Nanaimo formation (*I. vancouverensis* and *I. sagensis*) of Upper Cretaceous age. A very pleasant afternoon was finished at the seashore home of Mr. & Mrs. Sherman, who kindly supplied afternoon tea.

March 18th: A talk on fossil areas of south Vancouver Island was given by the writer, who listed different formations, their ages, and the fossils which have been found and identified by various collectors. Twenty-one members attended. At the request of members, a synopsis of the talk will be submitted to the magazine.

February 10th: The Victoria Lapidary Club kindly extended an invitation to our members to hear a lecture by Dr. S. S. Holland of the Mines Dept. which was given in the Board Room of the City Hall. The speaker explained

the differences between jade and other closely allied rocks, such as nephrite, and the sources from which supplies are obtained. Many Indian artifacts are composed of nephrite, boulders of which have been found in the Fraser River Valley.

April 15th: Dr. A. O. Hayes gave a very interesting talk entitled 'Volcanoes'. Their origin and composition - lava, ashes, etc. - were dealt with. Maps showed lines of weakness of the earth's crust, such as along the west coast of North America marked by a line of volcanoes including Baker, Rainier, Adams, St. Helens, Lassen and Shasta in the United States portion. Illustrative pictures rounded out the talk, enjoyed by a good sized audience.

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1957 REPORT OF BOTANY FIELD TRIPS

by M. C. Melburn.

The Botany Group made five field trips during the 1957 season. These were as follows:-

April 27	- Mt. Douglas
May 11	- Thetis Lake Park
June 8	- George Pringle Memorial Camp (Shawnigan Lake)
July 20	- Goldstream Park.
August 17	- John Dean Park.

The average attendance on these trips was 27, the largest number turning out for the all-day trip to Shawnigan Lake.

Of the 60 species observed at Mt. Douglas probably the best remembered would be the little monkey flower (*Mimulus alsinoides*), nestled in the rock crevices, red maids (*Calandrinia caulescens*) along the upper dry paths, the oddly-fringed fruit of the lace-pod plant (*Thysanocarpus curvipes*) and the mass of chocolate-tips (*Leptotaenia dissecta*) spread out at the base of a cliff near the summit.

Thetis Park with its larger area and greater variety of habitats provided us with 93 species, ranging in size from the tiny lady's mantle (*Alchemilla macrosepala*) to the buxom balsam-root (*Balsamorhiza deltoidea*) displaying its numerous golden-yellow heads. A fine patch of bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*) close to the water was new to many in the party and much admired; but every one greeted vanilla-leaf (*Achlys triphylla*), grove-lover (*Nemophila parviflora*) and broom-rape (*Orobanche uniflora*) like the old friends that they are.

Along the shore-line at Shawnigan Lake we found such

plants as creeping spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula roptans*), creeping St. John's wort (*Hypericum anagalloides*) and blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium idahoense*). Deep shade under the fir trees was a favorite spot for pipsissewa (*Chimophila unbellata*) and two species of wintergreen (*Pyrola bracteata* and *P. secunda*). Many ferns flourished there too and in addition to the commoner kinds we found the graceful maiden-hair fern (*Adiantum pedatum*) and the odd-looking moonwort or grape fern (*Botrichium virginianum*). The total for this trip was 60 species.

At Goldstream three of the most conspicuous plants were waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum tenuipes*), false hellebore (*Veratrum eschscheltzii*) and angelica (*Angelica genuflexa*). Brooklime (*Veronica americana*), enchanter's nightshade (*Circaea pacifica*) and foamflower (*Tiarella trifoliata*) were still making a good showing and the parasite, dodder, (*Cuscuta pentagona*) was blooming profusely on nourishment derived from its victims the asters, the silverwoods and the plantains. Without listing any trees, our total at Goldstream was 81.

August 17th is admittedly rather late in the season to go hunting wild-flowers so on the John Dean Park trip we decided to list trees and shrubs as well as herbaceous plants and we rather surprised ourselves by rounding up a total of 106 species. Trilliums, rein orchids (*Habenaria* sp.), bird-foot clover (*Hosackia parviflora*) and Deptford pink (*Dianthus Armeria*) were still in bloom; here also were found two plants not seen earlier in the year, namely, Indian pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*) and spreading dogbane (*Apocynum androsaemifolium*). Near the edge of the pond we studied a handsome red-fruited shrub much resembling soopolallie (*Shepherdia canadensis*). It was indeed a member of that same family (*Eleagnaceae*) but proved to be a cultivated species (*Eleagnus multiflora*). John Dean had evidently planted it there along with several other cultivated species which he chose to introduce for his interest and pleasure.

We were much indebted to Mr. George Hardy for an interesting afternoon spent fungus hunting at Thetis Lake Park October 19th, 1957. An account of that trip was reported in the December number of the Victoria Naturalist.

\* \* \* \* \*

REPORT OF THE WINTER CHAIRMAN  
on BOTANY GROUP MEETINGS

During the winter 1957-58, three botanical meetings were held, as follows:

Monday, November 18th, at Victoria College Biology Laboratory a display of local fungi, mosses, ferns and trees was presented. This meeting had a large attendance in spite of the inconvenient place and time (i.e. Monday) and could probably be repeated annually.

Monday evening, January 20th, at Victoria College, was spent in examination and discussion of mosses. This was an experiment, and the chairman's conclusion is that learning to identify plants should be carried out in very small groups, meeting in private homes, and not as part of the regular winter schedule.

Tuesday, March 25th, at the Provincial Museum colour slides of Vancouver Island spring flowers taken by Mr. Edgar Stansfield. This was a timely topic illustrated by excellent pictures. Unfortunately Mr. Stansfield was unable to be present so the programme was made up from his slides projected by Miss E. K. Lemon, with commentary by M.C. Melburn. At the conclusion a short test in flower naming was held.

Anne Gorham.

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BIRD NOTES:

by Alan Poynter

There is a small swamp on the Patricia Bay Highway, opposite the turn-off to Island View Beach, which is worthy of a visit at any time of the year.

Checking this area on the 7th of June I saw a pair of blue-winged teal with three ducklings move swiftly into the dense bullrushes. If this was a family it would be quite unique, as this duck has no nesting records on Vancouver Island. Two weeks later I stood for fifteen minutes while a pair of Virginia rail performed their morning's preening only twelve feet away, and on the 12th of July three yellow-throat warblers with their quaint wren-like flight were feeding around the base of the reeds. I only mention these three species, as they are not common in this district, but I have listed 35 species in this swamp.

It is the finding of a very rare or 'accidental' bird that keeps up the enthusiasm of many bird watchers. Although these cannot be accepted in the field of science unless a specimen is taken by a recognized authority, we have the thrill of seeing them ourselves. A good example of this was a bird I saw on June 1st while checking the Sooke River. I had two good observations of this shore bird and I believe it was a white-rumped sandpiper. It was using a fresh-water habitat as explained in Taverner's "Birds of Canada", and it had the call note and the markings indicated in all the bird guides. From the records this bird nests in the Arctic, using the flyway through central Canada and the Mississippi Valley down to South America on its migration flights. Only two specimens have been taken in British Columbia one at Atlin on May 16th, 1931 and the second at Tupper Creek on May 29th, 1938, both places being on the extreme north-eastern border of the province.

This is an exceptionally good find from an amateur's point of view and worthy of a personal note, but it is this type of situation which makes the taking of specimens a necessity, so often frowned upon by the amateur.

It would also be a great pity to let go unmentioned the full nuptial plumage display of the winter sea birds in the Victoria area in the spring. These birds, Aleutian sandpipers, red-backed sandpipers, black turnstones, surf birds, the horned, eared and Holboell's grebe, black-bellied plover and the red-throated loon, are all with us for several weeks in their more spectacular colouration before they travel north.

At Clover Point a flock of fourteen mature ruddy turnstones, one pectoral sandpiper, two wandering tattlers and several dowitchers were seen on their northward migration flight, while a snow goose in the company of a white-fronted goose spent several weeks on the Victoria Golf Links this spring, a pleasing sight to any bird-watcher.

A FOUL STORY: (being an abstract from a letter written by Mr. J. A. Berry)

The nearest to a bird story I've heard recently was recounted by a local minister. Hope it may be new to you. It's a fowl (not foul) story, and concerns a brood of chicken, ten hens and a cockerel. One day the farmer's wife sacrificed the cockerel for the minister's dinner. The hens were bemoaning the fate of their only brother, but the mother hen took a more philosophical view. "You really shouldn't feel so sorry for your brother going into the ministry" said she. "He never would have made a good layman."

## ENTOMOLOGICAL NOTES

One of our members, Mrs. Pam Field, lives in Osoyoos, and is a keen naturalist. She is even able to combine raspberry picking with entomology, as this extract from one of her letters indicates: "I have been usefully employed in raspberry row for about a week, and have not seen a single mantis, but the stink bugs are legion. However, I have found some interesting things down there; one was a grasshopper which is totally unlike any other that I have seen round here. It is a dried grass colour, and has a beautiful ski-jump curve from the end of its antennae to the lower end of its body, which is very thin. Its head is the biggest part of its body and it has a little spike at the other end, which I suppose is its ovipositor. It isn't a short-horned grasshopper, and definitely not a cricket. I am in possession of the dessicated corpse.

"The other find was a wolf spider - who eats bees. I have not been too sure until now if it was a wolf spider or a jumping one, but now I have seen a wolf I can see the difference, if you know what I mean. He - or probably she - I suppose, is black with a few brown spots on the upper part of the back (not too sure about arachnid anatomy). Legs are distinctly bristly, but the most noticeable difference is the way its latter half is hinged to the end. It sort of leans round corners, making itself into a semi-circle, and moving the feet on the outside of the semi-circle with suspicious stealth. It can leap from this position, which I think is awfully clever. The jumping spiders always back around to the thing they have their eyes on, and keep the front of their head towards it. This one had a round head and you could see two big eyes in the middle, and what might be two little ones on the edges, and two bumps round the corner. I am not sure that I like it, not that I have any aversion to spiders, but that I disagree with a diet of bees and the slinky sort of prowling that goes on to catch them."

A DIPPER'S NEST: On July 4th four of us had the good fortune to see our first dipper's nest, and to observe the mother in action, bringing food and carrying away droppings. The nestlings welcomed the mother's arrival with a chorus of happy notes which were easily heard above the noise of the running water. The nest occupied a girder niche on the underside of the second bridge at Cathedral Grove where it was well placed for safety directly above the middle of the stream.

M.C.M.

BIRD GROUP MEETINGS

by J. O. Clay

On the 28th of June sixteen members drove to East Sooke to visit the home of Mr. & Mrs. H.S. Benson at Becher Bay, where, in the large loghouse, there was quite a collection of mounted local birds on display. The group made a round of the property, including the hillside above, while some members rowed across to Wolfe Island, a part of the Benson property. Seventeen species were identified, one of them being conceded by several of the party to be a Hutton's vireo.

On Saturday, July 5th, 25 members and friends met at Deep Cove wharf and proceeded to Portland Island (now Princess Margaret Island) north-east of Sidney. This island of 547 acres, its size being approximately  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles by 1 mile, has now been acquired by the Provincial Government for use as a public park.

Landing in the northern cove sheltered by Chad Island, we made our way through the woods to the old residence. This stands in a farm clearing extending nearly the length of the island. At the south-west end of the clearing there is a sheltered sandy beach backed by a house, orchard and a large barn. The old farm has been a sheep pasture for years, the stock ranging freely through the surrounding woodlands. In our short visit of two hours no large timber was noted. Animal life, besides one large mink, consisted of the following birds: (offshore) glaucous-winged gulls, Bonaparte gulls, white-winged scoter, guillemot, harlequin and marbled murrelet; (on the island) towhee, russet-backed thrush, red-tailed hawk, barn swallow, violet-green swallow, western flycatcher, robin, bald eagle, white-crowned sparrow, song sparrow, chipping sparrow, siskin, rufous hummingbird, junco, heron, winter wren, crow, goldfinch and chickadees.

A trip was then made to Bare Island, where the well-known naturalist A. G. Lawrence from Winnipeg took the opportunity of photographing double-crested cormorants from one of several blinds constructed by Jerry Van Tets. Meanwhile the group scattered along the eastern shoreline looking for guillemot fledglings in their various crannies and for the vacated nests of the black oyster catcher. Mr. Van Tets informed us that the nesting cormorants had increased considerably of late years, there now being approximately 140 nests of the double-crested and 400 of the Baird cormorant, while there were at least 1000 pairs of

glaucous-winged gulls nesting on the island. The only resident small bird was the song sparrow.

VANCOUVER NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY'S SUMMER CAMP

by Gladys Soulsby

In July this year the above society held its Annual Camp at Cozens Bay, Kalamalka Lake, Vernon, with fifty people including nine children being present.

Thunder, lightning and rain came to us the day we were settling in, but from then on sunshine and heat gave us ample opportunity to explore the country for birds, beasts and flowers. Dr. Brink was in charge and gave us marvellous leadership. Mrs. Brink and the ladies' committee gave us all odd jobs, and the cook was out of this world. Excellent food!

The North Okanagan Naturalists Society from Vernon called on us and attended the campfire one evening. Dr. Ross, one of their members, in charge of the Forest Laboratory at Vernon, planned an afternoon's visit for us to cover the laboratory and see slides of the work being done for our forests. Mr. Arnett of Kamloops linked us up with that thriving city (where as yet there is no society) by speaking to us one evening of his experiences in Ontario and of the Federation of Naturalists in that Province.

Mrs. Stewart Bradley was in charge of the bird trips and a great many of the species recorded by Mr. Clay during our Okanagan trip this spring, were also seen at this summer camp. In addition black terns were seen on Swan Lake, long-billed curlews near a lake on the Kamloops road, and Clarke's nutcracker near the campsite.

One day a sixty mile drive was taken to Summerland Experimental Station. This proved very rewarding.

The trip to Silver Star Mountain, height 6200 feet, to the summit of which the Government has built a road, was a highlight of the camp, and the sub-alpine meadows were beautiful with mauve fleabane, scarlet Indian paintbrush, white valerian and some yellow columbine. The small white rhododendron bush was in blossom, and Englemann spruce were beginning to come in clusters after having been burned over some short while ago. We went into the fire ranger's tower, thus getting away from numerous and fierce mosquitoes for a while. A high wind, thunder and lightning and a bit of rain didn't stop any of us from saying that, as we did of the whole week of camp, it was a very wonderful experience. We hope more Victoria Society members will go to their camp next summer.

A STORY OF A STELLER JAY

by J. A. Berry.

The raising in captivity of a hardy bird like the blue jay would not be worth mentioning unless some observations were offered on the characteristics and behavior of the bird. Our pet jay, a Steller's, came to us while we were living in California, where the species is very common.

Some boys found him on the ground, and an unlovely and helpless fledgling he was. While we believe that caging of wild birds is usually a mistake, his chances of survival appeared so slim that we decided to take him in. Feeding was no problem. He was blessed with a voracious and indiscriminating appetite, and thrived on ground horse-meat and infant food. When half grown he would sit quietly on his perch after a good afternoon meal and amuse us with low, throaty half-musical chuckles. At this stage he was quite docile and trusting - qualities which, unfortunately from our viewpoint, he later lost.

An interested neighbor built an outside cage which was hung from a tree in the garden, and in this our bird grew to maturity - a striking creature as far as appearance went. However, he gradually became wary and suspicious. He would tolerate us with an air of "Let's have the grub and clear out", but strangers made him very uneasy. One day a neighbor lady surprised us by remarking, "I think I heard that scamp of a bird whistle." Sure enough, whistle he could, a clear flute-like note, and a welcome variation from his usual screeches and squawks. But he proved capable of further mimicry, and took to imitating the battlecries of fighting cats so faithfully as to bewilder the dog, whose delight it was to disperse such disturbers of the peace.

The jay by now was something of a local celebrity. However, his attempts to bark like a dog fell short. He practised off and on, but his vocal machinery was unsuited to the job. Also, volume was lacking. When he was about a year old the time came to bid our jay goodbye, as we were moving to Vancouver Island. To turn him loose, inexperienced as he was in self-preservation was unthinkable. However, a good home for him was found in a neighboring small town, and we heard that he had successfully added to his repertoire the cackling of a hen.

That jay was a roughneck. I don't believe that beneath those beautiful feathers there was a spark of affection for, or trust in, anyone. He was out for himself, and it

would be no libel to say that if he didn't rob birds' nests and become a nuisance at feeding tables it was simply because he never had the chance. Yet we liked the scoundrel - liked him for his beauty, his alertness, his "something doing every minute" habit, his unexpected and amusing powers of mimicry, and we saw him go with something that came close to genuine regret.

On the subject of bluejays, - should any reader by chance not have read "A Bluejay Yarn" in Chapters two and three of Mark Twain's "A Tramp Abroad", let him turn to it sometime. Bird-minded or not, he'll find it a "kick".

J.A.B.

BIRDING IN THE OKANAGAN VALLEY

by J.O. Clay et al

Seven bird enthusiasts, all members of the Victoria Natural History Society, spent ten days in May exploring the southern end of the Canadian Okanagan. As had been expected, the orchard lands of the valley were in an obvious condition of depletion in bird life, caused no doubt by the continuous spraying and dusting of fruit trees in summer. In the orchard lands we visited it appeared that the species least affected by the spraying were the non-foliage nesters such as house sparrows, kingbirds and blackbirds. Conspicuous by their absence in the orchards were the tree-nesting warblers and vireos. In the open valley, meadowlarks and mourning doves were common. In the openly treed pasturelands flickers, robins, chipping sparrows and brewer blackbirds were most common. In the natural brushy oases of the dry sage brush areas near water were found a welcome and characteristic medley of robins, song sparrows, warblers, vireos, catbirds and hummingbirds. In the marshland and open water were geese, mallard, coot, blue-winged teal, Barrow's goldeneye, ruddy ducks and three varieties of blackbirds. On the sparsely treed mountain pastures were found a representative number of many of the above mentioned birds.

On the road to Merritt the eaves of a large barn sheltered 48 nests of cliff swallows, while several of the road cuttings through sand cliffs were riddled with the nesting holes of the bank swallows. Where we stayed the night at a motel by the side of a lake on the way to Merritt there were hundreds of tree swallows, and in an old log barn there a blackbird had its nest concealed in a set of old harness. In the adjoining creek were scores of large Kamloops trout nearly stranded by the dry weather as they ascended to spawn.

(We were able to notify the owner of the predicament of these handsome fish).

In the dry Okanagan sage brush we had a good view of a rattlesnake, a bullsnake and many blue racers. The mammals seen were chipmunks, squirrels, yellow-bellied marmots, deer and one coyote.

In the Okanagan valley 105 species of birds were seen, including willow thrush, red-eyed vireo, long-tailed chat, cowbirds, redstart, calliope hummingbird, say's phoebe, lazuli bunting, white-throated swift, Wilson phalarope, lark, Baird and Brewer's sparrows and a pair of calaveras warblers. At one lake, high in the cattle range country, we saw one only bobolink, a bird which really belongs to the east. Apparently bird populations are always shifting, a species common one year may be scarce the next. We covered this area last year at the same dates, but we only saw one eastern kingbird then while this year they were almost as common as the western kingbird. The Bullock oriole were more numerous this year. Mountain bluebirds were reasonably numerous in the valleys but western bluebirds were only noticed once and then well up Anarchist mountain. Barrow's goldeneye ducks were nesting in most of the lakes, while yellowheaded blackbirds, allegedly a common species, were only seen twice.

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BIRD-BOMBING

In the early evening of August 11th three observers watched a female sparrow hawk, high on a TV aerial, being subjected to a lively "bombing" by a group of six barn swallows. Seconds apart, the attacks came from all directions. Each "stoop" dropped to within inches of the hawk's head, frequently so close as to cause her to crouch. However, she stood her ground and after approximately twenty minutes the swallows tired of their fun and disappeared.

M.C.M.

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It would be appreciated if any members would bring specimens to the General Meeting.

JUNIOR ACTIVITIES

by Freeman King

During the summer months the junior branch has been more than active and has not missed a meeting, in spite of the forest closure.

The following is a brief account of some of our excursions:

A trip to Sandstone Creek on the Jordan River road, was made for fossils, some of the members managing to get good specimens.

Another was to Rocke Cove, East Sooke, which proved to be an adventure, as we had to climb a cliff on account of the rising tide. Here we had the idea of seeing how many specimens of plant life could be found within a radius of 200 feet. On the final tabulation 98 different kinds of plants were found.

Whiffen Spit was an all day expedition. Hunting for petrified wood in the sandstone beds resulted in some excellent specimens, including three fossilized cones and wood with the bark still showing.

While the forest closure was on we went to Glyn Beach, where we hunted for sea creatures. Some excellent coloured specimens of whelk and sea snails were found.

Another Saturday we went to Island View Beach, where we hunted for killdeer nests - unsuccessfully - there were lots of birds though.

A trip to the west road approach of Mount Newton was made early in June. In this area is one of the finest arbutus tree groves to be found anywhere. Most of them are growing straight, and not showing the usual distorted trunk formation.

Another day we visited the farm of James Turner, who operated the old Sayward farm. Here we saw some most interesting old time machinery, and implements of a bygone day.

Regarding the tree plot on Capt. and Mrs. Bell's property, we have made several trips hoeing and cutting weeds. I am sorry to have to report that we have lost about 70% on account of the exceptionally dry summer. It is planned to replant those which have been lost as well as put in shrubs in the portion not already planted.

On Saturday last the field trip was to Mount Newton to explore the lake in John Dean Park for pond life.

(continued over)



Junior Activities continued:

I am very pleased to report that the parents of the children have been very good in helping with transportation. We have had an average attendance of twelve.

I think the summer's expeditions and trips have been enjoyed by the boys and girls. I know I have got a great deal of pleasure and fun out of it.

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INTERESTING BIRD INCIDENTS  
NOTED THIS SUMMER

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by A.R.D.

One day in July Alan Poynter was visiting the Albert Head Lagoon hoping to see shore birds, when suddenly a magnificent specimen of an adult bald eagle crashed down on a flock of twelve mallards. Ten flew away, but two were too hurt or dazed to climb. The eagle apparently had to pick them from the water while in flight, so it dived repeatedly, but each time the mallard dove under the shallow water. Forty times did the eagle come down on them, sometimes slowly, sometimes coming down fast and checking itself just before reaching the ducks, but the mallard timed their short dives so exactly that finally the eagle had to fly away without its prey.

Ralph Fryer reported to me that one evening in July as he was near his home on Richmond Avenue, a barn owl flew overhead heading toward Gonzales Hill. Many years ago we saw one at Cadboro Bay, but they are a rare bird here. Mr. Fryer also reported that on July 27th he counted 76 Heerman gulls at Saanichton Spit. How many of our members have seen these beautiful gulls, with their red bills and striking plumage? They arrive each summer from the Gulf of California, rarely going further north than Victoria, returning south in late fall.

A queue of people were on the Ogden Point Dock one day while the United States warships were here in July, waiting to inspect the U.S.S. Aircarrier 'Bennington', when a crow flew overhead cawing raucously while chasing a kingfisher round the dock. Suddenly there dropped into the middle of the queue a fish about ten inches long. The kingfisher had given up the battle and the fish. (Reported by Cmdr. Harry Soulsby.)

While on Salt Spring Island on July 19th we saw a large bird flapping very industriously making a loud crying call all the time. We couldn't make out what it was, but shortly

we saw come into view an osprey, soaring effortlessly in circles gradually working its way toward the flapping bird. Then only did we realise it was a young osprey, possibly on its first flight, not daring to stop fluttering its wings in case it fell. Apparently, the mother bird was just teaching it to fly.

Cowbirds are becoming more numerous here. On June 13th Alan Poynter saw a couple at the Totem Pole at Beacon Hill Park, and on July 30th, while at Saanichton Spit we saw a chipping sparrow (the smallest of the species) trying to feed two comparatively enormous cowbirds, both full grown and quite capable of looking after themselves.

On July 14th Alan Poynter saw a tufted puffin at Clover Point while on August 1st Mrs. Slocombe reported she had seen four of these birds at this point. Two pair certainly nested on Bare Island, and others must be nesting on some of the many islands round our shores.

On July 27th we saw two dowitchers in their handsome summer plumage walking over 'Lands End' green at the Victoria Golf Course. They paid no attention to us, but continued to stroll down the fairway until they disappeared in the distance.

Mr. Poynter has also reported seeing a female American merganser with six young on the Sooke River, and hearing an American bittern on Spectacle Lake, which is about a mile from the Island Highway just past the Shawnigan Lake cutoff. This was on May 25th.

A.R.D.

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Mr. Bruce Irving, a keen bird-watcher living at Ganges, Saltspring Island, reports that a pair of barn swallows has reared two sets of young this season on the Motor Princess. The birds constructed the usual mud nest on a beam over the car deck on the starboard side and carried on the business of raising young while the ferry made at least 7 return trips a day between Fulford Harbour and Swartz Bay.

In the September 1957 issue Miss M. C. Melburn reported a similar barn swallow incident on this ferry, the young being successfully raised.

G.C.C.

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NOTICE OF MEETINGS1958

Saturday

Sept.6:

BIRD GROUP FIELD MEETING:

Boat trip to Princess Margaret Island; meet at Monterey Cafe at 9 a.m., and at Randle's Landing, on the Swartz Bay Road, at 9:45 a.m. Bring lunch. Those wishing to participate please phone Mr. Clay on or before Sept.4, for reservation.

Tuesday

Sept.9:

GENERAL MEETING:

Dr. G. J. Spencer from the University of British Columbia, a witty and entertaining speaker, will give us a talk on Entomology. Place: The Cafeteria, Douglas Bldg., at 8 p.m.

Saturday

Sept.13:

A GEOLOGICAL FIELD MEETING:

Meet at the Monterey Cafe at 1:30 p.m. or at Island View Beach at 2 p.m.  
Leader: Mr. A. H. Marrion.

Tuesday

Sept.23:

A meeting will be held at 8 p.m. in the Reading Room of the Provincial Library at which time the speaker will be Dr. Wright from the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory, the subject to be "Earth in relation to the Universe"

Friday

Sept.26:

AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR:

Oak Bay Junior High School at 8 p.m.  
Speaker: William H. Wagoner  
Subject: "A Touch of the Tropics"

NOTE: The Juniors hold a Field Meeting each Saturday under the leadership of Mr. Freeman King. Any members who wish to accompany these trips, please telephone Mr. King.

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The editors would be pleased to receive from members, for publication in the "Naturalist", reports of any interesting natural history incidents which have come to their attention during the summer months.

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# Victoria Natural History Society

OFFICERS, 1958/59

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P. M. MONCKTON  
2199 Lafayette Street  
Telephone EV 4-8837

## **Editors:**

A. R. DAVIDSON  
825 Monterey Avenue, Telephone EV 4-9595

G. CLIFFORD CARL  
Telephone EV 3-8524

## **Secretary:**

MISS IRENE T. LATIMER  
2445 Hamiota Street  
Telephone EV 3-1316

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Telephone EV 4-4871

*Ornithology:* J. O. CLAY  
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