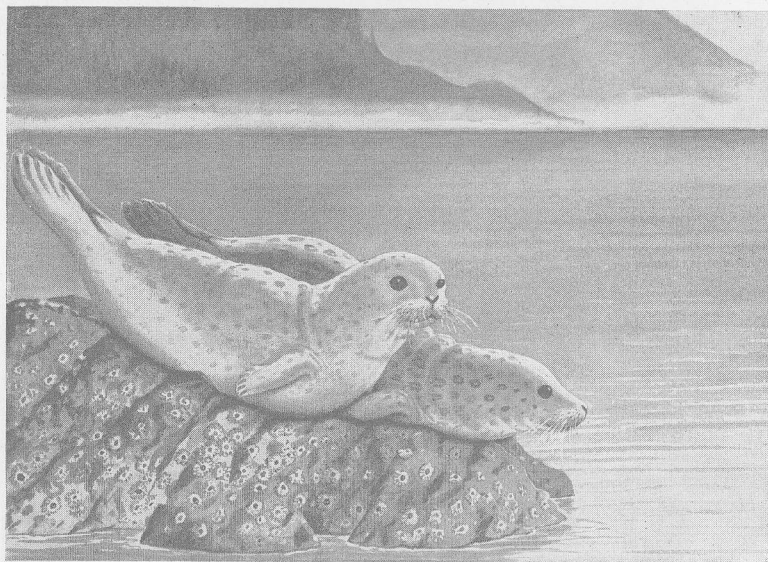


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Hair Seal

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HAIR SEAL

The hair seal is the most commonly seen marine mammal in littoral waters along the British Columbia coast. It occurs as well in many of the larger river systems draining into the Pacific, particularly in summer and fall when salmon are spawning. There is little doubt that in the fresh-water habitat salmon are eaten by these mammals. Whether salmon are eaten to the extent that the fishery is damaged however is questionable. In the marine habitat it has been revealed that such items as rockfish, lingcod, lampreys, shellfish and octopus are utilized rather than salmon, which are taken only occasionally. Nevertheless, the hair seal is unique among British Columbia predatory mammals, in being the only one upon which a bounty is still paid - though no one seems to know exactly why.

The hair seal is a highly specialized animal, very well adapted to the marine environment. The body is streamlined, the hind flippers are directed permanently backward, the eyes are large and efficient both under water and on the surface; the nostrils are situated dorsally so that a minimum of exposure is required to breathe. If the term intelligent can be applied to lower mammals, then it can be applied safely to this species, as anyone who has hunted it with gun or camera will tell you. It is quite capable of looking after itself, and despite hunting by man and killer whale is probably as plentiful as it ever was on this coast.

More detailed information on the hair seal may be found in Scheffer's, "Seals, Sea lions and Walruses" and in Provincial Museum Handbook No.11, "The Mammals of British Columbia."

C. J. G.

IN DEFENSE OF "USELESS" ANIMALS

by David Stirling.

At the January Natural History meeting the guest speaker, Mr. P. J. Bandy, Game Branch biologist, gave us an interesting lecture on game conservation in B. C.

There is no doubt that the Game Branch is doing a commendable job of game management, but the number of hunters is increasing every year while the habitat for wildlife is constantly shrinking. Since this trend will likely continue, sportsmen's organizations should take the lead in conservation education. Too often, unfortunately, their attitude is entirely negative and amounts to another "war" on the predators which are held solely responsible for the shortage of game. This attitude is encouraged by the gun and ammunition makers who exhort every "red-blooded" outdoors-man to "clean-up" these "varmints". There is a fixation in the minds of many people that game preservation means the killing of all carnivorous mammals or raptorial or fish-eating birds. Then, too, there is the not inconsequential number of irresponsible gunners, who, when legal game is not available, take out their frustrations on whatever wildlife is at hand. The banging of guns is exhilarating and one might as well aim at something living! These vandals of the shoot-first-identify-later school are a factor in the continued existence of the rare non-game species, particularly large birds.

A recent study in Michigan found there was a high illegal kill of does and fawns during a bucks only season. Game Department workers, on a grouse study, found the carcasses in the woods after the hunting season was over. The inference here is that illegally shot animals are not brought to the check-point.

Habitat is all important to the existence of any species; but in 19th century America year-round shooting by settlers, mass slaughter by market gunners to supply meat for construction camps and growing cities, and shooting by plume-hunters to supply the profitable fashion trade, brought several species to extinction and a number of others to the brink. With the passenger pigeon went the Eskimo curlew, great auk, and Carolina parakeet. Although their habitat has shrunk considerably in the past sixty years,

the egrets, brought to the verge of extinction by plume hunters, and the large waders, decimated by pot-hunters, have shown a remarkable increase since they have been given protection.

Finally, a word in defense of the wolf. The control of large predators is reasonable enough when they menace man or his domestic animals. Grizzlies and cougars can hardly co-exist with close human settlement, but the campaign to eliminate the wolf from the north by dropping poison baits by aircraft is difficult to understand. The wolf's role in the ungulate-predator relationship is more beneficial than detrimental; years ago there were many more wolves in America and infinitely more game animals. Anyone who has endured a winter in the far north knows that poisonous baits and the carcasses of poisoned animals are a menace to all omnivores and carnivores from gray jays and shrews to ravens and foxes. Let us hope that the day will never come when there is not a few wilderness areas left in British Columbia where we can hear the timber wolf howling his mournful serenade to the March moon.

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

At a meeting of the executive on March 13th the matter of dues for life membership was discussed, and, as a result, the following proposal has been prepared:

"That By-law 1 (d) which reads as follows "On the payment of twenty dollars (\$20.00) any regular member may become a life member" should now read "On the payment of twenty dollars (\$20.00) any regular member may become a life member, or on the payment of thirty dollars (\$30.00) any two adult members of one family may become life members."

This proposal will be presented at the next regular meeting, and will be voted upon at the following general meeting (May 9th).

A two-thirds majority of the members present is required to pass the amendment.

Any members who have old copies of this magazine and wish to dispose of them, would be conferring a favour to the Society by bringing them to one of our meetings and leaving them with the secretary or Treasurer. Many of these are distributed to the people attending the Audubon lectures. This is good advertising and brings in new members.

BIRDS OF LEISURE

by J.W. Winson

Birds have been admired in many ways and for many traits, but few have extolled their graceful manner of doing nothing. The swan on the water, the eagle on the crag or tree-top, the gull on the mast or rock, and the owl in the tree-crotch have been noticed, usually to mention the prideful pose of the one, the patience or the contemplative wisdom of the other, when in simple fact they were resting, idling, passing time until internal suggestions started them food hunting.

Smaller birds are more active, but not of necessity; most of it is just killing time actively, for these feathered philosophers know adequately what man is now learning forcefully and fearfully, how to enjoy peaceably the good hours of light.

For the few hours of nest-building and the few weeks of brood-rearing they work almost continuously, but not exhaustively, for food is plentiful. A little jealous hustling and fighting over mate or territory, and the rest of the year is serene.

Many do not nest at all, but congregate in indolent flocks, ready at call if any one is wanted to substitute for mate or parent. As far as can be observed, mating is permanent in most bird families, but should one be lost, a successor can be picked up immediately.

When the brood-rearing is over, all envy, jealousy and offense is forgotten. Hours are spent in preening feathers, in bathing and dusting, in just watching the world go by, in being content with watching - without interfering. After the brood has flown there is no property to guard; an alert eye to catch the passing morsel or to dodge the passing enemy, seems equipment enough.

No one bird is greedily gathering all the grubs and seeds into one pile, purposely making a scarcity for others, and consequently for himself. No group of birds combine to "control" the worms and the fruit, to guide it into channels of profit for themselves. For these innocents have no idea of the nature of "profit". The clever ones take advantage in better food or in easier ways of getting food which only serves to give them more leisure, their principal form of enjoyment. Some seem to plod methodically, as the woodpecker and the grouse, but they have always time to "stand and stare" or call to a neighbour. There is no anxiety lest another get before them or find better pecking.

They do not band to claim the earth as their own, marking boundaries that no others may cross. If temper rises to quarrelsomeness, it is an individual affair of little interest to the community. They do not send scouts abroad to spy out lands held by weaker or fewer birds, then follow with expeditions to conquer or exterminate them. If some prefer the distant scene, they go to it, and accept its conditions or return. The air, the waters, the land has no barrier they can not pass; it does not enter their minds to erect any.

In their wide-winged indolence and placid survey they see a principle, though perhaps unconsciously, similar to the one an ancient poet discovered: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." Therefore they are content as pensioners; nor do they usurp that ownership. Yet somehow theirs seem to be the most courteous attitude, expressed in a gratitude of graceful leisure.

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FOSSIL INSECTS IN THE MAKING

Last summer I came across several jack pines that had been girdled with an ax, apparently so that they would die and dry out in preparation for felling later. On the upper section of each girdle, where drops of clear gum or resin were thickest, great numbers of ants were found, dotting the tree like raisins. Most were dead and well imbedded in pitch; some were still alive judging by their feebly-moving appendages. Apparently they had become trapped in their excursions up and down the tree trunk, demonstrating one way in which insects may become permanently preserved to eventually become a fossil imbedded in amber.

G. C. C.

SPIDERS IN THE HOUSE

One of our members, Mrs. Pam Field of Osoyoos, takes a real interest in - shall we call it household entomology - and in a letter written to us this week, reports as follows:

"The insect life has not really got going outside as yet, but we have had lots to observe in the house... three kinds of spiders - the wolf spider, which I leave alone; the jumping spiders, which I watch, and occasionally put in the cupboards (under the impression that perhaps they might deter the moths) and the 'other' kinds, which include the ones with long legs that dash across the carpet when you are watching TV, and the squishy ones that you find behind the chest of drawers.... they are put outside, or vacuumed without a qualm. There are umpteen different kinds of ants, and I am waging war on them to the extent of filling up cracks and buying insecticide - none of which seems to make the slightest difference.

"The only unusual one we have in the house is something that I was told was an Assassin Bug - he is black and red in a 'startling modern pattern' and spends a great deal of time cleaning his antennae. We first got them four years ago, and I believe they came in a bale of hay or some slabwood; they are now very prolific in the vicinity of the stable, but this is the first time I was wintering them in the house. I was told they are very useful for getting rid of unwanted bugs, unspecified unwanted bugs, though. These spiders certainly throw a fit when they see one.

"There is a jumping spider near the end of our bed who I think is a lady, and who is evidently hunting for a husband because she is frightfully friendly to anything that comes near her, and will dance and wave her legs for the end of a bobby pin, or a finger, and nearly went dotty the other night when she caught sight of herself in a teaspoon! She leans over to one side, with one of her front legs in the air, wiggling her palps all the time. She only does it to one side for a finger, but was going from one side to the other when she met the teaspoon - she got faster and faster, then jumped, and of course, was completely let down when the reflection disappeared."

A. R. D.

THE MENACE OF BIRD WATCHING

One day, toward the end of February, we were walking over a field opposite the Patricia Bay Airport, in an endeavour to make an approximate count of the skylarks and pipits by flushing them, as at this time of the year they are reluctant to fly.

The larks rose a few at a time, some of them climbing and singing, others silent and dropping again to the ground. We then raised a short-eared owl, which flopped slowly into the air, to be immediately chased by a gull, which continued to harry it until they were both out of sight. The next bird we flushed was a snipe, which flew low and in its usual erratic fashion across the field. Suddenly it rose into the air and quickened its speed, and we then noticed it was being chased by a pigeon hawk. The snipe would dodge, fly vertically, make quick turns and use every trick to avoid being caught. Three times they circled the field. We watched closely, many times holding our breath as the hawk closed in, but the snipe finally make a quick dive to the ground and disappeared from sight, and we saw the hawk, empty of claw, rise and sit on a nearby tree. We had the impression that the hawk could have caught the snipe had it really wished to do so, as it would sometimes lag behind, then make a spurt, catching up with the snipe in a flash.

We do disturb the birds, not for their good, but to satisfy our curiosity. We will not promise to give up bird watching, but will exercise greater care, and also curb our inquisitiveness into their nesting behaviour.

A.R.D.

It is interesting to note that Victoria has produced two Audubon lecturers, Dr. Clifford Carl, who has been with them for some years, and Mr. C. P. Lyons, who gave his first Audubon lecture here on March 3rd and 4th. Mr. Lyons is now on his second tour, leaving on March 15th for several cities in California, Texas and Colorado.

SIGHT RECORDS OF UNUSUAL BIRDS SEEN INTHE VICTORIA AREA 1960 -

by D. Stirling

There may be some controversy about what is meant by an "unusual" bird. Some, such as the golden eagle, might be classed as regular rarities, as one or more of these birds are seen in the vicinity nearly every year. Most of the others are common birds in other areas of North America, but are rare visitors to Vancouver Island.

The following birds were positively identified by two or more observers:

<u>Species</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Observer</u>	<u>Location</u>
Rock wren	Jan.1	D. Webb	Cattle Point
(The last sighting of this bird which had been present in this area since September 1959)			
Slender-billed shearwater	Jan.7	Poynter-Morgans	Clover Point
White-throated sparrow	Jan.-Feb. Mar.-Apr. Oct.10	V.N.H.S. T & G Briggs "	Richmond Rd. Shelbourne St. "
Mockingbird	March	V.N.H.S.	Dallas Road
Cinnamon teal	April	"	Douglas Street swamp
Northern water thrush	Apr.24	"	Cowichan River
Solitary sandpiper	Apr.27	R.Stirling. D.Webb.	Douglas Street swamp
Western kingbird	May 13	The Stirlings	Colwood
Say's phoebe	May 14	V.N.H.S.	Kirby Creek
Barn owl	June-Oct.	"	Mt.Douglas Cross Road
Franklin gull	Aug.13	Poynter	Clover Point
Marbled godwit	Sept.Oct.	V.N.H.S.	Clover Point
Gadwall duck	Dec.26	Bell, Fryer	Beaver Lake
Slate-colored junco	Dec.23	The Briggs	Interurban Rd.
Dickcissel	Nov.-Dec.	V.N.H.S.	St. Patrick St.

THE SWALLOWS' RETURN

Well do we know that Victoria has the finest climate in Canada; mild and gentle winters and warm sunny summers. We know too that many birds are of the same opinion and spend the winter months here; also that birds from the hot and dry south come here in the summer to raise their young.

We didn't really expect though to find swallows here on the 25th of February, but it happened this year. Tommy Briggs had a telephone call from a lady who lives on the shore of Glen Lake reporting that she had seen swallows. This was on Saturday, the 25th, so on Sunday he went out there and found a small flock of between six and eight violet-green swallows.

Two years ago they were seen on the same lake on March 3rd, which was the earliest date recorded to that time. If this goes on, we may have to subscribe to the theory prevalent in Gilbert White's time (200 years ago) that some species of swallows hibernate during the winter months!

A good place to watch the migrating swallows is on Brookleigh Road, which skirts Elk Lake on the north. On March 14th this year they arrived there in hundreds, flying over the water in search of insects, and crowding all the telephone and light wires in the vicinity.

A.R.D.

APRIL BIRDS

This is the best month in the year to find the spring migrants from the south. Before the end of March we expect the arrival of the rufous hummingbirds, the white-crowned sparrows and the Audubon warblers, and the others come generally in the following order:

<u>April</u>	<u>April</u>
7th: Orange-crowned warbler	20th: Warbling vireo
8th: Solitary vireo	25th: House wren
11th: Townsend warbler	25th: Western flycatcher
15th: Myrtle warbler	27th: Savannah sparrow
	Yellow warbler
17th: Rough-winged swallow	Russet-back thrush
18th: Pipits	28th: Hermit thrush
	31st: McGillivray warbler
	Black-cap warbler
19th: Tree swallow	

These dates are approximate, and are based on recent records.

A.R.D.

A "BUG" HUNT IN THE RAIN

by Freeman King

A small group of "bug" hunters comprised of both adults and juniors went out to Francis Park in spite of the rain on March 11th.

Fortune smiled on us, for the sun made an attempt to shine through the cloud drift after we had got started.

Dr. John Chapman led us to the stream, and without any effort he showed us many wonderful creatures which live under the stones. Mayflies and stoneflies seemed to appear from nowhere. Turning over rotten logs and breaking off chunks of bark turned out to be most interesting, for there we found another world to see and wonder at.

Spiders, wood-bugs and many other little animals went into collecting bottles. Amongst the finds was a baby Pacific Coast newt, which just sat on our hands and blinked its eyes. A salamander appeared to be living with it, but his idea was different, as he wanted to be on the move. Centipedes and millepedes appeared among the sharply darting black beetles.

Some old stalks of the thimbleberry were found, each stalk having a gall on it where some insect had made a home for her new brood.

A short hunt over even a small area will show that there is a world around us and under us, if we will take the trouble to look. Each and every creature has its place in life, and if we try to understand their ways and habits, the better we will understand the great pattern of life itself.

JUNIOR JOTTINGS

by Freeman King

In spite of the extremely wet weather in February, the Juniors managed to get in some good field trips, as well as a meeting or two at the Provincial Museum, where slides were shown and instruction in bird and animal life given.

The trip to Mill Hill at Langford was interesting in that we found some early shooting stars in bloom, as well as spring gold, erithronium and saxifrage.

An expedition into the gravel pits at Keatings Cross Road showed us how erosion takes place, as well as indicating the different strata of sandstone and gravel that

were laid down many thousands of years ago. An interesting boulder of conglomerate was examined. I think it had a bit of about every kind of rock that is found on Vancouver Island in it. It was far harder set than any modern concrete.

The deputy leaders made a trip into Killarney Lake, where we explored the area and cooked our lunches. Water birds were plentiful on the lake, also some Canada geese. Large numbers of deer tracks were seen along the shore.

The leader group also spent a day at Francis Park erecting the new sign and clearing up an old fence that was torn down by a car going out of control along the road. As is our custom, we cooked our lunches. This group have become real experts in lighting a cooking fire in any kind of weather.

This group also attended the Audubon Lectures as ushers. The names of those appointed are: Nancy Chapman, Ann Proctor, Fran Murphy, Gerry Nelson, Trevor Gibbons and John Errington.

WILD FLOWER REPORT

Since February 14th the following wild plants have come into bloom:-

Western buttercup, shooting-star, early saxifrage, common mustard, buffalo-berry, bearberry, false-box, dead nettle, blue violet, red alder, three species of Montia, whitlow grass, colt's foot, sea blush, blue-eyed Mary, bleeding heart, white violet, large-leaved sandwort, grove-lover, little monkey flower, cream cups, yellow violet, red and evergreen huckleberry.

Will members please continue to phone in their early records to M. C. Melburn, Phone EV 4-9052.

The 1959-60 report of the Wildlife Service, which is a branch of the Department of National Resources, states that there are now in Canada 98 bird sanctuaries, which cover a total of six thousand, three hundred square miles.

NOTICE OF MEETINGS1961

Friday &amp;

Saturday,

Apr. 7th &amp; 8th:

AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR:

At the Oak Bay Junior High School Auditorium at 8 p.m. both nights.

Subject: "The New World Re-Discovered"

Speaker: Laurel Reynolds.

Saturday,

April 8th:

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

Tuesday:

April 11th:

GENERAL MEETING:

At the Douglas Building Cafeteria on Elliott St., at 8 p.m.

Speaker: Mr. York Edwards,

Chief of Research Section, Department

of Recreation and Conservation (Parks Branch) Illustrated.

Saturday:

April 15th:

BIRD FIELD TRIP:

Meet at Monterey Cafe at 9:30; bring lunch.

Co-Leaders: T. Briggs and D. Stirling.

Alternative meeting place is at 10 a.m.

by way of Island Hwy, to corner of Brock Rd. which is the 1st road on the right after passing Mill Stream Road.

Saturday,

April 22nd:

BOTANY FIELD TRIP:

Meet at Monterey Cafe 1:30 for John Dean Park. Bring Tea.

Leader: Miss M.C. Melburn.

JUNIORS 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. He hopes to have a CLEAN UP BEE one Sunday afternoon in April and date will be announced at General Meeting.



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