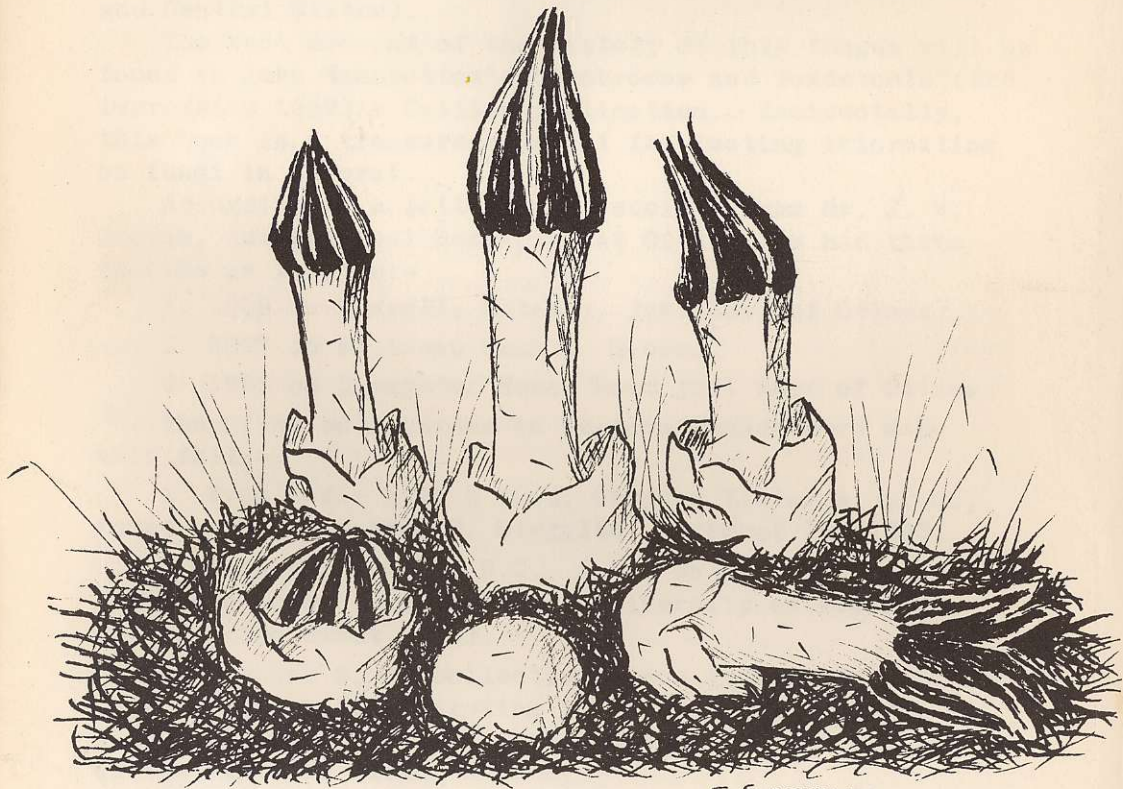


January, 1966  
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# THE VICTORIA NATURALIST



E. SARTAIN

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COVER PICTURE

(Reproduced from a drawing by Miss Emily Sartain)

*Lysurus gardneri* (synonym *Lysurus australiensis*) is a fungus which has gone under several other names due to the fact that it was discovered, described and named by mycologists in widely separated parts of the world. It is common in Australia and New Zealand, in India, Ceylon and Java. But there have been only four records of it in Great Britain and only six in the United States (Northern and Central States).

The best account of the history of this fungus will be found in John Ramsbottom's "Mushrooms and Toadstools" (3rd impression 1959), a Collins publication. Incidentally, this book is a treasure-house of fascinating information on fungi in general.

According to a letter just received from Dr. J. W. Groves, our National Herbarium at Ottawa has had three records as follows:-

1. 1936 in Russell, Ontario, just east of Ottawa.
2. 1937 in Papineau County, Quebec.
3. 1955 on Slaughter House Road just west of Ottawa.

The first collections in Western Canada were made this fall:-

1. From Cedar Hill X Road, Greater Victoria, B. C., found by Mr. and Mrs. H. Steggles, November 14, 1965.
2. From White Rock, B.C., found by Mr. Karl Warse and taken to Dr. R.J. Bandoni, University of British Columbia (no exact date).

Both these B. C. collections were from sawdust piles; ours here were found growing in great abundance in a mixture of sawdust and manure cleared from the stables of the Victoria Riding Academy.

The mycelium occurs in great quantity producing glo-bular fruits which are pushed up to the surface of the sawdust, appearing as white marbles which may grow to

hen's egg size. Each "egg" is burst by pressure of the growth within which in a few hours becomes a four to six inch whitish, cylindrical hollow stem surmounted by 5, 6 or 7 reddish-brown "arms".

The sticky greenish spore-mass is produced on the inner surfaces of these arms and in the process gives off a most offensive odour very attractive to insects which thus serve to disseminate the spores.

The burst membrane of the "egg" remains enclosing the base of the stem superficially resembling the volva of an amanita. However, the connection between stem and volva is very slight and the mature top-heavy stem soon topples over and begins to dry out. This position probably increases the chances of the spores being reached by a greater number and variety of insects.

*Lysurus gardneri* belongs in the Order Phallales (Stinkhorn Group) and as such is truly a credit to its relatives.

M. C. Melburn.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### BIRD REVIEW FOR 1965

by A.R. Davidson

The early months of the year were mild, with very little snow or frost, so the ground-feeding winter residents, such as song and fox sparrows, towhees, Bewick wrens, skylarks and meadowlarks, came through in good numbers.

The spring migrants from the south arrived, as usual, right on time, beginning with the violet-green swallows on March 8th, followed by the rufous hummingbirds (male) on the 28th and the white-crowned sparrows two days later. Then came the warblers, vireos, flycatchers and the other swallows. The last migrants are always the nighthawks, which we did not see until June 10th, and they were in very small numbers.

Three weeks later, on July 3rd, to be exact, we recorded the first returning migrant from the north, the least and western sandpipers, then, in rapid succession, came the other shore birds. Dowitchers and greater yellowlegs on the 10th, surfbirds on the 12th, black turnstones on the 16th, sanderings on the 17th, semipalmated plover on August 7th, wandering tattlers the next day and black-bellied

plover on the 9th. Northern phalaropes showed up off shore on the 6th and continued through September. Golden plover were seen on Sept. 15th, dunlin on October 5th, and Aleutian sandpipers, always the last, on October 19th.

The sea birds never fail us, and have returned in good numbers; commencing with the horned grebe on August 8th, with the American goldeneye last as usual on November 8th.

There was a good showing of common terns from August 8th, with the parasitic jaegers in attendance.

The turkey vultures came through from Sept. 24th to the beginning of October, possibly 200 being seen altogether.

A few blue-winged and cinnamon teal were seen between May 1st and the 28th.

One of the interesting features of the fall months has been the presence of several small flocks of whistling swans, which at this writing, can still be seen on Martindale Road.

Purple martin nested in small numbers right in Victoria on old piles and a fair number in the Highland district in old flicker holes on tall snags.

The unusual birds of the year were as follows:

2 Emperor geese at Clover Point on March 3rd.

A male mountain bluebird on May 14th on the Victoria Golf Course.

Three other mountain bluebirds were seen on April on Salt Spring Island, two males and one female.

2 Clark's nutcrackers at Metchosin on Sept. 23rd.

1 Say's phoebe on Beach Drive on November 6th.

The latter three species are all summer residents of the Okanagan Valley and eastward, and very unusual here.

A few sandhill cranes were reported from Metchosin during November.

This year the migration has been equal to that of recent years, which is considerably below that of even fifteen to twenty years ago, while the resident small birds are also in fewer numbers. But when most people, here and elsewhere, who have gardens, use various pesticides and weedkillers, we cannot hope that the birds will be able to maintain their numbers, save those few which are more resistant to poisons.

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CORRECTION: The Freeman F. King Scholarship Fund began in 1964, not 1965 as stated in the December issue.

JUNIOR JOTTINGS

by Freeman King

The fall and early winter activities of the Junior Branch have been varied and active. Our average turn-out on Saturdays has been, for the younger section, about 50 and for the intermediate section about 45. Even at that all members do not turn out. (Perhaps this is all for the best.)

Field trips have been made to see the salmon spawn at Goldstream, to Thetis Lake, Prior Lake, the Panhandle and of course to Francis Park. On each and every trip something new has been seen and something new has been learned. It may be winter but there are mosses, lichens and of course fungi to see and study.

Those in the intermediate section did a first class job of clearing and burning the branches etc. of those trees that have been felled because they were in the way of the Lab. They also have made a good start on the "strip survey" of all the things that grow and live in Francis Park.

The leader group have been holding their monthly cook-outs; once at Goldstream, where there was only wet wood to light the fires, and once to Young Lake at Sooke where they explored the "Cougar Caves".

\* \* \* \* \*

COPIES OF THE NATURALIST  
URGENTLY NEEDED.

The following copies of the Victoria Naturalist are needed to complete the files for the University of Victoria:

Vol.20 - No.9;      Vol.16 - No.2;  
Vol.14 - No.3;      Vol. 8 - No.2  
Vol.4 - Nos. 1 & 2.

Anyone having any of these copies to spare please hand them in or send them to Miss Enid Lemon.

BOOK REVIEW

by Dorothy Palmer

## Beneficial Insects

by Lester A.Swan, published by Harper and Row, N.Y.  
(1964)

"There seems to be a natural scheme of things to which financial men would refer as diversified investment. It is the total of all the factors, some of them very small, that maintains the balance" A.D.Pickett.

Above is one of the apt quotations used as chapter headings which enhance this interesting book. Every chapter has much interest to all naturalists and the information therein enormously widens our perception and appreciation. If birds are your specialty they are here, and lizards and frog, toads, salamanders, shrews and mice, bats, skunks, spiders, AND Beneficial Insects.

There are fascinating accounts of the behaviour and complicated interrelationships of insect lives. It is easy to like dragonflies, lady beetles and green lacewings; after reading this book we know that many unattractive life-forms are our friends too. We take kindly to the vedalia beetle feeding on cotton cushiony scale and another beetle feeding on mealy bug, and we learn that useful beetles, formerly numerous, are now almost eliminated where poisons are sprayed. Reviewing "Beneficial Insects" E. Grant Watson writes "Are any creatures harmful? Do not harmful and harmless interact on one another in ways not yet to be measured?"

"Beneficial Insects" was written to help non-scientist readers understand the biologic control of insect pests and to grasp its present and future possibilities. The author deals with parasites, predators and disease against pests, omitting the accessory alternatives to chemicals (for space reason). He suggests that many predators could be cultivated and sold to horticulturalists as safe substitutes for poisons which have eliminated too many living things regardless of their neutral or beneficial attributes. He quotes Paul DeBach, "Partial successes tend to be overlooked or discounted but nonetheless they often represent a considerable saving as

measured by reduction of damage or lessened need of treatment". (Proceedings of the Hawaiian Entomological Soc./62) He writes "The day will come when scientists will have the information and ability to blend all methods into control practices that will be the best for specific times and conditions", and adds that the day will arrive sooner through public awareness and understanding of biological control.

#### EDITORIAL COMMENT

Your new editor assumes responsibility for "The Naturalist" with considerable concern. The high standard of articles should be maintained and I hope you will continue to send in contributions regularly.

I hope to be able to gather together a balanced diet of reading - articles from all departments of the Natural History Society. Please make note of interesting local items that come to your attention and send them in. Remember my background is the prairies. Also, I am sure the readers are interested in natural history beyond the local scene and we should have articles and information about many places from time to time. Short, snappy book reviews are always in order.

Never think that individual help does not count for much.

My typewriter works quit well, except for one of the keys. It is true that there are 46 others that function perfectly well, but just one makes a difference.

You may say to yourself "well, I am only one, no one will miss me if I don't send in the material, there are others who will do my work." But you are missing. Remember my typewriter and say "I am the key person, I am needed."

\* \* \* \*

#### HABITS OF FRANKLIN'S GROUND SQUIRREL, *Citellus franklini*

By Dr. L.G. Saunders.

We shall never know how a bush gopher came to set up house under the cabin of a summer camp on an island in northern Saskatchewan, but there he was: he was first, and he was staying. Someone christened him John Willie, and everyone loved him. That first summer he had it all his own way; he got so hold he would come into the cabin and search the table, the cupboards, and our pockets for food. Soon he was eating from the cats' dish, to their obvious disgust.

Often out in the woods we would hear a rustling among the dry leaves and a high-pitched "Willy, Willy, Willy" would bring him scampering. Of course we had to produce something edible: a nut, a raisin, a cutworm. But not a pentatomid stink bug; I tried that on him once, and was he insulted! Like all northern districts, the place swarmed with mosquitoes which we fought with smoke and dope and nets, but Willie would let a mosquito gorge on the end of his nose and never lift a paw.

When camp was broken at the beginning of September, John Willie was sleek and fat, and no doubt had a most unusual store of provender down in that hole. It was a glorious fall and we came back for the Thanksgiving weekend, but no Willie was in evidence; he must have gone into hibernation some time in September in spite of the mild weather.

Camp was reoccupied on May 20th and John Willie was there, tame as ever and looking for easy pickings. There were other Willies now, less tame but not too shy to be seen about the clearing. How had they reached the island when they are supposed to sleep all through the freeze-up? Or do they swim? Many Willie-fights broke the sylvan peace of camp, from which the Old Brute gradually emerged as boss. Subsequent events proved that these were all bachelor suitors, and our John Willie was a lady! But the name had stuck and John Willie she remained. Long after the gladiators had departed, about the end of July, some very wobbly little Willies appeared, with extravagant heads and the insouciance of their mother. It took some time to determine that there were five in all, foraging and playing around the clearing from morning to night. They invaded everything, even the closest preserves of

Mother John and were promptly chivvied out again, for now that she had put them on their feet she was finished with them. After a week or two of this pestilence she gave up and departed for fresh fields; at least we like to think so rather than that she fell victim to some hawk or owl.

The youngsters thrived and grew almost overnight. In a short time their bodies had caught up with their heads and one had to look twice to be sure it wasn't John Willie returned. They rolled around in the morning sunlight, wrestling like little bear cubs, their short arms clasped around the other's shoulders, straining and pushing until one gave up and fled cussing through the bush. Occasionally we witnessed another performance in which two young Willies crouched side by side, head to tail, and pushed sideways at each other, grunting and growling and audibly gritting their teeth. No particular climax ended this exercise and its significance remains a mystery.

With humans accepted as harmless and even useful animals, feeding habits could be freely observed. Often in the dense growth of flowering plants and reeds along the lake shore, movement would be discerned and closer inspection revealed a Willie hauling down stalks of Common Hawkweed hand over hand until the heads could be reached. Only the base of the seed head was eaten, and only at a certain stage of maturity, not too green, not too ripe. Little tentative holes and scratchings appeared all over the clearing, and one day a more definite excavation was found in the side of a bank, with something white showing at the bottom. Investigation with a trowel disclosed a very considerable portion of fungus sclerotium, Polyporus tukahoe. It was at the crisp, chumpy stage, like celery root, and seemed good enough to eat; offered to John Willie it was accepted with avidity, but the youngsters were not quite sure they liked it. Birds' eggs were no doubt a normal food, for Willies were often seen climbing in bushes and vines some feet from the ground. To test this a hen's egg was offered. Did they know what it was? They certainly did. Here was bonanza, but their jaws would not open wide enough to puncture the shell. One after another they wrestled with that egg, embraced it with all four feet and rolled over, all the time gnawing fruitlessly, but try as they would they could not broach the treasure. There is no record of its ultimate fate: perhaps it went

back into stock, for eggs were precious at the lake.

A number of bird study skins were being prepared at camp, and the pathetic little carcasses were eaten in astonishing quantity by Willies, if they got there before the Whisky Jack. It was more surprising to see them drinking milk since that is quite divorced from anything they could get in nature, unless they can associate it with their infant days and mother. Oils and fats seemed to come first: a butter paper was sheer delight, though of course the butter supply itself would have been better. They would fight for days over a bacon rind even though it became black with dirt. "What's that dry, wooden-looking slab they're scrapping for?" "Oh, yes, the bacon rind". Peanuts were irresistible, shelled or unshelled, and a walnut could be extracted, with some tribulation, if "started".

Each little Willie had his own preserve around the outside kitchen and tried to drive off intruders. One was always at the back of the stove, or on top when it was not too hot; he never learned to try first whether it was hot, but advanced confidently towards some attractive-smelling pot, only to beat a scuttling and indignant retreat when he got over the fire. Several Willies shared the washing-up table more or less amicably, for stacked dishes were most intriguing and there was always the chance that the cover had been left off the soap dish. Once a Willie determined he would get into an aluminum bowl left on the smooth iron table top. Several attempts to climb in failed because the pan was light and slipped away, and then the inevitable occurred and he turned it completely over himself. Such antics as that pot performed, sometimes getting near the table edge (which would have meant freedom), then away, nearer and nearer to the hot stove top, until finally hot feet and rougher surface provided stimulus and purchase for a mighty effort and the dreadful encumbrance was thrown off. Willies do learn; this one was back among the pots a few minutes later looking for what he could find, but he kept away from the pot of his imprisonment.

The family was left in possession when camp was struck in the fall, but next summer the clearing was silent and deserted. What could have happened? One day I was quietly sketching a birch trunk deep in the woods when a fox came pattering along; he looked at me a long moment when he caught my scent, and trotted on. Need I say more?

FRANCIS PARK  
by Freeman King

Yes we still have lots of visitors to the Park. There is hardly a day but someone comes for a hike around one of the trails.

There are many things to see as you walk along the trails; the mosses and poly-pody ferns are perhaps at their best and there is a different "look" now that the leaves are off the shrubs and broad leaf trees. The little streams along the rain forest trail bring music to the forest, and when the sun shines through the tops of the trees it seems to be an enchanted land.

The exhibits in the Nature House have been changed regularly, and two large firs at the back of the Lab. have been taken down. This is in preparation for an addition that we hope to build in the not too distant future. A plot has been set aside for a Patrons' Plantation which we hope to start in a short time. We plan to ask for a "Work-bee" at the beginning of the New Year.

Yes, there is always something new at Francis Park.

\* \* \*

I meant to do my work to-day  
But a brown bird sang in the apple tree  
And a butterfly flitted across the field  
And all the leaves were calling me.

The wind went sighing over the land  
Tossing the grasses to and fro  
And a rainbow held out its shining hand,  
So what could I do but go?

Anonymous.

\* \* \*

BIRD RECORDS - December 1965 - by Grace M. Bell -

| DATE   | SPECIES                | No. | PLACE             | OBS. |
|--------|------------------------|-----|-------------------|------|
| Nov.28 | Arctic loon            | 75  | Island View Beach | DS   |
| Nov.30 | Meadowlark             |     | Telegraph Road    | TG   |
|        | Northern shrike        | 1   | Telegraph Road    | TG   |
|        | Red-winged blackbird   |     | Telegraph Road    | TG   |
|        | Bushtit                | 20  | St. Patrick St.   | GB   |
|        | Steller's jay          | 1   | Lansdowne Road    | P    |
|        | Red-breasted sapsucker | 1   | Beacon Hill Park  | LAN  |
| Dec. 1 | Northern shrike        | 1   | Cedar Hill X Rd.  | GB   |
| Dec. 3 | Goldfinch              | 4   | St. Patrick St.   | GB   |
|        | Sanderling             | 5   | Clover Point      | FNG  |
|        | Aleutian sandpiper     | 20  | Clover Point      | FNG  |
|        | Surfbird               | 6   | Clover Point      | FNG  |
|        | Black turnstone        |     | Clover Point      | FNG  |
|        | Glaucous-winged gull   |     | Clover Point      | FNG  |
|        | Mew gull               |     | Clover Point      | FNG  |
|        | Bonaparte gull         |     | Clover Point      | FNG  |
| Dec. 4 | Whistling swan         | 3   | Wallace Drive     | EL   |
|        | Yellowlegs             | 16  | Wallace Drive     | EL   |
|        | Bald eagle             | 1   | Cordova Bay       | S&LN |
|        | Gadwall                | 1   | Blenkinsop Lake   | AP   |
|        | Heermann gull          | 1   | Esquimalt Lagoon  | RF   |
|        | Western gull           | 2   |                   |      |
| Dec. 5 | Whistling swan         | 21  | Martindale Road   | MCKG |
|        | Red-throated loon      | 5   | Sidney, V.I.      | A&ED |
|        | Arctic loon            | 65  | Gordon Head Road  | A&ED |
| Dec. 6 | Golden-crowned sparrow | 8   | St. Patrick St.   | GB   |
| Dec. 7 | Varied thrush          | 6   | Alderley Road     | TG   |
|        | House finch            | 20  | Alderley Road     | TG   |
| Dec.10 | White-fronted goose    | 3   | Christie Point    | RF   |
|        | Hermit thrush          | 4   | Whiffin Spit      | A&ED |
| Dec.14 | Black-bellied plover   | 20  | Bowker Beach      | TG   |
|        | Dunlin                 | 100 | Bowker Beach      | TG   |

KEY to the persons who sighted the birds above:-

DS, David Stirling; TG, Tuesday Group; FNG, Friday Noon Group; GB, Grace Bell; EL, Enid Lemon; S&LN, Sean & Lyle Newton; AP, Allen Poynter; RF, Ralph Fryer; A&ED, Albert & Eleanore Davidson; MCKG, R. McKenzie-Grieve; LAN, Mrs E. Lansdowne; P, Mrs. Pike.

MEETINGS AND FIELD TRIPSEXECUTIVE MEETING

Tuesday, January 4

In Dr. Carl's Office  
Provincial Museum at 8 P.M.GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, January 11

Douglas Building Cafeteria,  
Elliot Street - 8 P.M.Speaker: Dr. Donald H. Mitchell  
Subject: Some Aboriginal  
Adaptations to Northwest  
Environments.AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM

Friday, Jan. 14

Saturday, Jan. 15

Oak Bay Junior High School  
Auditorium - 8:00 P.M.Speaker: Howard Orians  
Subject: For Generations to  
come.

BRING A FRIEND AND FILL THE AUDITORIUM

BOTANY GROUP

Tuesday, Jan. 18

Provincial Museum - 8 P.M.

Speaker: Yorke Edwards  
Subject: Learning to Know  
our Conifers.Even a Birder should know the trees, so  
leave your binoculars at home and join us.BIRD FIELD TRIP

Saturday, Jan. 22

Meet 9:30 A.M. Monterey Park-  
ing Lot10:00 A.M. Black Swan  
Hotel

Leader: Mr. M. Matheson.

JUNIOR GROUPMeet every Saturday at Monterey Parking  
Lot, Douglas and Hillside, 1:30 P.M. for  
Field Trips.

Leader: Freeman King

Phone: 479-2966



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