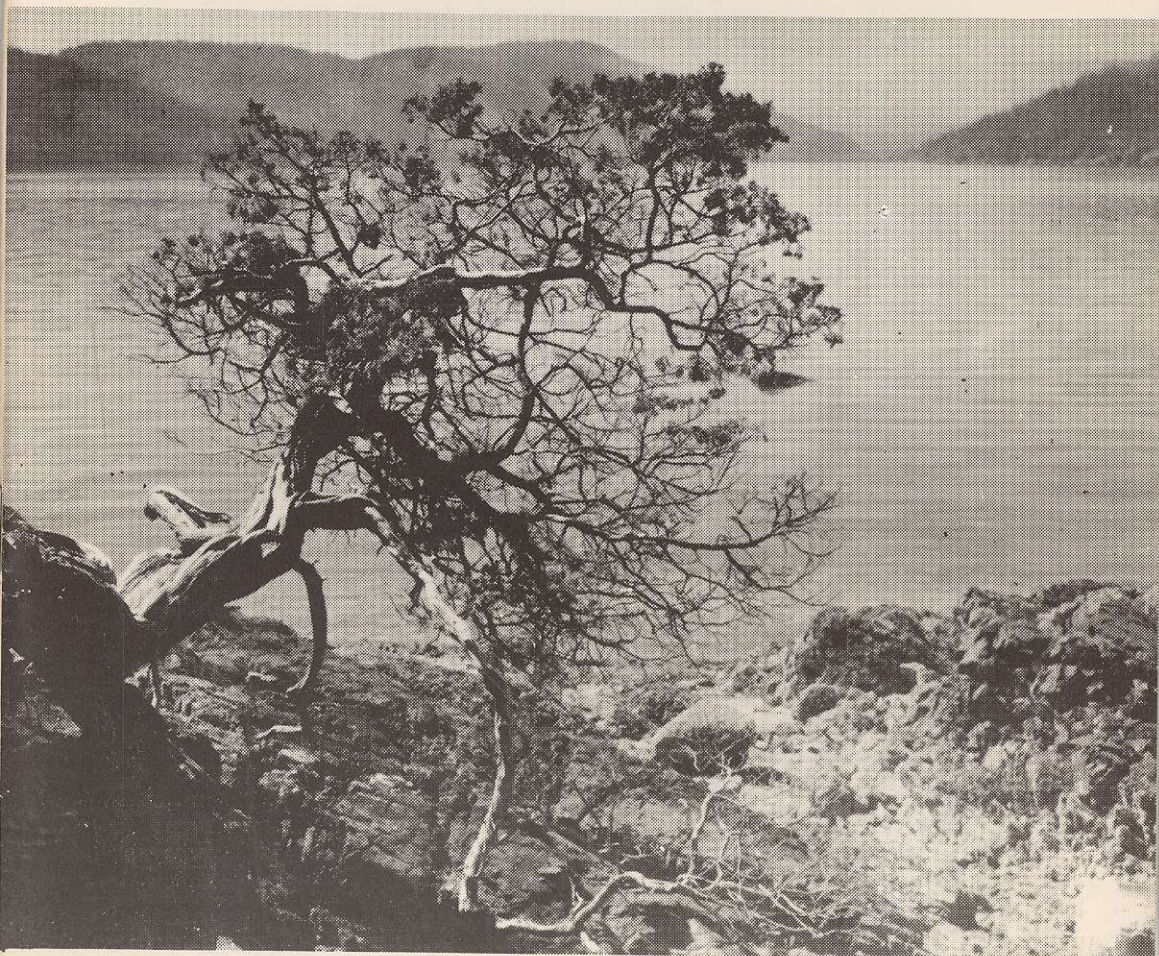


March, 1966  
Vol.22 No.7

# THE VICTORIA NATURALIST



published by the  
VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Victoria B.C

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THE WHARF PILING ASSOCIATION

by R. M. Gustus

Doubtless many of you youngsters are avid fishermen and are keen on the habits of the many local species of fish, but how many of you are acquainted with the spectacular worlds to be found clustered under our wharf pilings?

Get down on your knees and peer over the edge. Before you is a display of colours and shapes rivalling the best the living world has to offer. Prod the golden mass right beneath you. It won't bite hard, for it is a sponge (Halichondria) and its nervous system, if it has one, is only rudimentary. It would be fun to pour a small amount of cream onto the side of one of the many protuberances with a pipette, and to witness its slow absorption by the sponge and the milky current which is wafted out the larger pores, or oscula, several minutes later.

Gently break open a piece of the sponge (remember, a sponge has fantastic powers of regeneration--you are merely helping it reproduce!) Inside you may find an amazing collection of commensal animals, most of which are sea worms or polychaetes. Place the sponge gently back into the water, but don't drop it on that anemone. It is nearly a foot high, and its white tentacles tell you it is one species of the common Metridium. The frilly headgear is the animal's feeding mechanism, for tiny particles of food are strained from the water and passed by ciliary currents to the gaping mouth below. That stouter anemone beside it with the fleshier tentacles is the beautiful Anthopleura. Its Kelley green colour betrays the symbiotic algae which live within the anemone and manufacture food by photosynthesis to help feed the hungry coelenterate which rarely, if ever, resorts to active predation.

Be very still now---oops! they are gone. Watch them come back out. The prominent feather duster on

their heads identifies them as sabellid polychaetes (Eudistylia). Their crown of tentacles is well supplied with many eyes, enabling these annelids to dart back into their tough tubes at the earliest approach of danger (which, incidentally, is usually one of our finny friends!) The smaller feather dusters belong to worms which make protective calcareous tubes. These are the serpulid polychaetes, the local form being Serpula. The minute serpulid common on eel grass and kelp blades is Spirorbis. He must be placed under a microscope to be observed.

The delicate plumes hanging down from the timbers are colonies of hydroids, probably the common Obelia. If you are patient, you may see the strikingly beautiful sea slug, Hermisenda, foraging over the colonies. This crafty animal nips off the hydroid polyps and somehow internally passes the stinging cells, or nematocysts, of the hydroid into its own epidermis where they are then used to defend the slug. This is piracy of the high seas!

As you watch you will see drama, comedy, adventure and mystery as unfathomable as life itself. This account is but an insufficient introduction to the fascinating world which awaits you beneath local pilings. An hour spent in awe is rewarded many times over.

#### A TALE FROM GREECE

Dr. Margaret Newton, our friend and long time member of this society, wrote the Tuesday Group from Athens on January 25th as follows:

Two years ago a white pelican strayed from his mates and landed in the fish market on the island of Rhodes. Here he was very amply supplied with fish. He decided to remain; comes in at about 5 a.m. for his breakfast, and leaves when he is quite satisfied. All the people in the market love him. I went down early one morning and there he was standing in the middle of the street with his wings out, while he swallowed a big fish. The road was rather narrow there, so all traffic was held up, and there was a long line of cars on both sides, but the policeman refused to move the bird, said he must be allowed to swallow his fish! The children love him and stroke his feathers. When he has had enough attention he flies away, but is always back promptly at 5 a.m. So far, he has brought no mate with him.

A.R.D.

#### YOUR NATURE COUNCIL

by R. Y. Edwards

When you are a naturalist in British Columbia, and belong to one of the province's many societies for naturalists, you automatically become associated with the Nature Council. This council is simply the coming together of the provincial nature clubs and societies to deal with mutual problems and to work together to attain provincial, rather than local, goals. The Council is still an infant, but it has already more than justified itself.

Its many undertakings will be given at a later date, but one stands out and it is far too important to leave its praises unsung. Last year the Council sponsored a nature camp for adults near Peachland, in the Okanagan Valley, and this camp was followed by another for children which was partly financed by the Canadian Audubon Society. The camps were a staggering success. Happy times, fascinating things to learn, and good fellowship were abundant, and every one thought this first trial to be a force for conservation and natural science which must be perpetuated. Plans are now forming for the second camp.

These camps are not high pressure affairs. They hope to concentrate on group leaders so they can go home and pass on their knowledge to others, but the naturalist looking for an organized look at nature is welcome too, and such people may form the majority.

The camp is not without its difficulties. Good locations are scarce and not always available at convenient times. Instructors who can find the time are scarce. But it worked beautifully last year, and we hope will do so again. Our congratulations to the Vancouver members of the Nature Council who have done most of the work to create this exciting, new, conservation force in British Columbia, and Mrs. Lamoureux of Kelowna needs special mention too.

#### WHAT IS NATURE?

Nature is wildness and beauty and freedom;  
 Nature is greenness that sparkles in sunlight;  
 Nature is beautiful birds in the willows;  
 Nature is beauty surprisingly bright.

Nature knows mountains and rivers and forests,  
 Nature sees wilderness Man does not know;  
 Nature does feats that man cannot accomplish;  
 Nature alone grows each tree and hedgerow.

Nature is sunshine and dark cooling shade,  
 Nature loves happiness, freedom and life.  
 Nature makes everything perfectly proper,  
 Nature makes happiness grow out of strife.

by Kevin Van Tighem (age 12) of Calgary.

### W O O D

by Freeman King

Wood - the friendly warm material that often brings quiet beauty into our daily lives!

As I wander in the forest, along roads or down by the sea, there is never a feeling of being alone as long as I can see wood in its many shapes and forms. On the beach there is an accumulation of tide-drifted logs, old roots with their fantastic shapes, twigs and pieces of bark washed up and bleaching in the sun. Some of the drift woods take on appearances of animals, birds or even man... if you will let your imagination run. In many cases they have become homes for numerous creatures, some from the sea, others are terrestrial, and some are from both worlds.

There are many varieties of wood and amongst most species an enlarged bump can be seen growing on a trunk or a limb; this is a burl. Certain of these burls, especially in the oaks, are caused by a chronic fungus infection. On other trees they seem to result from injuries, burns or continuous irritation. In many cases the causes are not understood. Large burls seem to predominate in maples, sometimes this burl when sawn, planed and polished makes the curly or bird's eye effect that is often sought after by cabinet makers. The man who smokes a pipe prizes a briar. The bowl is made from a gnarled root of tree heath, a dwarf tree that grows in France.

I have often looked at an old fire scar on the trunk of an ancient fir tree and tried to read its history. How long ago did the fire happen? Was it a lightning strike or perhaps set by some bygone traveler? The story is there to be read, for the growth of the bark and the wood tell the story and will leave the imprint for as long as the tree lives.

Wood has been the true friend of man since he came upon the earth; it has clothed, sheltered, warmed and provided transportation for him down through the ages. And taught him many things. A freshly sawn stump can tell me the weather of years gone by as far back as the tree is old. In some of the really old timbers, I can tell the weather back to the time before the advent of white men to these shores. The ring growths set it out for one to read, and tell you whether it was a wet or dry year, a long cold winter or a mild one. The rings will show me the way if I am lost, for the rings respond to the amount of sunlight they receive.

I look at the rugged bark and marvel at its construction and its function to protect the life line of the inner bark, and, sometimes to provide homes for the many insects that are a part of the living forest.

When I reach home, there the warmth and friendly welcome of a panelled room awaits me, and the blazing log in the fireplace makes me think that wood is the most useful of earth's material for the creature comfort of mankind.

### CORRECTION PLEASE

CHANGE OF ADDRESS SHOULD BE SENT TO MR. C.W. MOREHEN, 4584 Bonnie View Place and NOT to Mrs. F.A. Sherman as advised in the last issue of the Naturalist.

Please note also that Mr. W. H. Warren, convener of the Botany section, has changed his address to 1041 St. Charles Street. Same phone.

### CORRECTION:

#### Participants on Christmas Bird Count.

Mrs. E. Bowsfield and Mrs. M. Winstone should have been included in the participants in Area F.  
 Mrs. L. Parris did not take part in the Count.

D. Stirling.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE SKYLARK'S GIFT

On a day in August in the year 1888 a young man from Boston travelled across the continent and found himself at Cadboro Bay. There he obtained an Indian canoe, hollowed from a log, and about ten feet long, and set out for the Gulf Islands, mainly to find the nesting sites of the tufted puffin and other Pacific birds. He had some quite hair-raising adventures while here, as well as being wrecked on one of the islands. However, he found the puffins, the oyster-catchers, guillemots, harlequins, etc. He appeared to have carried no food with him, but ate whatever the country provided, from roast cormorant to oyster catchers.

This man was Edward Howe Forbush, and as the years went on he became widely known as an active conservationist; was one of the founders of the Massachusetts Audubon Society; and became the Massachusetts State Ornithologist. As a writer on economic ornithology and other related subjects he became famous, but his major work was "The Birds of Massachusetts and other New England States". To quote from his biography: "Every step which he had taken was leading, consciously or unconsciously toward his great and final work. These three volumes are the culmination of his many years of bird study and research. They are illustrated with finely reproduced paintings by Fuertes and Allan Brooks".

They are, in the writer's opinion, the most important, practical and interesting books on birds yet issued in North America, and have been found most useful in the identification of many of our local birds.

Now, to jump a few years, to the spring of 1954, when a lady teacher, Miss Marie L. Weldon from Manhattan visited Victoria to find the skylarks. She called on the writer, then living at Cadboro Bay, and was taken to the corner of Finnerty and Sinclair Roads, where she saw and heard them. A year or so later she came again and was so moved by her experience among them, watching them and hearing their unique song, that on her return home she mailed these three volumes to us, for which she would accept no payment, though the set is valuable and difficult to obtain.

These volumes are in the library of the Society, presently located at 2144 Brighton Avenue, and can be borrowed by any member.

A. R. Davidson.

MEXICAN ADVENTURE TOURS

One of our two National Audubon Society Wildlife lecturers, C.P. Lyons (Chess) is starting out on a new spring and summertime enterprise commencing in April and running through to the middle of June. Mr. Lyons will be taking small groups on tours of nine days duration for those interested in natural history and the Mexican people.

Full particulars on these exciting tours may be obtained from:

C.P. Lyons  
1354 Monterey Ave.  
Victoria, B.C.

JUNIOR JOTTINGS

by Freeman King

The Junior Branch has been very active during these last months in spite of the weather.

In Francis Park there were many trees and heavy limbs across the trails. All these trails have been cleared by the boys and girls. Both sections have helped and it has been very gratifying how these young people take an interest and an active part in the preservation and maintenance of our park.

We made a trip to the Underseas Gardens which proved to be most rewarding. A hike out to the Rithet Estate showed us many features especially of some of the very old fire-scarred trees that told a story of the days when the Indians burnt off the land to enable them to grow the camas which they needed for food.

The leader section has held some very interesting "cook-out" trips. We went to Demanial Creek at Sooke to explore the cave there and found Hairy Manzanita in bloom. A trip to China Beach was very interesting especially through the climax hemlock forest. As the weather improves we will be able to put in more time on our ecological survey of the park, also to continue with the Centennial Trail, taking it to the borders of sections 98 and 116.

Our average attendance for the younger section has been 50 and of the older group around 45.

\* \*\* \*

SOME BIRDS REPORTED

January 18 to February 11, 1966

Jan.

- 18: WOOD DUCK, 1, Colwood Golf Links lake. J. Meiklejohn  
 22: REDHEAD DUCK, 1, Elk Lake. M. Matheson and  
 VNHS Bird Group.  
 22: AUDUBON WARBLER, 3, Elk Lake. M. Matheson and  
 VNHS Bird Group.  
 22: PINE GROSBEAK, 1, Gurnsey. Mrs. Sherman and  
 Miss Lemon.  
 22: TOWNSEND SOLITAIRE, 1, Inverness. Mrs. Monckton,  
 Mr. & Mrs. Davidson  
 23: YELLOW-SHAFTED FLICKER, 1, Linkleas. Mrs. Bousfield  
 25: WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW, 1, Esquimalt Lagoon.  
 Mr. & Mrs. Briggs  
 26: ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER, 1, Lafayette. Mrs. Monckton  
 29: MARSH WREN, 1, Pat. Bay Hi-way, Poynter's Puddle.  
 Miss Lemon.  
 30: RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKER, 1, Florence Lake.  
 Mr. & Mrs. Briggs  
 31: LINCOLN SPARROW, 1, nr. Saanich Mun. Hall,  
 R. Beckett  
 31: HUNGARIAN PARTRIDGE, 14, nr. Sandowne Race Track.  
 R. Beckett

Feb.

- 4: RHINOCEROS AUKLET, 1, Telgh. Bay & Ogden Pt.  
 Westmans & Fryer  
 4: WESTERN GULL, 1, Clover Pt. Davidson, Stirling  
 and Fryer.  
 5: BARROW'S GOLDENEYE, 2, Dallas Rd. since Nov.  
 A. Hockly  
 5: BLUEBIRD, 5, Lohbrunner Rd. Mr. & Mrs. Davidson  
 5: MARSH HAWK, 1, " " " "  
 7: SHORT-EARED OWL, 1, Uplands Park. Bruce Ford  
 11: CASSIN'S AUKLET, 1, Clover Point. Davidson and  
 Westman.

The average date of arrival of some March migrants follows. Watch for them.

Violet Green Swallow	March 5th
Audubon Warbler	" 19th
Rufous Hummingbird	" 28th
White-Crowned Sparrow	" 31st

G.B.

FOREST GIANTS, AN AMERICAN ASSET

by R. Y. Edwards

On a recent trip to California I drove for the first time on the Redwood Highway (U.S. 101) from Oregon to the Golden Gate. It was an impressive experience with trees. These are the Coast Redwoods, confined to about a million acres of foggy coast in California. The frequent fogs there are an environmental requirement of the redwoods. The result is a lush forest of huge old trees along miles and miles of the highway. This is no over-engineered freeway. The road is good yet keeps in touch with the countryside. This is an old fashioned road built for people with eyes and brains and an interest in the world around them.

Often the road is a tunnel through groves of forest giants so close to the car you can almost touch them as you pass. At a glance, a British Columbian feels at home for there are tall trees and big ferns and much of the vegetation is familiar, but a second look makes you feel a foreigner. The trees are not our trees, and the smell of redwood trees is quite distinctive.

The impressive feature about these forests is that they are preserved, and that many people seem to have spent a lot of money to do it. Along miles of road are periodic markers naming individuals or clubs as purchasers of a grove, and grove added to grove often adds up to long drives through deepest forests. Looking into the matter later, I found that the Save the Redwoods League has been active since 1918, from coast to coast, in raising millions of dollars to buy redwood groves out of the hands of logging companies. When the League raised half the price, the State of California matched the sum and these groves eventually grew into State Parks. The League is still growing, and it is still active in saving redwoods.

To date, 73,000 acres of Coast Redwoods forest have been preserved. Here, surely is one of the world's outstanding efforts to save wild landscape. And here, surely, is the world's outstanding success in preserving nature.

The Coast Redwood forest is the southern extremity of the Coast Forest of giants that bordered much of the Pacific Coast in North America. British Columbia and Alaska have the northern extremities of this forest where the species do not include redwoods, but we have red cedar, western hemlock, grand fir, Douglas fir and others.

The Americans have done a superb job of preserving large pieces of their forest. The redwood preserves are a stunning achievement. The Washington coast has large forests of the central coast protected in Olympic National Park.

As I drove down the Redwood Highway the scenery was delightful, and my thoughts were disturbing. There were about me miles and miles of preserved giants bought with millions of dedicated dollars. In British Columbia I could think of only 337 acres - Cathedral Grove in Macmillan Park - where we have had the intelligence and concern to preserve anything comparable; and really only one man, Mr. Macmillan, has saved the British Columbia coast from a clean sweep of destruction and negligence.

For the first time in my life I was ashamed of being a Canadian.

#### ONE AT A TIME

by Katherine Sherman

Where we lived, at Canoe Cove, until last July we had two nesting boxes placed one above the other, just outside the window. Each spring one or both would be tenanted by a pair of violet-green swallows. Last spring the swallows selected the lower box and as we watched them going in and out we noticed wasps going in and out of the upper one. At first we did not worry but as the wasp population grew we decided to do something about it. That evening, after we thought all birds and wasps had retired for the night, a courageous friend placed a bung in the entrance of the upper house. As it happened the wasps hadn't all retired for the night and the late-comers, unable to gain entrance, invaded the box below causing panic among the swallows. The same courageous friend obligingly removed the bung, and for a week birds, insects and humans went their respective ways without disturbing each other.

The wasps, however, continued to multiply and the upper box began to overflow as the wasps covered the surface with "honeycomb". Not content with this, for a second time the swallow's box was invaded and this time by far greater numbers, for the rest of the day the poor swallows flew frantically around not daring to go home.

That night we took drastic action. We put powdered D.D.T. in the tube of the vacuum cleaner, attached the

tube to the wrong end of the cleaner and squirted the powder into the upper box. That did the trick and the next day the swallows were flying in and out of their nest as usual.

After all these excitements we very much doubted whether there would be any baby swallows but, surprisingly, a few days later we rejoiced to hear the tell-tale twittering. If we had only known then that the events of the next few weeks would be so interesting we would have kept a daily record of what happened. At first it appeared that there was only one chick and the parents worked hard to satisfy its voracious appetite. Just when it was about ready for flight we were surprised to see a second little head at the opening. Although so obviously eager for food the parent birds consistently avoided feeding number two and concentrated all their efforts on their plump first-hatched. However, as soon as number one had flown, the parents concentrated on feeding number two, who was extremely puny and must have spent most of its time underneath the more robust nestling. Number two grew rapidly and just before it was ready for flight another tiny head appeared at the opening. Once again the parents avoided feeding the new one and concentrated their efforts on getting number two launched and off their hands. Yet, again the whole story was repeated, and eventually the fourth nestling was fledged. There must have been a race with time with regard to number four and the interesting thing with number four was that it was fed by three different birds; the third, we liked to think, was the first fledgling.

Unfortunately we moved to town and the next year there will be no swallows to watch. We wondered whether others have observed this "one-at-a-time" method of raising young? We hadn't observed it other years and attributed it to the fact that the egg laying and/or incubation were probably upset by the wasp invasions. At any rate, the method adopted by the swallows, though appearing to be heartless to us, worked!

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MEETINGS AND FIELD TRIPS

- EXECUTIVE MEETING: Dr. Carl's Office, 8 p.m.  
Tuesday, March 1. Provincial Museum
- AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM: Oak Bay Junior High School  
Friday, March 4. Auditorium at 8 p.m.  
Saturday, March 5 Speaker: Mr. Albert J. Wool  
Subject: Ranch Life and Wildlife
- GENERAL MEETING: Douglas Bldg. Cafeteria 8 p.m.  
Tuesday, March 8 Elliot Street  
Speaker: Freeman F. (Skipper) King  
Subject: The Role of the Junior Naturalist.
- BOTANY MEETING Provincial Museum 8 p.m.  
Tuesday, March 15 Speaker: Dr. R. G. McMinn  
Subject: The Role of Mycorrhiza in the Soil.
- BIRD FIELD TRIP: Meet 9:30 a.m. Monterey Parking Lot,  
Saturday, March 19 Douglas & Hillside, or 10 a.m. at  
MacDonald Campsite, Sidney.  
Leader: Mr. Murray Matheson.
- AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM: Oak Bay Junior High School  
Friday, March 25 Auditorium 8 p.m.  
Saturday, March 26 Speaker: Mr. C.P. Lyons  
Subject: Mexican Adventure
- EARLY SPRING Meet 9:30 at Monterey Parking Lot,  
BIRD FIELD TRIP: Douglas and Hillside, or 10 a.m. at  
Saturday, March 26 Fort Rodd Hill.  
Bring lunch and "Peterson's"  
Leader: Allen Poynter
- JUNIOR GROUP: Meet every Saturday at Monterey  
Parking Lot, Douglas at Hillside,  
1:30 p.m., for Field Trips.  
Leader: Freeman King. Phone 479-2966
- FREEMAN F. KING SCHOLARSHIP FUND DRIVE:  
Friday, April 1: Oak Bay Junior High School Auditorium 8 pm  
Saturday " 2: Subject: Australian Natural History.  
To be introduced by Dr. G.C. Carl.
- ADMISSION FREE!!! (All Donations gratefully accepted.)  
This is a very worthy cause deserving your fullest support  
at this final fund drive so please be there and let your  
friends know.



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