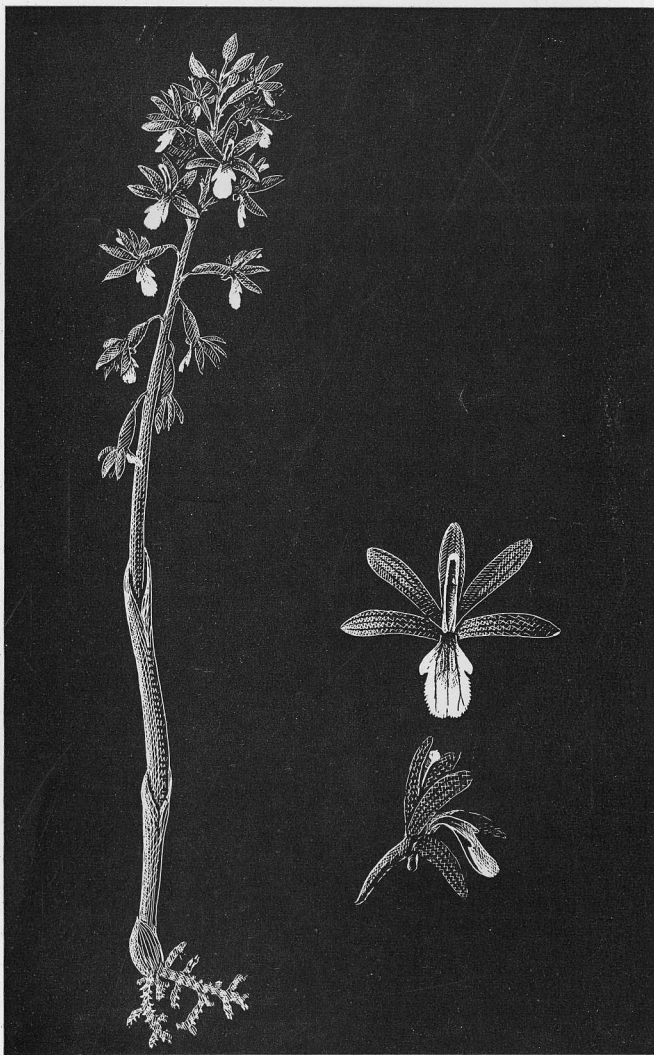


The
**VICTORIA
NATURALIST**

Vol. 17, No. 9.

May, 1961



Coral Root

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

Published by
THE VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Vol.17, No.9.

MAY 1961

CORAL-ROOT (CORALLORHIZA MERTENSIANA BONGARD)

Why borrow a name from a sea creature to describe a plant? Look at the illustration and you will see that the "root" structure of this plant does resemble a bit of coral rather than a normal root. However, its structure is highly suited to obtain food from decaying vegetation in the soil; this plant has no green pigment (chlorophyll) and therefore cannot make its own food as green plants do.

The pictured species is called Western Coral-root because it is the only distinctly western and northwestern species. Its other name is Merten's Coral-root, after the Botanist Mertens. You will have plenty of time to look for it during its flowering season which runs from June to early August.

In the meantime there will be much earlier opportunities to renew acquaintance with its better-known relatives, Striped Coral-root and Spotted Coral-root which in this vicinity begin flowering in April and May.

All three species have small but beautiful orchid-type flowers which in due time are followed by very attractive seed capsules. Make a note to look for these also to study and admire but not to pick. Any coral-root flower has two narrow petals and a third much wider one called the "lip". In the striped species sepals and petals are marked each with three madder-purple stripes; in the spotted, the "lip" is white with purplish spots; while the "lip" of the Western Coral-root is usually rather reddish purple without spots.

These are all fairly conspicuous plants, up to 20 inches tall, favouring rich humus soil in rather moist shady locations on Vancouver Island as well as on the mainland.

For further details of habitat and distribution and for descriptions of all other British Columbia members of the Orchidaceae Family consult Handbook No.16 written by Dr. A. F. Szczawinski and illustrated by Frank Beebe for the Provincial Museum series.

M. C. Melburn.

THE VALLEY OF THE KOKSILAH

by Gail Moyer (age 17)

We left the car at Burnt Bridge, walked over the newer span across the Koksilah and headed down an old logging road.

Gradually, the evidence of the human race and civilization faded into the clean, peaceful wilderness. A small creek, which had at sometime grown to a raging river and washed out its bridge leaving a small yawning gulley, helped to dissuade lazy people from venturing further. However, being brave and experienced souls we finally conquered the creek, and set forth along the abandoned road.

A short distance ahead we came to Wild Deer Creek. The sound of a waterfall lured us off the trail and up a crest covered with Prince's Pine. Up on the rise, we looked down on the picturesque twin falls. As it moved with the breeze, the delicate Maiden Hair Fern growing along the mossy banks added a fairy-like touch to the scene. Eventually drawing ourselves away from this beautiful place we once again set forth down the road. A faint trail to the right started a long hike to Wild Deer Lake. However we had taken that trail before so we kept straight ahead. The sound of a flicker drumming for his mate became clearer as we travelled along. After a long search we finally spotted him near the top of an old snag.

We followed a small branch of the road down to the Koksilah. Finally we reached the river after skirting a sparse patch of Stinging Nettles. In the soft sand at the river's edge there were Colt's Foot and Yellow Violets in bloom. Upstream we noticed a group of Erythronium or Easter lilies struggling for existence, and not yet in bloom. Along the river bank there were many Deer tracks leading to favourite water holes.

We struck back towards the old road, sending clouds of yellow pollen drifting into the air everytime we brushed the Alder catkins. A shy lizard scurried over a rock and disappeared as swiftly as he had come.

After travelling on further we again branched down to the river. This time we discovered an old log cabin which had been abandoned many years before. Initials and dates had been carved in the door telling of other passers-by who had come upon this lonely shack. After exploring around this portion of the river, we headed in the direction of the car, weary but happy, having all enjoyed our hike.

The music of hidden woodland birds followed us as we walked away from the peaceful forest.

1960 Bird Census, Courtenay to Comox

Common Loon	- - -	6	Red Br. Merganser	- - -	19
Pacific Loon	- - -	10	Bald Eagle	- - - - -	3
Redthroated Loon	- - - -	7	Pheasant	- - - - -	16
Horned Grebe	- - - -	20	Coot	- - - - -	27
Western Grebe	- - - -	7	Kildeer	- - - - -	1
Holboells Grebe	- - -	9	Wilson snipe	- - - - -	1
Dbl. Cr. Cormorant	- -	5	Spotted Sandpiper	- - -	1
Bairds Cormorant	- - -	1	Glaucous Wng. Gull	- - -	360
Heron	- - - - -	2	Short Billed Gull	- - -	5
Trumpeter Swan	- - - -	2	Calif. Murre	- - - - -	4
Black Brant	- - - -	7	Belted Kingfisher	- - -	8
Mallard	- - - - -	132	Flicker	- - - - -	6
Baldpate	- - - - -	75	Harris Woodpecker	- - -	1
Pintail	- - - - -	2	Downy Woodpecker	- - - -	1
Green Winged Teal	- -	1	Steller Jay	- - - - -	5
Shoveller	- - - - -	1	Raven	- - - - -	4
Canvass Back	- - - -	4	Western Crow	- - - - -	1
Greater Scaup	- - -	65	N. Western Crow	- - - -	30
Lesser Scaup	- - - -	4	Chickadee	- - - - -	10
Am. Golden Eye	- - -	76	Winter Wren	- - - - -	1
Barrow Golden Eye	- -	9	Bewick Wren	- - - - -	8
Buffle Head	- - - -	82	Golden Cr. Kinglet	- - -	15
Old Squaw	- - - - -	26	Meadowlark	- - - - -	19
Harlequin	- - - - -	3	Brewers Blackbird	- -	60
White Winged Scoter	-	850	Siskin	- - - - -	12
Surf Scoter	- - - -	1000	Towhee	- - - - -	12
Am. Scoter	- - - - -	59	Oregon Junco	- - - - -	24
Hooded Merganser	- -	12	Fox Sparrow	- - - - -	2
Am. Merganser	- - - -	8	Song Sparrow	- - - - -	32

58 Species

Lewis Park, via Dyke Road to Comox and head of Comox Bay, including Radford's swamp (where swans were seen)
8:20 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Clear and sunny. Observers Mrs. B. Westerborg and David Guthrie - December 26, 1960.

As the Canadian Field Naturalist magazine has ceased publication of Christmas Bird Counts, Mr. Theed Pearse asked if the above could be included in this magazine. For forty consecutive years Mr. Pearse has taken a Christmas Bird Census in the Courtenay-Comox area.

WILD PLANT REPORT

So many species have come into flower since the last report that only a partial list can be included in this number of *The Naturalist*:-

Trillium, oregon grape (bearberry), fringe-cup, toothwort, common gooseberry, wild ginger, Nuttall's violet, broad-leaved maple, calypso, yellow rocket, trailing blackberry, sweet gale, sanicle, lesser paint-brush, meadow-foam, red maids, lady's mantle, chocolate lily, balsam-root, few-flowered shooting-star, western flowering dogwood, blue-and-white lupine, tower mustard, garry oak, bedstraw, red elderberry, spotted coral-root, black raspberry, ground-ivy, meadow rue, false solomon's seal, star-flowered solomon's seal, sweet cicely, death camas, shepherd's cress, Lyall's anemone, cancer-root, striped coral-root, larkspur, perennial clover and sand spurrey.

The most interesting of these is meadow-foam (*Limnanthes macounii*) a small low-growing annual, decidedly uncommon if not rare. It has deeply-lobed leaves and flower parts in fours, the petals being creamy white and only 3 to 4 mm long. Four plants which I found in the Uplands in 1958 disappeared, and no more were observed there until April 2 of this year, when several dozen plants were located a few yards from the 1958 location.

Of this species Leroy Abrams (*Illustrated Flora of the Pacific States*, 1951) says "This unique species is known only from the type locality on Vancouver Island, British Columbia."

M. C. Melburn.

WORMS ON TREES

A fisherman requiring worms for bait would never think of climbing a tree to obtain them. About twenty years ago a poplar tree was felled and in a decaying limb crotch, thirty feet above the tree base, were several worms. The incident aroused speculation as to how they got there.

Two weeks ago another poplar had to be felled, as it leaned dangerously toward the house and showed signs of decay. Being forty years old it had reached a height of 120 feet with a butt diameter of 34 inches. A broad limb crotch at a height of forty feet was much decayed; in the recess were fourteen worms, ranging from one inch to two and a half inches with ringed bodies; they were evidently quite content to live in the rotten wood and slimy surroundings.

Possibly someone has the answer to their presence in the rotting crotch of the Aspen Poplar. The tree was heavily coated with moss on the north side and the bark rough with deep furrows. Rotting at the crotch could be the result of fallen leaves lodging there, annually, and decaying. On the assumption that a mountaineering worm had wriggled its way upward the bark was carefully examined but no trace of worm.

The only conclusion the writer can put forth is that of a bird, having built a nest in the crotch of the tree, dropped a worm when feeding its young and the fortunate wriggler wriggled under the nest to give birth to the brood we found, though no nest was seen when the tree was felled: it probably rotted and made compost in the crotch. Two squirrels noisily objected to the felling of their favourite tree.

W. MacKay Draycot

NATURAL HISTORY MAGAZINES

The Vancouver Natural History Society is considering the publication of a magazine to cover natural history observations in British Columbia, and request the assistance of all societies and amateur naturalists in the Province.

They also suggest, and we quote: "It would seem desirable to have the publication (sponsored) by an organization such as the long considered Federation of B.C. Naturalists, in order that its continuing success could be assured."

At the present time, there are three societies in B.C. devoted to natural history, viz. the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club, (which issues an annual magazine) the Vancouver society and our own.

Any further information we obtain on this matter will be published.

For many years there had been an organization in Victoria called the Natural History Society of British Columbia, but this society had faded out some time before the second world war, but in March 1944 the present society was formed and the next month the first 'Victoria Naturalist' was published, chiefly by the efforts of Archdeacon Robert Connell, Dr. Clifford Carl, Mr. A.L. Meugens, Geo. Hardy, Mr. J. A. Cunningham, and other naturalists. It started with eight pages, soon increasing to twelve, and had, at the close of its first year, one hundred single and twenty family members, the dues being the same as at present. (continued on page 28)

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

FINANCIAL STATEMENT JUNE 1st 1960 to MAY 31st 1961

INCOME:

Bank balance from previous year	- - - - -	\$ 2,129.06
Membership dues	- - - - -	500.78
Bank Interest	- - - - -	74.00
Juniors: refund camp grant	- - - - -	10.50
Natural History Society of British Columbia	- -	41.37
Bird check lists sold	- - - - -	7.50
Tax remission	- - - - -	103.46
Transferred from Audubon Account	- - - - -	960.87
Outstanding cheques	- - - - -	73.62
		<hr/>
		\$ 3,901.16
		<hr/> <hr/>

EXPENDITURES:

Monks' Multigraph Letter Service; Printing and mailing "The Naturalist"	- - - - -	\$ 536.11
Stationery	- - - - -	27.82
Donations	- - - - -	32.35
Registrar of Companies	- - - - -	.50
Subscriptions	- - - - -	43.14
Donation, Thomas Francis Park	- - - - -	221.93
Juniors	- - - - -	94.91
Conservation Council	- - - - -	5.00
Cost of meetings	- - - - -	67.62
Postage	- - - - -	11.00
Maintenance of equipment	- - - - -	11.06
Bank Balance, April 19th	- - - - -	2,849.72
		<hr/>
		\$ 3,901.16
		<hr/> <hr/>

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

AUDUBON ACCOUNT

FINANCIAL STATEMENT June 1st 1960 to MAY 31st 1961

INCOME:

Receipts from ten lectures	- - - - -	\$3,092.30
		<hr/> <hr/>

EXPENDITURES:

Amusement Tax	- - - - -	\$ 275.48
Advertising	- - - - -	102.01
Rent of School Auditorium	- - - - -	600.00
Contract payment to National Audubon Society	- -	1,094.31
Transferred to Victoria Natural History Account	- - - - -	960.87
Stationery and Printing	- - - - -	59.63
		<hr/>
		\$3,092.30
		<hr/> <hr/>

TREASURER'S REPORT

The net profit of the ten lectures was \$960.87. Last season our contract called for half of the net profit being turned over to the National Audubon Society, our net profit for that season therefore, being \$463.79.

The net balance at the bank is now \$2,776.10, as against \$2,129.06 on our last balance sheet, an increase of \$647.04.

Our membership now stands at 140 single, 60 family and 50 juniors. In addition, about 43 juniors are included in the family memberships.

Respectfully submitted,

Eleanore Davidson
Treasurer.

Audited and found correct: April 19, 1961

(signed) Stan Wakeford.

Continued from page 25:

NATURAL HISTORY MAGAZINES

Then, as now, its interests are mainly devoted to the natural history of the southern part of Vancouver Island. We think we can safely assure our members that the existence of another natural history magazine will in no way affect the continuance of 'The Victoria Naturalist'.

A.R.D.

THE PARASOL TREE

by Freeman King

I wonder how many people have noticed the flowering Horse-chestnut tree that is so plentiful in Victoria?

Look at it in early spring when the new leaves are coming out. They look like beautiful parasols with their dainty veined markings on the leaves. They seem to say, "Well, it is time for me to put up the shade against the bright sunlight".

The tiny spikes of the flower clusters are now forming. Soon they will be standing out like cream-coloured candles. The sweet-scented perfume sends out the call to all bees and other winged insects to come along and help pollinate them, that its life may go on.

By this time the leaves are out full, and cover the entire tree, making it a welcome place for a rest and shelter from the hot sun of midsummer.

As time moves on, the little green and spiked husks protecting the now forming nuts stand out like small green marbles. As fall approaches, these spiky husks open to allow the reddish-brown shiny nut to fall out. These are most fascinating to almost everyone, bringing back memories of those days gone by, when they played "konkers". To the present day boy they are still something to look for, and perhaps to play the age-old game with.

As the palmate leaves turn to a golden brown and come spiralling down, we know that autumn is at hand.

Even in the winter, when the branches stand out in stark contrast against the overcast sky, there is something majestic about this wonderfully shaped tree.

Take a look at the twigs and the branches, and at every joint you will see what looks like the imprint of a horse-

shoe, even showing the nail holes.

Origin of this tree is Greece, but it has been introduced in many countries including Canada.

THE SKYLARKS

Since the skylarks were established at Victoria about fifty-three years ago they have slowly increased both their range and their numbers. For a long time after the few birds were released near what is now the Victoria University Campus, they stayed right around there, but now they can be found in many of the fields as far north as Sidney.

A few of the skylarks have even gone further afield, as they have been reported near the old race track at Colwood, and, at one of our bird group meetings, one was found at the Esquimalt Lagoon. In addition to this three years ago a farmer reported he had seen and heard them on his farm in the Cobble Hill district. Alan Poynter investigated this report last year and found the skylarks. They can now be seen at several places on Kilmalu and Telegraph Roads. In the Audubon Field Notes for last fall one was reported on San Juan Island, which was quite possibly a migrant from this area, as we know of no others. Last year a farmer on Salt Spring Island advised he had seen at least one bird there, but although this report has been investigated, it has not yet been confirmed.

This extension of territory is undoubtedly partly due to a series of mild winters, with very little snow. A partial census carried out last year by Yorke Edwards and David Stirling indicated that the probable numbers on the Saanich peninsula is in the neighbour-hood of three hundred birds.

A.R.D.

Mrs. Grace Bell reports a white-crowned sparrow returning to her garden for the third consecutive year, it having been banded in the spring of 1959.

Alan Poynter reports the barn owl is back in its old haunts on Braefoot Road.

JUNIOR JOTTINGS

by Freeman King

The junior branch have been very active during the past month. The younger section made a trip to Blinkhorn Lake, Metchosin, where they saw a flock of eight turkey buzzards flying over Twin Hills.

An exploration of the gravel pits at Keatings showed us the different layers of gravel and sand that had been laid down many aeons ago. One particular conglomerate rock was inspected. This was again examined by a small group of the intermediates under Mr. A. H. Marrion, who gave us some valuable information how this type of rock was formed, and approximately where the different rocks that formed the large boulder came from.

A trip into John Dean Park at Mount Newton was exciting, for there we found some pink erithroniums growing in a low glade.

An excursion to Pike Lake into the park-like country, showed us a different type of terrain, with its rolling cleared hills and large trees in a section that had been left uncut.

The expedition to Cowichan Lake with 17 members of the intermediate group with Dr. John Chapman leading was more than a success. The experiments being carried out there by the Research Division of the B. C. Forest Service was explained to us by Mr. D. Robinson, the ranger in charge. It was all more than worth while. We also went into the Robertson River area where we cooked lunches and again found pink easter lilies. Some of the fishermen members just drooled when looking down into the river from the bridge saw several steelheads about eighteen inches long. We also visited a shale bed and dug for fossils, and I think almost everyone got a specimen.

The plans for the summer camp are under way, and it is hoped that we will be going to Miracle Beach for a week during the latter part of July.

The junior section will carry on during the summer with regular weekly meetings. Parents of this branch are asked to set aside the 13th of May to take part in the Society's annual outing, which will be at Blinkhorn Lake on Kangaroo Road, Metchosin.

NOTICE OF MEETINGS

1961

Tuesday
May 9th

ANNUAL MEETING: At the Douglas Building Cafeteria on Elliot Street at 8 p.m. Election of Officers and other business only.

Saturday
May 13th

COMBINED FIELD TRIP: A meeting of all groups will be held at Blinkhorn Lake on Kangaroo Rd. Meet either at Monterey Cafe at 9 a.m., or at Picnic Site at 9:45 a.m. All persons welcome. Bring lunch. If you can supply transportation or need same, telephone Mr. Tom Briggs at GR 8-4145. Further details will be given at the May Annual Meeting.

Saturday
May 20th

ENTOMOLOGY FIELD TRIP: Meet at the Monterey Cafe at 9:30 a.m. for Thomas Francis Park. Leader: Dr. John A. Chapman.

Saturday
May 27th

BOTANY FIELD TRIP: An all day trip to Cowichan. Meet at Monterey Cafe at 9:30 a.m. Bring lunch. Leader: Miss M. C. Melburn.

Saturday
June 3rd

GEOLOGY FIELD TRIP: The Sooke Sediments at Whiffen Spit. Leave Monterey Cafe at 12:30 p.m. Low tide is at 11:38 a.m. Take tea. Further details given at the May Meeting. Leader: Mr. A. H. Marrion.

Saturday
June 10th

BIRD FIELD TRIP: To Thomas Francis Park. Leave Monterey Cafe at 9:30 a.m. or at Park at 10 a.m. Co-Leaders: T. Briggs and D. Stirling.

Saturday
June 24th

BOTANY FIELD TRIP: Island View Beach and vicinity. Leave the Monterey Cafe at 1:30 p.m. Bring tea. Leader: Miss M. C. Melburn.

Saturday
July 8th

BIRD FIELD TRIP: By launch around Bare Island and ashore on Sidney Island. Meet at Monterey Cafe at 9 a.m., or at Deep Cove Wharf at 10 a.m. For reservations phone T. Briggs at GR 8-4145. All day trip. Bring lunch.

(continued next page)

NOTICE OF MEETINGSContinued:

1961

- Saturday BOTANY FIELD TRIP: Sooke District All Day Trip.
 July 22nd Meet at Monterey Cafe at 9:30 a.m. Bring lunch.
 Leader: Miss M. C. Melburn.
- Saturday BIRD FIELD TRIP: By launch to Princess Margaret
 Aug. 12th Island. Meet at Monterey Cafe at 9 a.m., or at
 Deep Cove Wharf at 10 a.m. All day trip.
 Bring lunch. For reservations phone T. Briggs
 at GR 8-4145.
- Saturday A BIRD FIELD TRIP is being planned, probably
 Sept. 9th to Discovery Island. Details will be published
 in the September magazine.

JUNIORS continue to 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 will also arrange trips to the Thomas Francis Park
 on Sundays on request.

THOSE ORNERY ORNITHOLOGISTS

Those bird watchers are a very odd lot.
 I've heard it said they should be shot.

Isn't it true they are always prone
 To doubt all identifications but their own?

It is also true they will persist
 In seeing birds that don't exist.

But you will agree that what is worst
 They always try and find the 'first'.

They know that they are always right,
 And can name all birds at one quick sight.

So forgive them do,
 As they would you.

They know no better,
 But aren't they clever?

A.R.D.

Victoria Natural History Society

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