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THE VICTORIA NATURALIST



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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Victoria B.C.

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COVER PICTURE

Photo by Ralph Fryer

SNOWY OWL Nyctea scandiaca

This particular snowy owl, with a puzzled expression on its face, was the one which frequented an old brick chimney on the B. C. Hydro property on Store Street last month.

The chimney is fifty feet or more in height, with an inside diameter at the bottom of about ten feet, and for many years has been the home for many of the pigeons which can always be found in the down-town area.

It would appear that the owl was after the pigeons, but it fell down the chimney, and was seen by Rob MacKenzie-Grieve the next morning. He picked it up and put it outside, but the next day there it was again, apparently none the worse for its adventure. This time Rob took it home, fed it, kept it for a day or two and then released it on the rocky hill overlooking Island Road, a place much favoured by the snowy owls this winter as a look-out point.

This time the owl did not return to the chimney, which is just as well, as it is going to be put to use again, with a heavy screen on top. Now, of course, the pigeons will have to find a new home.

Snowy owls can still be seen around Victoria, and from reports received, some have made their way south as far as Corvallis in Oregon, about 300 miles from Victoria; Victoria is about 1400 miles from their breeding territory. What is the motivation?

A.R.D.

W. D. REITH

1919 - 1967

Bill Reith died on January 5, 1967. He was 47 years old. Bill was a naturalist in the broadest and best sense of that often misused word. At the time of his death he was the editor of this magazine.

Bill devoted his life to the outdoors. For years he worked with the British Columbia Forest Service. Since 1962 he worked with the Provincial Parks Branch. He was a tireless worker for the Boy Scouts Association. His family was a closely knit unit that enjoyed long and sometimes rugged holidays in the wild. And one of his greatest delights was to take one of his cameras into some wild place to capture the endless beauty that he always found there.

We all reveal our inner thoughts and feelings in different ways. Perhaps the camera was Bill's most effective medium for expressing himself. His cameras revealed his artistic talents. The proof is in his pictures, and they reveal his skill far better than my words could ever do.

Bill Reith got things done. That was why he was your editor, for he could usually find time for just one more task. He crammed more into his life than most people who far outlive his 47 years.

Bill was a cheerful person, and he usually accepted the inevitable with a grin and a bit of penetrating wit. I do not believe that he would want us to be too downcast now. It is far better to dwell on his pleasant manner and on his many accomplishments. It is really quite a happy thought that fate put him among us, and that he did so much for us.

We have just experienced an ending. But how much sadder it would be if there had been no beginning.

R.Y.E.

"OFF SEASON" GROWTH

W. H. Warren

It has been a source of astonishment and wonder to observe how many plants under local conditions make considerable growth in seasons other than the Spring. I was first made aware of this when I had a commercial holly orchard. Under good moisture conditions, the Fall growth was almost as great as the Spring growth. Growth in Spring starts in early April and is complete in eight or ten weeks, followed by a rest period. With the first Fall rains or with irrigation in August or September growth again occurs.

Scotch broom and other shrubs behave in a similar manner.

Many of the early Spring wildflowers start growth in the Fall. I observed a number of ladyslippers (*Calypso bulbosa*) growing on a log in Goldstream Park in November with each single leaf over two inches long. Of course, the most striking of these plants is the licorice ferns growing on rocks and the upper sides of branches on mature, big leafed maples (*Acer macrophyllum*). These start growth with the first Fall rains in September and continue until Spring. The germination and growth of some plants in the Fall is also worth recording. The annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*) germinates in the Fall wet season and by March it is in flower, completing its cycle by the first of May. The Garry oak (*Quercus garryana*) drops its acorns in October. Those which find conditions conducive to growth may produce a ten or twelve inch root by Spring, long before there is any evidence of vegetable growth above ground.

Another never ending source of wonder is the speed with which certain trees produce flowers and mature seed in the Spring. If you are interested, note the ash and elm. The seed of the cottonwood is flying in late April and it germinates in only a few days and will produce trees up to three feet in height by Fall, under favourable conditions.

The ash trees on Douglas Street, planted on the sidewalk, had staminate flowers in bloom on January 16th 1967.

CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS - continued

| SPECIES: | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | TOTAL |
|---------------------------|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|------|-----|-----|----|-------|
| Hairy Woodpecker | | 1 | | 1 | | | 1 | | 2 | | | | 5 |
| Pileated Woodpecker | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | | 1 | 4 | | | 12 |
| Downy Woodpecker | | 9 | | | 6 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 2 | | | 35 |
| Skylark | | | | | | | 33 | | 16 | 4 | 38 | | 91 |
| Steller's Jay | 1 | 3 | | 2 | | | | | | | | | 6 |
| Common Raven | 12 | 3 | 7 | 38 | | | 6 | 3 | 6 | 35 | 1 | | 111 |
| Northwestern Crow | 75 | 35 | 134 | 148 | 48 | 172 | 357 | 103 | 262 | 32 | 103 | 19 | 1488 |
| Chestnut-backed Chickadee | 13 | 113 | 38 | 67 | 38 | 11 | 140 | 69 | 76 | 15 | 20 | | 600 |
| Common Bushtit | 14 | | | 37 | | 17 | 24 | | 34 | | | | 109 |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch | | 3 | 2 | 5 | 1 | | 6 | 1 | 9 | 4 | 1 | | 32 |
| Brown Creeper | 3 | 3 | | 5 | 3 | 1 | 4 | | 15 | | 1 | | 35 |
| Dipper | | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | 5 |
| Bewick's Wren | 1 | 5 | 7 | 11 | 3 | 12 | 14 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 7 | | 70 |
| Winter Wren | 9 | 11 | 12 | 22 | 2 | 4 | 19 | 4 | 9 | 2 | 1 | | 115 |
| Robin | 10,000 | 30 | 166 | 390 | 89 | 165 | 1622 | 69 | 1970 | 65 | 281 | | 14847 |
| Varied Thrush | 16 | 52 | 16 | 953 | | 3 | 173 | | 8 | 15 | 7 | | 1243 |
| Hermit Thrush | | 1 | | 1 | | | 3 | | | | | | 5 |
| Townsend's Solitaire | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | 13 | 23 | 8 | 91 | 8 | 35 | 105 | 1 | 53 | 15 | 35 | | 387 |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 1 | 15 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 9 | 63 | 15 | 16 | | 2 | | 137 |
| Bohemian Waxwing | | | 20 | | | | | | | | | | 20 |
| Cedar Waxwing | | | | | | | 39 | 4 | | | | | 43 |
| Northern Shrike | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Starling | 140 | 40 | 721 | 126 | 121 | 52 | 3143 | 277 | 1613 | 165 | 13 | | 6410 |
| Townsend's Warbler | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| House Sparrow | | 20 | 5 | 24 | 11 | 122 | 147 | 49 | 15 | 30 | 15 | | 438 |
| Western Meadowlark | | 6 | 7 | | 1 | 7 | 23 | | | | | | 44 |
| Red-winged Blackbird | 9 | 7 | 36 | | | | | 40 | | | | | 92 |
| Brewer's Blackbird | 11 | 3 | 100 | | | | 50 | 6 | | 1 | 215 | | 386 |
| Evening Grosbeak | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Purple Finch | 6 | 20 | 2 | 44 | | 2 | 4 | 4 | | 1 | | | 83 |
| House Finch | | 30 | 17 | 55 | 1 | 58 | 137 | 94 | 12 | | 46 | | 450 |
| Pine Grosbeak | | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | 7 |
| Pine Siskin | 64 | 65 | | 3 | | | 20 | 40 | 116 | | 100 | | 408 |
| American Goldfinch | | | | | | | 70 | | | | | | 70 |
| Red Crossbill | 16 | 29 | 2 | 9 | | | 35 | 18 | 35 | 30 | 25 | | 199 |
| Rufous-sided Towhee | 11 | 18 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 17 | 36 | 11 | 20 | 7 | 10 | | 149 |
| Slate-coloured Junco | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Oregon Junco | 120 | 299 | 100 | 225 | 4 | 21 | 308 | 138 | 76 | 56 | 95 | | 1442 |
| Harris' Sparrow | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| White-crowned Sparrow | 2 | | 1 | | | | 8 | | | | 6 | | 17 |

CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS continued

| <u>SPECIES</u> | <u>A</u> | <u>B</u> | <u>C</u> | <u>D</u> |
|----------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Golden-crowned Sparrow | 11 | 37 | 15 | 7 |
| White-throated Sparrow | | 1 | | |
| Fox Sparrow | 3 | 12 | 2 | 4 |
| Song Sparrow | 12 | 16 | 8 | 13 |
| <u>Total, Individuals</u> | <u>15,892</u> | <u>1,810</u> | <u>4,023</u> | <u>4,747</u> |
| <u>Area Species Totals</u> | <u>58</u> | <u>72</u> | <u>72</u> | <u>71</u> |

Total number of birds --- 65,022

Seen during count period but not on count day:

Snow goose, European widgeon, red phalarope, Heermann's gull, Western Bluebird, Hutton's vireo, orange-crowned warbler, brown-headed cowbird.

AREAS AND PARTICIPANTS: CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUSArea A: Prospect Lake, Tod Inlet

Mr. R. MacKenzie-Grieve, Mr. & Mrs. S. Mitchell,
Mr. A.C. Schutz, Mr. R. Phillips, Mr. Freeman King,
Miss N. Chapman, Miss S. Sanderman-Allen (Jnr.)

Area B: Florence Lake, Goldstream Mt. Finlayson

Mr. & Mrs. T. Briggs, Mr. E. Moody, Miss J. Hannay, Mr. & Mrs.
W. Fitzpatrick, Mr. J.M. Meiklejohn, Mr. R. Huckin, Mr. D.
McWhirter, Mr. G. Sorenson (Jnr.)

Area C: Esquimalt Lagoon, Witty's Lagoon

Mr. D. Stirling, Mr. D. Guthrie, Dr. D.B. Turner,
Mr. C.P. Lyons, Mr. F. Buffam.

Area D: Portage Inlet, Thetis Lake, Millstream Rd.

Mr. K.R. Beckett, Mr. Wm. Adams, Mr. R.Y. Edwards,
Mr. D. Gray, Mr. P. Douglas.

Area E: Beacon Hill Park, Esquimalt

Mr. & Mrs. R. Fryer, Miss L. Roberts, Mr. M. Seymour, Mr. D.
Gain, Mrs. G. Soulsby, Mr. A. Hockly, Mr. H. Warren,
Mr. B. Holmes.

| <u>E</u> | <u>F</u> | <u>G</u> | <u>H</u> | <u>I</u> | <u>J</u> | <u>K</u> | <u>L</u> | <u>TOTAL</u> |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|---------------|
| 1 | 10 | 24 | 26 | 8 | | 38 | | 177 |
| | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 1 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 | | 41 |
| 7 | 15 | 22 | 10 | 3 | 5 | 11 | | 122 |
| <u>3897</u> | <u>5871</u> | <u>12356</u> | <u>3866</u> | <u>7669</u> | <u>1740</u> | <u>2286</u> | <u>865</u> | <u>65,022</u> |
| <u>66</u> | <u>71</u> | <u>87</u> | <u>54</u> | <u>74</u> | <u>38</u> | <u>64</u> | <u>37</u> | |

Total Species - - - - 129

Compiled by: David and Ruth Stirling.

Areas, Participants, (cont'd)Area F: Clover Point, Oak Bay

Mr. G.A. Poynter, Mr. A. James, Miss M.C. Melburn, Mrs. L.
Parris, Mrs. M. Winstone, Mr. R. Reith (jnr.), Mr. J. Parris
(jnr.)

Area G: Gordon Head, Cadboro Bay Mt. Douglas

Mr. & Mrs. A.R. Davidson, Rev. and Mrs. D. Sparling, Mrs. H.M.
S. Bell, Dr. G.C. Carl, Miss P. McAfee, Mr. D. Turnbull, Mr. E.
Thorn.

Area H: Swan Lake, Gorge, Panama Flats

Miss E. Lemon, Mrs. M. Slocombe, Miss L. Slocombe (Jnr.)
Mr. & Mrs. C. Morehen, Mr. J. Morehen (Jnr.)

Area I: Blenkinsop Lake, Rithets, Elk Lake

Mr. M. Matheson, Mr. & Mrs. G. Hooper, Mr. J.E. Underhill

Area J: Wilkinson Road, Quick's Pond

Mr. F. Beebe, Mr. K. Hodson

Area K: Martindale Rd., Island View Beach

Mrs. R. Stirling, Mr. M. Miller, Mr. R. Storey (Jnr.)

Area L: Trial Islands, Chain Islands

Mr. C. Guiguet, Miss J. Guiguet

Photographers: Mr. & Mrs. D. Hancock, Mr. Wm. Reith.

Total hours in the field: 129; by car 46 hrs; on foot
80 hrs; by boat 3 hrs.

Total party miles: 376; by car 308 miles; on foot 60 miles;
by boat 8 miles.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Congratulations to Dave Stirling and York Edwards for the excellent display of members' black and white photographs presented at the January meeting. We must do that again next year.

To members of the Society who were unable to attend the January General Meeting, the proposed amendments to the constitution and by-laws, as well as the increase in membership dues as listed in the November 1966 issue of the Naturalist, were approved without change by majority vote.

WANTED IMMEDIATELY - an editor for the Victoria Naturalist. To anyone who feels that they are not participating in the society's activities as much as they would like - or should - this job is the answer. To the newer members, please don't feel you haven't 'belonged' for a sufficient length of time. We need your help.

To our longstanding members, please take another look at your spare time, as this is an interesting occupation that will put you in touch with the entire society and widen your outlook in the field of natural history; and, once organized, would not take up much time.

PHOTO SHOW

I hope January's Photo Show will excite all camera fans to get out and capture more of nature's beauties and moods on film for next year's bigger and better exhibition.

I thank all those contributors who made the evening a success. I apologize to Mrs Alison Berry for mislaying her excellent barn owl pictures on show night.

D.S.

A TRIP TO DUCK LAKE

It has been proposed that we join with the Vancouver Natural History Society in a field trip during the first week in April this year to Duck Lake near Creston, B. C. This would be for the purpose of observing the migratory swans, geese and other waterfowl which go through that area in their thousands.

Last year, several of us made this trip and came back enthusiastic and ready to go again this year.

If you are interested will you please get in touch with Gladys Soulsby at 2150 Granite Street. Phone 388-5028.

KAMLOOPS

The number of natural history societies in the Province is increasing almost annually. Kamloops now have a natural history branch to their museum association, and this winter did a Christmas Count of the area. They managed to find 24 species and 1116 birds. These were counted within a ten mile radius of the city. Included were 600 Bohemian waxwings, 250 evening grosbeaks, 24 red-wing blackbirds and 20 white-wing crossbills.

BIRDS FOR THE RECORD

by Gordon and Gwennie Hooper (477-1152, evenings)

| | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Peregrine falcon (1) - Ten Mile Pt. | - - December 24 - |
| | R. MacKenzie-Grieve |
| Orange-crowned warbler (1) - Penrhyn St. | - December 25 - |
| | R. MacKenzie-Grieve |
| Great horned owl (1) - Beacon Hill Park | - - December 28 - |
| (Lovers' Lane) | Alex James and Ralph Fryer |
| Western bluebird (6) - Prospect Lake Rd. | January 5 - |
| | Burnside - Freeman King |
| (4) - Granville St. | - January 14 - |
| | A.R. and Eleanore Davidson |
| Townsend's warbler (1) - Alpine Cr. | - January 6-11; 16 - |
| | Gordon and Gwennie Hooper |
| Common scoter (1) - Clover Point | - January 14 - |
| | Murray Matheson and Bird Group |
| Band-tailed pigeon (100) - Henderson Rd. | - January 14 - |
| | Enid Lemon and Mrs. M.A. Slocombe |
| Common raven (50) - Little Saanich Mt. | - January 15 - |
| | Allen Poynter |

JUNIOR JOTTINGS

by Freeman King

The wet weather did not curtail the activities of the junior branch. We have had field trips to Mount Douglas Park, where the stream was explored. There it was noted that the Douglas maple predominated the sides of the stream and the bank along the beach. We also noted many sea birds in the bay.

A hike along the Arbutus Ridge trail at Goldstream was more than interesting. We noted that the hazel catkins were almost ready to break into blossom, but that very few new flower buds were to be found on the dogwood trees.

It was interesting to see that the generally little stream was now a tumbling cascade of water, making many different kinds of waterfalls as it rushed down the hillside. Here mosses, lichens and polypody ferns grew in abundance, and we found many species of beetles under the bark of old stumps and logs.

The group have made a survey of all the trails at Francis Park and have cleared the fallen branches from the paths. Some work was done in the laboratory, making slides and studying the tiny water creatures found in the pools.

A number of the junior branch took part in the annual bird count.

Some of the leader section spent a morning at the Federal Forest Laboratories on Burnside Road learning how to make microscope slides, thanks to Dr. John Chapman and Mr. Ferris.

The juniors will be completing the Centennial Trail this spring as well as replanting the old fire burn. These two projects will be our contribution to Centennial Year.

THE VANCOUVER CHRISTMAS COUNT

This year the Vancouver Natural History Society made their best count in their history. The weather was excellent, the various districts were well planned and manned, and they arrived at a total of 131 species. This figure included rock doves, which to date have not been recognized by the Audubon Society, though there are many pigeons gone wild in both Vancouver and Victoria. The identification of one other bird was disputed, the Thayer gull, although we have good evidence this gull is present on the coast in winter months.

A.R.D.

STRATHCONA

Parks are bits of Nature,
Places to retreat
To cogitate upon the rate
Of Nature's full defeat.

Chorus: O hasten to our parklands,
Gambol through the stumps.
O sport and play throughout the day
Upon the tailings dumps.

Parks are lands to cherish,
Beautiful and still.
Hear loud and long the happy song
Of ore trucks on the hill.

Chorus.

Parks preserve our wonders,
Parks preserve our trees.
To save a few, the felling crew
Will miss those with disease.

Chorus.

Parks are democratic,
Parks shall favour all,
Especially those in business clothes
With lots of wherewithal.

Chorus.

Tent among the slash heaps,
Fish among the silt,
Sniff the draft in a mining shaft;
What wonders God has built.

Chorus.

"D.R.C."

MEETINGS AND FIELD TRIPS

February 1967

EXECUTIVE MEETING:

Tuesday, Feb. 7.

8 P.M. Dr. Carl's office,
Provincial Museum.AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM:Friday, Feb. 10 and
Saturday, Feb. 11,
8 P.M. Oak Bay Junior
High School Auditorium."Land of the Drowned River",
by Mr. Charles J. Stine.GENERAL MEETING:Tuesday, Feb. 14,
8 P.M. Douglas
Bldg. Cafeteria.Mr. J.E. Underhill will show
slides and talk about a
naturalist's experiences in
B.C.'s "Dry Interior".ORNITHOLOGY MEETING:

Tuesday, Feb. 21.

Chairmanship of Mr. M.
Matheson. Subject to be
announced at General Meeting.BIRD FIELD TRIP:

Saturday, Feb. 25

Meet at Monterey Parking Lot
at 9:30 A.M. or Black Swan,
Elk Lake at 10 A.M.

Bring lunch.

Leader: Mr. Murray Matheson
Phone: 383-7381JUNIOR GROUP:Meet every Saturday at
Monterey Parking Lot,
Douglas at Hillside for
Field Trips. 1:30 p.m.Leader: Mr. Freeman King
Phone: 479-2966.

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