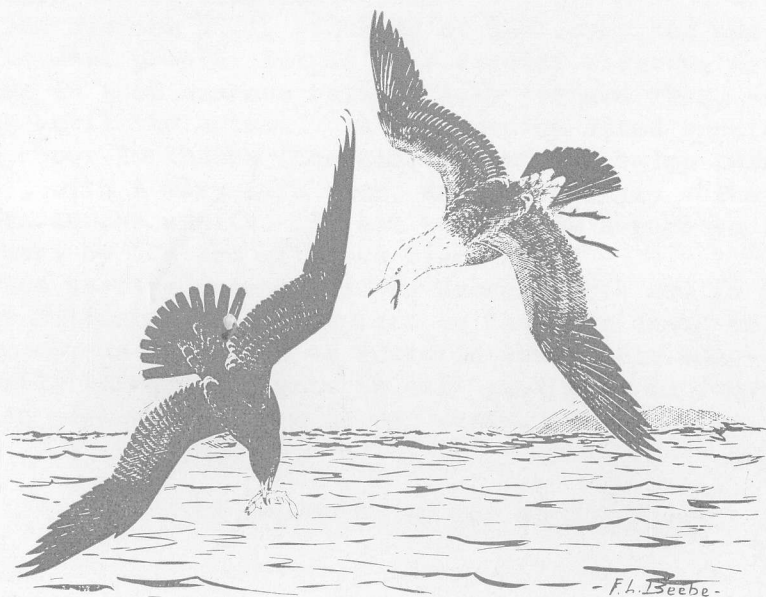


*The*  
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Heerman Gulls

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OUR COVER

The gulls of Victoria are an essential part of the life of our City, but to most of us they are just 'sea-gulls'. Actually at least ten species visit Victoria, the only resident ones being the glaucous-winged; others come in their season, some to winter here, others to visit. They present an interesting study, and often a perplexing challenge to bird students; some of the species being so like others, and the plumages of the same species varying so much, that identification can be difficult.

The Heerman gull, pictured on the cover, is one little known to most people, but it is a regular visitor, each year arriving in good numbers between July 1st and 10th, and remaining until the Autumn. It is a medium sized species, length about 20 inches (the glaucous-winged being twenty-six inches), with a very dark back, and startlingly white head and neck in the adults. It can be readily separated from all others by its red bill and black feet.

The nesting grounds of the Heerman gull are in the Gulf of California and elsewhere on the west coast of Mexico. It migrates as far north as Victoria and as far south as Guatemala. Around Victoria it will generally be found on the kelp beds which surround our coast.

A.R.D.

A PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

The following notice of motion was read at the General Meeting on April 16th.

Proposed that the paragraph (b) under "Officers" be deleted and the following substituted:

"The Executive Committee shall be composed of the Officers of the Society and shall have power to fill vacant posts of officers, to add members for special executive work or to fill vacancies on the Executive Committee. Such additional members shall be entitled to vote in the Executive Committee and to hold office until the next succeeding Annual Meeting."

THE WHALE IN STUART CHANNEL

Now that our whaling fleet is once again setting out to do carnage in the whale population some of us may find it pleasant to recall a time when and a place where almost the whole neighbourhood population was prepared to defend one whale; and this not so long ago.

Many of you will recall the exploits of the Ladysmith Harbour whale. For several summers this creature dallied in that vicinity. Up that way men were repeatedly quoted as having said they'd shoot anyone who harmed OUR whale. Yes, it was OUR whale. There was a vigilante sawed-off shot gun atmosphere to the whole district in a common will to defend OUR whale. These were not on the whole conservationists as Auduboners understand that qualification; just ordinary Joes.

What aroused this protective instinct? Surely it was an appreciation of the robust joy of living which the whale displayed. He disported himself in those many square miles of sea which flow between the Oyster District of Vancouver Island and Thetis and Kuper Islands; in all his cavortings in this area he was easily visible to watchers on the shores.

These waters are warmed in flowing over the estuary shallows of the Chemainus River and the sandy shallows around Boulder Point, as swimmers well know during the summer months; maybe Willie the Whale liked warmer water too. For hours each day he churned the sea into mountains of foam, raising vasty white suds all around him as he threw his great tail up out of the water as high as he could spare it, and flapped it whacking flat on the water, and repeated this, thump, splonk, thump, - which resounded thunderously off the rocky shores. He showed his white undersides in his crazy calisthenics, he leaped right out of the water - tons of whalemeat - and sank gurgling back again. This performance went on throughout many daylight hours with a joyous abandonment, raising wavelets along the shores; - a great creature apparently full of the joy of his living and doing no harm to anything.

That his acrobatics were confined to the daylight hours was fortunate. His nights were spent floating close under the western shore; resting but not exactly quiet. Have you ever slept near a whale? All summer this reporter slept with the whale floating in the sea just below our garden; more or less slept, since it is not easy to do so with equanimity. A whale is not a quiet sleeper although

he remains quite still; his digestive processes are noisy and not pleasant to listen to. But you put up with it, knowing he is safe so long as your rest is disturbed by these manifestations of his presence, - which plainly expressed consist of intermittent belches.

It is apparent that his tail thwacking activities during the day are motivated by his need for a summer clean-up, - to shake lice off his body. There is no question about his thoroughly enjoying himself and he doubtless felt more comfortable as his clean-up progressed.

(BUT, why one whale alone? Is this question answerable?) It is also apparent that when humans have such an opportunity to watch a creature enjoying itself so spectacularly day after day for weeks they find themselves entering into its enjoyment and value the creature protectively in appreciation of the pleasure it is giving them.

In that after dusk period, when the flotilla of evening fishermen throbs homewards across a rosy turquoise sea, which fades to silver, as a loon's call lilts across the water with haunting cadence, - then Moby Dick's cousin drifts to his night station, silently, unseen.

D.P.

QUAIL HUNT

by David Stirling

There have been recent reports of the mountain quail from Mount Finlayson and Kangaroo Road, but this bird is rather scarce on Vancouver Island. Therefore, when Mr. A.R. Davidson told us that quail were now calling in the hills flanking Munn Road, we decided to go out and investigate as soon as possible.

One morning on the Easter week-end six "keen types" rendezvoused on Burnside Road before proceeding to "Goodlands Farm", where we contacted Mr. F.A. Bolton. After obtaining advice on where the birds might be found, we climbed the ridge on the southwest side of the road. We walked for some distance along the top without sight or sound of our quarry; in fact the hills appeared completely birdless. The only sound was the desultory croaking of the Pacific tree toad and, rarely, the almost inaudible twittering of golden-crowned kinglets.

Along the hill tops we became interested in the spring flowers that were bursting out all over the mossy granite. Most interesting were the natural rock gardens of blue-eyed



Mary, saxifrage and baby monkey-flower. In order to record the Floral beauty the photographers unlimbered their cameras, close-up attachments and tripods. Clinging to the hill side with the help of hairy manzanita shrubs and weak strands of Arctostaphylos uva-ursi, the photographers were finally ready for business. But just at the critical moment, by placing a king-size cumulus in front of the sun, the fickle weather put an end to picture taking.

Next we tried the northeast ridge. This area seemed to be better quail habitat:- shrubby arbutus, salal, and plenty of seed-bearing plants. Very soon we heard our bird - a whistled "wook, wook", coming (we thought) from far up the ridge. However, we had not gone far when we flushed a quail from the shrubbery. It was noticeably larger than the California and the flank pattern was different - a "mountain" sure enough. During the next hour we heard and flushed more birds - a total of four, all singles. Once we heard a different call; a loud tremulous whistle - the alarm note.

At this season the best method of quail hunting would be: Take lunch and a large thermos of tea. Find a comfortable vantage point and wait until the quail sings. If you can't spot him with your binoculars proceed quietly in the direction of the sound. But remember the call has a certain ventriloquial effect in the hills; also it sounds considerably farther away than it really is. And one last word: birders are welcome at "Goodlands Farm" but please don't climb over the fences - use the gates.

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BIRD NOTES

It is interesting to note that our rather cold and wet spring appears to have no effect on the date of arrival of the migrating birds. At the time of writing (May 4th), the following species can be found in and around Victoria:-

Solitary vireo .	Western flycatcher.	Western sandpiper.
Yellow warbler.	Lutescent warbler.	Tolmie warbler.
Pileolated warbler.	White Crowned sparrow.	Chipping sparrow.
Savannah sparrow.	Band-tail pigeon.	Rufous hummingbird.
Russet-back thrush.	Violet-green swallow.	Barn swallow.
Cliff swallow.	Rough-wing swallow.	Tree swallow.

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J. OWEN CLAY

The passing of Mr. Clay will be mourned by all those who knew him.

Many were the bird meetings we enjoyed under his leadership. He knew the birds, their songs and where to find them. Always thorough, every trip was carefully planned, and a reconnaissance made of the territory to be covered. Should the area be privately owned, he always interviewed the owners to obtain the necessary permission, which was always granted. It is due to such men as Mr. Clay that the Victoria Natural History Society has been of such service to so many people.

He was born in England in 1884, and came to Victoria at the age of 23, and shortly afterwards purchased a ranch in the Slocan Valley, where he established himself as a fruit grower. In 1930 he returned to Victoria, and soon became well known as an orchardist.

He assisted in the formation of the Society in 1944, and from October of that year was the Chairman of the Bird Group. His death on March 24th of this year was a great loss to us all.

A.R.D.

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TREES AND THEIR BARK

On the evening of March 24th Mr. Freeman King gave to the Natural History Society the second of his talks on native plants. This time he dealt with trees and noted that each species of tree has not only its distinctive leaf shape and type of bark but to a very marked extent it has also a very characteristic outline. This feature, however, may become altered in early life by such accidents as a falling limb, a browsing deer, or a misplaced "hoof". Even in the seed stage fate brings many misfortunes, for example, a Douglas fir may produce in one crop 7000 or more seeds but many of these are eaten by mice, squirrels or insects, while a large percentage of the remainder fall among stones or shrubs where germination is impossible. On the other hand, even where soil conditions are ideal, more than 90% of young trees are doomed to die sooner or later as the result of crowding and competition. Mr. King once examined the cut ends of two fir trees which had grown side by side and found that one had a diameter of 18 inches, the other 4 inches, yet their growth rings proved their age to be identical.

(continued on page 112)

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETYFINANCIAL STATEMENT JUNE 1st 1958 to MAY 31st 1959INCOME:

Bank balance from previous year - - - - -	\$1,688.41
Membership fees - - - - -	355.35
Membership fees, junior - - - - -	38.00
Bank interest - - - - -	54.95
Tax remission - - - - -	90.85
Discount on payment to National Audubon Society -	27.12
Transferred from Audubon account - - - - -	381.61
Outstanding cheques - - - - -	147.26
	<u>\$2,783.55</u>

EXPENDITURES:

Monks' Multigraph Letter Service, printing and mailing "Naturalist" - - \$	375.40
Stationery and postages - - - - -	67.49
Cost of meetings - - - - -	34.95
Cost of projector - - - - -	16.81
Canadian Audubon Society - affiliation - - - - -	10.00
Wreath - - - - -	5.25
Christmas Bird Count. National Audubon costs - -	10.92
Cost in connection with junior branch - - - - -	112.29
Books for library - - - - -	109.81
Bank Balance, May 31st 1959 - - - - -	2,040.63
	<u>\$2,783.55</u>

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETYAUDUBON ACCOUNTYear June 1st 1958 to May 31st 1959INCOME:

Receipts from five lectures - - - - -	\$1,751.24
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EXPENDITURE:

Amusement Tax - - - - -	156.55
Advertising - - - - -	80.48
Rent of School Auditorium - - - - -	250.00
Contract payment to National Audubon Society - -	500.00
50% of net profit to National Audubon Society - -	382.60
Transferred to Victoria Natural History Society -	381.61

\$1,751.24

TREASURER'S REPORT

The net profit of the five lectures, after deducting the \$500.00 payment to the Audubon Society, as per our contract, was \$765.21. Half of this amount is paid to the Audubon Society, which is also part of our contract with them. The net profit for the previous season was \$1,031.67.

The balance at the bank is now \$2,040.63 as against 1,688.41 on our last balance sheet, an increase of \$352.22.

Our membership now stands at 116 single, 32 family and 43 juniors.

Respectfully submitted,

Eleanore McGavin  
Treasurer.



Mr. King dealt with 23 species of trees, making a brief statement on the comparative value of each kind for such purposes as construction, furniture-making, boat-building, fencing, pulp and paper, and fuel.

On display were mounts from each kind of tree showing section of wood, section of bark, as well as the twig - - ample evidence of the apparently inexhaustible fund of wood-lore, patience and energy of "The Skipper".

Miss Gorham expressed to Mr. King our warm appreciation for this interesting and informative lecture and demonstration.

M.C.M.

#### APRIL BIRD TRIP

ALAN POYNTER

The April Field Trip was held in the North Saanich area with twenty-three members meeting at Sidney Wharf on a bright clear morning.

The month being April we were out to have a last look at the departing winter residents, to brush up on the spring arrivals and at the same time we hoped to find a few passing migrants. Before the day was over all our expectations had been fulfilled, with a grand total of seventy-one species.

With a low tide we were able to walk over the rocks in Oystercatcher Bay where several species of gulls and shore birds were feeding together with black brant.

Mrs. Taylor very obligingly escorted the group round the shores and wooded area adjacent to her home and the afternoon was closed with a short visit to Resthaven.

Several Bonaparte gulls were seen off Sidney and the summer plumage of the ducks and shore birds was noted with interest.

Amongst the new arrivals were the chipping sparrow, solitary vireo, myrtle warbler, savannah sparrow (Brooks) and the white-crowned sparrow.

A lively discussion was held by most of the group over the identification of a small bird which was eventually accepted as a ruby-crowned kinglet and not the quite rare Hutton's vireo. (Later checked in the Museum).

Other notes of interest were the abundance of wild-flowers and other plant life, (for a bird group we had some very good botanists) and four sea lions seen quite close to the shore.

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#### FORAMINIFERA

by W. MacKay Draycot

While watching a dredging machine or giant suction pump at work off shore the curious observer naturally wonders what species of marine life are brought to the surface. Being one of the curious I decided to investigate by collecting some of the fine to coarse sand being ejected from the mouth of a long steel flume connected to a suction pump. Material was being pumped from the bed of Burrard Inlet at a depth of nine to ten fathoms to raise the level of the foreshore. Hundreds of screaming ever-hungry seagulls were feasting on the thousands of large to medium sized molluscs whose shells were broken by impact with stones and gravel as they coursed with terrific speed through the long steel tube.

The operation made it possible for an amateur conchologist to obtain specimens which could not be had without delving into the treasury to purchase them. Shell collecting is not a hobby with British Columbians. A small sackful of the washed sand, together with the finely broken shell fragments, was gathered, to be examined on days that are dull and nights that are lonesome.

In the search for foraminifera patience and curiosity--which most folk possess--and a knowledge of the ordinary constituents of sand are necessary. For the first time or so you will become enraptured over the visible miniature molluscs there to be found in various shapes and of rare beauty. Handle them carefully when placing the separate species in small glass phials; a few of the species are delicate so can not withstand your excusable desire to press them. A knife blade is better than forceps.

The next task, and test of patience, is the search for foraminifera. Only a teaspoonful of sand is necessary for each successive search. Spread it over the surface of something dark in colour, and rigid, such as an unglazed tile or slate. Under the heading of "foraminifera" in a text book or encyclopaedia you will find illustrations of the objects of your search. Though much magnified in the drawings some of the minute, perfectly formed creatures are no larger than a speck made with a sharp pencil point; others are readily discernible under a magnifying glass. It is a test of patience as you separate the sand particles with the aid of a pin or needle and draw to one side the odd bits that resemble the drawings in the text.

An Elphidium is easily spotted, though only the size of a small pinhead. He is somewhat similar in shape to the well-

known nautilus and usually has a shell of pea-green colour. There are many species and their ancestry dates back millions of years; one species, Elphidium incertum (Williamson) was found by the writer in Pleistocene (Ice Age) silt. Other genera occurring in local marine mud and sand are: Elphidiella, Sigmomorpina, Oolina, Trichohyalis, Discorbis, Buccella and Quinqueloculina; these names will serve as a guide in conjunction with your text book. All the above were taken from the bed of Burrard Inlet by the writer. You may not find them if you lose patience but you will be rewarded by finding a few, if you persevere. Finally, put your specimens under a microscope and you will be amazed on viewing perfection and symmetry in such minute creatures. A sample of mud-sand at extreme low tide harbours them. It's worth a try, even to satisfy your curiosity.

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#### APRIL GENERAL MEETING

This meeting was held in conjunction with the Thetis Park Nature Sanctuary Association on April 16th.

It was a good meeting, the Cafeteria being filled to capacity, more than two hundred people being present.

A certain amount of business was transacted by both societies, after which Dr. Adam Szczawinski spoke on a subject dear to his heart "British Columbia's Most Valuable Resource - Nature", illustrating his talk with coloured slides taken on a trip to the west coast of Vancouver Island and to Garibaldi Park.

Afterwards he spoke on the creation of an arboretum at Playfair Park, stating that the Saanich Council fully approved of the proposal and would provide the necessary labour. Dr. Szczawinski stated that the Saanich district is possibly the best area in Canada for the location of a garden of this nature, and that an association has been formed for its promotion. Playfair Park is situated in the north Quadra Street district and can be reached from Rock Street (which is the first road to the right after Tattersal).

After the meeting refreshments were served, and it was the general opinion that this meeting was one of the most enjoyable and instructive that had been held this season.

A.R.D.

#### THE JUNIOR PAGE

by Freeman King

The past month has been one of varied activities with the juniors. The trip to Island View Beach for fossils proved very interesting and a number of specimens were found in the blue clay banks, one being a piece of swamp wood which was only exposed by breaking open a huge lump of the clay.

Our expedition to Wells Mountain took us into a different terrain. We were in a large arbutus tree grove, with clumps of the hairy manzanita in full bloom, the sweet perfume of which had drawn many honey bees to the harvest. On this trip we found one of the saxifrages listed by Henry as being found on Mount Finlayson. This plant evidently likes very wet moss to grow in. On the slopes of the mountain a number of goats were feeding, and one could see that the vegetation was gradually being eaten away. This is an interesting country to explore.

Our next trip took us to Mill Hill near Langford, to the look-out tower of the B.C. Forest Service, but the wind was so strong that no one was allowed to go up to the top. Numerous plants were found here, amongst them being the erythronium, yellow violet, satin flower, miner's lettuce, and in the crevices the tiny mimulus.

The tree plot at Beaver Lake was our next objective. A check on the seedlings showed they were doing well. It is planned to make a picnic spot on the rocks to the east, and some stones were gathered ready to build a fire-place. On the pond a pair of Canada geese were seen. Apparently they were nesting there. The trail around Beaver Lake was explored and trilliums were found in bloom.

The seniors were out to the west coast and explored around the Sheringham Lighthouse, the lighthouse keeper showing us over the plant. While we were cooking our dinners there in the rain, a large black mink came to take a look-see at us. On the rocks was growing a stunted wind-swept Sitka spruce tree not more than eighteen inches high, but judging by its thick trunk it was perhaps fifty years old. The goose-neck barnacle grows abundantly near the low tide level in this region. An interesting drawing, apparently of Indian origin, was found on the face of the rocks.

Our six weeks T.V. show on CHEK is completed with some very interesting results, and we would like to thank members of their staff for their help and kindness to us.



NOTICE OF MEETINGS - MAY, JUNE, JULY, AUGUST, 1959

MAY 9th, BIRD GROUP FIELD DAY: Metchosin District & Witty's Lagoon. Meet at Monterey Cafe 9 A.M., or St. Mary's Church, Metchosin, 9:45 A.M. Bring lunch. Leader: Mr. Alan Poynter.

MAY 12th, ANNUAL MEETING: Slides by members. Refreshments. 8 P.M. in the Douglas Bldg. Cafeteria, Elliott Street.

MAY 16th, BOTANY FIELD TRIP: Meet at Monterey Cafe 1:30 pm for John Dean Park.  
Leader: Miss M. C. Melburn.

MAY 23rd, GEOLOGY FIELD TRIP: Meet at Monterey Cafe 1:30 pm for Island View Beach.  
Leader: Mr. A.H. Marrion.

JUNE 6th, BIRD GROUP FIELD DAY: Shawnigan Lake. Meet at Monterey Cafe 9 a.m. or Shawnigan Lake Cut Off 9:45 a.m. Bring lunch.  
Leader: Mr. Alan Poynter.

JUNE 13th, BOTANY FIELD TRIP: Meet at Monterey Cafe 1:30pm for Goldstream Park.  
Leader: Miss M.C. Melburn.

JULY 4th, BIRD GROUP FIELD DAY: Bare Island & Sidney Spit. Meet at Monterey Cafe 9 a.m. or Deep Cove wharf 10 a.m. promptly. Bring lunch. Confirm with Mr. Alan Poynter, EV.4-8330 before Wednesday, July 1st.

JULY 11th, BOTANY FIELD TRIP: Meet at Monterey Cafe 1:30pm for Thetis Park Nature Sanctuary  
Leader: Miss M.C. Melburn.

AUGUST 1st, BIRD GROUP FIELD DAY: East Sooke & District. Meet at Monterey Cafe 9 a.m. or St. Mary's Church, Metchosin, 9:45 a.m. Bring Lunch.  
Leader: Mr. Alan Poynter.

AUGUST 15th, BOTANY FIELD TRIP: Meet at Monterey Cafe 1:30pm for trip to Sooke area.  
Leader: Miss M.C. Melburn.

AUGUST 29th, BIRD GROUP FIELD TRIP: Portland Island. Meet at Monterey Cafe 9 a.m. or Deep Cove wharf 10 a.m. promptly. Bring lunch. Confirm with Mr. Alan Poynter, EV.4-8330, before Wed, Aug. 25th.

JUNIOR BRANCH: Skipper continues expeditions throughout summertime. His telephone, GR.9-2966.  
Leader: Mr. Freeman King.



# Victoria Natural History Society

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