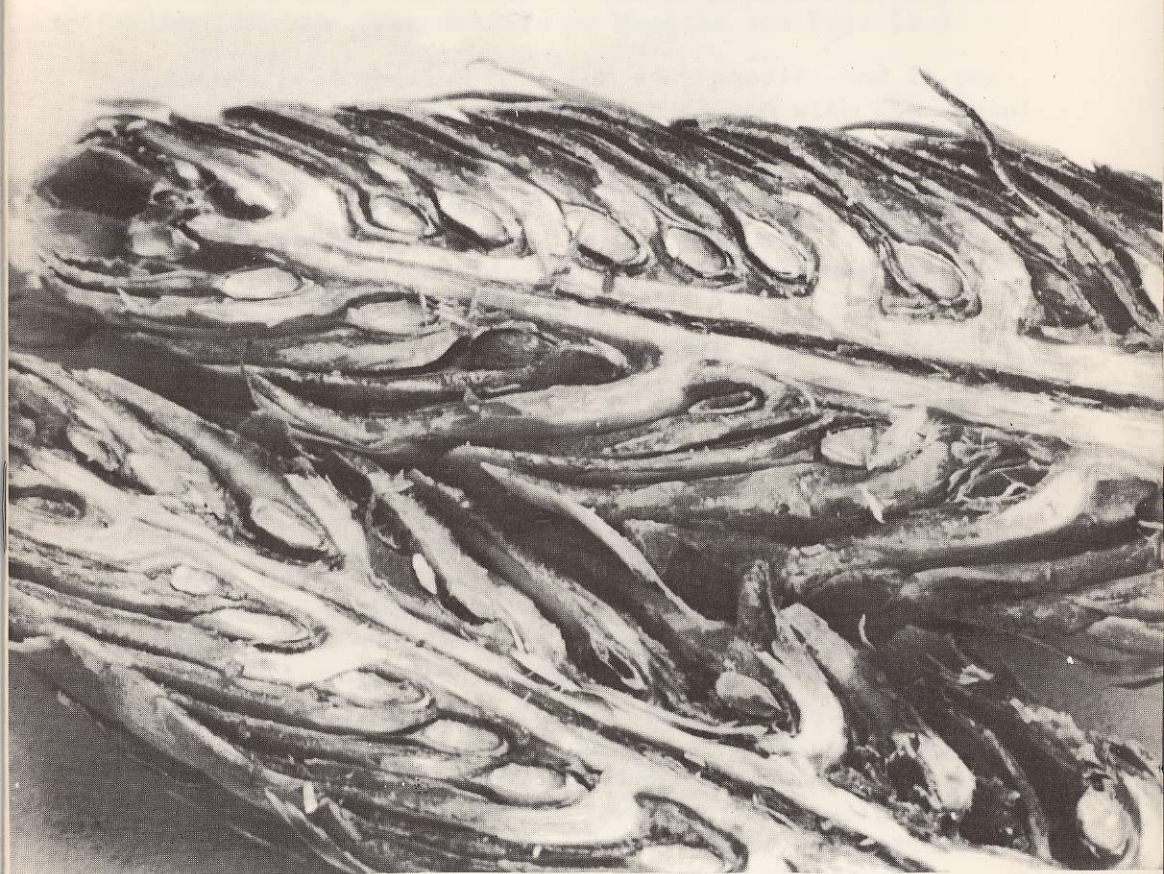


September, 1967
Vol. 24 No. 1

THE VICTORIA NATURALIST



published by the [REDACTED]
VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Victoria B.C

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COVER PICTURE

Photo by the late W.D. Reith

CONES OF DOUGLAS FIR

by R.Y. Edwards

The Douglas fir is (Pseudotsuga menziesii (Mirb)Franco) Pseudotsuga - false hemlock, and menziesii - of Menzies, a Scottish botanist who observed and collected on this coast in the 1790's. (For details on Menzies see Page 11.)

Autumn is a special time for many people, and is perhaps especially so for a naturalist raised with the annual blaze of colour that paints the forests of eastern Canada. But even here, far from the hardwoods and deep in the western world of evergreens, autumn is a time of balmy days in a land fat with the fruits of summer's growing. Even the evergreen conifers celebrate autumn when their cones hang plump with new abundance.

Our cover picture is of Douglas fir cones, cut in half so their hidden content can be seen. Each cone is a sort of multiple pregnancy, each seed a microscopic fir tree enclosed with its own food supply to give it a start in life, and each enclosed for protection between tough cone scales. If all such tiny firs were successful the world would soon be choked with firs. All life, fortunately, must end, and in firs the ranks begin to thin early. Notice that a number of the pictured seeds are only husks. The food stored to feed little firs is food sought by others, like fungi and insects.

A fir seed is a magic thing. Hold one in your hand. Most of its bulk is stored food, but life is there, a tender speck that, given luck and time, can turn into a giant, tons and tons of little cells towering 300 feet from the soil. This must be about as close to magic as most of us will ever come.

IN SEARCH OF SAGE GROUSE
ONE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA'S "LOST" SPECIES

The full moon had set. Daylight was spreading over the treeless hills. The sage brush was stiff with frost, but already the three early birds of the Great Basin Desert - horned larks, meadow larks and vesper sparrows - were on the wing and in full song. A flock of small cackling Canada geese moved purposefully overhead, their high-pitched calls carrying far across the sky. This was the setting for the strutting display of the sage grouse - the world's second largest grouse - in Moses Coulee, Washington State.

As the party of birdwatchers from Vancouver and Victoria led by Larry Wadkins of the State Game Department moved over the sage flats one day last April they became aware of low "gulping" noises. Presently the group came to the rim of a shallow basin and there below was the source of the strange sounds. Fifty sage grouse were on their "lek" as the strutting ground is called. Individual territories within the lek are known as "courts". Some birds were displaying. This consisted of spreading the tail so that the stiff, pointed feathers spread out in the form of a star, dragging the wings downward, and, most remarkable of all, inflating the breast pouch so that the two orange display sacks were visible. The birds, blown up to a large size and looking pompous, now take a few steps forward at the same time bouncing the inflated breasts up and down. These birds were in the open, some on a recently cultivated field. Their large size, contrasting plumage and strange display antics made them a spectacular sight.

In the States, sage grouse range in suitable habitat between the Cascades and the Rockies. East of the Rockies, their range includes Montana and extreme southern Alberta and Saskatchewan. They inhabited the southern interior of British Columbia until about 100 years ago. Recently, an unsuccessful attempt was made to re-introduce them to the Richter Pass area. Unless the sage grouse returns to British Columbia, local birdwatchers will have to go to Wenatchee, Washington to see this fine species. (For directions please contact R. Fryer, M.C. Matheson or myself.)

David Stirling.

Since this was written, R.Y. Edwards has moved to Ottawa to be Chief of the Interpretation Division, Canadian Wildlife Service. We think that's his title. Correct, York?

JUNIOR NATURALISTS' CAMP

Camp was held again this year at Goldstream, from July 23-29. Twenty-six attended, including five staff, ten boys and eleven girls. Skip was leader-in-charge. Mrs Kaye Osborne was camp-mother. "Ozzie's" chief job, as far as we campers were concerned, was looking after the canteen! Mrs Storey was chief cook again this year and did a wonderful job with her able assistants Mrs Jones and Mrs Scott.

We worked on a busy but flexible programme, with our free time filled with stunts, games, nature-collecting, and just plain fun. In the evenings we attended Skip's nature talks which he gave as Park Naturalist of Goldstream. These talks were very popular with visiting campers from all over Canada and the United States. Often the tourists would stay after Skip's talk and join in with our own campfire.

The camp was divided into four sections with Barbara Chapman as Skip's field assistant. Group leaders were Jane Moyer, Donna Doran, Sheilagh Watts, and Genevieve Singleton. Each group was given a section of Goldstream Trail (including the stream) to survey. The groups made a complete ecological study of all the mosses, ferns, lichens, fungi, trees, shrubs, flowers, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians etc. and the associations between them. We also noted the low cone and fruit crop this year.

During camp we went to the Goldstream marsh flats. Here we compared the plants and animals of a terrain quite different from that we had surveyed.

Camp was wonderful this year. Fine weather, good cooking, being outdoors and camping for a whole week.

A big thank-you to all the staff and to everyone else who helped to make Nature Camp '67 the best ever!

by Juniors Sheilagh Watts and
Genevieve Singleton.

* * * * *

SOME VICTORIA LOW TIDES OVER LABOUR DAY WEEKEND

Sept. 2	8:30 a.m.	1.2 feet
" 3	9:10 a.m.	1.2 feet
" 4	9:45 a.m.	1.5 feet.

Note that tides are for Victoria area.

Times are Daylight Saving. G.C.C.

DIVING LESSONS FOR KINGFISHERS

Waterlea on North Pender Island is a big old house close to the water with beaches and a magnificent sea view in three directions. Within 50 feet of the big livingroom window is a shallow lagoon where, at every high tide, a little band of buffleheads would brouse among the sea-lettuce, accompanied by an assortment of scoters, mergansers and goldeneye. At low tide there were often heron wading in the shallow water to hunt for mudworms. The lagoon is protected by a small wooded island, joined to the main island at low tide. Here, eagles often perch in the tall Douglas firs. Always there are gulls and crows and little land-birds in the bushes. During the years we spent a month or so at Waterlea each summer, the sea-birds were a continual source of interest and enjoyment. But it was during the two winters that we lived there that we really learned to know them. We even got to know some of them as individuals and to call them by name, names we gave them in the fascinating but unscientific game of anthropomorphizing.

A pair of kingfishers lived on the island, and nearly every day we saw one or both birds perched on a dead branch above the lagoon, or hovering over the water with wings beating rapidly, for all the world like a helicopter. From there they would plunge, splashing, into the water, and as likely as not come up with a small herring. One day in early summer we saw a third kingfisher, fully grown, but still being fed by the parents, and we were permitted to watch his fishing lessons. The youngster soon learned to hover, but diving was a different matter. Down he would plunge, but five or ten feet above the water he would get cold feet, open his wings wide, and zoom up again without getting wet. Out would come Pop from his perch above the pool (or it might have been Mom as we were never quite sure unless we saw them together and could see the difference in size.) He scolded and swore with typical kingfisher profanity that said as plainly as if he were talking, "You dumb cluck! You'll never catch fish that way! Watch me!" So Pop would play helicopter for a minute or two, then plunk into the water, and up with a minnow.

This performance was repeated at intervals for two or three days, and then one day, after a couple of false starts, Junior got up his nerve, kept his wings closed, and actually hit the water with an appropriate splash.

Out came Pop from the bushes, but this time the swearing note was gone from his voice, and we could imagine him saying with a cheerful chatter: "Attaboy! Now you're learning! Next time you try it, grab yourself a fish." So Junior learned to fend for himself, and we must suppose he wandered down the shore to look for a wife.

Hugh Grayson-Smith.

AN UNUSUAL OTTER INCIDENT

On a quiet March morning, a resident of Prospect Lake was watching a pair of Canada geese from a window. With a tremendous splash, one bird, calling frantically, took to the air. The second bird appeared to dive below the surface.

Knowing the habits of this particular species, the resident was astonished to see the bird below the water surface, and much concerned when, after several seconds, it did not reappear.

After about two minutes, the goose floated to the surface below a small wharf many feet from the first sighting. It was obviously in distress with wings open, head and neck submerged, and showing no sign of life.

Jumping into a row boat, the resident and his son moved quickly under the jetty in time to see a river otter move away from the scene and scramble ashore.

Holding the head and neck of the goose above water for a half-hour was enough to allow the bird to recover sufficiently to swim away with, apparently, only a severely torn and bleeding lower neck and breast area.

Obviously the otter had attacked the goose from under water. Because of the wound area of the bird and the length of time it was held beneath the surface, it would be impossible to determine whether the otter meant to drown the goose or kill it by severing the vital region of the neck. The subspecies of Canada goose was not determined. But the incident shows the power and ferocity of the River Otter, *Lutra canadensis*.

Allen Poynter.

PARASITES AND SOME FARM ANIMALS

Last year, I tried to introduce the subject of parasitism and related animal associations. The chief aim was to show the important place of parasitism in Nature, the enormous numbers and widespread existence of parasites, and some of the other animal associations, leading sometimes to true parasitism which, in many cases is an adaptation enabling the parasite to survive as a species. And survival of the species is the prime purpose in Nature.

It is now proposed to give a few details of the different types of parasites.

As we are usually most interested in what affects us directly, we should by rights start with parasites that select man as their host - i.e. Medical Parasites. While these forms often have most complicated life cycles, they are readily available in detail in most Medical Home Advisers. So we shall describe others of economic rather than medical importance, such as the Cattlepests.

Anyone dealing with cattle or horses has seen the small ova or nits on the legs and shoulders of these animals. In horses, they are the ova of the horse bot, Gasterophilus equi. When hatching, the larvae, causing irritation are licked off and, once in the mouth, travel to the stomach where, by means of hooklets, they attach themselves to the walls, which are sometimes completely covered. Here they feed until spring when they release their hold, pass out with the droppings, and burrow into the soil where they pupate and emerge in summer as adults.

The warble fly, Hyperdoma lineata, works in much the same manner, but deposits its ova on the legs and sides of cattle. But the hatching larvae when licked off do not go to the stomach. Working their way through the connective tissues, they reach the back where they remain beneath the skin, raising large lumps with a small breathing and discharge opening in the top. When fully grown, the larva leaves through this hole, drops to the ground, burrows in and pupates. Hides of cattle so affected are greatly reduced in value.

The sheep gadfly, Oestrus ovis, deposits her ova in

the nostrils of sheep. Here the larvae feed until spring, drop to the ground, burrow in, and pupate. As the larvae are quite large, they cause considerable discomfort and even death of the host.

These three parasites are all present in British Columbia. They lessen the economic value of the animals they infest. Fortunately, control measures are now available.

A. Dehen.

BIRDING IN VANCOUVER

On May 13, 23 of Victoria's birders led by myself boarded the ferry at Swartz Bay, and were met at the Mainland Terminal by several of their Vancouver counterparts who supplied transportation for an exciting, rewarding field trip in the Fraser Delta Area.

Stopping at the Ladner Lagoon (Sewage Pond), we observed at close quarters blue-winged and cinnamon teal, dowitchers, marsh wrens and a rare northern phalarope in breeding plumage. Our second stop was at the Reifel Waterfowl Refuge which is still under development. This is a tremendous project being undertaken by the people of British Columbia, and all concerned can be proud of their efforts which can only end in great success, if the Provincial Government will recognize it when considering their proposed deep sea terminal in that general area.

The afternoon was spent on Iona Island where we were impressed by the quantity of gadwall duck, and pleased to see a female redhead duck and four beautiful Wilson's phalarope, as well as whimbrel and black-bellied plover.

Leaving our delightful hosts, we returned by ferry to our fair island and noted a large congregation of bald eagles (+ 21) in Active Pass where we had seen about 200 arctic loon from the morning boat.

While the total species count of a good 77 was not spectacular, we had enjoyed the company and many birds that are not common in the Victoria area.

Allen Poynter.

BOOK NEWS FOR NATURALISTS

These are some books added to the stock of the
Greater Victoria Public Library in June and July:-

Berrill, N.T.	Inherit the earth; man on an ageing planet.
Fenton, C.L.	Tales told by the fossils.
Ommaney, F.D.	The fishes.
Heiter, K.	Hedgehogs.
Sinnott, E.W.	Bridge of life from matter to spirit.
Wetmore, A.	Water, prey, and game birds of North America.
Godfrey, W.E.	Birds of Canada.
Lawick-Goodall, J.	My friends the wild chimpanzees.
Leopold, L.B.	Water. (Life Science Library).
Amos, W.H.	Life on the seashore.
Moucha, J.	Beautiful moths.
Ingram, J.	In search of birds.
Taylor, N.	Plant drugs that changed the world.
Hay, J.	Atlantic shore.
World Wildlife Fund.	Launching of a new Ark.
Jukes, T.H.	Molecules and evolution.
Caras, R.A.	Last chance on earth: a requiem for wildlife.
Riedman, S.R.	Home is the sea for whales.
Simpson, B.	Rocks and minerals.
Meglitsch, P.A.	Invertebrate zoology.
Vigel, Z.	Reptiles and amphibians.
Barton, J.G.	Wild flowers.
Mountford, C.P.	Ayers Rock.
Cromie, W.J.	Living world of the sea.

List supplied by Mr. George McBride,
Head of Circulation, G.V.P.L.

* * * * *

DOG, SNAKE, AND BIG, FAT TOAD

It wasn't so much a creek as a marshy trickle with lots of willow bushes. I was about to cross when I saw my dog looking at a fairly large garter snake with many orange red spots on its back along its entire length. It was doing something quite ridiculous.

A large toad was sitting quietly on the damp ground. The snake apparently had wondered if he could swallow it. He had opened his mouth wide, really wide. The jaws formed an obtuse angle of about 140 degrees. And the mouth, so opened, was pressed against the toad's rump.

It was as if you had pressed the palm of your hand against a football and then tried to close it. After a couple of seconds the snake withdrew his mouth and slithered into the bushes. The toad did not move.

Adrian Paul, Kleena Kleene.

AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILMS - 1967-1968

On October 6 and 7, at the Oak Bay Junior Secondary School Auditorium, we start our 22nd season of Audubon Wildlife Films. We are proud of this unbroken record, made possible by the wonderful support of our members and the general public.

The programme for the coming season is:-

Oct. 6 & 7	Charles T. Hotchkiss	"Wilderness Trails"
Nov. 3 & 4	Allan D. Cruikshank	"Land of the Giant Cactus"
Dec. 1 & 2	Wilf Grey	"Four Seasons"
Feb. 2 & 3	Walter H. Berlet	"Northwest to Alaska"
Mar. 22 & 23	John D. Bulger	"Wild Rivers of North America"

We welcome our 3rd speaker from Victoria, Mr. Wilf (Valley of the Swans) Grey, whose many excellent films, photographed for the British Columbia Government, have won international acclaim.

Please purchase your season tickets (adult \$3.50, Student \$1.00) at the September meeting.

* * * * *

A NET OF NATURALISTS

Each of the nine issues of Vol.24 will have a one-page piece on a notable naturalist, now dead, who worked in the Pacific Northwest between 1741 and 1947. As a single page can be little more than a biographical note, these sketches are presented in the hope that members will want to read more elsewhere. (I suggest the Provincial Archives!) The regrettable omissions due to lack of space will, it is hoped, provoke lively informed criticism. For such critical discussions educate. Including me, I guess!

Editor.

BIRDS FOR THE RECORD

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

Yellow-headed blackbird (1) - Poynter's Puddle -	April 20 -
Fork-tailed petrel (2) - Clover Point -	April 24 -
Black-legged kittiwake (1) - Clover Point -	April 27 -
	Ralph Fryer
Snowy owl (1) - Beacon Hill Park -	May 29 -
	Joan Groves
Wood duck (6 adult, 8 young) - Elk Lake -	June 15 -
	Cy Morehen
Mockingbird (1) - Lockehaven Drive -	June 27 -
	Mr. & Mrs. L.S. Hope
Dowitcher (1) - Clover Point -	July 19 -
	Enid Lemon

Notes for the summer from A.R. Davidson:

Bonaparte gull (up to 100) -	all summer
Rhinoceros auklet (up to 200) - Ten Mile Pt. to Clover Pt.	June 27 on
Tufted puffin (a few seen with auklets) -	
	Clover Pt. - summer
Mourning dove (8) - Lockehaven Drive -	from early June

Migrants (ARD):

Peeps (400, mostly least, few western) -	June 30
Surfbird -	July 6
Black turnstone -	July 11
Northern phalarope -	July 15
Ruddy turnstone -	July 19
Dowitcher (21) - Uplands Beach -	July 22
Golden plover (1) - Victoria Golf Course -	July 27
Wandering tattler (1) - McNeill Bay -	July 28

* * * * *

MENZIES' MANUSCRIPT: The original MS of the journal Menzies kept on his voyage with Capt. George Vancouver is in the British Museum. A certified copy is in our Provincial Archives. The portion dealing with Vancouver Island and Puget Sound was published in 1923 as Archives Memoir No.V. Juniors, if you don't know this book, you might be fascinated. Menzies' own handwriting is reproduced, some of his drawings, and an appendix lists plants collected by Menzies.

Editor.

ARCHIBALD MENZIES (1754-1842)

The five Menzies brothers were all botanists and gardeners.

Archibald, who studied at Edinburgh's Royal Botanical Gardens, also studied medicine at the University, became a naval assistant surgeon in the Royal Navy and, after a period stationed ashore at Halifax, Nova Scotia, made two voyages round the world and twice visited the Pacific Northwest.

Little is known of his first voyage under fur-trader, Capt. Colnett, but whenever possible he collected seeds and plants for his interested friends in Britain.

In 1790, the British Government appointed him Naturalist to accompany Capt. George Vancouver. His instructions were to report on the whole natural history of the countries visited, especially the soil, trees, shrubs, including grasses, ferns and mosses. Curious or valuable plants were to be dug up and planted in a glass frame especially built on the ship's quarter deck.

In Chile, at a formal dinner, Menzies pocketed some unfamiliar nuts, and, planting them in his glass frame, had five healthy young Monkey Puzzle trees when he returned home. The first of such to be introduced into Britain, one of the five originals survived at Kew until 1892.

At least eleven British Columbia plants bear Menzies name as species. There is also the genus *Menziesia*. Here we know well the Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and *Arbutus menziesii*.

Menzies, generous donor of his great collections did not receive due credit for many years. Pursh, in his Flora, used collections made by Lewis and Clark (1804-06) and credited many west coast species to them though Menzies had observed and listed them some ten years earlier.

In later years, Menzies was most generous with advice and information sought by other botanists, notably Douglas and Scouler. President of the Linnean Society for a term, Menzies, retiring from the Royal Navy, practised medicine in London where he died in 1842, bequeathing his herbarium of grasses, sedges and cryptogams to Edinburgh's Botanical Garden where he had trained.

R.C.

MEETINGS AND FIELD TRIPS

September 1967.

EXECUTIVE MEETING:

Tuesday, Sept. 5

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

Tuesday, Sept. 12

"From the Sea to the Mountain"
by Mrs J.M. Woollett,
Douglas Bldg. Cafeteria, 8 p.m.BIRD OUTING:

Sat. Sept. 16

Meet at Monterey Parking Lot
at 9:30 a.m. or at Fort Rodd
at 10 a.m.Leader M.C. Matheson,
383-7381BOTANY MEETING:

Wed. Sept. 27

At the Museum, 8 p.m.

"How to grow wild flowers
in your garden"by Mrs Sybil McCulloch,
Secretary, Vancouver Island
Rock and Alpine Garden Society.JUNIOR GROUP:Meet every Saturday at
Monterey Parking Lot,
Douglas at Hillside for
Field Trips, 1:30 p.m.
Leader: Mr. Freeman King,
Phone 479-2966SPECIAL NOTICE:

The B.C. Nature Council will meet at the Nature House, Thomas S. Francis Park on Oct. 14 and 15, (the week-end after Thanksgiving). Everyone is welcome at meetings and on the Sunday Field Trip. Details at Sept. meeting or phone D. Stirling 385-4223.

* * * * *

Remember that Audubon Wildlife Film Season Tickets are on sale at the September meeting, too.

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