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(Photo by G. A. Hardy)

Woodland Knoll

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THE WOODLAND KNOLL

by George A. Hardy

The woodland knoll illustrated on the cover is only a scant quarter of an acre in extent and about fifteen feet above the level of the surrounding forest near Blenkinsop Lake. It is simply a mound of rock protruding through the rich soil about it, and constitutes a living demonstration of the conversion of bare rock to fertile soil, long since achieved by the surrounding land which is still underlain by the same type of rock.

The greater part of the surface of the knoll is covered with a thick mantle of mosses and lichens - pioneers in the process of soil formation from bare rock. These in turn give a foothold to the polypody or licorice fern, especially on the moister north slope, where it forms a frilly curtain of green. Among it, on the steeper parts, is a mosaic of sage green and vinaceous rosettes of the stonecrop (Sedum spathulifolium) later giving rise to masses of yellow flat-topped parasols, beloved by the caterpillar of the hairstreak butterfly which feeds on it.

Nearby in due season a floral network of tiny pastel pink flowers of the small-leaved miner's lettuce (Montia parvifolia) will cover the slope, while on the more level shelves and terraces the sea-blush (Valerianella congesta) lays a carpet of pink blossoms, interspersed with the bright blue mats of blue-eyed mary (Collinsia grandiflora var. pusilla).

Where the edges of the knoll merge into the better soil areas the lovely pendant flowers of the easter lily (Erythronium oregonum), the shooting star (Dodecatheon latifolium) and camass, form drifts of white, magenta and blue, while higher up the welcome spring blooms of the satin flower (Sisyrinchium douglasii) enliven the scene with their rich purplish spangles.

As the season advances and the green of the mosses change to browns and greys Michael's rein orchid (Habenaria

unalascensis, var. elata) thrusts up its white flowered racemes from among the oaks bordering the knoll, and plants of the aster-like Seriocarpus rigida find here a congenial site, while the drier slopes will sport the colourful blooms of the wild hyacinth (Brodiaea grandiflora) and the wild onion (Allium acuminatum) with the tall white corymbs of the yarrow (Achillea millifolium) standing sentinel-like among them. When the mosses have assumed their most parched condition the fall knotweed (Polygonum spargulariaeforme) comes into its own, spraying the slope with its small pinkish flowers that often attracts the copper butterfly, which finds both food for itself and its progeny, the eggs overwintering until the following spring.

Cracks concealed beneath the mossy cloak are indicated by rows and strings of the sheep-sorrel (Rumex acetocella) and the little hair-grass (Aira praecox) where a trifle more soil and moisture pertains, while a larger crevice will be sufficient to enable a Garry oak to gain a precarious hold, even if it does mean a starved and stunted example.

The small hollows on the knoll hold water during the winter, but dry up in the summer's heat, and just as they are drying up in the spring the mouselike (Myosurus minimus var. lepturus) may be seen. Its minute green spike of tiny flowers, if not noted for beauty, is a welcome find to the flower lover, as it is by no means a common plant.

The drainage channels of these hollows are filled with the sponge-like masses of blinks (Montia fontana) a low growing succulent plant with very small white flowers, and a prolific producer of shiny black seeds that endure the summer's drought, to sprout with the later rains, ready to continue the species the next year.

This is by no means a complete list of plants that find a home in such places, but only an indication of what can succeed in such an apparently inhospitable situation.

Thus our woodland knoll has many possibilities, for it constitutes a veritable museum, with a changing year round series of integrated living exhibits, not to mention the various birds and insects and other fauna that may be conveniently and easily studied in such a situation.

So the knoll is an excellent grandstand from which to observe such birds as frequent the area; probably the western tanager as he sings his short robin-like song from a nearby tree, and who is by no means so conspicuous in his

livery of red, yellow and black as when taken in the hand. The black-headed grosbeak is another handsome bird to be seen, or more frequently heard, hereabouts, for the rich flute-like notes of his song are uttered either when perched, or on the wing, and sometimes even when on the ground. Or again the purple finch will be seen on the topmost twig of a fir tree giving voice to his merry little song.

At one time a squirrel was seen to scuffle on the ground as if digging up some hidden object, then to dart up a branch of a tree. Here it commenced to eat some choice morsel, soon to poke a part of it in the crevice of the bark. On investigation this proved to be a fungus related to the truffle, a group of below-ground-dwelling fungi very difficult to locate by us humans, but no trick at all to the squirrel with his efficient sense of smell.

THE MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD

by Adrian Paul, Kleena Kleene, B.C.

Anyone who hasn't seen these beautiful birds may find it hard to believe that the male looks as if he had been made out of a piece of blue sky. And they are not afraid to show themselves. In fact, almost every habitation in the western Chilcotin district is favoured with a pair at nesting time, either in a bird-house, woodpecker hole or a convenient niche in a building.

They arrive early in April, sometimes as a mated pair; if a single bird arrives first it stakes a claim to a nesting spot, and then goes off to round up a mate.

One year before laying started I went away early one morning leaving a transom ventilator open, and on my return in the afternoon of the next day I released a male bluebird which was fluttering against a window trying to get out. Then to my very great surprise the following day I found another male bird dead behind some cushions on the couch. The female presumably had, within thirty-six hours, not only decided she had lost her mate for keeps, but had gone off and rounded up a new one, and he in turn had been inadvertently trapped.

The eggs are the rather unusual number of five or six. The first young leave the nest about the third week in June, and sometimes a second brood is raised. One does not as a rule

see much of the family after nesting is over, but like some other species they often visit the nest just before going south about the end of September.

A LUNCH HOUR INTERLUDE

by Alan Poynter

The breakwater off Dallas Road, only a few minutes from the office is a very pleasant walk, usually providing at least one interesting bird observation. Extending several hundred yards into deep water it enables one to get just that much closer to the many alcids moving through the straits, and it provides shelter and calm water to a variety of sea birds during the winter season.

On January 11th, together with several other men, I was witness to the spectacular sight of one (to me) extremely large northern sea-lion devouring two extremely large octopuses in a period of just under ten minutes.

The first sight of the sea-lion was only the occasional appearance of a massive head moving rapidly in a southerly direction. After being submerged for a goodly time this animal literally exploded on the surface with an obviously living creature in its jaws, and thrashing it from side to side ripped off what proved to be a tentacle of an octopus. Letting the main body submerge the sea-lion took only a few seconds to devour the limb, whereupon it dived to retrieve the bulk of the unfortunate octopod, which, in the early stages put up quite a struggle, with much splashing and thrashing and entanglement of tentacles. However, it was soon dismembered and devoured, while a flock of scavenging gulls made short work of the small pickings left on the surface.

A second long submersion produced an even larger octopus, fully six feet across, which attacked so savagely that the sea-lion almost threw itself clear of the water, exposing flippers at least three feet in length, while the tentacles of its gruesome repast flailed wildly about in mid air.

It was truly an awe inspiring scene, being both violent and exciting, but it was also an educational experience as to the feeding habits of this animal. Sea-lions have been purged in large numbers as the destroyer of commercial fish, but according to Cowan and Guiguet (Mammals of British Columbia) they eat mostly what is termed "scrap fish", with small amounts of salmon, halibut and sable fish.

The Natural History Society of British Columbia

by J. M. Barnett

The acquisition by Mr. Davidson of an old photograph of members of the Natural History Society of British Columbia aroused a great deal of interest among our members.

The photo, now hanging in Dr. Carl's office in the Provincial Museum, was taken on April 12th, 1890, at Cadboro Bay. The names of eleven of the men shown are printed at the bottom and it is interesting to note that of these, Mr. J. Fannin, Dr. C. F. Newcombe, Mr. J. Deans and Mr. O. S. Hasting were four of the Founding Members of the old Society.

Efforts to trace the original owner of the photograph were unsuccessful but a visit to the Provincial Archives in the Parliament Buildings gave us access to some printed Bulletins issued by the Society which proved most interesting.

Among these was the first Annual Report from which we learnt that "a meeting was held at the Provincial Museum on March 26th, 1890, when it was decided that a Society should be formed. Forty gentlemen signified their wish to join and Mr. Ashdowne Green, C.E., was elected as the first President."

From the Constitution we learnt that the objects of the Society were:

- (1) To promote the study of the Natural Sciences and Historical Research.
- (2) To collect all available data in connection therewith, to act as an auxiliary to the Provincial Museum, Department of Agriculture, Department of Mines and Library of the Legislative Assembly.

The members were all men who were scientifically inclined and the talks given covered a variety of subjects.

Most of the speakers in the early days of the Society voiced their limited knowledge of the subject covered and asked the members for their co-operation in gathering information.

In his first talk the President, Mr. A. Green, chose for his subject, "The Salmon of British Columbia". At the end he said: "This paper is written not so much to impart information as to show how little we really know about the most valuable fishes of our Province and also in hopes that up-country members will be interested enough to collect

notes of the habits of the fish in their several locations and forward them to the Provincial Museum."

Mr. J. Fannin, Curator of the Provincial Museum, gave a talk entitled "Preliminary list of the mammals of British Columbia" and in conclusion said: "We admit our ignorance of many of the small mammals and it is therefore desirable that collecting in this direction be prosecuted more earnestly by members of the Society."

That the efforts of the members bore fruit is also brought out in the talks to the members.

In the "Study on Entomology" credit was given the members: "Good work has been done by this Society in Entomology this year, notably the completion of the Life History of the Vancouver Island Oak Tree Looper (*Ellopiia somnaria*) in conjunction with Prof. James Fletcher, Government Entomologist at the Experimental Farm, Ottawa, who has thought the matter of sufficient importance to devote a lengthy article to it in his Annual Report, in which he gives advice as to the most effective remedies for destroying this pest. It is sincerely hoped that the Park Commissioners will see the necessity of using every effort to save our shade trees in the Park and not allow such desolation to happen as was caused last summer when the Oak trees were completely defoliated by the insect."

In the later "Report on the Entomology of British Columbia" there was mention that in 1892 the oak tree pests around Victoria were conspicuous by their absence.

Dr. C.F. Newcombe was an untiring worker for the Society and in an 1898 Bulletin published a "Catalogue of the Crustacea in the Provincial Museum."

In an 1897 Bulletin was a paper entitled: "Notes on some new and interesting species of shells from British Columbia and the adjacent regions" by William Healey Dall, Honorary Curator of the Department of Mollusks United States National Museum.

In this paper Mr. Dall acknowledged the energetic researches into the fauna of British Columbia by Dr. Newcombe and others. While looking at the list we noted a mollusk of the genus *Rissiona* (*R. newcombei*) named in honour of Dr. Newcombe, "whose energetic researches have added much to our knowledge of the fauna of British Columbia."

After listening to a broadcast about the Victoria Natural History Society over Station CJVI, Mr. Robert Peters of 2371 Arbutus Rd. wrote to the station on April 17th, 1961. He had been a member of the old Society from 1908 to 1928

and said: "I also recall the names of some of the Government members and officers of that date and a little later. Mr. J. A. Anderson (Minister of Agriculture) and his brother Walter, C. C. Pemberton, Mr. Lowenberg (German Consul), Mr. J. A. Wallace, Mr. H. Bevan (Manager, Bank of Montreal), Mr. F. Kermode (Curator of Museum), Mr. Hibberson, Mr. Sutton among others.

One of the programmes concerned the importation of English birds, among these the skylark, the goldfinch, the blue-tit, the linnet and the redbreast. These were shipped out from Leadenhall Market, London E.C., and came by (boat and) rail over the C.P.R. with an attendant to feed and tend them. They were housed in a greenhouse on Rupert St., and liberated by the officers of the Society. The Skylarks at Royal Oak (Rithet's Farm) and the redbreasts were taken by Mr. and Mrs. Bevan at their home on Marine Drive, Oak Bay. They took elaborate precautions for their protection.

I recall also a trip to Bare Island in the nesting season of the sea birds, to count eggs of the various sea fowl."

In the Provincial Museum publication "Alien animals in British Columbia" by Carl and Guiguet, we have the statement: "In the fall of 1903, 100 pairs of skylarks (*Alauda arvensis* L.) were released near Victoria by the Natural History Society of British Columbia; in 1913 an additional forty-nine birds were liberated in the same area."

The descendants of these birds can today be considered a living memorial to the original Society.

From an old newspaper we learnt that in 1897 Victoria was shaken with the news that a sea-serpent was gamboling off these shores. There was much talk of the sea-serpent at a meeting of the Natural History Society of British Columbia in January 1897. The evidence was claimed to be of an authentic character and was worth being carefully weighed.

It was difficult to find out just when the Society ceased to function but a tip took us to the Registrar's office where we learnt that the Natural History Society of British Columbia was legally dissolved on March 3rd, 1933.

This was not quite the end of the story for one day some years later the Bank of Commerce notified us that they had an account of the old Society which was laying dormant in their books and suggested that we try to do something about it.

It was necessary to get the signature of an officer of that Society on a cheque and it was only through the un—

untiring efforts of our treasurer Mrs. E. Davidson that Mr. W. A. Newcombe graciously consented to sign a cheque which on June 30th, 1960, transferred the sum of \$41.37 to our account.

Thus we have a small link which through the old photograph and the transfer of funds takes us back through the years to 1890.

OF SILVER AND PEACOCK BLUE

by Dorothy Palmer

Our island winters have many moods, of infinite variations, each pleasureable if simple outdoor enjoyment be sought.

Wet days are gentle in the woods, raindrops murmur happily through trees, sigh softly to earth through moss and ferns; exhilarating are upland trails when Scotch mists' moistured gauze wafts across our hills; rough days are for the seafront, white banners waving, cheering seas racing across the Straits, breakers thundering, trailing tattered tresses; a woodland walk is not to be missed when snow whispers in the trees to dress each twig in pearly filigree, the conifers' skirts trailing with fat snowy bustles, and the little people leave footprints of their secret ways; days of hoar frost are lovely anywhere, every bush and reed sparkles with rime, curtseys gracefully. But those grey days of winter, in our cities windless, dull, depressing, will be lighter and brighter by any of our lakes; - by any of our lakes it IS a lovely day.

Elk Lake of a grey day in January was polished silver, satin smooth, ruched in white along the deep centre where gulls rested; quiet, still, of a silence that FELT wonderful.

From the far shore trees and hills dropped reflections on the lake in tints of reseda and deep blue overlaid in grey, and beyond the lake's perimeter hills drew soft mist blankets up over firs and maples, muting their colours. Osiers and willows growing in the shallows were delightful, soft crimson and ochre, flanked by tall alders with warm henna tracery above, graced with catkins, the backdrop a tangled silver grey wilderness.

Close under the willows was a patch of deep blue-green opalescence shading to indigo, in appearance like a raft of peacocks' feathers, - coot, pressed close together in hundreds. Single birds paddled on to disappear in the thickets; probably hundreds of birds were scattered throughout the

wilderness.

Coot more often appear to be slate coloured, or deep sapphire blue, or black all over except his distinctive white beak and white frontal; light refractions in this sheltered location gave a surprisingly rich feast of colour.

Far away across the lake geese were resting, proud heads held high, the white bibs of Canada geese clearly seen.

Many mergansers swam close to shore, their long bodies handsome in white and black uniforms with red splashes from beaks and legs; they caught small fish and fought over them, turning, dodging, rushing whichever was in possession.

The grotesque shape of a great blue heron stood hunched up on a raft moored off-shore, apparently asleep until a merganser to-do aroused him; then he launched himself awkwardly, like an overloaded air-freighter, to fly around in leisurely manner, his great wings barely clearing the ducks. After a turn or two he dropped anchor on the raft again, shrugged his shoulders and looked down his long beak.

A black and white question mark detached itself soundlessly from an alder top, fell towards the lake, apparently pulled the rip cord and resolved itself into whiteness of down bent head and tail with large black body and wings, the primaries widespread, curving, feathery, - a bald eagle with coot for dinner in mind. He flew over them in a semi-circle, - and away went the coot in retreat. More and more coot came from thickets to rush after the flock. The eagle circled and swooped, circled and swooped; coot stragglers submerged briefly to escape him, dived and swam, dived and swam. The water was massed with hurrying little bodies; they all swam on a clear course outside the raft, and as they passed by the heron watched them coming, watched them going, turning his head to right and to left, to right and to left.

Out of nowhere two gulls came with quick wing beats and between them flew one black crow crying "for shame, for shame"; they set about the eagle, flying at him repeatedly, till he floated up to his perch amid the alder tree's silver tracery. Promptly the coot about turned, the heron marshalled them past his stance, and soon the swarm of coot were back near the overhanging willows.

A swirl of black and white floated down without sound of wing-beats to circle a-floppity over the coot, around and around. Again the coot retreated, again the heron took the salute, again the two gulls with one black crow between

materialised out of nowhere. This time the three "muskeeters" harried the eagle right away, the great bird in reluctant, protesting, wavering flight; but the guardsmen sent him off and away to Bear Hill.

The swans, mergansers and numerous baldpates, mallards, lesser scaups disregarded the predator and the coot. Beyond the birds an unruffled lake slept between pearly satin sheets, the mists hung veils over hills and distant shore: the afternoon darkened.

Cold? Yes, and a warm home-coming in good spirits feels grand after sampling the delights of a "dull" day by a silver lake embroidered in soft greys, reds, ochres, peacock blue, white majesty, black and white royalty, and tall henna-crowned alders.

That January day our aim was to seek out a reported goose-that-couldnt-be and we found, not the legendary goose, - we found ENCHANTMENT!

THE BIRDS OF MARCH

The month of February and the beginning of March finds the birds at their lowest ebb, but soon the first migrants will arrive from the south to enliven the scene. First to come is the violet-green swallow, which have been found here as early as February 26th, but their average arrival coincides with the first week of March. The Audubon warbler is the next to arrive, generally about the third week, and following it the white-crowned sparrow, which rarely puts in an appearance before the last days of the month.

A fair number of the latter winter here, and it is difficult to decide whether, toward the end of March, we are seeing a wintering flock or some newly arrived from the south.

When we were at Deep Cove recently at the home of Mrs. Madeline Till, investigating the curious account of the winter wren (see page 95) we were told by Mrs. Till that a white-throated sparrow had been coming into the garden with a flock of other wintering birds, so we waited in the house while she threw some feed out, and it was not long before a mixed group of white-crowned and golden-crowned sparrows appeared, and with them one white-throated. In addition to these and all feeding together, were fox sparrows, song sparrows, juncos and towhees, with a Bewick wren hovering on the outskirts.

The latest report of a white-throated sparrow was from Mrs. Gosling on Blenkinsop Road last December. A few days

previous to that Mrs. Hobson had one feeding with the other birds in her garden on Argyle Street. Whether these are the same birds which arrived here in December of 1959, or whether others have since arrived, we do not know. These sparrows are a strictly eastern species.

A.R.D.

A MOST DESIRABLE RESIDENCE

by Madeline Till

It was funny how, although both the houses were practically in the same location facing south, with practically the same view, one of them was always vacant while the other never lacked a tenant. The popular one was fastened under the eaves beside the garage door, and the other was on what might be called a corner lot at the end of the building. Perhaps it was too exposed. I don't know. Anyway, a Bewick wren started the fashion and raised families in the 'desirable' residence two years in a row. The following year, a violet-green swallow beat her to it, laid eggs ...and was attacked by a thug in the shape of a house sparrow. The nest was abandoned and not used by swallows for two or three years, when they had better luck.

On a gloomy January evening I stood at the kitchen window thinking what fun it would be when the nesting season arrived, and the empty house would be occupied again. Then I became aware that the roof of the garage was alive with small dark-brown feathered shapes - winter wrens - seemingly dozens of them flying in from every direction and making for THE house! One went into it, and another and another. Then one came out or was pushed out, and still they came, more and more of them! I lost count and it got too dark to see, but I swear there were a dozen or more crammed into the box.

This reminded me of an episode related by a friend in Cordova Bay. She and her husband get up at the crack of dawn to go to work. They have a bird house outside the bathroom window, and while father was busy shaving he counted thirteen wrens emerge from it. The last one looked rather ruffled and gave himself a good shake as if to iron out the creases made by twelve bodies lying on top of him!

EDITOR'S NOTE: To some of our bird watchers this winter wren episode will be regarded with scepticism, especially as these birds are only found in isolated

pairs in the woods and heavy brush. However, we called on Mrs. Till and found she knew the birds quite well and was unlikely to be mistaken. We also checked with the lady she mentions at Cordova Bay. Then we checked through all the bird books in the society's library, but found nothing to substantiate it, so we borrowed, from one of our members, the volume relating to wrens in "Life Histories of North American Birds", compiled by A. C. Bent, which is authoritative, and there we found the account of a winter wrens' lodging house in Western Washington, where, in severe winter weather, these birds will gather together at the setting of the sun around a bird box.

The following quotation is taken from this report in Bent's detail of winter wrens:- "January 21st proved the prize record for wren lodgers. After a short period of the usual "Play-antics" the birds entered rapidly until 30 were counted. Others continued to come, but the situation inside apparently seemed hopeless, and they flew around to the front of the cabin and under the eaves. Just before complete darkness one belated wren came to the bird box, tried to enter and failed, finding a full house; but not to be denied a warm sleeping place he made a vigorous but unsuccessful attempt to gain entrance. He heard the wrens inside chattering and moving about, perhaps trying to make room for the late comer. He finally made a third desperate attempt, and, climbing over seemingly insurmountable obstacles, he gained entrance, and in a few moments all was still, with 31 winter wrens snugly ensconced in this 6x6x6 inch apartment".

A.R.D.

COMOX CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS, 1961

by Betty Westerborg

This count was taken on December 30th, and covered Lewis Park, the Dyke Road, Comox Bay, fields and swamps, Point Holmes, etc.

A total of 63 species and 4060 individuals were noted. There were no rarities.

Compared with the 1960 count, land birds were more plentiful, but fewer species of waterfowl were seen. Siskins, house and purple finches were well represented - over one hundred of the latter were seen in one flock. Most numerous were baldpate, a flock of about 700 being found in a flooded field. Four bald eagles soaring over the bluffs at Point Holmes provided a memorable sight.

Observers:- Comox Christmas Bird Census, 1961 -

Betty Westerborg, Theed Pearse, David Guthrie, David Stirling and Tom Briggs.

THE EAGLES SWOOP

by G.M. Bell

As we stood on the spit, looking toward the towering conifers on the inner side of the lagoon shoreline, we saw them - two full-plumaged bald eagles, their heads and tails stark white flashing boldly against the dark backdrop of trees. They flew past one another at the water's edge where small waterfowl scattered, some diving and others running over the water before rising to fly away from the eagles' site of operations. There was a plan.

The eagles swept over the same small bird which in diving eluded them again and again. Each time the duck went under, the talons of the hunter missed, leaving for a moment a patch of disturbed water.

While this was in progress we saw the great blue herons coming from firs and cedars behind the swooping, magnificent birds of the air. They flew out from the tops of the dark trees and we counted them - twenty-seven, silhouetted against the sky, moving steadily away from the scene enacted below them. (Why did they go, was it just an admission of the eagle's sovereignty?)

The eagles finally exhausted the duck. It rose for air, it dived for protection over and over and over till at the last the strong talons above let down at the exact time of the duck surfacing and - no fumbling, no sound could we hear, but it happened - the great birds played out their technique to its satisfactory conclusion. One of them flew to a nearby tree. The other, the duck in its grasp, alighted on a branch in another tree, inspected its catch and began to eat.

The sun was setting. Before we left both birds were in the same tree; the one which feasted remaining where it was and the other on a branch a few feet away not disturbing it.

We could not tell which species of duck was taken in the dark water reflecting the background of trees. It was, we knew, a duck - providing an eagle's sustenance within the wise ordering of the plan and control of nature.

A HELPFUL SNAKE

by W.M. Draycot

That dreaded creature the repulsive snake slithers under a cloud of suspicion. As with many groups in the animal kingdom there are the good ones and the bad ones some people think --- even among snails. Fortunately we have one kind of reptile, the garter snake, that is mankind's best friend and should be protected. The distrust in man and the garter snake is often mutual, fear reposing in both though it need not be so. The snake is quite harmless.

One of its good deeds was demonstrated to me while weeding the garden. The potatoes were showing first leaves above the soil. A large loathsome slug was peacefully wending his way over a slimy trail toward a potato hill. From under the protective cover of rhubarb leaves nearby emerged a dark full-grown garter snake resplendant in his coloured stripes. Had he seen me he might have wriggled off but he kept on his course in the channel of the earth mound, occasionally surmounting it to peer over the top. Arriving at a point where his quarry would have to pass he waited. Unconscious of danger the slug rose to the summit of dirt. Slowly the snake drew back his head; thus poised he waited, then in a flash, jaws widely extended, he struck. Following a few minutes pause to recover from the strain, the swallowing process began. In ten minutes the slimy slug, about three inches long, was encased in the snake's bulging envelope. Satisfied with his capture he slowly returned to the rhubarb plant to digest his succulent meal.

The lesson was positive proof of the economic value of this reptile which should not be destroyed but encouraged to live on to fulfill his mission to aid the gardener.

VICTORIA AND DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGY CLUB

by Donald N. Abbott

Some members of the Society may not be aware of a young sister organization which, in many of its aims and interests, overlaps with the V.N.H.S. The Victoria and District Archaeology Club was formed a little over a year ago with fourteen members and has since grown to a membership of thirty-five including some from the Cowichan Valley and the Gulf Islands. Its objects are "to encourage the study of archaeology and to stimulate active interest in the scientific investigation and preservation of archaeological re-

sources." To this end members participate in "site surveys" - mapping and description of all the prehistoric remains in an area - and many have been engaged with scientific crews excavating for knowledge of prehistoric man in British Columbia in sites up to 9000 years old.

No doubt many Victoria Natural History Society members will be interested in the activities of the Archaeology Club and would be able to contribute to its success with their own knowledge of and interest in our natural environment and man's relations with it over the centuries. Indeed, there are already a significant number of enthusiastic V.N.H.S. members in the Archaeology Club. Anyone wanting further information should contact the Club's president, Richard Cox, at EV.4-9167, or its secretary-treasurer, Miss Frances Woodward, at the Provincial Archives.

JUNIOR JOTTINGS

by Freeman King

During the past month our activities have been concentrated at the Thomas Francis Park.

The group have helped to clean up the ground, and also worked on the new Nature House, now almost completed.

Soil surveys have been made, as well as the notation of the different trees and shrubs, and the new growth of the spring plants.

Our expedition to Mill Hill on the 17th of February was very good. We found the early saxifrage, spring gold, bitter-cress, satin flower and hairy manzanita, all in flower.

In a small pool at the top of Mill Hill many water creatures were observed, amongst them a ghost shrimp, identified by Dr. John Chapman.

Some of the members have commenced a rock collection for display in the Nature House.

As you will notice from the programme for this month on the last page, our Speaker will be Mr. C. P. Lyons. Mr. Lyons is with the Provincial Parks Branch, he is an Audubon lecturer, an author (our library has four books of his) a member of our Society, and a most interesting speaker.

NOTICE OF MEETINGS

1962:

Saturday ENTOMOLOGY: Meet at the Monterey Cafe at 9 a.m.
March 10: for a field trip.

Leader: Dr. John A. Chapman.

Tuesday GENERAL MEETING: At the Douglas Building
March 13: Cafeteria on Elliot St., 8 p.m.

Speaker: Mr. C.P. Lyons, Parks Branch, Dep't of Recreation and Conservation.

Subject: "Sights and Sounds of Old Mexico."

Saturday BIRD FIELD TRIP: Meet at the Monterey Cafe
March 17: at 9:30 a.m. or Witty's Lagoon
at 10 a.m. Bring Lunch.

Leader: Mr. T.R. Briggs

Tuesday BOTANY: At the Museum at 8 p.m.

March 20: Speaker: Mr. Freeman King

Subject: "Identification of Trees
and Shrubs in Winter."

Friday & AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR: At the Oak Bay Junior
Saturday High School Auditorium at 8 p.m.
March 30 & 31 both nights.

Speaker: Mr. Cleveland P. Grant

Subject: "Heart of the Wild".

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.

Recently Ralph Fryer was in Beacon Hill Park photographing the canvasback ducks, the results of which we enjoyed at the February meeting. He reports that while doing so two small boys about five or six years old came up and asked what he was doing, to which he replied "I'm trying to photograph the canvasbacks. Whereupon one of the boys laughed scornfully, and said: "You can't fool me mister, I know ducks have feathers on their backs."

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