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COVER PICTURE

Photo by Ralph Fryer

 Ross' Gull Rhodostethia rosea

Rarest of Accidental Stragglers

by David Stirling

A meaningful saying many years ago was, "All roads lead to Rome." In the world of birds, apparently, all flyways lead to Clover Point.

On October 27, 1966, Ralph Fryer noticed a strikingly marked small gull among the crowd of Bonaparte's and mews at Clover Point. Ralph was fortunate in obtaining some good 16 mm colour movie footage of this visitor. Later, on November 9, what was probably the same bird was photographed in black and white. See the result on our cover.

The little gull was the size of a Bonaparte's gull but superficially resembled a kittiwake. Back and wings were marked like an immature black-legged kittiwake except that the partial collar was absent and the legs were red. The most important field marks were wedge-shaped, tail with black tip and dark under wings.

Recently, the writer, R. Fryer, R. Y. Edwards and M. C. Matheson critically examined the movie and with the aid of all available bird books we were forced to the conclusion that the unknown bird was an immature Ross' gull. The same bird was reported in the December magazine as a red-legged kittiwake.

Ross' gull breeds in north-eastern Siberia and winters around open waters in the Arctic Ocean. All Canadian records have been from the high Arctic.

How did a Ross' gull get to Clover Point? How did a varied thrush get to New Brunswick or a European crane get to Alberta? It seems that most birds

travel well defined paths and remain within their normal ranges but certain individuals go blundering off in contrary directions. We can only speculate that a Ross' gull was caught up in a great circulation of air from the Gulf of Alaska and joined migrating kittiwakes and Sabine's gulls streaming south off Vancouver Island. Autumn gales finally blew it in to Clover Point.

Whatever the story, there is no doubt that Ross' gull is the 1966 rarity of the year for Victoria.

ON THE MIGRATION OF A WILD GOOSE

By M. A. S.

The grey wind whistles in from the north
And renews a pattern within you.
The cold settles beneath your down
And your instinct calls to your wings.
You will go south.

Your loins have functioned as April does,
Bringing both release and new life.
Better now that you follow your star compass
And refresh your potency.
You will go south.

Your mate will fly wing to wing, calling,
And there will be ease and green food.
But there is no need to urge you to hurry -
Your time piece is more exact than any.
You will go south.

FLEDGLING BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES

By Adrian Paul, Kleena Kleene

Most people expect young birds to have drab plumage or at least different from that of their parents. In the case of black-capped chickadees this is not so.

The four I particularly noticed were perched about six inches apart in a row on the limb of a tree above swampy ground near the river, while their parents bustled about feeding them.

As far as I could see, the four young birds had only two minor differences -- their tails were shorter and they looked as if they had just been issued brand new suits. In other respects, including size, they looked exactly like their parents.

MUTUALISM

By A. Dehen

In two previous issues (Sept. Nov.) the subject of parasitism was introduced. Another relationship between different animals is known as mutualism.

Where in parasitism one partner (the parasite) benefits at the expense of the other (the host), in mutualism, as the name implies, both partners receive a certain amount of benefit from the association. The classic example used to illustrate this relationship is that of the termites and their *Trychonympha*. The latter are flagellates inhabiting the termites intestinal tract. The termites eat wood but cannot digest the cellulose as is, but in the intestinal tract it is converted into absorbable carbohydrates by the flagellates.

This is a case of absolute dependency on each other as without the teamwork neither partner could survive.

A better example perhaps, as it can easily be observed in a saltwater aquarium is that of the hermit crab and the sea anemone. The crab lives with its soft tapering abdomen thrust into the empty shell of a gastropod mollusk upon which it fastens an anemone. The latter acts as camouflage in a way and also discourages some of the crab's enemies with its stinging tentacles. In return the anemone which is a sessile type becomes more mobile and feeds also on food particles floating upward from the crab's meal. When the crab outgrows its shell and finds a larger one to move into, it transplants the anemone on to its new dwelling.

In local waters there is also a hermit crab living in a shell covered with a sponge, but the writer has no personal knowledge as to whether the crab plants a fragment of sponge on its shell or not. It is said that the sponge eventually dissolves the shell. At any rate the relationship is the same. The crab is camouflaged and the sessile sponge becomes mobile and has a better chance of finding a more productive feeding ground.

Another relationship where both partners benefit, and which only recently has been investigated, is known as cleansing symbiosis where certain small fishes, shrimps and crabs pick off parasites and clean up ulcerations on larger fishes. These small scavengers are never molested by their large "customers" or "patients". Some of these cleansing fishes have developed special features such as pointed snouts and tweezer-like teeth suggesting evolution towards cleaning services.

While some of these scavengers go after their hosts, others seem to establish what might be called cleansing stations where fish come for attention. Up to 300 fish have been counted at such a station in a single six hour daylight observation period. Some which could be identified by their wounds or ulcerations returned day after day.

Experiments made by skindivers off the southern California coast tend to show that, when the cleaners at the station were removed, there was a definite increase in ulceration of the attending fish and within a few days the fish population was markedly reduced.

CALLING ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS

We need your black and white photos for the January 10 General Meeting. Bring in or send from one to six of your nature shots to David Stirling, Parks Branch, Department of Recreation and Conservation, at least a week before the meeting. Any size will do. Don't forget to include: What is it, Where it was taken and Who took it.

COVER CONTEST

Coincidence, I think, is always a little amazing. Shortly after the December issue of our magazine came off the press, I sat looking at its cover, wondering if a change of design was in order.

Then, lo and behold, a few days later, I heard mutterings of a letter received by the Executive Committee, telling them the cover design should be changed.

The wording of the letter, I feel, could have been better (it was somewhat peevish and petulant in tone), and I think most people agree that constructive criticism

is preferable to destructive. However, perhaps the present cover design was chosen somewhat arbitrarily, and apparently a new design is desired by more than a few. Therefore, the next play is to pass the ball to those who care.

To produce a new cover motif in the most democratic manner possible, a contest is now open to those who wish to submit their conception of what our magazine cover should be. All suggestions for cover design changes will be welcome and should be sent to the Secretary not later than March 1st. The new designs will be judged by the Executive Committee and the most suitable one, if all goes well, will be on the April or May and ensuing issues. There will, I'm afraid, be no prize for the winner; only the inner satisfaction of seeing his or her design in print.

Editor.

SNOWY OWLS IN VICTORIA, NOVEMBER 1966

These magnificent birds (*Nyctea scandiaca*), which stand some 20-27 inches high, with a wingspan of 38-60 inches, are not seen very often in Victoria during their fall migrations from the Arctic tundra.

Judging by the account of the snowy owl in Bulletin 170, United States National Museum, almost every year there is a migration of these birds to southern Canada. But every four or five years, or multiples of these numbers (1931-1940, last recorded years mentioned) there is a heavy migration which probably coincides with the periodic fluctuations in the abundance of lemmings and Arctic hares. These animals constitute the main food supply of snowy owls.

This year appears to be one of the heavy migrations to Victoria area. From November 10th (date of the first sight record on Newport Ave. of two birds, one a beautiful white male and other either a female or bird of the year) to the date of writing, November 14, there are records of at least six birds sighted, including one at Victoria International Airport as well as on Sidney Island.

One is apt to think of most owls as being dusk or night fliers, but the snowy owl has diurnal habits. Because of this convenience, I had the opportunity, thanks to a phone call from Mr. Jack Todd, to see the female or young of the year bird perching on a chimney pot and the male on a rock bluff at 8 a.m. on November 10th -- a sight I shall always remember.

Regrettably, during the large migrations, fatigue, hunger and trophy hunters plague the wanderers and few return to the frozen north. But in their breeding habitat, "scandiaca" is a marvel of adaption. Only its eyes, talons and tip of its beak show through the dense blanket of down and feathers that warms and waterproofs the surprisingly small body and pads it out to a chubby profile. This owl survives far better in the Arctic area than in the warm and perilous lands to the south.

In the Provincial Museum there are only six snowy owl specimen skins which have been collected in Victoria area. This is a remarkably small number if we remember that the Museum has been established since 1887.

E.K.L.

* * * * *

BIRDS FOR THE RECORD

Correction: The bird listed last month as a redlegged kittiwake has since been identified as a Ross' gull -- very unusual in this area.

Whimbrel (7) - Esquimalt Lagoon -	November 10 -
	Ralph Fryer
Cackling Canada goose (2) - Esquimalt Lagoon -	November 6-11 -
	Tom Briggs
Canada goose (1 lesser; Blenkinsop field -	November 11 -
	Ralph Fryer
Horned lark (2) - Esquimalt Lagoon -	November 11 -
	Tom and Gwen Briggs
Gray partridge (15) - Pat Bay airport -	November 11 -
	Allen Poynter

Goshawk (1) - Martindale Road -	November 12 -
	Ralph Fryer
Virginia rail (1) - Beaver Lake Pk.area -	November 12 -
	Grace Bell
Great horned owl (1) - Bonnie View Place -	November 14 -
	Cy and Lois Morehen and family
European widgeon (1) - Esquimalt Lagoon -	November 19 -
	Murray Matheson and Bird Group
	(first seen October 30)
White-throated sparrow (1) - Florence L.	November 21 -
	Tom and Gwen Briggs
Sabine's gull (6) - Clover Point -	November 25 -
	(1) - Clover Point -
	December 5 -
	Ralph Fryer
Pacific kittiwake (6) - Clover Point -	November 25 -
	(4) - Clover Pt.
	December 7 -
	Ralph Fryer
Gadwall (1) - Raper's Pond -	November 26 -
	Ralph Fryer
Barrow's goldeneye (1) - Dallas at Cook -	November 27 -
	Alan Hockly
Starling (1) - distinctly pale yellow -	November 27 -
	Beacon Hill Park - Alan Hockly and two others
Heermann's gull (1 immature) - Clover Pt.	December 4 -
	Allen Poynter
Western gull (1) - Clover Point -	December 7 -
	Ralph Fryer
Snowy owl - numerous sightings - 5 at once	
	on Trial Island -
	latest report (1) - Trial Island
	December 3 -
	Mrs. Monckton and the Davidsons
	(3) along the Cowichan River,
	near the lake.
	(1) on Mary Tod Island -
	December 10 -
	A.R. & E. Davidson
Whimbrel (1) - Shoal Bay -	December 10 -
	A.R. Davidson
Rufous hummingbird - (1) - Victoria Ave.	December 10 -
	Frank Benton
Ringbilled gull (1) - Hollywood Cresc.	December 11 -
	Helen Matheson

YOU CAN HELP SAVE THE BIGHORN

The California Bighorn Sheep sounds like an immigrant to Canada, but in fact he's native to the interior of British Columbia. Less than 2,000 California Bighorns survive today, out of the millions that flourished in the West when the white settlers came.

In the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia, near Vaseux Lake, a band of about 100 Bighorns is fighting for survival. This band at Vaseux Lake is unique in all of British Columbia because the sheep are often seen by tourists travelling along busy Highway 97. Who can forget the proud sight of a full-curl ram and his ewes on the rocky bluffs beside Vaseux Lake? But in truth, the sad picture in recent years is often of winter-starved sheep standing dully near the highway, awaiting death from starvation, disease, or collision with traffic.

Can this unique band of Bighorns survive? This depends on one factor -- enough food. They must compete for their food with domestic cattle that now graze the same range.

To save the Vaseux Bighorns, the Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society, representing most of the outdoors and recreation groups of the region, has agreed to purchase 500 acres of prime rangeland for grazing by the sheep alone. Completion of this purchase depends on your financial support.

OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN PARKS SOCIETY
Box 787, Summerland, B.C.

MEMBERSHIPS

Single \$2.00 Club \$5.00

Enclosed please find \$_____ for

OPERATION BIGHORN

Name _____

Address _____

All contributions, above Membership fees, are tax deductible.

THANK YOU!!

We would like to thank everyone who attended and thereby contributed to the success of the party after the bird-count.

M. & P. Matheson

JUNIOR JOTTINGS

by Freeman King

In spite of rainy weather, the Junior Branch held regular weekly meetings and good attendance. They went on a field trip to Mt. Newton and studied the pond life in the little lake. On the way to the lake, we noted a lot of young western yew and thickets of dogwood.

The small lake was very rich in plant and animal life and specimens were collected for the University of Victoria.

We also noticed several large trees blown down on the east side of the lake, and an abundance of mushrooms.

The Group also made a lichen survey along the Rain Forest Trail in Francis Park, and while doing so, found many spider cocoons containing tiny jumping spiders.

To compare winter conditions with what they had found during the summer, the intermediate section of the Group went on a field trip to the Dogwood Trail in Goldstream Park. They also went around the west side of Beaver Lake and found a variety of fungi and a surprising number of holly seedlings, but very few waterfowl, although chickadees and kinglets were quite prevalent.

The Group congratulates Stephen Pursell for winning a World Book Encyclopedia by successfully answering the Victoria Daily Times "Ask Andy" column question regarding whales.

* * * * *

S A L M O N

By Freeman King

During the recent salmon spawning run in Goldstream Creek, thousands of people, young and old, stopped to watch that fascinating phase of a salmon's life.

Many of the "salmon watchers" expect to see the fish leaping out of the water -- probably because they have seen films showing sockeye and spring salmon. The salmon in Goldstream are coho (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*) and chum or dog salmon (*O. keta*). Coho will jump up small waterfalls like those at the entrance to the campground and then move on to the up-stream pools. When they first come into the stream in October, they are a bright silver which soon dulls to a reddish hue. Their spawning habits differ from the chum; they pair off during the run and often the females will fight off males that attempt to follow them. During the run, the fish move upstream at dusk and dawn and stay in deep "waiting pools" during the day. When the eggs hatch, the young fry stay in the creek for about a year before going out to sea. When they return to their home stream in their third year of life as mature fish, they will weigh up to twelve pounds.

This year (1966) was not a good year for coho -- perhaps because the water was low, or maybe it was one of the "off years" when very few return to spawn.

On the other hand, it was a good year for chums and it was estimated that nearly 10,000 moved up Goldstream Creek, small stream though it is.

Chum habits vary from that of coho in as much that they begin to run early in November and continue until sometime in December. They do not pair off so readily and the males fight a great deal. This year the ratio of females to males was estimated to be 60 and 40 per cent.

The two species of fish also differ in the type of redd or egg depository they make -- the coho redd is much more elaborate. Many of the less carefully protected chum eggs are eaten by gulls and dippers that keep an eye on the egg-laying process and dive in as soon as the way is clear to pick up any easy meal.

After hatching, chum go directly to the sea and generally return in their fourth year, although a few

return after three years, perhaps because better feeding matured them more quickly.

When they are mature, male chum develop a hooked nose and their large dog-like teeth are exposed, hence the name "dog salmon". These fish do not go far upstream and as they rush the riffles in the shallows of the creek, they often run aground, showing most of their bodies above water. Both chum and coho die after spawning, but many cling to life for a week or more, drifting listlessly in the current as death overtakes them. Seagulls have a field day at spawning time, gorging themselves on dead and dying fish and becoming so full they can barely fly -- they seem particularly fond of picking out the eyes of the fish, even before they are dead. A fungus also attacks the expiring fish, speeding the process of decomposition and hastening the return of their body chemicals to the water and land that bore them in life.

No one who has watched the throes of a salmon spawning run can help but be impressed and realize that our streams must be protected from pollution, and the scouring of severe run-offs, to assure the perpetuation of salmon which are so important to the economy of this Province.

Are we thinking ahead and acting to assure spawning runs of the future?

* * * * *

THE TWELFTH VERSE

I know one songbird's empty nest,
 Upon a lovely wooded crest.
 The fledgelings deemed it paradise,
 But distant, glowing stars enticed;
 They found sweet fields of golden grain,
 But knew not paradise again.

J. Gordon Stace-Smith.

MEETINGS AND FIELD TRIPS

There will be no executive meeting in January.

AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM:

Friday, Jan. 6 and Saturday Jan. 7, 8 P.M. at Oak Bay Junior High School Auditorium.

Enjoy "Canada's Mountain Wilderness" with Mr. Edgar T. Jones of Edmonton, Alberta.

GENERAL MEETING:

Tuesday, January 10.

Members exhibition of black and white photographs. Come and participate. See announcement in this magazine.

BIRD FIELD TRIP:

Saturday, January 14.

Meet at Monterey Parking Lot, Douglas at Hillside 9:30 a.m. or Clover Point at 10 a.m. Bring lunch.

Leader: Mr. M. Matheson
Phone 383-7381

BOTANY MEETING:

Tuesday, January 17
8 p.m. Provincial Museum.

Mr. Freeman King will demonstrate how to identify deciduous trees by their bark.

JUNIOR GROUP:

Meet every Saturday at Monterey Parking Lot, Douglas at Hillside for field trips.

Leader: Mr. Freeman King
Phone: 479-2966.

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