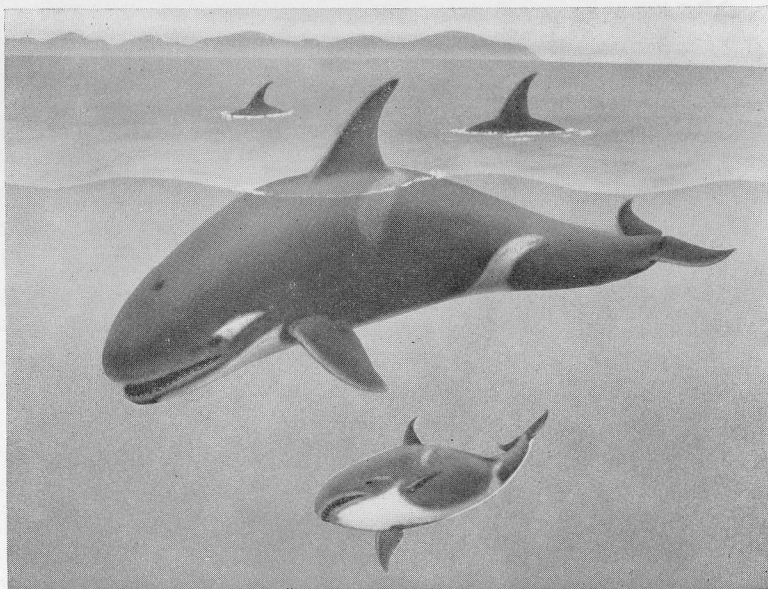


The
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Pacific Killer Whale

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OUR COVER

The killer whale, our largest porpoise, is said to attain a length of 30 feet in the case of the male, but the largest one actually measured in British Columbia so far was 22 feet. Most males here appear to average about 20 feet in length and females about 18 feet, large enough to swallow a harbour porpoise, a seal, or possibly a man. Though there is no authenticated record of a killer eating a human it is considered to be possible and consequently these mammals should be regarded with respect.

One of the most intriguing puzzles concerning killer whales arises from their tendency toward mass suicide. Occasionally groups of these animals meet death by stranding on a beach for no apparent reason. One of these tragedies occurred when eleven full-grown killers were grounded on a shelving shore near Masset, Queen Charlotte Islands, on January 16, 1941, and a second took place on a boulder beach east of Estevan Point, west coast of Vancouver Island on June 13, 1945, when 18 adults became stranded. A similar event took place in Trinity Bay, eastern Newfoundland on April 27, 1957, when 19 killer whales beached themselves and died. Other strandings in other parts of the world involving both killer whales and false killers add to the puzzle.

Accidental stranding is discounted because of the generally high degree of intelligence exhibited by these animals. Moreover, on a few occasions when people have witnessed the event, whales towed off the beach and pointed to sea deliberately turned and beached themselves again. One theory is that the whales are driven by a deep seated urge to migrate in a certain direction no matter if land lies across their course. Admittedly this is a weak explanation but no better one has been brought forth as yet.

SAPSUCKERS EATING ANTS

by G. Clifford Carl, Provincial Museum

Last June I watched several pairs of yellow bellied sapsuckers feeding upon flying ants. This was near the Indian village of Kitwancool, north of the Skeena River near Hazelton in open woods consisting of aspen, cottonwood, jack pine, red cedar and Douglas fir; twinberry and elder formed a sparse undercover.

The birds were making sorties from several favorite perches much like a flycatcher capturing insects on the wing. Occasionally a bird would fly to the ground, pick up an insect and return to the perch after which it would "sharpen its bill" by wiping it on the support. One also lighted on the side of a large cottonwood and worked up the trunk in a series of hitches, picking up an insect here and there.

On closer scrutiny a large ant nest was discovered at the base of the perch and near the tree. Many winged queens were sunning themselves on the nest and some were climbing dead sticks and other promontories. It appeared that the sapsuckers were deliberately selecting the flying ants, passing up the much more numerous wingless forms which also were swarming up and down the cottonwood.

W. L. McAtee, quoted in Bent's "Life Histories of North American Woodpeckers" states that "about four-fifths of the insect food of the three species of sapsuckers consists of ants, the eating of which may be reckoned slightly in the birds' favor. The remainder of the food is made up of beetles, wasps, and a great variety of other insects, including, however, practically no wood-boring larvae or other special enemies of trees. The birds' vegetable food can not be in their behalf, as it consists almost entirely of wild fruits, which are of no importance, and of cambium, the securing of which results in serious damage."

THE LADY BEETLE

by W. Mackay Draycot

The ingenuity some people possess for augmenting their income is sometimes surprising. We were exploring the summit of a low mountain which had several depressions and rocky humps. My friend's interest was botany. By all appearances there were no other humans in this botanist's Mecca on the lower mainland.

We were about to descend when we caught sight of a man

swinging an insect-net around. We approached him, thinking he was an entomologist collecting specimens. Not so. Instead of the customary collecting jars he had a specially constructed pail with a finely-woven cover. This receptacle was half full of lady beetles, or ladybirds as some prefer that name.

Naturally we were curious to learn the reason for his action. He told us, in secret, that, at that time, there was an urgent demand for lady beetles by fruit-growers in California to control the aphids and other pests that were doing great damage in the orchards. To prevent overcrowding, the beetles were shipped in specially devised boxes; he was paid according to the number of beetles enclosed in each carton. He said he was attracted to this spot when hunting deer and being curious to learn the reason why insects collected here he made enquiries which led to this unusual occupation. Hundreds of lady beetles had chosen this particular spot to swarm in preparation for hibernation. His secret can now be told for he has passed on, and his strange vocation has come to an end.

There are many species of lady beetles but the familiar one here is well-known by its single black spot on each elytron, or wing cover. This much can be said in its favour; it helps to control aphid pests when we have a reasonably dry summer; it is a favourite with children who have learned to appreciate its beauty and kindly nature; and it was dedicated to the Virgin by the devout in medieval times hence the name lady.

WILD AND FREE

by Dorothy Palmer

"The Winds and Morning, the Deep Night,
and Birds Singing and Clouds Flying, ..
and Freedom, and the . Earth."

from Rupert Brooke.

Our old farmer friend was ruminating on his favourite topic, - land. He plucked from Ernest Swift's "By Which We Live" Aldo Leopold's definition of conservation, - "Conservation is a state of harmony between man and land", and all that which comprises the land, soils, waters, plants, animals. "An aesthetically attractive slogan," he said, "and basically true. But conservation literally means 'with keeping', with keeping the BEST and it CANNOT be done." He turned to sweep an arm around, calling attention to our inland's panorama displayed behind us. "Wild and free, and true, all that which is made of"

tion to our island's panorama displayed rising behind us. "All the wild and free, all the illimitable spaces of nature, all the so-called balance of nature is subordinated to the need to provide jobs. Let's face it, this century is the twilight of the larger wild creatures; those which are not thought to be essential cannot be maintained alongside our pattern of living and those which may be thought to be essential will be fenced in. This continent's magnificent parks are under constant nibbling attack from industrial, transportation and communications considerations; a rear guard action. Food for multiplying humans and trees for waste paper will limit living space for larger animals; it will be kinder to let them disappear."

"In other continents our record is repeated: take Australia; or take Africa, - where production on all cultivateable lands is vital for the Africans, and supporting their wild creatures will become impossible."

"Whipsnade has no relation to the spaciousness of their natural habitat. Agreed we can enjoy seeing these animals in adequate park enclosures; an acceptable adaptation but no longer wild and free."

... We met the old farmer on cliffs overlooking the Straits, on a chilly damp February day. Before us the sea was a strange greenish-grey and green tinted mists hovered impatient to enfold the waters, the mountains a distant whisper in the sky. And yet the scene had an inner radiance, with a feel of snow in the air. Two fishermen drifted by, balls of iridescent white and black, their cheek buffles puffed out importantly, - an insouciant pair of spirit ducks floating on about their secret affairs.

While we chatted the scene was changing. The Olympic peaks were slipping away behind dark purpling clouds, which were sweeping towards our shores, spraying a white fringe before them; the sea was washed with indigo by the approaching storm, paling near land to blue underlaid with mauves and greens; the tide passed lazily by in an oily swell, the water rippled around rocks, caught up golden horse-shoes and threw them back to the western skies. The scene was full of weirdly ominous portent, - and strangely beautiful.

... "They can't take that away from us!" ...

Our wildflowers, - surely we can always keep them in their full natural loveliness, in many places not readily exploitable? ... Easter Lilies each spring popping up all around rocks and in many surprising places, gracefully

bowing their heads of dainty white flowers. Masses of deep blue camas with yellow buttercups, drifts of blue and yellow colour beneath our Garry oaks. Little mimulus peeping out of rock crevices, tall mimulus in swamplands. Rocky terraces washed in pink valerianella with pale blue collinsia offsetting the pink generosity. There are our dogwood trees whose graceful branches hold out their flower heads ringed by large creamy white bracts, which mass whiter and whiter all over topmost branches, sunlit in brilliant chastity against blue skies. Tawny tiger lilies, the vermilion of Indian paint brush and, - but we have so many and so much.

And there are our island's hills and mountains, satisfying contours against the sky. Mauves and pinks and blues shade along the slopes of our mountains, subtly blending into greys and grey-blues, while snowcaps are jewelled in brilliant hues by setting suns and fleecy cloudlets hover over the peaks in ruby and pearl and flame-lit laciness; the skies beyond soft creamy emerald, suggesting night's coolness awaiting day's ending. Our lesser hills become darkly mysterious at twilight, limiting our horizons. ... "The Best Things in Life are Free!" ...

Aldo Leopold has said, "The chance to find a pasque flower is a right as inalienable as free speech." He also wrote, "Now we face the question whether a still higher 'standard of living' is worth its cost in things natural and wild and free."

But Rupert Brooke said, "Dawn was theirs and sunset, and the colours of the earth."

AN UNCOMMON MIGRANT FOR VICTORIA

On February 7th a party of bird watchers saw a snow goose on the flooded fields on either side of Martindale Road in Saanich. It was feeding in the company of a flock of about two hundred widgeon, and stayed with them for several days.

MOUNTAIN QUAIL (*Oreortyx picta*) on MUNN ROAD

By Ruth Stirling

Little is known concerning the mountain quail on Southern Vancouver Island. There is even some doubt as to whether this bird was introduced or is a native species, but it seems unlikely that it is indigenous to Vancouver Island.

Carl and Guiguet (Alien Animals in B.C. Prov. Mus. Handbook 14, 1958) state that in 1860 or 1861 mountain quail were released on Vancouver Island but the birds failed to become established. Later introductions in the 1870's and 1880's were successful and although the birds have never been numerous small groups are still present in the Highland District, the Sooke Hills and in hilly areas from the Malahat to Duncan.

In the spring of last year mountain quail were heard calling in the Thetis Park "Panhandle" by several persons, and Barry and Joanna Morgan saw a pair on Mount Seymour in July.

In April, 1960, Deirdre Webb and I spent some time in the rocky hills adjoining Munn Road observing mountain quail. At this time of year the males spend a good deal of time calling from a stump or rocky prominence. The call at a distance is a soft, querulous "to-wook" but at close range it takes on a more demanding quality and might be better translated as "Kyork". Even when the birds are calling constantly they are very difficult to see for the voice has a ventriloquial quality. They are extremely wary - the slightest movement sends them scurrying into the underbrush. We succeeded in seeing one male calling from a Douglas fir stump, the chestnut flanks, and long plume falling over the back were very conspicuous.

July and early August are apparently the best months for observing this elusive bird. At this time of year the chicks are unable to fly and the parent bird is protecting the brood. We observed three separate broods in early August and in all three cases only one parent bird was present.

In the vicinity of Munn Road the ranges of the mountain quail and California quail overlap; broods of both species were seen within a few hundred yards of each other.

A SMALL CONTRIBUTION TO THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

By Tom Briggs

The dawn wasn't too promising so piled all my "dirty weather" duds into the car. Pleased to say they were never used. Picked up my Junior partners and proceeded to Christmas Hill, a spot I knew nothing about. It is one of the most beautiful pieces of natural property over which I ever trespassed. Guess the birds didn't know it was wonderful habitat. Got a couple of chickadees and golden-crowned kinglets.

Pressed on to the rendezvous with the other members in our group, birding as we went. Didn't set any records though. As we all met, birds seemed to pour out from all directions. So we combed an adjacent hedge-bound meadow, to pick up a few species in good numbers, including many red-wing blackbirds. Pleased about this. Don't think one was recorded in the Victoria count last year.

Did Panama Flats quite thoroughly. Don't think the ducks were quite as numerous as in previous years. Did get many more red-wing blackbirds and saw a Cooper hawk carrying a quail. It landed on a fence to let me get a good look at it. Never cease to be amazed at their strength. Seemed to me the quail was nearly as heavy as the hawk.

Pressed on to a good hawthorne jungle to get quite a good count of robins and waxwings. From here it was Swan Lake. Had about 500 baldpates nearby last year but even with enthusiasm we could only make it 100 this year. The Lake was dead, birdily speaking. Got a few species in skimpy numbers. So many of our local lakes seem to be quiet this winter.

As dusk was closing in we noticed a good concentration of birds across the Lake settling in to some trees. Against the red evening sky they could have been any robin-size bird. We doubled back to investigate, winding up right in their midst. They were roosting robins. As we were leaving we heard and saw a commotion in a tree nearby. Many pheasants had chosen this tree in which to roost. As we watched many more came in. A most interesting note upon which to close a perfect day.

Was very pleased to have a couple of Juniors along in our group. They were Gerry Walker and Dave Grey. They were most helpful, especially Gerry who was stuck with the tallying job as we called the birds. So thank you Juniors for helping! Thanks to everyone who turned out. You did a good job!

PARK TOUR

by Freeman King

Sunday afternoon February 12th some fifteen members of the Society made a tour around some of the trails in Francis Park. It was a blustery day on the outside, yet in among the trees it was pleasant.

Going in over trail Number Four we saw some of the largest trees in the park, as well as an old stump with a block of cedar on the top that had been there for at least seventy years. The block was covered with moss and looked like an evergreen mail-box. This relic has been fastened to the stump to prevent someone destroying the unique sight. The lack of undergrowth in some places makes it an ideal picnic spot when the hot summer comes.

The limestone cave on the west side of the park was explored. The cave extends about ten feet back into the hillside and drops down several feet. In it one could sit upright and be in good shelter against a bad storm.

Branching off from Number Four to Trail Three, we went down to where the stream runs along the boundary, and where the alder groves are mingled with old maples which are covered with moss to the crowns. In a snag birds have worked a hole that is about fifteen inches long and close to six inches deep. Close by there is an old red cedar that has been burnt out at the base a number of times. It is about ten feet through, and now it is like a miniature shelter.

The site of the future nature house and picnic grounds was pointed out, and plans were discussed concerning a clean-up bee for the place where the old house once stood.

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD

Since some time in December a hummingbird has been reported several times from the Cadboro Bay area, and it was assumed it was a wintering rufous. However no bird watcher had caught sight of it until last week-end, when it was seen by Bob Mackenzie-Grieve in his garden. Bob, a very sure and cautious bird watcher, positively identified it as Anna's hummingbird. It was a male, and its size and colouring precluded it from being any other species. It will be remembered one of these birds spent most of the summer in John Palmer's fuchsia garden in 1957 and again in 1958. Mr. Palmer also reports that an Anna's hummer showed up for a few days in each of the following years but in each instance was apparently driven off by rufous hummingbirds.

BEACON HILL

by J. M. Barnett

"Death, life and happiness are in the story of Beacon Hill. On these headlands where an ancient race once buried their dead, early settlers erected beacons to guide mariners past dangerous Brotchie Ledge. Here too, ever since Victoria was founded in 1843, people have gathered to enjoy sports and a vista of timeless appeal."

So reads the plaque along Dallas Road.

While today many of our members do not go there to enjoy sports, in our walks around the hill and its adjoining parklands we do enjoy the "timeless appeal" of the rich flora and fauna so abundant there.

Because of the mild climate enjoyed in this part of our country, flowers bloom all twelve months, and spring commences with the turn of the year. In January crocuses display their golden blooms on the lawns and robins start tuning up for their persistent serenades which will come later.

During the cold days the sheltered ponds are the most interesting places to visit, for here ducks of a dozen species come to feed and rest, away from the frozen wastes of their breeding grounds.

Where else in Canada could you hope to get close enough to these wild creatures to examine and admire - even without binoculars - the beautiful colours and designs which are woven into their plumage by the Great Architect of the Universe?

Dr. R. M. Saunders, an enthusiastic ornithologist who once saw a male shoveller duck at close quarters, wrote in his book "Flashing Wings": "Never had I a chance to examine a fine male so closely. The strongly contrasted pattern of black, white, tawny, red and green made a vivid picture. But the colour of the head was puzzling to the extreme. For the sun struck it at different angles from moment to moment causing it to flash green and scarlet, maroon, purple, blue and black, with a confusing yet entertaining iridescence"

We wonder how many have had this exciting experience. Yet it is possible here at Beacon Hill Park.

Here you may see the male hooded merganser which few birds surpass in attractiveness, or the handsome vivacious little bufflehead. Canvasbacks, exclusively a North

American species of duck, and conceded to be the fastest flier among them, are usually to be found on large bodies of water. But here they come to the ponds where you may admire "their broad flat bodies wrapped in pencilled snow".

Even the Beau Brummel of the paddlers - the wood duck, may be seen here. He is a shy bird and loves to stay near the green laurels which overhang the ponds. Examine him in these surroundings and you may agree that "the resplendent, iridescent plumage of this bird with its combination of delicately graduated vermiculations offset by bold dashes of white against the rich dark background, reproduces the changing colours of the water reflecting sun, sky and foliage".

We are prone to give little thought to the greedy gulls which appear to be all alike, yet if we examine them closely whenever we visit the Park we would be apt to recognize five species, each with some little difference which would establish its identity.

The first greens to appear in the thickets around Lover's Lane are the leaves of the Indian plum, which, before they are full size, send out delicate tassels of white flowers from their midst. And to welcome the calendar opening of spring what could be so spectacular and colourful as the red flowering currant, with its drooping clusters of flowers which so attract the bright rusty rufous hummingbirds, their throats ablaze with fiery red.

When the last of the daffodils have vanished from the lawns in front of the hill, you will notice patches of blue in the grass, which are the beautiful flowers of the camas. Not so evident at this time among the grasses which are rapidly growing tall, is a dwarf lupine with small deep blue and white flowers, and round fingered leaves about the size of a quarter. Later, patches of creamy white take the place of the blue, to proclaim the presence of death camas - horrible name for a beautiful delicate flower!

Music has a universal appeal and Victorians show their appreciation of good music by the crowds which attend the Sunday concerts at the Park. But we personally think that no music is sweeter than the songs of the western meadowlarks given daily, all day, around the front of the hill. Here is not a collection of persons and instruments following the bars of written music to produce harmonious sounds, but an individual, pouring out his own soul in the joy of living and loving. Perched on top of a tree, showing

his golden vest to all observers, the meadowlark serenades his mate with full, rich, bubbling music.

With the approach of the warm days, the wild roses paint the landscape with pink, and on one occasion near the cliffs we stood and listened to a song sparrow giving his renditions in a bower of roses - one of the prettiest stage settings a singer ever had. As we saw him in the same spot on several days we felt sure he had a family tucked away somewhere below him in the security of the thorny tangle.

We feel drawn closer to nature when we get intimate glimpses of her creatures as we did one day when we stood, not fifteen feet from a chipping sparrow as he danced around and around fluffing his feathers in evident enjoyment of the spray from a lawn sprinkler. And on another day when we went to the humus pile after it had been soaked and found a small pool of water which was a community bath in which robins, blackbirds, sparrows, purple finches and a pair of siskins took turns. It reminded us of the wading pool at the opposite side of the path where young children love to splash around. This same humus pile in late summer is a favorite spot of ours when the sinking sun is bathing it with the last rays of the day. The rotting leaves and grass cuttings are food for numerous worms and insects which in turn provide food for birds. Here robins and blackbirds, sparrows and quail bring their young for the evening meal, while overhead, darting around in intricate and everchanging patterns, the violet-green and barn swallows are busy in the same pursuit. A very good spot to study some ecology.

After sundown the place to visit in the Park is the waterfront where the trees and thick masses of bushes are the roosting places of literally thousands of birds, - robins, redwings, Brewer blackbirds, starlings and sparrows come here in flocks and just before darkness descends, the noise of their chatter has to be heard to be believed.

With the first chilling frosts in the northern regions the migrants once again return to take up residence in a more temperate climate, and again the cycle of the year is complete.

If you want to see living pictures splashed with colour and activated with life; if you want to see beauty and enjoy associating with nature, - follow the birds to Beacon Hill Park.

BLOOD ON THE SNOW

by Frank L. Beebe (Conclusion)

Predators hunt because they have to. The sensing of the nearness of prey, by sight, smell or hearing is the initial stimulus; the predator follows. The moment the hunted animal senses the presence of the predator and attempts to run or fly away, that action then excites the predator to exert itself to the utmost and chase, and if it catches it kills. That is the essence of predation. The kill, or the escape of the quarry completes the action. If the prey is killed it may be eaten or it may not. That is an entirely different matter. Within this basic pattern are variations in detail to infinity, of course.

The urge to hunt does not change much over the year, and the predators hunt just as persistently when they are not feeding mates or young as when they are. As to the interpretation of the spirit in which this hunting is done, that is often in the viewpoint of the observer and can be seen in any way you choose. A goshawk in a violent encounter with a big pheasant looks absolutely satanic. I suspect that the wild terrifying aspect of many of the predators, particularly some of the large cats and the larger raptors is a real physiological aid in overcoming large prey. The weasels and ferrets have a similar furious manner and evil look to them. I think that this is in reality a sort of "horror mask", the real function of which is to frighten the victim half to death and inhibit any tendency it may have to fight back. If one can look past this mask the impression of the spirit in which they hunt then appears very little different from that so easily observable in a hunting dog, which obviously goes hunting for the sheer enjoyment of it, for the keen, high excitement and stimulation of the chase itself.

While at first glance this excess of hunting energy appears wasteful, it seems to me that it would have a highly selective thinning action on the prey species, and it would certainly tend to keep the predator itself in very high condition. The factor that enters here is that for a predator to be able to kill in excess of its own food requirements presupposes either a sufficient abundance of prey that some of them repeatedly expose themselves to attack, or a set of conditions that forces crowding of large numbers of prey into a small area with consequent exposure to attack. High abundance of prey creates opportunity by pushing some of the excess population into exposed situations. This is real

abundance, and "excessive" killing under these conditions only serves to keep the prey population under control and provide food for other, less capable meat-eaters.

There are other times, when to human eyes, prey species seem most unfairly at the mercy of the predators. These situations occur during times of natural crisis or scarcity when large numbers of prey species are concentrated about some swiftly dwindling facility essential to life. It may be food, water, or cover, but it represents some particular lifesaving feature in an otherwise hostile world due to drought, snow, freezing, or famine. It is at these times, and in these situations when the excesses of the predator are most likely to arouse the wrath and hatred of the human observer. Humans feel pity for the poor, dying creatures caught in these natural calamities, and it appears to us that they are in quite enough trouble already without having to be set upon by the predators as well. In these situations predators kill increasingly in excess of their own needs as the situation worsens; they wax fat on a dwindling food resource and apparently do their utmost to wipe out that food resource. Yet even here, however much their depredations infuriate the human concept of fair play, they are serving the end of the species in trouble rather more than they are their own. By swiftly reducing the number of mammals or birds at the dwindling resource the presence of the predator increases the relative amount of that precious resource for those that are left. Moreover, inasmuch as under these conditions the predator invariably takes the less alert individuals the resource is left for the stronger. Finally the threatening presence of the predator in such a situation tends to break up these unnatural concentrations and scatter the surviving population much sooner than would otherwise be the case.

It is in these situations that the predators are most frequently in conflict with man, for mankind persistently sets up these conditions of unnatural concentrations. Aside from the keeping of herds and flocks of domestic animals and birds, we often provide food for wild animals and birds in periods of hardship and scarcity, and thereby concentrate large numbers in some pretty perilous and exposed places. We are inclined to take an extremely critical view of the predators moving into these most inviting conditions. We would do well to broaden our viewpoint and regard them as a very interesting, useful and dramatic part of the situation, not as a hateful interference.

When concentrated populations become much weakened from hunger, cold, or disease the rate of excess killing goes up, as opportunity permits, and in extreme circumstances a predator may wipe out an entrapped population at an accelerated rate, finishing the matter in a flurry of mass killing of the kind we have observed in confined flocks. This can happen under natural conditions only to a population that is pretty well doomed anyway. At this point, with nothing left to hunt, it must leave the area. It leaves behind considerable food for scavengers, for in all likelihood it has been feeding a growing population of scavengers for some time anyway. It leaves in high condition, capable of going a very long way with little to eat. If the hostile condition is widespread the predator too, may now starve.

Natural predation functions to keep the vegetation-eaters from wiping out their own food resource; it also works in such a way as to set a premium on functional well-being, speed, alertness, and good health of the prey. "Excessive" predation, aside from being the mechanism which permits the predators to reproduce, functions to keep the numbers of the predators very much lower than would be possible if they utilized all they killed. Under conditions of abundance one goshawk will do the control work of ten or more by killing ten times what it needs, as opportunity provides, yet put only a tenth of the pressure on a scattered residual population in time of stress.

Where is the evil in that? The evil is in the eye of the beholder; it is not in the predator, it is not in nature, it is only in the viewpoint of man.

JUNIOR JOTTINGS

by Freeman King

The displays put on by the juniors at the Provincial Museum during December were of an outstanding nature. Collections of rocks, plants, insects, fungi, and some mixtures of all of them, plus live rabbits, show a keen interest which the girls and boys have in the things of the great out-of-doors. Not only were there good collections, but the manner in which they had made cases and mounted the specimens were of high calibre.

Our expedition to the Goldstream Camp sites gave the children some good examples of the different strata of terrain that are encountered there from the stream bed at almost sea level to the nearly dry belt at the upper reaches

of the railway. Some specimens of an aphid which infests the hemlock were collected and passed on to the Dominion Pathological Laboratory.

The trip into Arbutus Hill off Munn Road showed some different country where it had been logged and burnt over. Now it is coming back with a heavy growth of arbutus which will be in time a "nurse crop" for the conifers.

The leader group made an expedition into Spectacle Lake and found two inches of snow on the ground and over two inches of ice on the lake. We cooked our dinners and explored the area, getting good and wet in the process.

The Essay Contest has been set up again. This time we have barred those who were previous winners thus giving the others a chance. Mr. Brian Tobin and Mr. Art Stott of the editorial staff of the Victoria Times have offered to judge the essays.

Mr. Gordon Clendenning and Mr. Dick Moyer have once again drawn up the schedule for the car pool, for which we are very grateful. Many thanks gentlemen.

EARLY BLOOMS

by M. C. Melburn

Flowering records of wild plants so far in 1961 are on the whole earlier than for any year in the last ten:

Miner's lettuce, Jan.1; spring gold, Jan.11; Hazel, Jan.12; bird cherry, Jan.19; salmonberry, Jan.21; stork's bill, Jan.22; manzanita, Jan.27; bitter cress, Feb.2; skunk cabbage, Feb.6; wild strawberry, Feb.5; red-flowering currant, Feb.5; easter lily and satin flower, Feb.14.

In addition to the above the following plants, some of them weeds, were found in bloom as early as Jan.1st: Hawksbeard; wall lettuce; perennial daisy; groundsel; avens; cat's ear; dandelion; common sow thistle; spurge; chickweed; broom, gorse, and jointed charlock.

Please telephone early records to -

M. C. Melburn,

EV 4-9052.

NOTICE OF MEETINGS1961

Friday &

AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR:

Saturday

At the Oak Bay Junior High School Auditorium

March 3rd

8 p.m. Both nights.

and 4th

Speaker: Chester P. Lyons.

Subject: "The Right to Live".

Mr. Lyons is one of our own members,
and a well-known speaker.

Saturday

ENTOMOLOGY:

March 11:

Dr. John A. Chapman will lead a FIELD TRIP
to Tom Francis Park. Meet at 9:30 a.m.
at Monterey Cafe.

Tuesday

GENERAL MEETING:

March 14:

At the Douglas Building Cafeteria on
Elliott St., at 8 p.m.A SOCIAL has been arranged when new
and not-so-new members may get acquainted.
Please be sure to come!

Saturday

BIRD FIELD TRIP:

March 18:

Meet at Monterey Cafe, 9:30 for Witty's
Lagoon. Bring Lunch.
D. Stirling and T. Briggs Co-leaders.

Saturday

BOTANY FIELD TRIP

March 25:

Meet at Monterey Cafe 1:30 for Thetis Park.
Bring Tea.
Leader: Miss M. C. Melburn.JUNIORS:The Juniors will meet each Saturday at the
Monterey Cafe at Hillside and Douglas Sts.,
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 will also arrange trips to
Tom Francis Park on Sundays on request.

Victoria Natural History Society

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Minister of Education

J. W. EASTHAM
Former Provincial Plant Pathologist

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