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# THE VICTORIA NATURALIST



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FIRST NESTING RECORD OF  
BRANDT'S CORMORANT IN CANADIAN WATERS

By David Stirling

Brandt's cormorants are a familiar sight to Victoria birdwatchers. These large, dark brown birds arrive here in hundreds in late August from their breeding islands to the south in Puget Sound and the outer coast of Washington.

Brandt's cormorant appears to be highly gregarious and more "pelagic" than the pelagic cormorant. Brandt's appear in huge rafts in Active Pass, Finlayson Arm and other nearby waters when herring are spawning; rarely are they seen singly or fishing close to the rocks like the pelagic cormorant. The Chain Islands are a favourite roosting spot and when hundreds of these birds assemble there the islands appear, from a distance, to be forested with a thick cover of small fir trees. When these cormorants are moving back and forth between their feeding grounds and roosting islands they present a fine spectacle of long lines and V's of dark birds flying rapidly and purposefully over the water. At these times they are frequently mistaken for geese by casual observers.

Brandt's cormorants are handsome birds in early spring. Breeding adults develop a striking deep blue gular pouch and long hair-like white feathers on face and neck. At this time they can be mistaken for no other cormorant found in these waters.

In the summer of 1964 we observed many Brandt's cormorants on, and near, Sea-lion Rocks, a group of five rocky inlets lying about one half mile off Long Beach, near Tofino. We saw cormorants arriving on one island carrying seaweeds in their bills. This and other actions suggested the possibility of nesting.

There were no published records of Brandt's cormorants breeding on the coast of British Columbia, although Allan Brooks, 1925, mentions the possibility of nesting on Solander Island based on the presence there in summer of adults in breeding plumage. With this information in mind

Frank Buffam, Park Naturalist at Wickaninnish, and I landed on Sea-lion rocks in July, 1965.

About 1,000 roosting cormorants flew off when we landed leaving the breeding birds at their nests on the top of the island. Breeding birds showed little fear, merely showing their disapproval by low groans and regurgitation of masses of small fishes. There were no crows on the island so no harm was done to the colony as a result of our brief visit.

We counted 110 nests in three separate groups. Nests were constructed of seaweeds, mostly false eel grass, well cemented with guano. Nests were much like those of the pelagic cormorant, but they were sited differently. The pelagic nests are usually built on niches on the face of cliffs while Brandt's nests are close together in groups mostly at the same level. Some nests held eggs while others had young ranging in size from newly hatched chicks to pin-feather covered birds almost as large as adults.

The cormorants share this barren rock with a breeding colony of glaucous-winged gulls and many huge Steller's sea-lions.

Editor's note: The following should have been printed in the May issue but was crowded out.

COVER PICTURE May Issue

By Bill Reith

Scarlet bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*) is a small relative of our common Pacific dogwood tree, the floral emblem of British Columbia.

Usually, this little cousin, if I may call it that, seems to prefer moist forest places, and grows in many regions of the Province. This photo was taken in Manning Park, not far from Pinewoods Lodge. When we hiked along the Pachena Trail from Bamfield to Clo-oose its brilliant red berries added a gay touch to the otherwise sombre green of trailside foliage. At Wickaninnish Park, on the west coast of Vancouver Island, we found it had altered its usual ground growing habit and had become almost a creeper to reach several feet up the boles of cedar trees. In spring or autumn, by bloom or berries, it is a plant with a happy countenance.

PARASITISM

By A. Dehen

Recently at Natural History meetings and in our magazine some more or less pointed remarks were made regarding the Bird people monopolizing most of the space in the magazine. Now, we cannot blame these folks too much for being enthusiastic about their subject- after all birds are mostly quite uninhibited and are a pleasure to watch. It is said that in any given period there are more books published about birds than about any other group of animals. This being so, articles about birds are sure to have a large number of appreciative readers.

However there are many groups of animals less publicized and therefore less well known equally if not more interesting. One of the most interesting groups is that of the parasites. Contrary to popular belief parasitism is wide spread in nature and occurs in both Animal and Vegetable kingdoms and in addition there are animals parasitic on plants and plants on animals.

Someone once said that a bird is a flying zoo. Every bird is a host to a number of parasites, internal as well as external. Almost none of its organs is exempt from being a suitable habitat for one or more parasites. Internally we find fungi, amoeba, flukes and worms in lungs, bladder, heart and intestinal tract while skin and feathers shelter a variety of ticks, fleas, lice and mites. While the majority of these parasites are seldom seen or even suspected some are more noticeable. For instance a few years ago cliff swallows nesting under the eaves of a rural school building so infected the classrooms with ticks that the classes were suspended for two days in order to fumigate the building. On another occasion a farmer brought in chickens which were supposed to be suffering from warts around the eyes. This appeared to be so at first sight, but on closer inspection it was found that the "warts" consisted of numerous bloated ticks and more than 200 were removed.

In England three years ago a captured hedgehog proved to be the host to 584 fleas, 31 ear ticks, and several hundred smaller ticks. After removal of this large number of parasites the hedgehog was quite ill for about a week or ten days until its blood forming system had readjusted itself again as there was an overdose of antibodies in the bloodstream.

Insects, being the largest single group of animals, also have numerous parasitic members many of which occur locally and can be studied either in the field or in captivity.

Besides parasitism there are also other animal relationships such as commensalism and mutualism and the variations of these leading up to true parasitism. It is to be hoped that some readers may become interested to study or investigate such a large and interesting subject merely introduced here.

LATE SIGHTINGS OF BANK SWALLOWS  
ON THE WEST COAST OF VANCOUVER ISLAND

By Wayne Campbell

Published sightings of bank swallows from the Coastal area are few. This may be understandable since this species is considered a rare visitant to the Coast and many birders, not suspecting their presence, probably record their sightings as 'rough-winged swallows'. This year, however, several sightings have been published and consequently recorded. (see "Bank Swallows on the West Coast" by G.A. Poynter, October, 1965 issue of The Victoria Naturalist).

It is the purpose of this article, therefore, to record two additional sightings of bank swallows on the West Coast. Both sightings are from the George C. Reifel Waterfowl Refuge on Westham Island, near Ladner, B. C.

On November 20, 1965, while leading a bird field trip to the refuge with the Intermediate Naturalists of the Vancouver Natural History Society, five bank swallows were observed flying low over the outer sea marsh. Realizing this was an unusual sighting we checked field marks very carefully.

On November 23, 1965, while with Mrs. 'Kay' Smith and Mrs Nancy Anderson of the Vancouver Natural History Society a single bank swallow was observed 'insecting' very low over the sea marsh near the entrance to the refuge. Several times the bird flew to within 50 feet of us.

Normally bank swallows have left their summer ranges in British Columbia by the end of September. By November the birds should be in their South American wintering ranges.

It is interesting to note that Brooks and Swarth, 1925, indicate that the bank swallow "may be of general distribution during migration". Perhaps closer examination of

migrating swallows in the future will result in a new status for the bank swallow on the West Coast.

SPRING RECORD OF BANK SWALLOW

By G. Allen Poynter

A quick stop at the Ladner sewage pond, on the mainland proved very rewarding on June 3, 1966, when a lone Bank Swallow was observed with a small flock of Barn Swallows in the same stand of cat-tails that this rare western-coast species was seen during the fall migration of 1965 on September 2nd.

Anyone passing through this area during the spring and fall migration periods should make a point of stopping at this pond (the smell is no worse than Clover Point). The writer can advise directions.

MIGRATION DISASTER

A report of the effects of abnormal weather conditions on migratory birds in April 1966 in western Chilcotin: with assistance from observers Mrs D.E.Bittner, Mr T.D.Chignell and Mrs Eleanor Graham.

The first week in April was unusually warm (April 3rd 62 and April 4th, 72 degrees in the afternoon) resulting in: (1) tree and violet-green swallows, ruby crowned kinglet, Audubon warbler, yellow-bellied sapsucker and several species of pond ducks FIRST SIGHTED A WEEK EARLIER THAN USUAL; (2) probably all flickers, robins, varied thrushes, starlings, juncos, fox sparrows and 75% of mountain bluebirds arrived before April 10th.

On April 10th snow fell all day with temperatures between plus 30 degrees and minus 4 degrees.

The following mortality is considered reasonably accurate: robins 65%, varied thrushes 65%, starlings 35%, juncos 50%, fox sparrows 50%, mountain bluebirds 80%, waterfowl and woodpeckers unaffected, blackbirds slightly affected.

It is noted that (1) juncos in particular continued to die for several days after return to normal weather (often plus 20 degrees at night in April); (2) robins were unwilling to eat crushed grain which appeared to satisfy other species.

Adrian Paul  
May 7, 1966.

DOG STINK-HORN

(Mutinus caninus)

by M. C. Melburn

Specimens of this fungus were found in the greenhouse beds of Mr. L. Simmonds, Blenkinsop Road. Among the fragrant carnations they contributed a decidedly contrasting odour, though not so pungent as that of the related genus *Lysurus gardneri*, numbers of which were sitting cheek by jowl in the same bed. (By-the-way, Mr. Simmonds obtains his manure fertilizer from a nearby dairy farm and there seems absolutely no possibility that *Lysurus* arrived there from the Cedar Hill Road location reported last Nov.).

This stink-horn is smaller than *Lysurus*, being only 3-4 inches in height, its pale pinkish white stem rising out of a much smaller "egg" and terminating in a perforated orange coloured tip. The spore-bearing upper quarter of the stem is red, thinly coated with a green mucilaginous layer, while still in the fruiting stage.

Mycologist C. McIlvaine is the only authority claiming to have eaten this unprepossessing plant but he goes so far as to praise its edible quality. Well! "everyone to his taste", as the old woman said when she kissed her cow!

WHAT HAVE YOU SEEN?

by M. C. Melburn

Six uncommon plants have been observed in this area during the summer. The first three herein noted are in the Mustard Family and all of them are plants introduced from Europe.

(1) *Camelina sativa* (False Flax) was found by Mr. H. Steggles growing as a solitary specimen at the rear of his property on Chelsea Place. This plant has smooth arrow-shaped leaves and small yellow flowers. In Peck's "Manual of the Higher Plants of Oregon" it is recorded as "a rare plant of Oregon found in grain fields". In the herbarium of the Provincial Museum there are specimens collected at Cedar Hill, Oak Bay, and Sidney but none since 1930.

In Great Britain its common name is "Gold of Pleasure". Reason unknown.

(2) *Alliaria officinalis* (Garlic Mustard), as the name implies, carries a strong odour. It has small white flowers and quite attractive cordate leaves and can attain

a height of well over 4 feet.

Dr. G. C. Carl has noticed it for several years on waste land in the Gonzales Area. Almost 20 years ago Dr. Carl collected specimens for the Museum herbarium but there are no other records.

(3) *Coronopus didymus* (Slender Wart Cress) is a low-growing, often prostrate, plant with very small white flowers and deeply dissected leaves. This was found by Mr. A. Hockly on the seaward border of Beacon Hill Park. The only specimen in the Museum herbarium was collected at Nanaimo by John Macoun in 1914.

(4) *Galium verum* (Yellow Bedstraw) is the only yellow-flowered member in its genus. A specimen was collected July 28th, 1962, by Mr. A.R. Davidson and recorded again July 29th, 1966. This plant was growing on the Oak Bay Golf Course, proving that a golf course is a good place for a bird-watcher to do a bit of botanizing. This is another introduced plant and the only specimen in the Provincial Museum was collected in the Gorge District in 1939 by Miss Margaret Crummy.

(5) *Plantago macrocarpa* (North Pacific Plantain) is at home in bogs and other cold wet places. It is sub-coastal but not maritime and occurs as far north as the Aleutian Islands. This species of plantain is unique in its genus in that its capsules are indehiscent and contain no more than two seeds each. Vancouver Island specimens in the Museum herbarium are from Alberni tidal flats, Kaouk River and a peat bog near Kennedy Lake. The writer collected specimens in June near Comox among other rank-growing vegetation near the mouth of the Puntledge River.

(6) *Psilocarphus elatior* (Taller Woolly-heads) is also a plant of Western North America. The only specimen in the Museum herbarium was collected at Sidney in 1913 by John Macoun. It grows in dry beds of vernal pools and our 1966 specimens were collected by the writer in Uplands Park near the shoreline. The tallest of these were less than 6 cm. in height and could be easily overlooked because of their superficial resemblance to a low growing cudweed of similar gray-green appearance. This native plant belongs in the Composite Family.

All Natural History Society members should watch for and report any unusual plants.

## B I R D N O T E S

July 1 to August 14, 1966. GMB

July

- 1: SANDPIPERS, Western & Least, Whitty's Lagoon. ARD  
 1: GREATER YELLOWLEGS, 2, Shoal Harbour, Sidney. ARD  
 7: EARED GREBE, 6, Sidney, V.I. ARD  
 9: HEERMAN'S GULL, 10, Oystercatcher Bay, Robert's Pt. ARD;  
 17th, 1, Clover Pt. AP. Aug. 13th, 50, Islnd Vw Bch. AP.  
 9: BONAPARTE GULL, 200 adults, Oystercatcher Bch. ARD  
 10: DOWITCHER, 1, on UVIC Campus. ARD; Aug. 13, Cadboro By, RM-G.  
 16: SURFBIRD, "Small group", Reah Rock, Sidney Is. VNHS Brd Gp;  
 18th, with turnstones, Clvr Pt. Mrs. ARD; 27th, 3, Clvr Pt. GS  
 16: CALIFORNIA GULL, 12, Esquimalt Lagoon. ARD  
 16: MEW GULL, 6, Esquimalt Lagoon. ARD  
 16: HORNED GREBE, 6, Sidney, V.I., ARD.  
 16: BLACKBELLIED PLOVER, 2, Sidney Spit. Bird Group  
 17: TUFTED PUFFIN, 4, Clvr Pt. AP; 27th, 2, Clvr Pt. Mrs. ARD  
 18: BLACK TURNSTONE(s), Clover Pt. E. Davidson (Mrs. ARD).  
 18: RUDDY TURNSTONE(s), Clvr Pt. Mrs. ARD; 27th, 1, Clvr Pt. GS;  
 Aug. 9th, 1, Bowker-beach, GMB  
 19: RHINOCEROS AUKLET, 43, Ten Mile Pt. AP & TG - "obvious migration - many more seen in following week," A. Poynter.  
 20: DICKCISSEL, 1 adult, nr. Airport, unconfirmed. J. Elliot, non-member. First report since Nov. '60. Bird then stayed till middle Jan. 1961.  
 22: PARASITIC JAEGER, 1, "early bird; not due till mid-Aug." Cadboro Bay, AP  
 26: WANDERING TATTLER, 1, Gordon Hd. Pt. ARD  
 30: FOX SPARROW, 1, near Yacht Club, Uplands, RM-G

Aug.

- 2: COMMON TERN, 13, Bowker-beach. JS; 13th, 100, off Bkr-bch, E&ARD  
 2: SEMIPALMATED PLOVER, 1, Bowker-beach, JS; 13th, Esq. Lgn. E&ARD  
 6: BLACKTHROATED GRAY WARBLER, 1, Munn Rd. AP & JS  
 6: PURPLE MARTIN, 8, Burnside. AP & JS  
 9: ARCTIC LOON, 1, Ten Ml. Pt. ARD; 13th, 1, Islnd View. AP  
 13: PINE GROSBK, 1, Cadboro Bay. RM-G  
 13: VAUX SWIFT, 3, Cadboro Bay, RM-G; 6, Cordova Bay. E&ARD  
 13: LESSER YELLOWLEGS, 3, Cad. Bay. RM-G. 1, Uplands, 1 Bowkr. "  
 13: DUNLIN, 1, Cadboro Bay. RM-G  
 13: CHIPPING SPARROW, 23, Keatings Cross Road. RM-G.  
 13: BLACK SWIFT, 6, Is. View. AP; 6, Cordova Bay, E&ARD; 14th 35-50, Cadboro Bay, RM-G.

- 14: WOOD DUCK, 4 imm., Beaver Lk Pk pond. AP  
 14: MOURNING DOVE, 2, off Dooley, E&ARD

NORTHERN PHALAROPE: "A few off Victoria round the end of July". Mr. & Mrs. ARD. "Some were off Sidney in early August," Mr. Alex. James.

Observers: Victoria Natural History Society Bird Group; Tuesday Group; Mr. & Mrs. A.R. Davidson (Eleanore & ARD); Gladys Soulsby (Comm. & Mrs. H. Soulsby); A. Poynter; J. Slimmon; R. Mackenzie-Grieve; G.M. Bell; J. Elliot, non-member; A. James.

THE VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SCHOLARSHIP FUND

We all know about the Freeman King Scholarship Fund. Those present at the Annual Meeting are aware that through the efforts of "Skipper's" many friends and admirers, the objective of \$5000 has now been reached. This sum invested provides an annual scholarship of \$250.

Members who have joined the Society more recently may not know that the Freeman King Scholarship is not the only one sponsored by the Society. We have our own Natural History Society one, but this one is only partly self-sustaining.

It was early in the year 1961 that the Executive first conceived the idea of a scholarship to assist a University student in the field of biology. In 1962 the Society was able to purchase a \$1000 bond which produces an income of \$50 a year. The following year the Society decided that it could award its first scholarship of \$100 by making up the balance from general funds. We are still paying the balance each year out of general funds. Ours was the first scholarship in the field of natural sciences to be given at the University. The award winners selected by the University have been -  
 1963-64 Gordon Robilliard; 1964-65 Miss Caroline Menzies  
 1965-66 Miss Mary McKellar.

Appreciative letters have been received from each of the students. We quote from one of them: "I would like to thank the Victoria Natural History Society for the Scholarship that was awarded to me this year. It is awards and scholarships like this that give students the incentive to continue studies and try their best."

We believe that both our scholarships are thoroughly worthwhile projects, and we would like to see our own on a sound, self-sustaining basis. Another \$1000 is needed! donations large and small will be most gratefully accepted by the treasurer.  
 K. Sherman.

THE CO-OPERATIVE SAPSUCKER

by E.K. Lemon

Last June I had an opportunity to renew my acquaintance with the Oliver area in the South Okanagan. Before very long anyone interested in natural history will be travelling the 20 miles of the historic fur brigade trail of yesteryear, the White Lake Road. There are so many different types of habitat in this area, that one is assured of seeing many interesting flowers or birds. This late afternoon we were not disappointed. A trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) provided us with a great deal of interest. A yellow bellied sapsucker had drilled, in many places, through the cambium of the delicious sticky sap. Three species of hummingbirds, rufous, blackchinned and calliope were busy sampling the juice as well as a hornet and a bee and when the sapsucker moved off his place was taken by a chipmunk and a squirrel.

I am sure that if there had been more time to spend at the "sapsucker tree" many more customers would have turned up for the "free juice" which is so rich in sugar and possibly other substances which have been absorbed through the tree's root system.

THE PAINTED LADY

The painted lady (*Vanessa cardui*), a medium sized butterfly, is light brown, bordered by an irregular band of black. This is broken by white markings, and by four black spots on the hind wings.

I was very surprised to see an unusual number of these butterflies passing through the garden on Sunday, May 8th. This seemed to be a migration, which occurs every seven or eight years. All the painted ladies I saw were coming from the south and most of them were in a hurry. The odd one or two stopped, so I expect they were spreading themselves out over the countryside.

When this butterfly is in great abundance, it is strongly migratory, and this period is usually followed by one of scarcity. These migrations are probably caused by a shortage of food plant, emigration, or parasites.

I have been collecting butterflies for over five years, but this is the first time I have caught a painted lady in my own garden near Prospect Lake.

Andrew Harcombe,  
Junior Naturalist Member.

AN UNUSUAL FUNGUS  
SARCOFPHAERA CORONARIA

by G. Allen Poynter

Being very much aware that there are more things in life than birds, the Poynter family have made an exerted effort this year to identify most of our more common flowers, trees and mushrooms. On one of our evening outings to Mount Douglas at an elevation of about three hundred feet in a dense stand of Douglas Fir, a fungus was seen pushing through the heavy ground cover of tangled branches and fir needles, first appearance indicated a Puffball, but on closer examination, it was seen to be split in several directions from the top centre and was hollow with a mauve to flesh colour lining having a velvet-like texture.

A search in the immediate vicinity turned up twenty-five fungi in various stages of growth ranging from the one inch in diameter young to the largest individual which was seven and one-half inches across the rim.

Once the fungi bursts open the rim splits and forms a crown-like circle with the points almost symmetrically spaced.

On delivering a specimen to Miss M. C. Melburn, it was identified as *Sarcophphaera Coronaria* which is apparently common in the State of Iowa and considered rare in other locations.

The species has been found in only two or three other locations on Vancouver Island, the first find being in Thetis Park, November 20, 1957.

OBITUARY

by A.R. Davidson

Mr. W. T. Tildesley, who died at the Veteran's Hospital on August 13th, was the editor of the "Naturalist" from April 1950 to March 1952 and associate editor from September 1948 to March 1950. He was also the author of many botanical articles for the magazine. He was formerly professor at the Manitoba Agricultural College and a Veteran of the First World War.

MEETINGS AND FIELD TRIPSEXECUTIVE MEETING:

September 6

Dr. Carl's Office, 8 p.m.  
Provincial Museum.GENERAL MEETING:

September 13

Douglas Building Cafeteria,  
Elliot Street, 8 p.m.Speaker: Miss Enid LemonSubject: Avocet Country:Malheur and Bear River Bird  
RefugesBIRD FIELD TRIP

September 17

Meet at Monterey parking lot  
9:30 a.m. or Thomas Francis  
Park at 10 a.m.Leader: M. MathesonBOTANY MEETING

September 27

Provincial Museum, 8 p.m.

Speaker: Mr. David BallantyneSubject: Influences of Hormones  
on Flowering.AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM

Friday, September 30

Saturday, October 1

Oak Bay Jr. High, 8 p.m.

Speaker: Mr. D.J. NelsonSubject: "Inherit The Wild"JUNIOR GROUPMeet every Saturday at Monterey  
Parking Lot, Douglas at Hillside,  
1:30 p.m. for field trips.Leader: Freeman King,  
Phone 479-2966.

\* \* \* \* \*

Andrew Harwood,  
Junior Naturalist Member.



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### Editors

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