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Victoria B.C

COVER PHOTOBroadleaf Maple Leaves and Flowers

by the late Bill Reith

BROADLEAF MAPLE, *Acer macrophyllum*

by D. Stirling

The broadleaf maple is the only large maple tree on the Pacific coast. It is aptly named for leaves 14 inches wide with stems 10 inches long have been recorded. More commonly the leaves are 6 to 10 inches wide.

The range of the broadleaf maple in Canada is coastal mainland British Columbia, Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlotte Islands. It is not found higher than 1,000 feet, and, inland from the coast, grows only along river valleys.

The broadleaf maple prefers rich bottom lands and the edges of streams. It varies greatly in form and height in different soils and situations, but the finest grow on moist gravelly soils in open places. Here the trunk is short but thick, the crown wide and spreading. In the forest the trunk sometimes attains a height of 60 to 80 feet with a short narrow crown.

Old maples frequently have their trunks and branches densely covered with mosses and licorice ferns. Good examples of these trees with epiphytic plants are near the bridge at Goldstream Park.

In spring the new maple leaves burst out and grow rapidly. Fragrant yellow flowers appear a few days after the leaves. At this time, I think, the broadleaf maple is at its best, especially when rufous hummingbirds flit among the new greenery.

NESTING BOXES

In the March issue, I read with interest the article by H.D. Wallis on nesting boxes for swallows.

As I have made many successful boxes for birds the size of violet-green swallow, here is my experience.

Boxes are best made from old lumber, inside size about 5x6" by 6" high. The entrance hole is about 4" up from the bottom. Its size should be 1 1/8" in diameter, (no larger) so house sparrows cannot enter.

The hole must be smoothed down to size with sandpaper, but rough up the bottom part so the birds can get a grip to enter. Nail a rough piece of wood inside below the hole so the birds can get out easily. Do not put a perch on the outside.

The best position for the box is on a post at least 7 feet from the ground. Nail a piece of tin about a foot wide around the post to prevent cats and raccoons from climbing up. If the box is nailed to a tree, there must be a method of preventing the predators from reaching the box.

Another good site is under the eaves which swallows seem to favour.

I usually make the hole about 2x2". Over this I nail a teak covering board with the 1 1/8" hole already made. Teak does not swell in wet weather. To clean out the box, pry off the board, and hook the old nest out.

Walter Redford.

MISNOMERS UNLIMITED

If you have trouble learning birds' names maybe this is why.--- A horned grebe has no horns. The upland plover is a sandpiper. Screech owls do not screech. The nighthawk is not a hawk. The hairy woodpecker doesn't have hair. The ladybird is an insect (apologies to L.B.J.) A warbling vireo's song doesn't sound at all like a warbler's. The palm warbler is at home in the black spruce forest. Cape May warblers are almost never seen at Cape May. The prairie warbler inhabits many different habitats but is practically non-existent on the prairies. Evening grosbeaks are not a bit nocturnal. Tree sparrows nest in the far north where there are no trees. The house sparrow is not a sparrow. You would never see a water pipit in the water. A meadowlark is an icterid, not a lark.

From Toronto Naturalist Newsheet.

THE SKYLARKS

The numbers of skylarks on recent Christmas Bird Counts have been so varied that some comment may be of interest.

The figures for the last 5 years are:- 1962 - 126; 1963 - 243; 1964 - 812; 1965 - 969; 1966 - 91.

In each case the same area has been covered.

During the winter months these birds stay on the fields and rarely rise unless they are flushed. So, in order to take anything like an accurate count, each field they inhabit should be gone over very completely. As they are now established over a large area this, of course, is impossible. The district covered by the census is a circle 15 miles in diameter, according to the rules of the National Audubon Society. This circle encloses 176 square miles, divided into 12 districts among relatively few participants.

When the 1964 and 1965 counts were taken, snow was on the ground. When this occurs the skylarks tend to gather in large flocks. When flushed, they all rise together, making an estimate of their number relatively easy. But when the latest count was taken the weather was mild, and had been all winter, so the skylarks were widely scattered. This largely accounts for the astonishing difference in the numbers of the last three counts (812, 969 and 91).

It seems that skylarks, once established, are tenacious birds, as, in spite of acres of University buildings and blacktop around Finnerty Road where the largest flocks were found for many years, they can still be seen there.

There is good reason to believe that skylarks have been increasing for the last decade and have also extended their territory. They can now be found on most large fields from Victoria to Sidney, also on Saanichton Spit, Sidney Island, Cobble Hill, and on the Indian Reserve near Duncan.

A.R. Davidson.

More bird misnomers we might add to those on page 90 are:- a purple finch is never purple. A pelagic cormorant is the most coast loving and has a double crest in spring but the double-crested cormorant never has.

A.R.D.

1967 WILDFLOWERS IN BLOOM

Thus far in 1967 more than 50 wild-growing plants have been observed in flower within 7 miles of city centre. A few of these are trees or shrubs:- willow, bird cherry, red-flowered currant, salmonberry, hazel, false box, bear-berry and tall oregon grape. A majority of the others are perennial herbs or hardy annuals.

A good proportion in this latter group are naturalized species and some of the very earliest are our most ambitious plants called "weeds" e. g. chickweed, yellow rocket, bitter cress, dandelion, sow thistle, cat's ear, groundsel, shepherd's purse and corn spurrey.

These are not handsome plants by common standards but their flowers are a welcome sight in January and February.

On the nearby hills (Seymour Hill, Mt. Douglas, Mill Hill and Bear Hill) our native wildflowers are already well advanced. A few of these are:-

Spring-gold (*Lomatium utriculatum*)

Satin flower (*Sisyrinchium douglasii*)

Wild easter lily (*Erythronium oregonum*)

Blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia grandiflora*)

Shooting-star (*Dodecatheon hendersonii*)

Early saxifrage (*Saxifraga integrifolia*)

Camas (*Camassia quamash*)

Swamp scenery is already aglow with skunk cabbage (*Lysichitum americanum*) and in the damp areas resulting from temporary vernal pools, there can be found three very small dainty species of *Montia* (miner's lettuce):- *Montia fontana*, *Montia dichotoma* and *Montia lowellii*. High on dry rocky out-crops among mosses a gray-green species of *Montia* spends an early but brief existence; already it is in seed, *Montia perfoliata* var. *glauca* (dwarf pallid montia). Among these small montias a sharp eye may detect shining chickweed, an inch-high member of the Pink Family called *Stellaria nitens*.

The latter half of March should bring along two or three species of wild geranium, monkey-flower, large-leaved sandwort, chocolate lily and several others.

We can hope to find at least 30 species of wildflowers April 8th in Thetis Park Nature Sanctuary when we go there for our first botany field trip of the season.

M. C. Melburn.

PATRONS' FOREST

The Centennial Trail is finished so we want to start on our second centennial project. This is an addition to the Nature House at Francis Park. The addition will be a lecture and study room for use in bad weather, and for occasional special events.

So far we have \$160.00 towards this project. To raise the major part of the necessary funds we are "selling" trees in Patrons' Forest. Patrons may buy a Douglas fir, jack pine, arbutus or Garry oak. When the tree is established we will mark it suitably with the "owner's" name. Tree prices are \$5.00 and up. Buy now while the choice is good. You can "give" a tree to anyone, anywhere. For further details contact Mr. R. Moyer, 1020 Mina Ave., or Freeman King (479-2966).

Freeman King.

Editor's Note:- This story reached the Naturalist as part of Junior Jottings. It seemed worthy of standing alone as an example of the determined energy we have come to expect from Freeman and His Juniors. So, with Freeman's permission, we have presented it separately.
R.C.

SEA OTTERS

The sea otter was at one time abundant on the California coast, and was hunted by the Russians. Prices were high and the demand great, and great numbers were taken until the sea otter became so scarce that the hunting ceased.

In 1938 some few otters were again seen, and since then they have been watched with varying results as to increase and decline, continued survival being in doubt.

It is reported that the 1966 count by the California Fish and Game Department shows an increase, not indeed large, but sufficient to indicate a gradual increase, and continued hope for the ultimate survival.

The penalty for killing an otter is a heavy fine.

E.E.B.

" ANTING "

On a rainy morning in September, two birders, hoping for a Say's phoebe in the Walkers' garden saw a golden-crown sparrow acting strangely. One of a group under a cedar tree, the golden crown appeared to be 'anting'.

Later, the birders consulted their reference books and sent their findings to the Naturalist.

Mrs Walker quotes from the Encyclopaedia Britannica:- "In sunbathing a bird may rest on the ground, spread its wings and feathers and remain still as though it were enjoying the warmth of the sun on its body. Possibly related to either sun or dust bathing is "anting". In this process the bird places living ants among its feathers. It may substitute for the ants such things as bits of orange peel or a moth ball, substances that the bird rubs on its wings or the posterior part of its body. What purpose this toilet serves is unknown, but perhaps the bird likes the feeling of some ant secretion or a substitute on its skin."

The other birder, Mrs Grace Bell, consulted Joel Carl Welty's "The Life of Birds". In the chapter on behaviour, Mrs Bell found:-

"Anting occurs in either a passive or an active form. In passive anting, seen in crows, the bird spreads its wings, ruffles its plumage, and "sits down" on an active anthill to let the angry ants crawl through its feathers. In active anting, as practised, for example, by orioles, jays, and starlings, the bird seizes one or more ants, and strokes or jabs them among its feathers. In active anting, the bird usually anoints ventral parts of the body, particularly under the wings and tail. Often, in its contortions to place ants among the under-tail and rump feathers, the bird steps on its own tail and tumbles over backwards. Sometimes the bird will eat the ants after anting, and at other times will discard them. The ants used are often those that spray or exude pungent, aromatic or repugnant fluids. While ants are the standard objects used, birds have been observed "anting" with substitutes such as beetles; bugs, wasps, orange peel, raw onion, hot chocolate, vinegar, hair tonic, cigarette butts, burning matches, and smoke. Whitaker (1957) has listed 148 species of birds which have been observed anting with at least 24 kinds of ants and over 40 substitute materials. When Whitaker exposed a hand-raised Orchard oriole, *Icterus spurius*, to ants on 80 different

days, the bird anted on 67 of them. Individual anting sessions commonly lasted 45 minutes. Various explanations of anting have been proposed by different authors: the bird wipes off the ant's formic acid before eating it; the live ants eat or repel the bird's external parasites; ant fluids produce pleasurable effects, relieve itching, or act as a medicinal tonic on the skin; ant fluids provide physical protection for the feathers. But so far, no explanation of anting has been generally accepted----- "

Vera Walker & Grace Bell.

ANIMAL RECOGNITION BY SCENT

In the Victoria Daily Times, Dr. Clifford Carl recently mentioned cases where the member of a species, having lost his species scent, was no longer accepted by members of that species.

Years ago, when I was farming on Galiano Island, I was helped by an old Dorsetshire farmer, Albert Head.

One year, when he had to pass the cowbarn on his way to the sheep, I used to help with the milking until he came. Then we went straight to where the sheep were penned for the night.

One day the cowman said, "Old Head thinks you have the evil touch. Every lamb you touch dies."

Although Head's reasoning was often wrong, he was a keen observer. So I carefully considered his verdict. It was true that a number of lambs handled by me had died. Their mothers had disowned them, and refused to suckle them. By the time we noticed this, the lamb was too weak to be saved by bottle feeding.

I concluded that my hands carried the smell of cows, which was passed on to the lambs I handled. The cows' smell over-rode the lamb's scent so that the ewe no longer recognised her own lamb, and refused it.

Next day, when Head came, I washed my hands with plenty of soap and water, and told Head the reason why. He was skeptical, but from that day on, when I started washing my hands well between milking and going to the sheep, the ewes stopped disowning the lambs I handled.

Max Enke.

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Each sting of the stinging nettle is really a stiff, hollow spine and springs from a slightly swollen base. This base holds the poison that is released when the plant is touched. Part formic acid, a nettle sting resembles that of a bee.

BIRDS FOR THE RECORD

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

- Black-bellied plover (85) - Bowker - January 31 -
Tuesday Group
(Approx. 100 to be seen on rocks off Bowker
during January when tide was right)
- Band-tailed pigeon (1,000) - Gordon Head - February 13 -
Cy and Lois Morehen
- Townsend's solitaire (1) - Thetis Lake Pk.- February 19 -
(Seymour Hill) Gordon and Gwennie Hooper
- (1) - Island Road - February 23 -
Mrs. L. Parris
- (1) - King George Tce. - March 5 -
Allen Poynter
- Bohemian waxwing (40) - Florence Lake - February 26 -
Tom and Gwen Briggs
- Snowy owl - Pat Bay Airport - February 26 -
Mr. Goodwill (Hydrographic Service)
- European widgeon - Oystercatcher Bay - February 26 -
A.R. and Elinore Davidson and Mr. Goodwill
- Black brant (2) - Bowker - February 28 -
Tuesday Group
- (60) - Bowker - March 11 -
A.R. and Elinore Davidson
- Orange-crowned warbler (1) - Beacon Hill Park - March 1 -
(Lovers' Lane) Alan Hockly
- Western bluebird (2) - Taylor Road -
(3) - William Head Road - March 4 -
Joan Groves, Betty Wise and Betty Parlow
- Spotted sandpiper (1) - Canoe Cove - March 5 -
Allen Poynter
- Violet-green swallow (30-40) - Glen Lake - March 11 -
A.R. and Elinore Davidson

To look for in April: Cinnamon teal, osprey, whimbrel, sandpipers (spotted, least and western), western flycatcher, swallows, purple martin, house wren, Swainson's thrush, water pipit, solitary vireo, warbling vireo, warblers, American goldfinch, chipping sparrow.

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Birders! May 13, day trip to Westham Island, page 100.

JUNIOR JOTTINGS

The Juniors have been very busy as usual. The younger section went out to the old gold mine tunnel at Goldstream. This is beside the newly cut Trail, the Arbutus Ridge Trail. They worked clearing up fallen branches and cleaning up the trails at Francis Park.

The intermediate section has done a fine job at the park. They planted over 350 tree seedlings in the burnt over area beside the Prospect Lake Road. They have completed the Centennial Trail, which was begun three years ago with the aim of making a trail around the park.

The trail now connects with the Cave, Cut-off, Fern, Rain Forest and Swamp trails. It takes in many features from sunny open rock-knolls, through heavy fir forest down to moss-covered maples, alders and cedars. It goes by marsh and stream and back up the sunny southern slope.

Along the way, are several small ponds and sloughs with bountiful water life. Direction signs have been placed. All trails lead into one another and are in a rough circle.

Thanks to the Provincial Parks Branch for new benches at the parking lot. Thanks to the adults who came out to help us with the trail.

It was a pleasure, during the planting project to have the Museum students from Vancouver with us. One of the Juniors took them on a guided tour.

Several guided tours of instruction have been given to Cub and Brownie packs, and to Sunday school groups. These tours are handled by members of the intermediate section. Among the intermediates, Kelvin Bell, a fine young geologist, is making a study of the Park's rock formations.

News of our second centennial project and how we propose to raise funds is on page 93 of this issue.

That building goes up this year.

Freeman King.

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Achillea millefolium, the Latin name of Yarrow, which grows throughout B.C. on dry, poor soils, is easy to remember. For millefolium reminds us of its soft, special leaves, and Achillea recalls the legend that Achilles used yarrow to tend the wounds of soldiers fighting at the siege of Troy.

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BOOK NOTE:- THE POETRY OF EARTH. This is a collection of English nature writings from Gilbert White to Richard Jeffries. Published by Gollancz in London in 1966, the only edition now in print is the American, published by Atheneum Press, 162 E 38 St., New York, 10016. It has more than 400 pages, 53 full page illustrations, and is priced at U.S. \$10.00. Among authors included are Gilbert White, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Thomas Gray, Dorothy Wordsworth, John Clare, Charles Kingsley. Y.G.

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BOOK NOTE:- BIRDS IN OUR LIVES. A magnificent book designed to give the layman a wider appreciation and deeper insight into the overall impact of birds in our civilization. It unfolds a fascinating story about all sorts of birds and their lives, describes the intensive search for knowledge of how birds migrate over long distances, and gives a fund of other information. All this is 576 pages, well illustrated and reasonably priced at U.S. \$9.00. This book is obtainable from - Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. E.K.L.

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BOOK NOTE:- ON AGGRESSION. In this book, Konrad Lorenz, natural scientist, observing the behaviour of tropical fish in an aquarium, became interested in their aggressive acts. These observations were confirmed as he floated, snorkel-equipped, off the Florida Keys. Further study led Lorenz to conclude that aggression has played an important role in the survival of many species, including man. For 20th century man, however, aggression may well lead to destruction unless the perversions of this instinct are recognized and controlled as Lorenz feels they must and will be. "On Aggression" published by Harcourt Brace & World Inc. E.B.

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CORRECTION: My apologies to Treasurer E.E. Bridgen for the March issue's mangling of his 100% correctly worded notice about the change of membership dues. Life members do not pay \$50 or \$75 per year as stated. The cost of living is not that high - yet! This correction, we hope, will remind members that our fiscal year now ends on April 30, and not, as before, at the annual meeting in May. R.C.

A MEMORIAL WINDOW

The English naturalist, Gilbert White, 1720-1793, served as curate at Selborne, Hampshire, and at nearby parishes from 1751. His careful observations of nature were first written in letters to other naturalists. These letters were later the basis for his "Natural History of Selborne". This has often been reprinted for its simple pleasant writing style, and for its scientific accuracy.

Having heard that there was a memorial window to Gilbert White in the church at Selborne, I wrote to Selborne on February 23rd. By March 2, a reply from the Rev. John Carlington, the present Vicar of Selborne, was on my desk.

The window, he wrote, was installed by the Gilbert White Fellowship in 1920, the bi-centenary of the naturalist's birth. The window, facing southwards, depicts St. Francis of Assisi surrounded by more than 90 birds, all of them mentioned in "Natural History of Selborne." The Nave of the church is late Norman, about 1170. The chancel and side aisle (containing the window) are of a later date. Selborne's nearest town is Alton, and the nearest big town is Winchester.

Local naturalists, visiting England, and finding themselves near Winchester, will see from the maps that the trunk road from London to Winchester passes through Alton. They might enjoy seeing this church and its particular window. The Rev. John Carlington's address is Selborne Vicarage, Alton, Hampshire. His phone number is Selborne 259.

We thank the Vicar for his prompt, helpful reply, and for the coloured picture postcard of the window.

Ruth Chambers.

* * * * *

"I was much entertained last summer with a tame bat, which would take flies out of a person's hand. If you gave it anything to eat, it brought its wings round before the mouth, hovering and hiding its head in the manner of birds of prey when they feed. The adroitness it showed in shearing off the wings of the flies, which were always rejected ---- pleased me much."

Gilbert White in "Natural History of Selborne"
(Letter XI.)

MEETINGS AND FIELD TRIPSAPRIL 1967

EXECUTIVE MEETING:
Tuesday, April 4

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

BOTANY FIELD TRIP:
Saturday, April 8

Meet at Monterey Parking Lot at 1:30 P.M. for a trip to Thetis Park Nature Sanctuary.
Bring Tea.

Leader: Miss M.C. Melburn
384-9052

GENERAL MEETING:
Tuesday, April 11

8:00 P.M. Douglas Bldg. Cafeteria
Dr. J. Armstrong will give a slide talk on Natural History of Hawaii.

BIRD FIELD TRIP:
Saturday, April 22

Meet at Monterey Parking Lot at 9:30 a.m. or at Thomas Francis Park at 10 A.M.

Leader: Mr. M.C. Matheson
383-7381.

ORNITHOLOGY MEETING:
Tuesday, April 25

8:00 P.M. in Provincial Museum.
Subject to be announced at General Meeting.

Chairman: Mr. M.C. Matheson
383-7381

JUNIOR GROUP:

Meet every Saturday at 1:30 P.M. at Monterey Parking Lot.

Leader: Mr. Freeman King
479-2966.

DAY TRIP to WESTHAM ISLAND. The Vancouver Natural History Society have invited our birders over to see the George C. Reifel Waterfowl Refuge on Saturday, May 13. This is a day trip only. Meet at Swartz Bay to catch the 7 a.m. ferry as foot passengers. Mainland birders will meet us at Tsawwassen, provide transportation for the day, return us to catch the 5 p.m. ferry. A long day with much walking so good footwear and a large lunch are recommended. To reserve transportation, phone Allen Poynter (477-3230) before May 1st.

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Editors

DR. D. B. SPARLING
No. 11 - 1354 Beach Drive
Telephone 385-2229

DR. G. CLIFFORD CARL
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