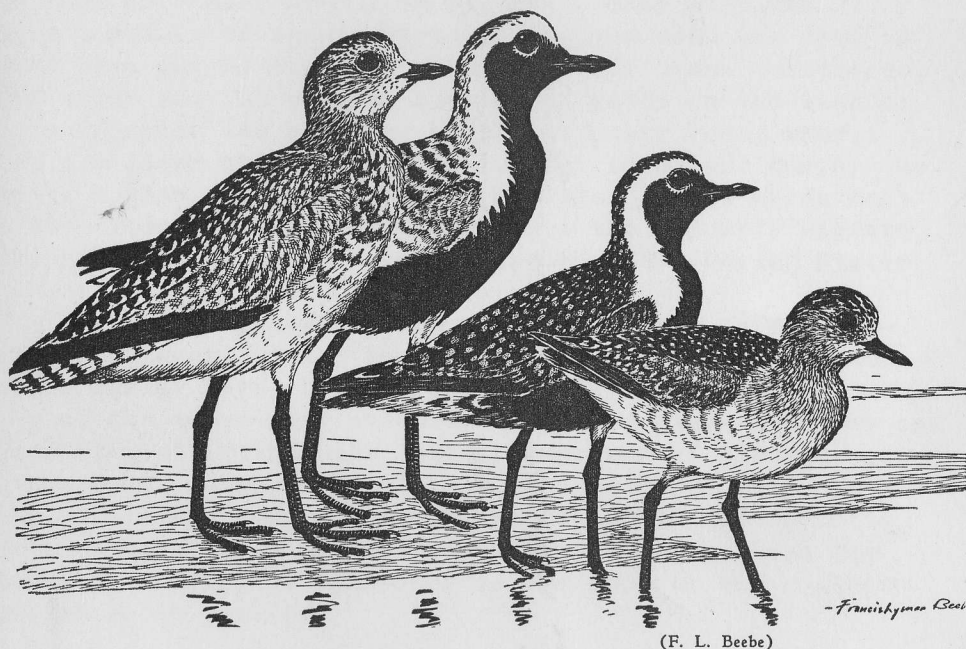


The  
**VICTORIA  
NATURALIST**

Vol. 18, No. 2

October, 1961



(F. L. Beebe)

Golden & Black-bellied Plover

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

THE VICTORIA NATURALIST

Published by  
THE VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

---

Vol.18, No.2

OCTOBER 1961

---

OUR COVER

The black-bellied plover is by no means a common bird for Victoria, but there is one place where it usually can be seen from late in September to early spring, and that is at the foot of Bowker Avenue in Oak Bay. Generally the flock there consists of about thirty birds, and when the tide is right they can be found mingling with the black turnstones, surf birds and the various species of gulls on the line of rocks opposite the beach or on the adjacent rocky shore. They are large shore birds, quite grey in colour during the winter months, and with slate-grey legs. These birds nest in the Arctic, a few winter here, but the majority migrate during September and October to the southern United States.

The golden plover is a much scarcer bird in our district, but every winter some member of our bird group identifies one or more of these plover, quite often in the company of the above-mentioned black-bellied plover. They are somewhat smaller than the latter, are much of the same appearance and colour, and are not easy to distinguish from them. This species too, nests in the Arctic and south to north central B. C. but has a much wider range than the black-bellied, often wintering as far away as the southern part of South America.

The golden plover is one of the many birds which narrowly escaped being exterminated in earlier times on this continent. When the hosts of passenger pigeons began to disappear through the onslaughts of hunters and destruction of breeding habitat, this bird commenced to come into the chief game markets of the U.S.A., in barrels, to take the place of the pigeon. After that the decrease of the species was rapid. All along its route in the settled parts of the continent it was regularly slaughtered. Eventual legal protection in the States and Canada saved the bird from extinction, but its numbers are still relatively few.

TOOTH AND CLAW

by J. W. Winson.

One of the wonders of nature is the gift of protection or weapon of conflict endowing each creature she honours with life. The tooth of the tiger is no more purposeful than the claw of the bear, the scales of the lizard or the sting of the bee. There were tusks for the mighty mammoth, and needle poisons for the minutest jelly fish. Talons and tearing beaks were given to those that besought them, and the meekest worm is given a turn that may save it from destruction. The finest eye in the world, the clearest, the quickest, is given to the bird, and wings to lift it to safety. The mouse has the most sensitive whiskers, responsive to slight vibrations. The inoffensive hare has a defensive kick. The timid doe can cut with a sharp hoof; the porcupine, the skunk, has each its own weapon, not to be used without provocation.

Those living by attack and capture are well provided with fleetness or patience and other powers lethal. The adaptations are admirable for the life of the creature, and could they plead in the court of Noah, the asp and the lynx, the wasp and the shark would justify their aggressions. In a world full of life to its limits, the talon, the tooth, the claw and the sting seem to be necessary.

Defense is in alertness, speed and armour, each to its need.

Among these aggressors and victims appears man, and what is he? He has no tusks, no tearing teeth as dog or cat, no piercing claws to scratch or hold. His soft hands and sensitive fingers would bleed before they could damage in attack. Deer, rabbit and horse can kick if cornered, man must stand on one leg while striking with the other, and then has but soft toes that would "stub" if not guarded. As an animal he is as weak in attack as in defence. The physical helplessness of child and mother in a world of wolves and tigers is pathetic.

Yet to man was given the power of thought beyond all other creatures. The mind that blooms into soul has become weapon and armour all-conquering. Creatures that know him, fear him, this soft-skinned man that melts teeth and claws from rock and mixes minerals that make weapons fly.

Nature made him for peace, with open hand and smiling

mouth. He has become the most cruel of fighters, warring against his own kind, a lower level than the rule of the jungle.

Built for gentleness, and endowed with Godlike vision, man acts like a blind one, who suddenly given sight, picks up a club to slay his fellows. Did nature make a mistake, or is his sight not yet clarified; must ages pass before his vision is sufficiently penetrating for him to see that peace and goodwill are the only sane and logical principles of human life lived adequately?

A TALE OF OWLS

In a recent letter received from our good friend Jim Grant, a member living at Lavington, near Vernon, he relates the following story:

"One night this spring we happened on a family of long-eared owls near Wye Lake (close to Vernop). We first heard a chorus of very sweet and un-owl-like voices calling "ki-deer, ki-deer" from a birch thicket, while a couple of others accompanied them with noises exactly like a puppy snivelling. As we approached, one of the parents came toward us out of sight in the long grass and low brush making noises like a broody hen, and kept trying to lure us away. We never did see it, and were still in the dark as to what these birds were until we caught sight of the young. As it got darker they got braver and came and perched around us, bobbing their heads and calling incessantly. Then the very next night up at Round Lake I blundered on to a long-eared owl's nest on the ground with five downy young in it. The poor parents were frantic, and tried all the broken-wing antics in the book."

A.R.D.

To those of our members and friends who wish to attend the Audubon Lectures, we would advise buying their season tickets at an early date, as the supply is limited.



## GUIDED TOURS IN BEACON HILL PARK

by Gladys E. Soulsby

During this summer a start was made on having Guided Tours of Beacon Hill Park. Mr. W. H. Warren, Parks Administrator for Victoria, consulted with our President, Mr. Freeman King, and, after some instruction, I began this service early in July. We tried several different parts of the Park for the Tours, and the duration time of forty minutes for each one, was found to be the best. During these forty minutes a brief history of the Park and its features was given and the names of native and exotic trees and shrubs. We always looked for birds too!

It was found that the most popular time for these Tours was immediately after the Sunday Band Concert. Every Sunday there would be from thirty to sixty people who stayed to make the trip. Many questions were asked and great appreciation of the Park was expressed. A goodly number of these people were from our own city, but every Province of Canada was represented as well as U.S.A., England, Scotland, Ireland and the Continent.

It would be difficult to say which part was best liked, but usually the most rapt attention was given when we came to a specimen of the "Dawn Redwood, Metasequoia". This is a living relic of a fossil genus, found as recently as 1945 in Hupeh, China, by T. Wang. Seed was collected in 1947 and introduced into U.S.A. and England the following year. It is a relic of the Mesozoic Age and fossil remains have been found at Francois Lake, B.C. To make it even more interesting to me, while I was attending the Vancouver Natural History Society's Camp at White Lake, near Penticton this year, we were taken on a geology trip by a fossil expert and each of us procured a fossil of this same tree! We were told that this species grew pretty well all over this continent about fifty million years ago!

### AN AFFECTIONATE HUMMINGBIRD

Mr. W. Mackay-Draycot, one of our valued contributors to the magazine, tells the following story of a rufous hummingbird.

On the afternoon of July 21st, at the home of Mrs. Marie Timms of Langley B.C., one of the children brought into the house a hummingbird, unconscious from shock. It wasn't long

though before it recovered sufficiently to perch on the edge of a bowl. In a little while it accepted watered honey from a finger-tip. It was then put in a cage with a test tube of honey and water hung at an angle so the bird could feed itself.

The hummingbird quickly adjusted itself to its surroundings and to the children, making no attempt to fly away. When taken to the garden it would return to the house and fly to its bowl of honey kept on a side table, though several times it fell into the bowl and had to be washed off. Far from being shy it permitted stroking and handling by the children.

After eleven days it seemed fully recovered, as when let out of the cage where it was kept at night, it began to fly around the room, so the door was opened and this time it flew away. From a drawing made by one of the children it was evidently an immature male.

The incident was well documented by excellent photographs of the bird perching on the tray of the baby's high chair and surrounded by a group of charming children, which we regret not being able to reproduce in the magazine.

One can imagine the joy felt by the mother and children of this family when the care they had given this tiny bird was rewarded by its being restored to life and liberty.

A.R.D.

*Silka spruce !!*

### HOW DID THEY GET HERE?

by M.C. Melburn.

**YELLOW FLAG** (*Iris pseudocorus*). This handsome "Six-footer" is the commonest iris of the British Isles. It has broad stiff leaves and stout flower stems. The colour is rich yellow. How it got to Cowichan Lake is still an unsolved problem, but a clump was found along the foreshore of the South Arm of Cowichan Lake, on the property of the Provincial Forestry Station, and a collection made by myself and Miss J. Brenton on June 7th 1961.

**DWARF CHICKWEED** (*Moenchia erecta* or *Stellaria erecta*). This is a slender erect annual resembling a stitchwort, but it rarely exceeds four to six inches in height. It is blue-green in colour and quite inconspicuous among the tall grasses where it grows, except for its relatively large white flower. The flower parts are in fours and the petals are not notched, a departure from the usual *Stellaria* structure.

The flowering period runs from early April well on into May or even early June.

Plants of this species were collected in Uplands Park (Oak Bay). Specimens have been placed in the herbaria at Ottawa and the University of British Columbia, as well as in the Provincial Museum. Dr. Beamish in charge of the herbarium at U. B. C. knew the species only from material sent in a collection from England, but J. A. Calder, Botanist at the Research Institute, Ottawa, had not previously seen the plant in Canada.

#### MEMBERSHIP

We are pleased to note that about thirty new members have joined the Society recently. We hope they will enjoy the amenities the group has to offer. Come to the general meeting on October 10th. Are you interested in geology? Mr. Marrion will be glad to meet you. Or in botany? Miss Melburn and Professor Lowe can help you. Does the insect world intrigue you? Dr. John Chapman can answer your questions. Or birds? See Mr. Tom Briggs and Dave Stirling.

#### WE DISCOVER DISCOVERY

by J. M. Barnett

We woke on September 16th to the mournful sound of fog horns all around us, and after a hasty breakfast, groped our way along the winding streets through a heavy mist, until we reached the Yacht Club.

Looking out over the water all we could see was a solid wall of white, except for the dim outline of a few boats anchored a short distance away.

No sooner had we left the wharf than we entered a new world - a white world in which we seemed to be the only living creatures. Visibility was not more than fifty feet, and, for what seemed an age, nothing came out of the soft white wall in front of us.

From somewhere off in the distance a lonesome call penetrated the blankness around us, and we recognized the cry of a gull.

A white flutter overhead for a moment and we recognized a common tern, and this was followed by a grey form passing across our bow over the water, which we identified as a

cormorant. Off to one side we caught a glimpse of a vague form and were just able to catch it in our glasses before it disappeared. This seemed to be two men in a boat.

Kelp started to appear around us, its big bladders sometimes looking like ducks on the water. Then something big and dark emerged out of the fog in front of us, and we felt the engines reversing. Before the boat stopped we knew we had arrived somewhere, and our host informed us it was one of the rocks off Chatham Island, but how he recognized it was a mystery. After backing off, we turned and coasted along slowly, for we were in rocky waters with the tide swirling round us, and as we moved it seemed as if the rocks were continually being moved right in our path. But we knew this was not entirely true, for we glanced over the side once and saw a submerged rock almost within arms reach - indeed we half expected it to scrape the bottom of the boat - but it didn't.

A large rock then appeared on which we could see some dark shapes, and as we slowly moved past, we caught sight of some red beaks which identified the shapes as black oyster-catchers.

At last an ominous bit of land loomed up, but we found this was a point of Chatham Island, which was directed towards our goal, and it was no time before Discovery Island and the little dock came into view.

As we disembarked we felt that for the most of us, this was a unique experience and one that ended happily only through the experience and cautious patience of our host and his assistant.

On the island the fog was still very heavy and observations difficult, but as we neared the sandy bay, we decided to go down to the shore where we were just able to discern some birds, which were identified as western sandpipers, dowitchers and a sanderling.

A stroll along the waterfront in front of the cottage disturbed many savannah sparrows, but the pipits, which we were looking for, were not to be seen on the ground. We heard them calling and saw a small flock flying over. Of interest here was the evidence of some bird beach parties. At one place were the remains of a number of sea urchins, while in another the carapaces of crabs.

Dave Stirling showed us the shell of a keyhole limpet, which was  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " long, and also the shell of a dunce-cap limpet. We feel sure that some of the designers of m'lady's millinery for this year must have got their inspiration from these



sea-side animals. The protective shell armour of one of our large chitons was also found, and caused some interest, because these tide-pool residents are not often noticed by those who love to wander along the sea-shore.

The fog started dispersing about mid-morning, and by noon the sun was shining bright and warm. While eating our lunch on the lawn we saw a great blue heron standing on a floating log out in the water. He was very alert looking, watching the water just below him, but we failed to see him strike. Later, while strolling along, we saw him again quite a distance from his original position. He was still standing on the log and still intently watching the water, and we wondered if he had hitch-hiked all the way propelled by the current.

Going into the woods we came to a large brush pile, which was alive with birds. Juncos and sparrows were predominant. The latter were very dark, and we thought they were fox sparrows, but one obligingly flew up to a twig in full sunlight, and we could see he was one of our dark song sparrows. A perky little winter wren was here, also a Bewick wren and a brown creeper. There were some golden crowned kinglets, but very few warblers.

Once again we looked in at the sandy beach area and saw four green-winged teal and a sandpiper. The teal flew off, but the shorebird allowed us to approach and identify it as a pectoral sandpiper.

It was a beautiful afternoon for boating and we enjoyed our return trip to the full. Soon after we set out we passed the rock on which we had dimly seen the oyster-catchers, and the birds were still there, so we were able to check how well our course had been plotted in the blank fog. Then a dozen or so harlequin ducks flew by and when we got out into the open water we were delighted to find it covered with a large number of marbled murrelets and some pigeon guillemots. Both these birds were in their winter plumage, which shows a lot of contrasting black and white, and thus were quite conspicuous on the water with the sun shining on them.

It was with a thankful feeling of having had a wonderful day that we disembarked. We wish there was some way in which we could communicate our thanks spiritually instead of just saying 'thank you' to our host, Capt. E. G. Beaumont, but perhaps sometime when he is sitting quietly on his verandah and looking out over the waters in front he will think of us and know something of the pleasure he gave to

so many of us on the day we re-discovered Discovery Island.

A note from our leader, Tom Briggs:

The number of species seen was down slightly compared with other years. Except for numerous harlequin ducks (there were about three hundred seen in the area) and the inevitable gulls, other species were much fewer in number. Marsh hawks, red-tailed hawks, Coopers and sharp-shinned hawks put on a good show however.

The trip was up to the high standard set in other years, though it was marred somewhat when Alice Hoppe had the misfortune to fall and break her wrist.

Seventy-nine species were seen by the forty-three members present.

Thank you, Captain Beaumont.

#### BOTANY MEETINGS

Professor C. W. Lowe will commence a series of talks on plant life. Each member is requested to bring a specimen of any type of plant life, together with a set of questions which they wish to have answered about the particular specimens. After the quiz period Professor Lowe will begin a discussion of some plant family's characteristics. Please bring notebooks and pencils.

#### A LINK WITH THE PAST

About a month ago my wife and I were examining some paintings at Lund's Auction on Fort Street, when we came across a group of photographs on a table. The one which interested us particularly was one of a group of men with the following details printed on the mount:

"First Field Excursion of the B. C. Natural History Society, Cadboro Bay, April 12th, 1890."

J. Fannin.	J. Merritt	O. C. Hastings
J. K. Worsfold	E.M. Skinner	Dr. C.F. Newcombe
J. W. Deans	Capt. Fielding	J. Devereux
	L. B. Norgate,	O. L. Poudrier.

I immediately contacted our president, and received permission to bid up to \$15.00 for this lot. I think there

were six photographs in all. As we were unable to attend the auction, a bid was placed for this amount with Lunds. However, I found the next day that they had been sold for \$16.00 to Mr. J. K. Nesbitt, the parliamentary reporter and historian. So I got in touch with him and asked if he would sell this photograph to the Victoria Natural History Society, and that it would most likely be placed in Dr. Carl's office at the Museum. This he agreed to do. Mr. Nesbitt then donated the ten dollars he asked for the photograph to the Society for Preservation of Craigdarroch Castle in which he is keenly interested.

We would be very pleased if any of our charter members can give us more particulars of this earlier society and its members.

A.R.D.

#### POISON OAK

by Freeman King

The poison oak plant has been rediscovered on Vancouver Island. It is about forty years since it was last seen in the greater Victoria area.

It was spotted by Paul Newman, a member of the junior branch, growing on the property of J. Munro at the corner of Prospect Lake and Munn Roads. The bright scarlet leaves were the means of attracting his attention.

Some of the material which had been collected was taken to Dr. Adam Szczawinski, Curator of Botany at the Museum, who positively identified the plant after a further search revealed the tiny whitish berries which are characteristic of the species.

This shrub is scattered over about five acres, and in places it has climbed about fifty feet up and around a Douglas fir tree. The main stem on this particular plant is about four inches across, and there is no doubt but that it has been growing in this area for a number of years. It has leaves rather like those of a Garry oak. They are a dull green in the spring and summer, turning to a bright red in the fall.

A yellowish oil named "urushiol" permeates all parts of the plant, and contact with it will cause inflammation followed by blisters. Symptoms can appear twelve to twenty-four hours after contact, but may do so within an hour or so. Even if the plant is burned, the soot can cause the symptoms to appear. It is transferable from cloths or tools that

have been in contact with it.

A good treatment, should you come in touch with it is to wash the skin with laundry soap and hot water, making a heavy lather; then rinse thoroughly. To make sure, go through this process at least three or four times.

The owner of the property has been notified that the plant is growing on his land and told of a spray that will at least discourage it from spreading.

#### JUNIOR JOTTINGS

by Freeman King

The trip out to Glynn Beach at Ardmore enabled us to find many shore creatures, and gave us the opportunity to see the complete skeleton of a rat fish which had been washed up on the shore.

Our expedition to Seymour Hill reservoir proved so interesting that most of our time was spent there. For such a small pool of water the number of creatures was surprising for all of us.

A really good work bee was held clearing trail at Francis Park. A portion of an old road which had been made by the early settlers close to 100 years ago, which led back into the Highlands, was brushed out and made into a fine path. It leads from Trail No.3 to Trail No.4, and is good walking.

Owing to the number of boys and girls of different ages in this branch, we have had to reorganize the meetings. Commencing the 1st of October the branch will be in two groups and designated as Group "A" and Group "B". Each group will have younger and intermediate members in it. Gail Moyer and Joyce Chope have been made supervisors of groups. Leaders of "A" group are David Grey, Nancy Chapman, Gerry Nelson and Ann Proctor. Leaders of "B" group are Gerry Walker, Shirley Martin, Trevor Gibbons, John Errington, with Lynda Gregg as spare. Gerry Rushton and Chris Morgan, who were with the Parks Branch as Nature House attendants, will help in the group whenever possible.



NOTICE OF MEETINGS1961

Saturday

ENTOMOLOGY:

Oct. 7th:

Meet at the Monterey Cafe for a Field Trip from 9 a.m. to 12 noon with Dr. John A. Chapman. Adults and children.

Tuesday

GENERAL MEETING:

Oct. 10th:

At the Douglas Building Cafeteria on Elliott Street at 8 p.m.  
 Speaker: Frank Gilbert Roe, LL.D., F.R.C.S.  
 Subject: "Who Exterminated the Buffalo?"

Saturday

BIRD FIELD TRIP:

Oct. 14th:

Meet at the Monterey Cafe at 9:30 a.m., or at Island View Beach at 10 a.m. Bring lunch.  
 Leader: Mr. T. R. Briggs.

Tuesday

BOTANY:

Oct. 17th:

Speaker: Professor C. W. Lowe  
 Subject: Plant Life.

(Details of this series will be found on page 25.)

Friday &amp;

AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR:

Saturday

Oct. 27 and 28:

This is the second of five Audubon lectures to be given at the Oak Bay Junior High School Auditorium at 8 p.m., both nights.  
 Speaker: Fran William Hall.  
 Subject: "Puerto Rico U.S.A."

-----

The Juniors will meet each Saturday at the Monterey Cafe at Hillside and Douglas Street, at 1:30 p.m. for Field Trips.  
 Leader: Mr. Freeman King.

Anyone who would like to join these trips is very welcome.

-----



# VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

## OFFICERS, 1961-62

### *Honorary Presidents*

HON. EARLE C. WESTWOOD  
*Minister of Recreation and Conservation*

MR. J. W. EASTHAM  
*Former Provincial Plant Pathologist*

### *Honorary Life Members*

DR. G. CLIFFORD CARL  
*Director, Provincial Museum*

MR. GEORGE A. HARDY  
*Former Provincial Botanist*

### *Past Presidents*

ROBERT CONNELL - - 1944-48  
G. CLIFFORD CARL - - 1948-49  
GEORGE A. HARDY - 1949-50  
MRS. R. G. HOBSON -- - 1950-52  
J. A. CUNNINGHAM - - 1952-54

C. W. LOWE - - - - 1954-56  
A. O. HAYES - - - - 1956-57  
P. M. MONCKTON - - 1957-58  
MRS. G. E. SOULSBY - 1958-59  
RALPH FRYER - - - 1960-

### *President*

FREEMAN KING  
541 Mackenzie Avenue  
Telephone GR 9-2966

### *Vice-President*

P. J. CROFT  
1954 Waterloo Road  
Telephone EV 5-6155

### *Editors*

A. R. DAVIDSON  
825 Monterey Avenue  
Telephone EV 4-9595

G. CLIFFORD CARL  
410 Queen Anne Heights  
Telephone EV 3-8524

### *Secretary*

MISS IRENE T. LATIMER  
2445 Hamiota Street  
Telephone EV 3-1316

### *Treasurer*

MRS. ELEANORE DAVIDSON  
825 Monterey Avenue  
Telephone EV 4-9595

### *Chairmen of Groups*

#### *Programme and Publicity*

MRS. RUTH STIRLING ----- GR 9-4646  
MRS. H. M. MATHESON --- EV 5-5628

#### *Ornithology*

T. R. BRIGGS ----- GR 8-4145  
DAVID STIRLING ----- GR 9-4646

#### *Botany*

MISS M. C. MELBURN (Summer)  
Telephone EV 4-9052  
PROF. C. W. LOWE (Winter)  
Telephone EV 3-7037

#### *Entomology*

DR. JOHN A. CHAPMAN  
Telephone EV 4-5568

#### *Zoology*

DR. G. CLIFFORD CARL, EV 3-8524

#### *Audubon Lectures*

MISS ENID LEMON, GR 7-2194

#### *Federation*

MRS. G. E. SOULSBY, EV 6-5028

#### *Conservation*

MRS. J. R. PARRIS, EV 3-0572

#### *Geology*

A. H. MARRION  
Telephone EV 4-1983

#### *Juniors*

FREEMAN KING ----- GR 9-2966  
MRS. K. OSBORNE --- EV 5-8164

### *Annual dues, including subscription:*

Single, \$2.00; Family, \$3.00; Junior, \$1.00; Life Membership, \$30.00;  
Life Membership husband and wife, \$50.00.