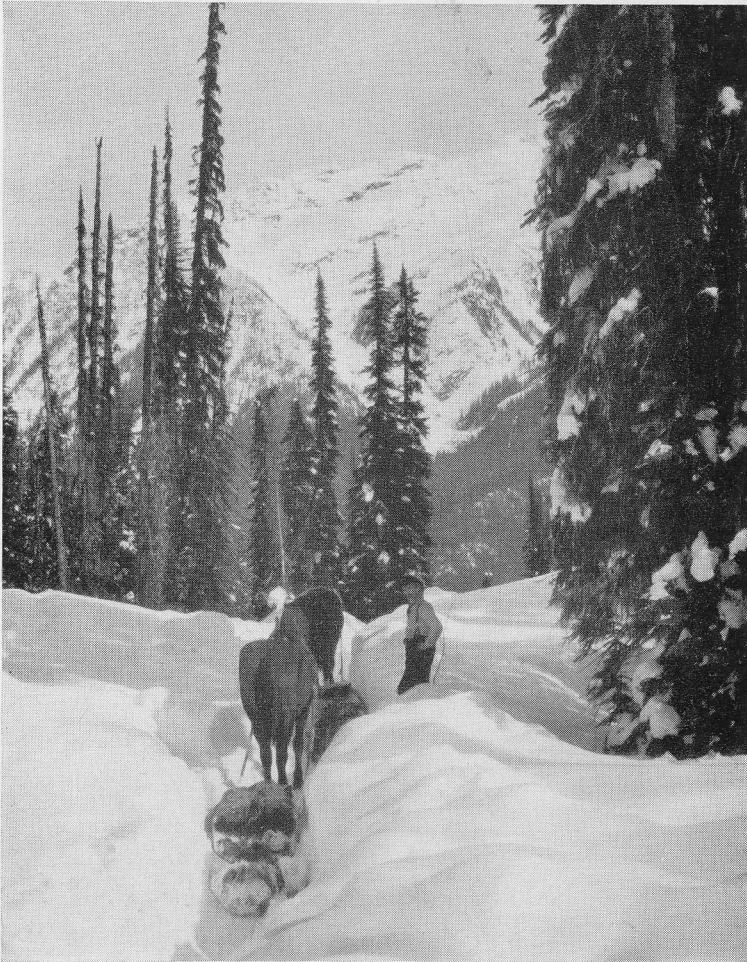


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(B.C. Department of Mines.)

Rawhiding Ore, Lardeau, 1914

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OUR COVER

Rawhiding high grade ore was one of the methods used in the nineties and at the beginning of the century, the ore being bundled into a fresh hide of a deer, or other animal, the fur being on the outside, and lying the way it was to travel. The load was hauled over the snow trails by a packhorse down the mountains to the nearest railway for shipment to Trail, where the Consolidated Mining then had a smelter. When the trails were steep, as so many of them were, a log was fastened to the bundle and used as a drag to prevent it from sliding under the hooves of the horse.

In those days, this was really the only way the miners had of bringing the ore down the mountains. Needless to say, it is not now used anywhere in British Columbia, and is only of some historical interest.

The Lardeau country is situated south of Revelstoke, between Upper Arrow Lake and the Duncan River, Trout Lake being approximately in the heart of it. Here it is all high country and rough travelling and those early prospectors were undoubtedly a hardy and venturesome people.

At that time about fifty mines, large and small, operated in this Slocan area, the ore being mostly lead, zinc and silver, some of it with a modicum of gold content. It is interesting that the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company is today working on some of these mines in the Duncan Lake area of the Lardeau.

The above information was given the writer by one of our members, Mr. Geo. E. Winkler, a practical geologist, and a man who has put half a lifetime prospecting and mining all over the Province. His knowledge of mines and minerals, of mining personalities, and of the mountains, glaciers and rivers, of British Columbia is profound, and is based on personal knowledge. He was there.

A.R.D.

THE STICKLEBACK AND OTHER SPINY FISHES

by G. Clifford Carl, Provincial Museum, Victoria, B.C.

A number of our fish groups are specialized in some way so that they are likely to be noticed even by the layman. The sticklebacks are one of these.

In this group it is the breeding habits of the various species that have received special attention though the fishes themselves are somewhat striking in appearance. The best known member is the threespine stickleback, a species found all around the world in the northern hemisphere. Despite its small size, under 4 inches in length, this fish commands attention because of the brilliant colours of the male in the breeding season. At this time the throat and belly are carmine, the back and sides olive, the eye is blue and the fins are green. The two prominent spines on the back (followed by a tiny third spine which justifies the name) and the even longer spines on the belly mark this gaily coloured midget as a fighter worthy of respect by creatures many times his size.

Not only do belligerent males drive off other males from nesting areas but they also fearlessly attack any fish that blunders into their domain regardless of size.

The nest, constructed by the male of bits of plant tissue stuck together by a sticky secretion of the kidneys, is usually shaped like a shallow saucer or sometimes like a tube with a front and back opening. In such a structure the eggs of several females are laid and the male stands guard even after the young have hatched.

Another remarkable point of interest about our stickleback is that it is found both in salt and in fresh water. It is one of few fishes that can live equally well in either habitat. Consequently it is very widely distributed throughout the Province being found along our entire shore line, in every river system connected with the sea and even in some isolated lakes.

A near relative of the stickleback is the tube snout, an extraordinarily long, slender fish found commonly in schools around wharves in salt water. As its name suggests the head is prolonged into a tapering snout at the end of which is a tiny mouth capable of taking in only the smallest of sea life as food. Like the stickleback it swims mainly by means of the fan-like side fins holding the body stiffly like a stick or a bent piece of wire. A series of small spines down the mid-line of the back shows that it belongs to the stickleback family.

Another spiny fish common all along our coast is the rock fish, usually called rock cod - a poor name since it is nowhere near a cod in looks or habits. There are a great many species of rock fish, all distinguished by well-developed spines in the back fin and a relatively large head and mouth.

Their method of reproduction is somewhat unusual. The eggs hatch within the body of the female and the larvae are released into the water in a rather immature condition. Each is less than half an inch long yet able to swim and to begin feeding. Immense numbers are produced during the summer months so that although many of them are devoured by other creatures enough survive each year to maintain the population of each species.

Several of our rock fish species are fine flavoured and are usually available in local fish shops. They also provide good sport fishing for both anglers and skin divers.

One more fish group that often comes to attention is the sea perch family because these fishes also give birth to living young. In this group, however, the developing embryos are retained within the body of the female for some considerable time, in fact until they are well-formed and of a relatively large size. Apparently, during their development the embryos absorb oxygen from the mother's blood stream through their membranous and over-large fins which act as gills at this stage, and some investigators claim the young may also derive some nourishment from the parent by the same means. If this is so, these fish are somewhat like the mammals in which the young grow somewhat like a parasite within the female. The yellow shiner frequently caught by small boys around wharves is the best known member of this group. Larger representatives are the dusky sea-perch and the blue sea-perch each of which may attain a length of 15 inches and produce 3 to 4 dozen young at a time.

BIRD MEETING, DECEMBER 12th: A short account of this trip will be found on the programme page, but we must not overlook the fact that Mr. & Mrs. J. A. Berry invited the party to have lunch on their property on Pipe Line Road, and we were surprised and delighted to find a beautiful log fire in the open ready for us, with an abundance of weiners and buns, which were roasted in record time. Many thanks to Mr. & Mrs. Berry for this kind gesture, which helped to make a most enjoyable day for all concerned.

A.P.

This meeting was held in the Douglas Building Cafeteria on Tuesday the 8th, with an excellent attendance.

The speaker for the evening was Mr. C. P. Lyons, well-known to most of the members and friends present as an expert speaker and photographer of wildlife.

His occupation as supervisor of Provincial Parks takes him to all corners of British Columbia, and wherever he goes his cameras go too, depicting on slides and movies the scenery, the flowers, birds and animals, and he has the most interesting stories to tell of what he sees and photographs.

As an Audubon lecturer he also travels widely in Eastern Canada and the States, and so advertises the beauties of this Province to thousands of potential tourists.

Needless to say, the evening was much enjoyed by the large audience.

Mr. Freeman King, who presided at the meeting, mentioned that the acquisition of Rithet's swamp will be held in abeyance until the winter is over.

He also stated that another junior essay contest for boys and girls from 11 to 13 years, and from 14 to 17, will be held in the spring, the essays to be about three hundred words. Further details will be given later.

The last of the prize winning essays submitted in the competition last spring will be found in this issue.

Interesting item in COUNTRY LIFE, November 12, 1959.

A copy of Audubon's Birds of America, published by the author in London, 1827 - 28, containing 435 plates and more than a thousand life-size figures, engraved in aquatint and colored by hand, fetched £13,000 at Sotheby's. Purchaser not named.

The book has been part of the library of the Society of Writers to the Signet since publication. (Library is a legal one, in Edinburgh).

Interesting to note that in 1922 a copy went for £600; in 1945 one went for £3,700, and in 1955 another for £9,200.

Excelsior - and how!

J. A. Berry.

There are three matters which the Society should take up this year, commencing with this month's meeting:

First: An effort should be made to have the tidal waters at Witty's Lagoon made into a Federal Bird Sanctuary. Hunters there have been killing sandpipers, meadowlarks and other small birds; possibly because the first shot fired in that rather enclosed area raises all the ducks, and there is nothing left to shoot. This lagoon is becoming a popular picnicking place, even in the later months, and there are residences now on both sides.

Second: A letter to the Fish & Game Branch of the Department of Recreation and Conservation might accomplish something. In the list of game regulations issued to hunters with their licences is a 'personal message to hunters'. At the present time this reads as follows:- "Don't shoot harmless wildlife".

"Practice on crows, magpies and that ilk."

We would suggest this be changed to read:-

"Leave harmless life alone. Remember your licence entitles you to shoot prescribed game only. Most other birds, including eagles, hawks and owls are protected by law."

There is nothing in the present game regulations to advise hunters that these birds are now protected. Most of them think hawks are fair game.

The third matter is the treatment of roadside hedges and trees with poisonous sprays. In addition to the ugly mess this has made of many of our roads last year, and the definite fire hazard it creates, we believe these, and other pesticides used by farmers and foresters, are responsible directly for the low numbers of small birds seen last year and this winter. This matter should be taken up now with the Provincial authorities in an effort to have measures passed prohibiting all roadside spraying.

With regard to the second item, may we point out that hunting licenses are issued by hardware and sporting good stores which stock firearms. We are advised there are no regulations regarding their sale. As a license may be purchased by any resident of legal age it is obvious that a license may get into the hands of an irresponsible and incompetent person. As a road test is required of those who apply for a license to operate a car it seems to us that some test of capability should be required of those who carry a gun.

THE THIRD LAGOON

(midwinter)

Anonymous.

The estuary meadows gleam weepingly under winter rains, pale fawn and grey, patched with broom huddled darkly green. Gales whip cruelly across the flats; the maples branch-filter the blasts and let them whirl on to meet buttressed bench land, to uplift white gulls in their graceful strength. Bordering willows stream dripping branches, riding the winds, which rustle deadly through scattered bushes. From the Straits waves gallop landwards, roaring; they suck and ebb and flow, and roar on and on in a continuity of frustration along the shore. ...

... We remember summer's long peaceful days; children, gay garlands, riding log-chargers off the beach; blue tidal pools mirrors for summer skies, placid sun-sequined seas, the distant snows of Mount Olympus seen past the Angels' Gateway. A pleasant scene in summer, a scene of rewarding beauties, - to most of us. ...

... We remember autumn here as a scene of different beauties, maybe more rewarding because winter is not far away. Rewarding beauties, - to most of us. Waterfowl whistle and call in haunting lament, swimming and diving amid the kelp beds which encircle the bay. Single birds and pairs wing out from the lagoon, taking a wide circle along the shore and islets to reach the kelp beds. There is a wing splashing over there along the kelp line as if it were a domestic duck pond.

Autumn is the season of the "sad migration"; sad, - because our songsters are leaving us to follow the sun south, which we cannot do. Sad, - because the greatest peril of wildfowl on their perilous southward journey is created by the least intelligent predator.

We remember an autumn morning, the first Sunday in November. From the maple trees, from poplars and alders, from every shrub meadowlarks were singing with the gaiety and joyousness that only the western meadowlark can give to its song. The whole meadowed expanse was ringing with hearty song; the golden-throated birds sang amid golden maple leaves, amid yellowed willows and poplars, singing encouragement, - the harvest anthem of the larks.

... "But THEY are shooting the larks", the resident told us, bitterly. ...

Red-backed sandpipers fed along the shores of the lagoon, unafraid until the killdeers' plaintive warnings set them

winging in their pretty curving flight, only to settle down a few yards distant. Under the far shore of the lagoon numbers of migratory wildfowl rested and fed, mallard ducks chatting cosily amongst them. At the head of the lagoon the creek's summer trickle was now a noisy volume of water cascading echoingly down the waterfall.

... "BUT THEY shot numbers of sandpipers," the resident later grieved. For the killdeer "spoil sports" had gone.

On the beach one golden plover was resting after its long flight from the arctic. A very tired bird, depending on the camouflage of its plumage for protection, almost matching the beach. We sat on a log nearby and watched it for a long time. It stood at ease on one foot with the other tucked up in its tummy feathers; from time to time it yawned, from time to time it blinked to show up its creamy eyelids. It was a very tired bird, very sleepy; a beautiful little bird, its feathers in V points of gold all over its small body. Later, at nightfall it would have fed, then winged up to reach a southing air-current and passed safely on its journey.

... "But THEY shot it with a rifle, right through from wing to wing. THEY shot it while it slept, standing at ease on one leg. THEY shot it and threw it away!" A rare and pretty bird, one of the beauties of nature for which some of us are grateful. ...

A little lad came to us with a salvaged diver for identification, - a bundle of glistening white down. "THEY are shooting everything", his mother said, distressfully, and took her boy away from there.

Far out one punt pushed slowly through the kelp, and the wildfowl kept moving out of range, flying a distance ahead or circling to settle again elsewhere. The gunner in the punt was the conscientious type, a sportsman within the law; presumably he was. Presumably the birds had a reasonable chance of escape, presumably the "protected" birds were not in danger from him. PRESUMABLY. ...

... Today, in midwinter, we are looking across the lagoon, across the meadows and bay, remembering that the days gradually lengthen, that in a few weeks the earlier northward migrants will be here, heralds of the "happy migration". Perhaps the grass is greening along the beach line, surely it grows afresh beneath last year's remnants; the alder twigs glow warmer, the maple buds are growing.

Winter storms will be forgotten when the travellers

return but we shall not forget autumn and the "sad migration". And we remember that while wild creatures only kill because they MUST to eat, human creatures kill for the heck of it, - too many of them do and flout decency.

We trust that before another sad migration this lagoon will be a sanctuary for birds, another speck of safety for the world's rare and disappearing feathered beauties.

Note re title THE THIRD LAGOON: The first is Esquimalt Lagoon - a Federal bird sanctuary; The second is Albert Head Lagoon - also a bird sanctuary; The third is Witty's - Read the editorial.

OUR LIBRARY

Since the latest list of books published, the following have been presented to the library:-

A Scotch Naturalist, a life of Thomas Edward,
by Samuel Smiles, - - - from Mr. & Mrs. J.A. Berry

A Dictionary of Birds, - - - from Mr. J. W. Winson --
by Alfred Newton, published in 1893.

Union Bay, The Life of a City Marsh, (from
by H. W. Higman and E.J. Larrison, (Mrs F.C. Bogart

Homing with the Birds,
by Gene Stratton-Porter, from Mrs M. Leveson-Gower

The Tundra World,
by T. S. Stanwell-Fletcher, - from A.R. Davidson

The Society subscribes to the Canadian Field Naturalist and the Canadian Audubon magazine. Copies of the Audubon Magazine, published by the National Audubon Society, can also be obtained.

We also receive a quarterly called COUNTRY-SIDE, a journal issued by the British Naturalists' Ass'n, and THE BLUE JAY, the quarterly publication of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society.

BIRD LIFE AT ESQUIMALT LAGOON

by David Stirling

Early in December while watching a rather rare Barrow's goldeneye on Esquimalt Lagoon, the whistling take-off of surf scoters and a great commotion among the gulls drew our attention to a pair of adult bald eagles. The eagles were questing low over the water and presently one of the birds singled out a coot from the several hundred that frequent the lagoon. The coot submerged each time the eagle swooped but apparently it soon became exhausted. The final swoop carried the eagle into the water. It seemed to experience some difficulty in becoming air borne again, but after "swimming" for some distance along the surface with outstretched flapping wings, it flew off to Hatley Park with the coot in its talons.

Strangely enough a small group of buffleheads, almost directly under the eagle, showed little if any concern; and a pair of red-breasted mergansers carried on with their ceaseless peering beneath the surface for small fish.

It might be of interest to mention since this is the "counting season", that on the same morning there were about 1,600 western grebes, and 1,400 Brandt's cormorants present offshore in two separate rafts.

BIRD NOTES

On one of our birding trips in December we were on one of the fields near the Island View Beach Road watching a flock of about a thousand blackbirds, mostly Brewer, with a sprinkling of red-winged and starlings. The blackbirds were peacefully feeding in the field when a peregrine falcon appeared. Immediately the entire flock rose into the air and chased the falcon in a body. The hawk easily outflung the blackbirds, so they gradually extended themselves to form a large ring, as if trying to hem it in. The maneuvering was most interesting to see, and went on for some time, the falcon making no effort to strike. Finally the blackbirds tired of the sport and settled into a group of trees, while the falcon flew on its way.

A.R.D.

JUNIOR ESSAYS

The following is the last of the prize winning essays submitted in the competition sponsored by the Society last May. It was written by Neil Robertson, age 12 years.

An Autobiography of a Chickadee

I am a chickadee, or, as some people call me, a black-capped, because of the black cap I wear. I inhabit southern Canada and sometimes go as far south as the Missouri.

I am not a beautifully coloured bird like the cardinal, but I do not mind that. My upper part is black and grey, and underneath I am black and white. I am about five and a quarter inches long.

In winter I like to feed on suet or fat which some kind people hang out for me. Sometimes people call me a fearless bird, because I like to eat crumbs off people's window ledges.

I live in the hole of a rotten fence post, and my nest is built of soft grass, moss and other plants. My mate lays from five to eight eggs each year, which are white in ground colour, spotted with reddish brown, with a tendency to form a wreath near the larger end of the egg.

My favourite sport is to hang perpendicularly to the side of a tree and eat bugs and other insects. I help people by eating the insects which are pests to them; and in the winter, when the insects are not to be found, I feed on hibernating bugs and eggs.

When winter comes and snow is on the ground, I join a flock of other chickadees and move about hunting for insects. In the spring I will look for a mate to live with in my comfortable nest, and hope my cry of chickadee-dee-dee will be heard for many years to come.

REGISTRATION OF THE SOCIETY

Since the general meeting on November 10th, the Constitution of the Society has been thoroughly checked by the Registrar of Companies and approved, with two additions; that the Society requires a Seal, and that a chartered accountant audits the books.

Our group is now a properly registered Society.

JUNIOR JOTTINGS

by Freeman King

During the past month our activities have been many and varied. The meeting in the Provincial Museum, when films on forestry and conservation were shown, was well attended, a number of parents staying for the show.

The trip to Goldstream Park proved more than interesting, the camp site being situated on different 'benches', which showed the strata of the ground in its different stages. The waterfall on Goldstream made a wonderful picture with its green setting of moss and licorice fern. Salmon were seen spawning in the stream; the elderberry bushes were starting to put forth their new leaves, and the hazel shrubs were starting to fill their catkins.

We made an expedition to Bear Hill, which is just north of Elk Lake. From the top a most magnificent view of the Keatings valley and the surrounding country can be seen. This hill is in a series of terraces. On the slopes we found saxifrage plants bringing forth their new leaves. They looked like beautiful green whorls and are very striking.

The trip to Rithet's hill at Royal Oak was very interesting. Several deer were seen; a black widow spider was captured and taken to the Museum. Clusters of snail eggs were found in the moss, and spider eggs in their cocoons were hanging from grass stems; many tiny water creatures were found in the ponds. We also saw a number of ladybirds congregated on the rocks at the top of the hill where they had clustered for their winter hibernation.

On Saturday evening the 12th, Mrs. G. Chope gave a party for the members of eleven years and older at 18 Wellington Street. There were over twenty of us there. Games and stunts all pertaining to natural history were run off with some very good results, and the evening finished with refreshments.

The last outing of the seniors was to the B. C. Forest Service nursery at Duncan where Mr. Jack Long showed us the process of extracting and cleaning the seeds of the Douglas fir and hemlock trees, a most interesting experience. We wish to thank Mr. Long for his kindness in showing us around.

We are planning our annual birthday party for Saturday, January 23rd, in the Scout Hall on Shelbourne. Members of the Senior Branch are invited to attend and see the Junior Members in action.

NOTICE OF MEETINGS

Friday & Saturday, January 8th & 9th
AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR: At the Oak Bay Junior High School Auditorium at 8 p.m., both nights.
 Speaker: Mr. Howard L. Orians.
 Subject: The Land the Glaciers Forgot.

Tuesday, January 12th.
GENERAL MEETING: At the Douglas Building Cafeteria at 8 p.m.
 Coloured slides by our members, Lucy Parris, Mayford Slocombe, Edith Valens, Barry Morgan and Philip Monckton.

Tuesday, January 26th.
BOTANY GROUP: At the Provincial Museum at 8 p.m. Mr. Freeman King will talk about coniferous seed production, and the junior leaders will review some of their field work.

Saturday, January 30th
BIRD FIELD TRIP: Meet at the Monterey Cafe at 9:30 a.m., or at the Esquimalt Lagoon bridge at 10 a.m., for a trip to the lagoon and Thetis Park. Bring lunch and waterproof footwear.

The Juniors will meet each Saturday at the Monterey Cafe at Hillside and Douglas Streets at 1:30 p.m. for field trips.

Leader: Mr. Freeman King.

Anyone who would like to join these trips is very welcome. Mr. King can be contacted at GR.9-2966.

THE DECEMBER BIRD FIELD TRIP

by A. Poynter.

This meeting was well attended, with 21 members being present at the outset a good turn-out considering the weather forecast. We were very pleased, and before the day was over so was everyone, as the sun shone most of the time, and we had an abundance of water birds. Small birds were noted by their absence, but we did note a few. Several large flocks of ring-neck ducks were on both Beaver and Elk Lakes. I estimated approximately 400, which is 500% above average.

Mr.A.R.Davidson and Mrs.E.McGavin,while separated from the group, found 2 redhead ducks,the rare bird for the day.

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Telephone EV 3-8795

Vice-President:

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