## THE VICTORIA NATURALIST



published by the VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Vol.23, No.7

March, 1967

#### COVER PICTURE

Photo by the late W. D. Reith

SKUNK CABBAGE Lysichiton americanum Hult. & St.John

My first glimpse of the yellow skunk cabbage was from a train. It was April, and I had come across Canada for the first time with my nose pressed to the window. And when we came to the mountains I remember trying to sit on the floor for a time to see if from there it was easier to look up the mountain slopes. It was, but the astonished natives around me were distracting, so I conformed again.

The train rattled into British Columbia, and we were in heavy forest. Two features whizzing past the rain-speckled windows were of special interest. One was a tree with its foliage in flat layers that reminded me of ferns. I suspected I was looking at western red cedar for the first time, and I was.

It was gloomy weather, and the sombre forest was gloomy, and snow was everywhere, but in wet places there was bare ground, and glowing out of the gloom were my first yellow skunk cabbages. I was impressed. The plant was a big cheerful splash of colour, handsomely sculptured, and quite suitable to proclaim the joy of spring. By contrast, the skunk cabbages I had hunted down every April in Ontario's swamps were drab little hoods of green and purple only inches high. Here in the west was a plant as big and bold and brash as the wild mountains about it.

Few of our flowers are such an eye-full, and the smell is really not so bad - if you stay up-wind.

#### A PILL-BUG GOES WALKING

After repeated trials, close observation and careful measurements, the speed of one of these little fellows can be confidently stated to be 1 mile in 2 days 10 hours and 40 minutes, if travelling "non-stop" (i.e. 24 hours a day).

The trials were made on a fairly thick-piled livingroom rug which admittedly affords a somewhat more even surface than an ordinary grass lawn with obstacles such as sticks and stones.

Even if normal outdoor conditions be reckoned to cut in half the above speed, the resulting estimated rate would seem remarkably good for a small traveller of such stout build, equipped with such a relatively thick suit of armor.

So, in spite of the glamour of space-age speed, hats off to our little terrestial crustacean, Armadillidium vulgare!

on th.M.J.M. for a time to gee if from there it was carier

#### bestoling I master builder " master bedat

Early last summer I noticed one of our resident house sparrows busily carting long bits of dry grass into our bird feeder. He would scramble through the wire netting, deposit his straggly bit of goods and fly off for another piece. I pondered on his actions thinking it was an odd place to build a nest if that was what he was doing. Perhaps he was trying to attract a female who wanted something in the penthouse line. That should really read females as the structure was quickly taking on harem proportions. However, no interested females appeared. This did not deter our "master builder". The feeder was rapidly filled with nest material - not just a cosy bottom layer but full to the brim all the way round. A bird psychologist might be able to make sense of this gigantic "nest" - It still hangs there slightly shaken down by wind and weather and I am leaving it there in the hope that our little avian contractor decides, next season, to refurbish his "home with a view".

MAS

\*

See Page 79 for revised scale of dues. - Ed.

#### CHARTER AND BY-LAWS

The November, 1966, issue of the Victoria Naturalist gave details of the proposed amendments.

These changes were ratified at the General Meeting of the Society on January 10th, 1967, and have been filed with the Registrar of Companies, as required by the "Societies Act" and are therefore now effective.

Members' attention is drawn particularly to the section stating that the Society's fiscal year now ends on April 30th of each year, and that dues for 1967-1968 become payable following that date.

The new scale of dues is:-

Ordinary Member - - - \$3.00 per year

Family Members - - - \$5.00 per year

Junior Member - - - \$2.00 per year

Life Member- Single - -\$50.00 per year

Husband and Wife

Life Membership 75.00 per year

Will members please note that dues as printed on the back cover, are no longer valid.

E.E.B.

#### THINKING IT OUT

A piece of hard toast thrown out on to the flat roof of a restaurant on the Patricia Bay Highway attracted the attention of a crow. The proprietor, looking out of the window above, was interested to see how the bird would handle it. The toast was too hard, so the crow carried it to a wet place on the roof and flew away. Shortly afterwards, it returned, tried it again, and then turned it over in the water, left it again and later returned and ate it.

More toast was put out and the crow (only one appeared) repeated the performance many times.

Mr. and Mrs. Landy, the owners, vouch for the truth of this incident.

A.R.D.

The Vancouver N.H.S.is definitely organizing a trip to the Valley of the Swans (Duck Lake near Creston). This date to see the spring migration is in the first week of April.

Phone Gladys Soulsby (388-5028) if interested.

#### COMMENSALISM

Commensalism is the term used to denote a relationship of two different types of animals where one is the host and the other a boarder. In most cases, the host is not even aware that he is being exploited, and is suffering no harm.

This is where commensalism differs from true parasitism (see Sept.and November, 1966, issues) where the host often suffers considerable harm or even death. Commensalism differs, too, from mutualism (see January, 1967, issue) where each partner benefits from the other's presence.

A good example of commensalism is that of the small flatworm which attaches itself to the gills of a king-crab. As the crab feeds, particles of food float up and are caught by the worm who thus receives shelter, food and transportation. As this food consists only of the wasted scraps of the crab's meal, the worm cannot be considered a parasite as the host suffers no harm at all.

There are many such harmless associations. The Portugese Man-of-War (Physalia) and other large jellyfish (Scyphozoa) give shelter to many small fishes and crustaceans. These seem to have developed an immunity to their host's poisonous tentacles which, however, deter larger predators from attacking them. One might consider this to be a borderline case between commensalism and mutualism as it is possible that these small fishes attract larger ones which then become the victims of the jellyfish. In such a case, both partners would benefit. Many shellfish shelter certain small soft-bodied crabs and fishes. A burrowing worm, aptly named the Innkeeper worm, is host to small fishes, crabs, and other worms.

Among the insects we find beetles and other insects living undisturbed in ants' nests where they act mostly as scavengers. More than 1500 species are known. Higher up in the scale of life we find, on a few isolated islands near New Zealand, the lizard-like Tuatara living in the same burrow with a petrel, and feeding partly on insects and partly on scraps of food brought in by the bird.

The larger sponges are perhaps host to the greatest variety of commensals and have been known to house hundreds of small crustaceans, fishes, worms, etc.

Finally, commensalism, mutualism and parasitism are all related associations.

A. Dehen.

#### NEEDING TRANSPORTATION?

Will members who, due to lack of transportation, cannot attend General Meetings kindly send the Secretary a postcard giving their name, address, phone number and a diagram showing their location in relation to some main road?

Will members with passenger space in their car, and who would be willing to make a slight detour to pick up another member, please send the Secretary a postcard giving name, address, phone number and route normally travelled?

We'll then try to be the link between volunteer transporters and would-be transportees. (Postcards rather than phone calls, please, as postcards are a handy accurate reference and are sure to reach the Secretary who is often out and might miss a phone call.)

K.S.

#### A NEW EDITOR

Starting with this issue, the Victoria Naturalist has a new editor, Mrs Ruth Chambers, who was formerly a columnist with the Victoria Daily Times where she wrote under her maiden name of Enke. Please send all contributions direct to Mrs. Chambers at 4317 Blenkinsop Rd., Victoria, B.C. (477-1676)

As what might be called Emergency Assembly Editor, I have been greatly helped by the Executive Committee, by the kind practicality of Miss Monks, and by that invaluable file of unused articles by members.

The file is almost empty now. So do keep those articles and fillers coming. An editor must have something to edit. Thank you.

#### COVER CONTEST

The closing date for the Cover Contest (see January, 1967 issue) has been changed from March 1st to March 31st.

The change of design only applies to the top portion of the cover, that part above the Cover Picture.

Suggested cover designs should be sent to the Editor, 4317 Blenkinsop Road.

New designs will be judged by the Executive Committee at its April meeting.

#### THE HAZEL

The hazel shrub or small tree, <u>Corylus cornuta</u> Marsh, var. <u>californica</u> (D.C.) Sharp, grows abundantly at Goldstream, and a few specimens grow along the Sooke Road just behind Luxton.

It grows in clumps, sending up many "sucker shoots"each year and can befome a real thicket. Its average height is 12 to 15 feet, and occasionally may be over 20 feet tall. The bark is smooth, reddish-brown in colour with small whitish streaks showing. In an older tree, the main trunk becomes quite dark and often scale-like.

The shrub develops catkins the year before blooming. In early spring, the bright yellow tassels hanging from the slender twigs are spectacular against the darker background. The tiny female catkins with their bright red styles appear on the end of a bud, and one must look closely to see them. Both catkins appear before the oval, pointed leaves that are thin and sharply double-toothed. These leaves almost hide the nut, enclosed in a stocking like a husk.

The nut at first seems full of a pith-like substance and the embryo seed is like a pale yellow dot. By the end of the summer the seed or nut has filled the wooden shell. The edible nut is the same as those you can buy in a store. It is often called a crack nut. This nut is a favourite with squirrels which harvest and store them in a hollow tree or under a log for a winter's supply. Crows also take the nuts, but I don't know how they break the shell.

The wood of the hazel is durable and tough and will last almost indefinitely under proper conditions. In England the hazel is grown commercially for its nuts and for its wood. It is grown in coppices and cut in rotation. The stems are used for hurdles, wattles, cattle cribs and hoops for barrels. The pieces are soaked in water to make them pliable. They are often used as "spars" and "binders" for thatching. Twigs and slender branches are bundled into "faggots" and used as kindling.

At one time hazel was used for charcoal-making in the old earth mound method. It is a tie for bundles of brush and for the reeds often used for thatching. It makes walking sticks, hunting crops, handles for tools, fishing-poles and bows for boys.

A hazel switch, generally hung just below the mantelpiece, could be used on bad boys. I know!

Freeman King.

By Freeman King

The Juniors met every week as usual, rain or shine. They went to Thetis Lake Park for a fascinating afternoon spring flowers blooming, new shoots and many leaves. They cleaned up fallen branches at Francis Park, made a survey of some of the boundaries of the new addition to the park complex. New trail cards have replaced those that were weatherworn. The burnt out area is being planted with Douglas fir, jack pine, Garry oak and arbutus.

At weekends, older boys and girls were at the Nature House where displays have been changed. Work on the Centennial Trail will resume as soon as the weather improves.

Congratulations to Louis Broadworth who won top marks at St. Patrick's School for his poem on Spring.

\* \* \* \*

#### IT'S SPRING

With elegant fragrance and seeds ablow, Where animals awake the forest of wonderland, their home Where bulbs and seeds live, once again With the freshness of spring in the air.

Louis Broadworth.

#### BIRDS FOR THE RECORD

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

Townsend's solitaire (2) - Ten Mile Pt. - January 31 - Tuesday Group

Mourning dove (6) - Brentwood - February 4 -

A.R. and Eleanore Davidson Snowy owl (2) - Near Dominion Exp.Farm - February 11 -

(in area for 2 weeks) Enid Lemon and Mike Miller

Here, in Kleena Kleene, we often have planes flying overhead and sometimes helicopters although seldom the two at once. But one morning last June, as I was watching a singing Tennessee warbler, quite rare here, a plane flew right overhead at less than 500 feet. Another followed close behind. Seconds later a helicopter came over at less than 200 feet. A few seconds later I looked for the Tennessee warbler. He was still there and still singing. Does he winter by an airfield?

#### UP WITH THE SWALLOWS!

Every spring for several years, pairs of violet green swallows were seen about the garden as they searched for nesting places. Having read that land clearing and increasing human population made it hard for these birds to find natural nest sites, I decided to help by placing a nesting box on an oak tree opposite the kitchen window where the birds could be watched and enjoyed.

A ½ inch plywood box was made with waterproof, removable roof. After consulting a library book, I decided that the box opening should be 1½ inches in diameter and placed near the top. The box was attached to a board and the board nailed to a tree about 15 feet above ground level. All was now ready for the swallows. But when they arrived, a pair of English house sparrows had already taken possession. So no swallows nested in the garden that year.

I next consulted a local expert who consulted a book. A box of different size and shape was made and set in position just before the swallows appeared. Again they were frustrated and again the sparrows took possession.

At the end of the season the roof was lifted and the sparrows' untidy house was revealed. (The nest was scraped out. A colony of mites was found in the crevices of the box. These were quickly killed by a brushful of crank case oil mixed with gasoline.)

Since the swallows had tried and been determined, I decided to be determined, too. Besides, who wants to be beaten by a pair of 'mitey' house sparrows?

A small semi-circular opening was substituted for the old one, and a ladder was placed against the tree. When a violet-green tried the opening and failed to get in, the opening was enlarged slightly with a wood rasp. This process was repeated for several days. At last the opening was right for swallows and wrong for sparrows.

Soon next building started and the watchers were looking forward to the appearance of young birds. However, about the time the eggs should have hatched, some of the numerous crows began to watch the nest box. Suddenly the swallows departed and were not seen again that year. As I had often seen crows carrying fledglings across the garden in summer, I felt sure I knew the young swallows' fate.

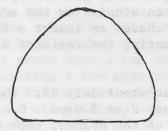
During the following winter the box was taken to the workshop and a sort of wire "catcher's mask" was built around the box. The whole thing was replaced on the tree. When the swallows returned in the spring they went directly to the box and began building operations within a few days.

The "ant-crow" mask seemed to impede the swallows' flight at first. So one vertical section of wire was removed, changing a  $2\frac{1}{4}x2\frac{1}{4}$ " opening to  $4\frac{1}{2}x2\frac{1}{4}$ ". This greatly improved the accessibility to the wooden nest box hole. Unfortunately one bird was caught in a cleft formed by twisting back the vertical wire at the time of cutting. Luckily the bird was seen, rescued and freed. Within five minutes it was back on the job of nest building. Soon both birds were able to negotiate the wire cage easily, although the female was less adept than the male. When the young were partly feathered they began to stick their heads out of the nest box hole in hope of being fed.

There came a day when five young ones emerged from the nest. They perched for a time on the cage wires, (2 hours in one case), then flew off, circling the trees in true swallow style. At the end of the days the five young and two adults were seen lined up on the telephone wire only a few feet from the box. Then they all took off together and were not seen again.

The successful model is still on the tree. It works and the swallows will soon be here.

H.D. Wallis



APERTURE
ACTUAL SIZE AND SHAPE

Due to space limitations and other considerations, the diagrams that accompanied this article could not be used.

Interested members should write H.D. Wallis, 4200 Cedar Hill Road, (Phone 477-2253).

#### DISPLAY BY COMMON LOONS

By Adrian Paul, Kleena Kleene

In 1965 and 1966, for reasons unknown, our local five pairs of breeders only raised a grand total of two young birds.

By mid-August in both years the "childless" pairs abandoned their normal isolation and formed a small flock of five or six birds. This flock, deliberately it seemed, approached to within about fifty years of the campers on shore. There they put on a display consisting of wing flapping, splashing, diving and vocalizing, all in a close, compact group, like, perhaps, "The Dance of the Tartars". After several minutes of entertaining the tourists, the troupe withdrew.

#### HAMMOND'S FLYCATCHER NESTS

By Adrian Paul, Kleena Kleene

Here this species builds near the water, 30 feet from the ground, a foot from the main trunk of an aspen, at a fork on a horizontal dead branch, visible from above and from below. Well camouflaged from a casual observer, the nest is sheltered from sun during part of the day.

The nest territory is jealously guarded by the male. A surplus male was noted often singing on the edge of the territory. One day he chased an insect a few feet inside the territory. Instantly, the resident male attacked.

The young leave the nest about July 22. Their departure sometimes spreads over 2 or 3 days. One nestling once moved out near the end of the branch, took off suddenly and flew about 80 yards. There it was met by a parent and escorted to a tree.

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*

He that feareth every bush must never go a-birding. C16 Proverb.

#### THE GREAT BLUE HERON

By Greville E. Seon, Hornby Island 1801 HOMAN

For more than ten years I have been watching the inhabitants of a small heronry of the great blue heron during their nesting period.

The heronry consists of about 34 nests in the tops of a group of alder trees, and it is closely contained at that figure. But the birds are absent during September and do not return until about the middle of March when the first arrivals are noticed.

The birds come in small groups and spend much of their time in the heronry. In the mornings and evenings they perch on a large dead Douglas fir known as the Standing Tree. When all the heron are present a curious custom is performed (In 1966, on April 2 at 8 a.m.) At this time nearly all the birds are standing on the limbs of the fir. Apparently, at a given signal, they all take to the air and soar around in a large silent circle. There is only an occasional "squark". After about fifteen minutes the ceremony is over and the birds start to break away in groups up to a dozen or so. Some go to the feeding grounds and others to the heronry. This happens only once a year and is a pleasure to see.

After the fly around the business of pairing off takes place. I have read that the procedure is that the male selects a stick and flies with it in his bill to a prominent limb of a tree and stands motionless with his neck extended to the sky until a female decides he will do as a mate. She takes the stick from him and the bargain is sealed. I have watched many males standing with the stick, but I have never seen a hen accept it. Both sexes take part in building a new nest or repairing an old one. The male brings the material and the hen weaves. If she cannot push the stick into place, she moves to the opposite side and pulls it into place. Both sexes take turns with the brooding.

During the incubation period, crows often loaf around in nearby trees. If the heron are frightened or leave the nest for a short time, a crow may steal an egg for himself. Crows nest later than the heron. But crows are more robust and furious than heron. By fiercely protecting the stolen eggs, they may contribute to the balance of nature.

#### MEETINGS AND FIELD TRIPS

#### **MARCH 1967**

EXECUTIVE MEETING:
Tuesday, March 7

8:00 P.M. in Dr. Carl's office

GENERAL MEETING: Tuesday, March 14 8:00 P.M. Douglas Bldg. Cafeteria. Miss Edith Valens, Mr.G.A.Poynter & Mr.C.Morehen will show natural history

slides.

BIRD FIELD TRIP:

Saturday, March 18

9:30 A.M.at Monterey Parking Lot or 10 A.M. at Witty's Lagoon. Bring lunch.

Leader: Mr. M. Matheson, 383-7381

BOTANY MEETING:

Tuesday, March 28

8 P.M. Provincial Museum

Mr. H. Warren will speak on "Trees and Their Care".

JUNIOR GROUP:

Meet every Saturday at 1:30 pm. Monterey Parking Lot. Leader: Mr. Freeman King

479-2966

\* \* \* \* \* \*

On March 21 and 22 there will be an evening showing at the McPherson Theatre of C.P.Lyons' film "Wilderness Adventures in B.C." - the Monashees, Bowron Lakes and West Coast Hike.

\* \* \* \* \* \*

#### SWEAT OFF THOSE POUNDS!

If you want constructive slimming exercise, or think your mate needs it, we suggest that you go to Thomas Francis Park at 2 p.m. on Saturday, March 4th. They'll be working on the Centennial Trail that day. So take pickaxe and shovel and have a swinging time!

# CATHEDRAL WILDERNESS EMPIRE



QUINISCO LAKE

PHOTO BY JACK STOCKS

- A. WILDERNESS PARK
- B. SURROUNDED BY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

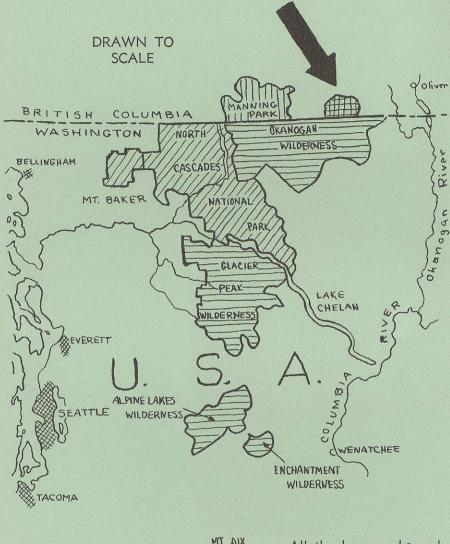
in the

ASHNOLA WATERSHED AREA British Columbia

Proposed by

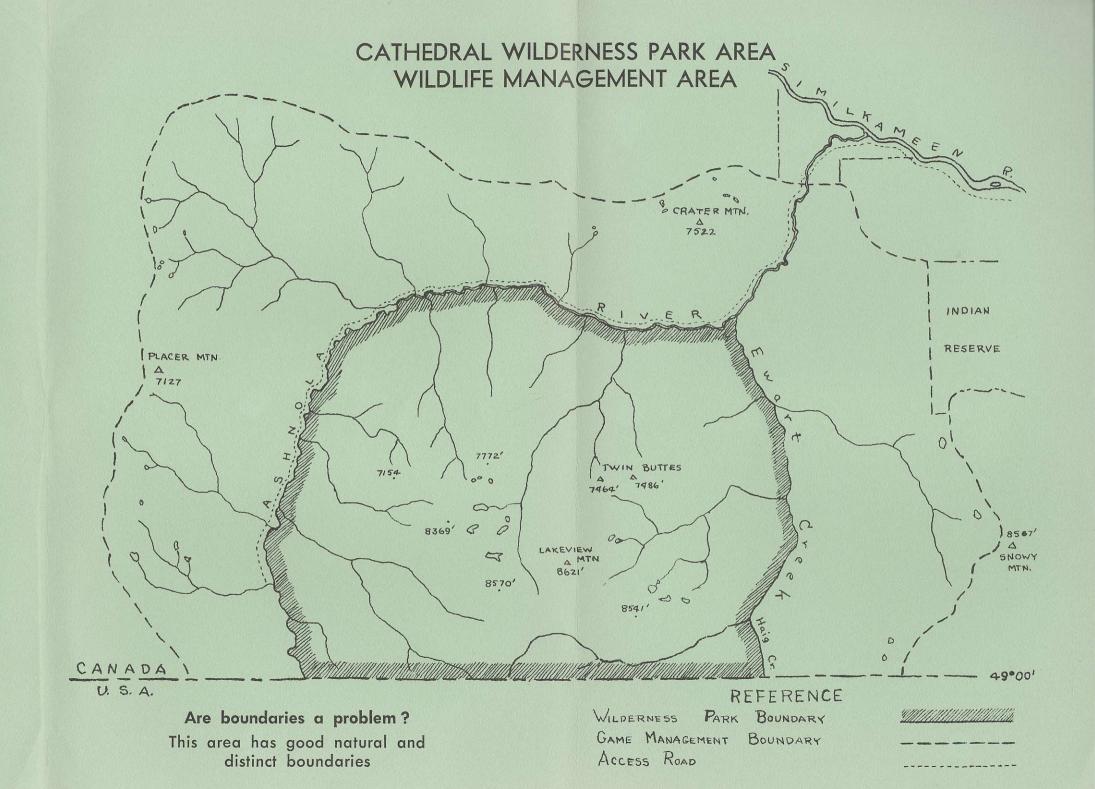
OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN PARKS SOCIETY and many other groups.

### OUR PROPOSAL





All the large parks and wilderness areas shown here in the U.S. are either already established or have been officially proposed by a government sponsored study team.



This is a special area with many unique plants and animals as well as magnificent scenery.



CATHEDRAL LAKES

PHOTO BY JACK STOCKS

#### YOUR SUPPORT IS NEEDED!

Please write letters to the Minister of Recreation and Conservation and your M.L.A. —  $\mathbf{or}$  —

Sign and send the form letter below.

#### The Honourable Kenneth Kiernan,

Minister of Recreation and Conservation Parliament Buildings Victoria, B.C.

Dear Mr. Minister:

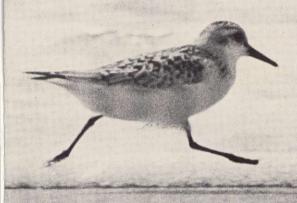
I support the Cathedral Lakes Wilderness Park and Wildlife Management Area as proposed by the Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society.

Signed	

Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society

Box 787 — SUMMERLAND, B.C.

## AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILMS

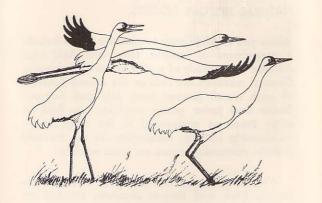


presented in
VICTORIA
by
Victoria Natural History Society
and the
Canadian Audubon Society

## Jwenty-First Season 1966-1967 Programme

Friday, September 30, 1966 Saturday, October 1, 1966 Friday, November 4, 1966 Saturday, November 5, 1966 Friday, January 6, 1967 Saturday, January 7, 1967 Friday, February 10, 1967 Saturday, February 11, 1967







Friday and Saturday Sept. 30 and Oct. 1, 1966

D. J. Nelson
"Inherit the Wild"

Have you ever seen an alligator build a nest and lay eggs? Or an eagle take a bath? Have you ever seen a mammal that stuffs food into its mouth with its whiskers? Watch them on film with conservationist D. J. Nelson of Billings, Montana. Featured are rare and near-rare animals such as the whooping crane, manatee, Everglade kite and Ross' goose. From beginning to end, "Inherit the Wild" is a fascinating collection of intimate studies of natural wildlife.



Nov. 4 and 5, 1966
Robert W. Davison

"The Vanishing Sea"

Great Salt Lake is the focal point of a fascinating photographic study of life in and around the Great Basin in Western United States. Among the animals found here are the brine shrimp and pelican, desert kit fox and kangaroo rat, water ouzel and western grebe. The dependence of all life upon water becomes increasingly significant as man's demands upon natural resources grow. Robert W. Davison of Bountiful, Utah, presents a powerful conservation story.

## THE RESERVE WAS AND THE WAS TO SEE WHITE TO SEE WHITE TO SEE THE SEARCH WAS TO SEE WHITE TO SEE



You are cordially invited to hear these eminent speakers and see their wonderful films. Help further the cause of conservation through appreciation and understanding of the world of nature. Bring your family and your friends.



Friday and Saturday
Jan. 6 and 7, 1967

Edgar T. Jones
"Canada's Mountain
Wilderness"

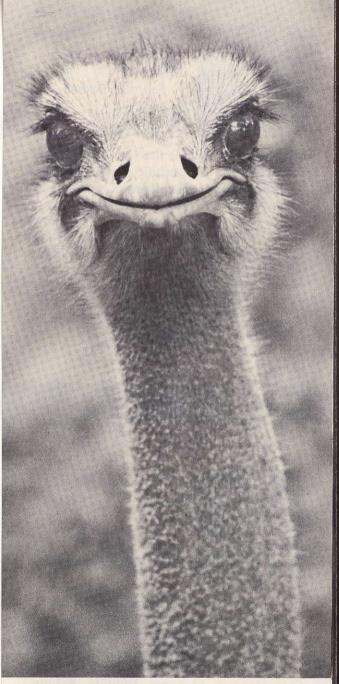
The rufous hummingbird, the incredible harlequin duck of mountain streams, the giant blue grouse in courtship, Cooper's hawk and western tanager—all inhabitants of the Canadian Rockies—fill the screen in "Canada's Mountain Wilderness," by Edgar T. Jones of Edmonton, Alberta. Mountain sheep, goats, and elk are featured too, in a program which will delight all those who enjoy the out-of-doors, and who seek a respite from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.



Friday and Saturday
February 10 and 11,1967

Charles J. Stine
"Land of the Drowned River"

Field naturalist Charles Stine guides viewers on a fascinating natural history tour of the Delmarva Peninsula. After a canoe trip down the Pocomoke River, visits are made to Assateague Island National Seashore, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and Blackwater Wildlife Refuge. Emphasizing their ecological roles, Dr. Stine presents in superb color pictures many of the birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles and insects that inhabit the area. An absorbing film story.



## AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILMS

#### VICTORIA

Oak Bay Junior School Auditorium 2101 Cadboro Bay Road

8:00 P.M.

#### SEASON TICKET

\$3.00

(4 Audubon Wildlife Films)

Single Admission ......\$1.00

#### STUDENTS:

Tickets are obtainable at:

Office of the Provincial Museum

Dogwood Gift Shoppe, Ltd. 2224 Oak Bay Ave. 1801 Fort Street

Ford's Book Store 641 Yates St.



Sanderling by Gordon Smith Pika by Charles J. Ott Brown Pelican by Robert C. Hermes
Ostrich by Gordon S. Smith
Printed in U.S.A.

## THE VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

invites you to participate in activities which include a programme of lectures, films, and field trips devoted to the study of native plants and animals. General meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month (except June, July and August). Senior and junior group meetings are held at other times as announced in the magazines—membership includes subscription to the Monthly Bulletin containing notes on local wildlife.

We would suggest that you visit the Thomas S. Francis Park and Nature Museum, situated on Munn Road, which is off Prospect Lake Road.

A visit at any time of the year is most enjoyable, but we especially recommend the springtime, when the flowers are blooming in great profusion.

We would be pleased to arrange guided tours of the Park for any interested groups. Please phone Mr. King, 479-2966.

Further information re the Society may be obtained from:

Mrs. F. A. Sherman Victoria Natural History Society 2168 Guernsey St. Victoria, B.C. Telephone 386-1965

#### VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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R. Y. EDWARDS 2264 Windsor Road	MRS. K. OSBORNE 1565 Begbie St.		
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