

December, 1967

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# THE VICTORIA NATURALIST



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COVER PICTURE

By Ralph Fryer

A NEW NESTING RECORD FOR MEW GULLS

By C.W. Morehen

During the past winter, Ralph Fryer suggested following up a lead he had on gulls nesting on an island in Lake Cowichan. His guess was that the gulls were Mew gulls and, if so, it would be a record for them nesting so far south. Birds of Canada lists Kennedy Lake, V.I. as the most southerly nesting site.

On June 18, we set out to follow up this nesting lead by car and canoe. On arrival at Lake Cowichan we were rather disappointed to find the islands heavily wooded and not a gull of any kind in sight. Ralph inquired of a local boatman and was told of an island they called "Gull Island", not far from the centre of the lake and straight out from Forest Products campsite on the south side of the lake.

This was the lead we needed and with our 60x telescope we saw gulls flying around what appeared to be a small rocky island. Canoeing to that island seemed out of the question so we drove round to the north side of the lake and inquired of a local cottager, Jack Wilkinson, if he would take us out to the island in his motor boat. This he was glad to do. It was soon apparent that they were Mew gulls, four pair in all. There were three nests. One had three eggs. One had two eggs. One had one young with one egg just hatching, and a third egg as yet unhatched. (Ralph's picture of this nest is the Cover Picture for this month). Ralph got excellent movies and still shots thanks to the help of Jack Wilkinson and his boat. Jack claimed the gulls had been there about ten years and had been wiped out one year by an unknown cause; fortunately they had returned to nest the following year.

We returned that night happy with our find which is no doubt a nesting record for this bird so far south.

(Continued overleaf)

This trip was followed by a June 29, daybreak trip that included Grace Bell with her sound equipment, Ralph Fryer with his camera equipment, and the writer and his wife with their power boat in tow.

We arrived at the island in good time, and found the nest with two eggs intact, while on the water were two quite young gulls and one somewhat older. The clamorous adults fourteen in all - gave Grace constant opportunity for her recordings while Ralph obtained further excellent shots of parents, eggs and young. The young were certainly not co-operative for which we can probably blame the parental advice coming to them continually.

Thanks to the patient efforts of Grace Bell and Ralph Fryer, we now have permanent records on sound track and film of Mew gulls nesting on "Gull Island" in Lake Cowichan, Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

#### BOOKS OF INTEREST FOR NATURALISTS

Some recent books added to the stock of the Greater Victoria Public Library in October 1967.

Briggs, Peter	Water: the vital essence.
Helm, Thomas	Hurricanes: weather at its worst.
Taylor, Roy Lewis	The evolution of Canada's flora.
Walsh, John	Time is short and the water rises: Operation Gwamba.
Lust, Peter	The last seal pup.
Hardy, W. G.	Alberta: a natural history.
Farrington, Benjamin	What Darwin really said.
Young J. Z.	The memory system of the brain.
Hart, Susanne	Too short a day: a woman vet in Africa.
Baker, J.A.	The Peregrine.
Russell, Andy	Grizzly country.
Blanchard, D.C.	From raindrops to volcanoes.
Zuber, Christian	Animal Paradise (Galapagos Islands)
Basford, Leslie	The science of movement.
May, C.P.	A book of Canadian birds.
Shepherd, Anthony	The flight of the unicorns.

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

#### UNSPOILED MARSH LANDS

Every consideration should be given to the holding of marginal forest and wild land within the boundaries of our urban areas. Such lands are valuable for the young people attending our University for they provide a place where the young can find and study the things they have been shown in books.

Another type of land we must protect and hold is the marsh lands. These marshes, wherever they may be, are a very important part of our ecology and our way of life. If we fill in or drain our marshes, we destroy many plants and animals which can only live in this environment. Once destroyed, they can never be brought back again. Marshes are a complete wilderness area of their own. Destroy these areas and we thus destroy the natural feeding grounds of many birds, some of which are beneficial to mankind and can only live in this type of land. Also, these marshes are resting and feeding stations for the migratory water-fowl as they go north in the spring. The marshes provide the type of food the birds need to carry them on to their nesting ground. In the fall, the marshes are again used as a feeding station as, during the summer months, they have built up and stored the kind of food the birds need on their journey to their winter habitat. These marshes have been used by countless numbers of birds over the centuries. They have become a built-in complex in the bird's life that we can destroy and thereby perhaps lose forever this particular path or flyway.

Birds play an important part in the destiny of man. Centuries ago, man destroyed himself and his way of life by such acts as the destruction and drainage of marsh lands. Carthage, the ancient city of Ur, the lands of Arabia and Palestine - all were once wooded with many rivers and streams. Now they are a sun-drenched, sandy desert. Let us not make this mistake again.

Marsh lands hold water, allowing it to soak slowly into the water table and to enrich the soil so we may grow food. Destroy the marshes and we lower the water table. This is already happening in many places.

Remember the past. Think of the future generations. And preserve those marsh lands NOW.

Freeman King.

### KOOTENAY AND KOKANEE

On the 1966 Thanksgiving weekend, I went with a friend in his Ford "Bronco" to explore some of the country around Kootenay and Duncan lakes. We drove from Trail through Nelson and Kaslo to the north end of Kootenay Lake and on up to the Duncan river. At Meadow creek we stopped at the station where biologists of the Fish and Wildlife branch were studying the movement of the Kokanee, a species of landlocked salmon which spawns in the creeks flowing into Kootenay Lake. Although it was late in the season we saw a number of the fish with their brilliant red bodies and greenish-black heads. Those we saw were ten to twelve inches long and we were told that the Kokanee which spawn at the northern end of Kootenay Lake are smaller and spawn later than those in the West Arm of Kootenay Lake. Two days later, on our way back we stopped at Red Fish creek to check this point. We found the spawning run definitely over. No live fish were in sight, but the carcasses we saw were mostly 18-20" long and would weigh several times as much as the fish we saw at Meadow creek. We saw a number of fish going up the Lardeau river, and from the large number of California gulls below the dam, assumed that there were fish in the Duncan river also.

We left the highway a few miles from Howser, camping for the night. The next morning was chilly with several degrees of frost as we continued up a rough trail which the "Bronco" handled easily. We climbed at times to an elevation of 7,000 feet and wound along the ridge for 20 miles as far as a small lake where a helicopter landing area has been prepared for fighting fires. A short distance from the heliport, the limestone ridge rises to form Mt. Abbott (9,000 feet) and Mt. Templeman (10,000 feet.) From many places along this trail one gets superb views of the Selkirk mountains to the east and north, and, to the south and west, of the Monashee mountains whose snow-covered peaks rise to a height of 10,000 feet. Beyond Duncan Lake we could see Kootenay Lake extending away into the distance. Visibility was excellent and we got some good pictures.

There were not many birds in the high country, but we saw some of the typical ones - Clark crows, Canada jays, chickadees, red crossbills and varied thrushes.

Returning from the ridge, we inspected the Duncan dam and then camped on the shore of Kootenay Lake. The next

morning we saw a dipper looking for his breakfast among the rocks at the water's edge, at an elevation of 2,000 feet. Later that day we saw another dipper on the edge of Kokanee Lake at an elevation of 7,000 feet and where snow covered the ground. These hardy birds seem to adapt themselves to a wide variety of weather and altitude as long as the water's edge is open to them.

That day we drove up Kokanee creek as far as the old Molly Gibson mine, and hiked up the valley past Kokanee Lake to the height of land looking down on three small lakes - Keen, Garland and Kaslo - which drain north to Kaslo creek. Most of the time we were in a blinding snowstorm. We had hoped to reach Kokanee Glacier but the unfavourable weather discouraged us so we turned back. We had seen a lot of beautiful scenery and had a lot of good exercise.

A. Douglas Turnbull.

### THE EDITOR'S DESK

Once more we resort to this space-saving device.

THOSE 88 DELINQUENTS! Treasurer E. E. Bridgen reports that 88 members have not paid their dues. Thus they have received four issues of the magazine free. We like to be generous. We want to remain solvent, too! Dues are payable to Victoria Natural History Society. Mail direct to Mr. E.E. Bridgen, 2159 Central Ave. The amount is printed on the back cover.

NATURE TOUR IN AUSTRALIA. David Stirling left Nov.2 to lead such a tour for the organizers, Treasure Tours International Inc. He will be back in mid-December.

WEEKEND MAGAZINE Our Society's Annual Fungus Foray, 1966, was presented as a picture-story in the Nov.11,1967, issue of this coast to coast magazine.

UNIVERSITY LIAISON Dr. W.E.M. Mitchell, 2171 Granite St., Phone 383-2579 is our new officer for this job.

MORE SOCIETY NEWS AND NOTICES on final page after meetings and Field Trips.

E-E-A-A-GLE! E-E-A-A-GLE!

In his book, "The Territorial Imperative," Ardrey says that aggressive defence of a territory is normally directed against members of the same species, and that aggression against a different species is rare. However, at Waterlea we regularly witnessed two definite examples of territorial aggression between species - gulls versus eagles, and swallows versus robins. The robin-swallow quarrel is part of another story that we may tell another time; this story concerns the eagles.

Despite the fact that bald eagles were regular visitors to our little island, where they perched in the high branches of the Douglas firs, to rest and survey the landscape, they were never left in peace for very long before being attacked by the gulls. As long as there was only one stray gull in the vicinity, discretion took the better part of valour, and the eagle was tactfully ignored. But as soon as reinforcements arrived, the dive-bombing would begin. The gulls would take turns to swoop down to within a foot or two of the seated eagle, and zoom up again before the eagle could catch them. Meanwhile other gulls would sit on nearby branches to watch the performance and scream encouragement. At first the eagle would try to ignore the gulls, but before long he would start snapping at them as they swooped past. Finally, he could stand the pestering no longer, and he would lazily take off to go about other business. The gulls' performance was usually accompanied by an almost hysterical screaming, quite different from the ordinary gull cry, which is frequently just a call to share in a find of food: "Come and get it." We soon learned to recognize the special cry of "Eagle! Eagle!" Many times when we heard it we turned the binoculars on the eagles' favorite perch, and never failed to find one or two eagles being dive-bombed.

Why do the gulls think the eagles are their sworn enemies? The unattached males and immatures who make up the bulk of the summer gull population along the shore do not seem to have strong territorial instincts. They evidently consider that they have prior perching rights on the tidal flats, but they do not seem to defend any particular territory against other gulls, and they rarely fight among themselves except when one of them finds a tasty tidbit and another tries to steal it. They tolerate the herons and the kingfishers who are competing for the

food supply. They have no quarrel with the crows, but will allow crows to forage on the same beach, only a few yards away, as long as the crow lets the gull have first pick. Why then are they so persistent in attacking and driving away the eagles? Is it the result of a lesson learned in infancy when perhaps eagles raided the breeding grounds and carried off baby gulls? We never saw an eagle attempt to capture a full-grown gull, but perhaps the gulls who survived the hazards of infancy had learned from their parents to hate and fear all eagles.

Hugh Grayson-Smith.

JUNIOR JOTTINGS

The Junior Branch began this season's outings with a trip to Goldstream where they spent an autumn afternoon learning about Goldstream and its surroundings.

The next Saturday, the Intermediate Group went to Francis Park to clean up around the Nature House, check the trails and replant the trees in Patrons' Forest. All this was done in preparation for the Nature Council Meeting at the Nature House on the following weekend.

On the weekend of the Nature Council Meeting, the Junior Group went up to Francis Park and learned about the surrounding areas as they were divided into groups and travelled along the trails.

This last weekend, Oct. 28, the Intermediate Group had an interesting visit to the Thetis Lake areas. The lichens and mosses were very damp and prolific due to the wet weather we have had lately. This was an enjoyable, worthwhile trip for the older members.

Jane Moyer, Junior.

JUNIORS: If you want to read more on Dr. Dawson, the great Canadian geologist, (see page 47), the Greater Victoria Public Library has material written by and about him. The Life and Letters of George Mercer Dawson is in the Provincial Archives. The list of his publications gives an idea of the extent of his travels, of the breadth of his mind, and of his wide range of interests. Readable, with photographs, sketches, and list of publications, this book was written by Dawson's niece, Lois Winslow-Spragge.

Editor.

### ANNUAL FUNGUS FORAY

Influenced by a misleading press notice, on November 4th we had an assembly of 72 collectors, approximately double our usual number. However, there was plenty of room for all and having begun at 10:30 a.m. there was good daylight time for more extensive hunting.

The combined efforts of the observers harvested at least 70 different species, as usual of all colours, shapes and sizes. The mushrooms represented all five groups based on spore-colour - white-spored (the most numerous by far), rusty, pink (or salmon) brownish-purple and black.

Russula, Lactarius, Tricholoma, Clitocybe, Marasmius, Mycena, Collybia, Lepiota, Amanita, Laccaria, Cantharellus, Xeromphalina and Hygrophorus, were all represented in the white-spore group.

In the rusty-spore genera we had many species of Cortinarius (some authorities estimate there are altogether 400+ species in this genus.) Our most readily-recognized species were Cortinarius cinnamomeus and C. semisanguineus. But we saw at least eight other kinds. Pholiotas (majority of them growing on wood) were represented in our collection by P. marginata (dangerous) and P. spectabilis (edible but dry and coarse.)

Two handsome little salmon-spored species were a brown-capped Entoloma species and dark-blue Leptonia lampropoda.

The best known brown-purple spored mushrooms are doubtless the Agaricus species and we had three of these, A. silvaticus, A. silvicola and A. placomyces. All agaricus species have a conspicuous "ring" and in that respect resemble the Amanitas as well as in having "free gills". But an Amanita has also a "volva", which may be cup-shaped or in the form of concentric rings of ridges closely attached to the enlarged stem base. In collecting, always be sure to lift all of your specimen in order to examine the stem base.

In the black-spored group only three species turned up i.e. Panaeolus campanulatus (growing on mammal droppings) and two species of Gomphidius, G. glutinosus and G. subroseus, both of which have their caps coated with a slimy gelatinous layer. In spite of this unattractive appearance these two are usually considered edible especially G. subroseus. Both species have decurrent gills and

wear a dark ring rather high up on the stem; the stem base in each is coloured yellow.

As a matter of fact only a very small percentage of our mushrooms are poisonous, but, are all the rest classed as edible? Perhaps. But we must distinguish between "edible" and "palatable". A person could safely chew and swallow straw or sawdust but these would not be considered palatable.

Many forms of animal life eat poisonous mushrooms safely e.g. common slug, various insects and even land turtles. Foresters state that deer and cattle have been observed eating mushrooms. But the prime animal mushroom-eaters are the squirrels and they make a practice of storing away their surplus for future use. Apparently even poisonous species are eaten by these active little fellows, witness the big "nibbled-out" fly agaric (Amanita muscaria) on display Saturday.

The most admired specimens found on the "hunt" were the dainty little pink-capped Mycena adonis, and an equally tiny but white species of Marasmius growing out of a dead twig. Much attention also went to Hygrophorus conicus, a reddish-yellow specimen whose greenish-yellow stem turns black with age or with handling. Authorities are about evenly divided on the status of this particular species which ranges from it being considered edible (as all other Hygrophorus members are supposed to be) to being on the "Suspected" list or "dangerously poisonous."

This brings to mind the old saying "what's one man's meat is another man's poison". So beware; experiment on a very small scale and never cook two kinds in one "stew." If sickness should result, it would be impossible to know which kind was the "villian". And remember, even the safest mushrooms can cause sickness if not young, freshly-gathered and free from insect invasion.

Some of the best kinds are:- all species of puffballs, most of the chanterelles, delicious lactarius, shaggy mane, oyster fungus (Pleurotus) and Boletus zelleri. All of these are easy to recognize. Don't take chances. Better be safe than sorry!

References 1) Museum Handbook No.24 by R.J.Bandoni and A.F. Szczawinski. 2) The Savory Wild Mushroom by Margaret McKenny. 3) Mushrooms and Toadstools, published by Blandford Press, London. 4) Mushrooms of Canada by J. Walton Groves.

M.C. Melburn.

BIRDS FOR THE RECORD

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

White-fronted goose (1) - UVic -	Oct. 4 -
Wood duck (1 female, wild) - Beacon Hill Pk. -	Oct.12 on -
	Cy Morehen
Sharp-tailed sandpiper (1) - Martindale Rd. -	Oct.14 -
	A.R. and Elinore Davidson
White-throated sparrow (1) - Hunt Rd. -	Oct.15 -
	Allen Poynter
White-throated sparrow (1) - Ascot Drive -	Oct.16 -
(with juncos, golden-crowns) Harold and Vera Walker	
Lesser yellowlegs (3) - Martindale Rd. -	Oct.15 -
Ruddy turnstone (1) - Clover Pt. -	Oct.15 -
Sabine's gull (1 immature) - Clover Pt. -	Oct.21 -
Franklin's gull (1 immature) - Clover Pt. -	Oct.21 -
	Allen Poynter
Franklin's gull (1) - Clover Pt. -	Nov. 9 -
	Elinore Davidson and Ralph Fryer
Golden eagle (1) - Esquimalt Lagoon -	Oct.21 -
Cackling Canada goose (1) - Esquimalt Lagoon -	Oct.21 -
	A.R. and Elinore Davidson
Sandhill crane (4) - Ten Mile Pt. -	Oct.22 -
	Betty Westerborg and Dave Kerridge
Bobolink (1) - Hunt Rd. -	Oct.28,29 -
	A.R. and Elinore Davidson, Allen Poynter
Semipalmated plover (1) - Clover Pt. -	Nov. 4 -
	Allen Poynter
Short-eared owl (1) - Uplands Park -	Nov. 5 -
	A.R. and Elinore Davidson

Migrants and winter visitors: green-winged teal (35 plus, Oct.14); old squaw (Oct.14); red-breasted merganser, canvasback and common merganser (110; 70 on Gorge)(Oct.21); red-throated loon (Oct.28); common goldeneye, ring-necked duck (Nov.4).

Reported: blue jay - MacAnally Rd.; tree swallow - Dallas Rd. - Nov.7; all-black duck with bottle-green gloss, dark bill, mallard shape and with mallards - Martindale Rd. and Elk Lake.

GEORGE MERCER DAWSON (1849-1901)

What do you know of George Dawson, the small man who was a great geologist?

He was born in the small town of Pictou, Nova Scotia in 1849. But, before he was ten, his family moved to Montreal, at which time his father became President of McGill University. Always eager to learn about the outdoors, George spent many hours by the McGill College stream. When he was about eleven, he contracted a severe chill from these icy waters. He recovered gradually, but was left with a hunch back, and never grew taller. Until he reached University, he had to study under a private tutor.

At 18, he enrolled at McGill University as a partial student, taking courses in English, chemistry and his favourite subject, geology. Two years later, he went to England where he spent the next four years studying for his degree at the Royal School of Mines.

Dawson's first important scientific appointment was as geologist to the British North American Boundary Commission, which, in 1873 and 1874, marked out the boundary between Canada and the United States. In addition to geography and geology, he studied bird life and sent many new species to the British Museum. He also studied mammals and flowering plants. A good artist, he often sketched and painted the various scenes of his travels.

In 1875, he was made paleontologist (one who studies fossils) to the Geological Survey of Canada, and in 1883 he became Assistant Director. Between the time of his first exploration in 1873 and his death in 1901, he went on many exploration trips, mostly in the Canadian Northwest (including the Queen Charlotte Islands.) In all, tremendous distances were covered, usually under difficult conditions.

From 1870-1900, he was continually writing and publishing.

Six years before his death, Dr. Dawson was appointed Director of the Geological Survey of Canada.

In 1901, he caught acute bronchitis, and died three days later.

The Yukon's Dawson City, and Dawson Creek, B.C. were both named after him. Dr. George Mercer Dawson had the frail body of a child, and yet his endurance was incredible.

Barbara Chapman, Junior.

MEETINGS AND FIELD TRIPSEXECUTIVE MEETING

Tuesday, Dec. 5.

8 p.m. Dr. Carl's office  
Provincial Museum.AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILMSFriday and Saturday  
December 1 and 2Wilfred E. Gray presents  
"Four Seasons" at 8 p.m. at  
Oak Bay Junior Secondary School.GENERAL MEETING:

Tuesday, Dec. 12

"The Wilderness Concept and B.C. Parks"  
Speaker: Kerry Joy.CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT:

Saturday, Dec. 30.

Counters are asked to check areas  
during Christmas holidays. For  
information on count please contact  
Betty Westerborg or Ruth Stirling  
at 385-4223.

(No Bird Field Trip this month)

JUNIOR GROUP:Meet every Saturday at Monterey  
Parking Lot, Douglas at Hillside,  
at 1:30 p.m. for field trips.  
Leader: Freeman King, 479-2966.ADVANCE NOTICE:We will have a black and white photo  
show at the February General Meeting.C. P. LYONS' FILM, Quest for Adventure, will be shown  
December 12 and 13 at 8:30 p.m. at the McPherson Theatre.  
Adults \$1.50, Students 75¢.ON SALE AT THE MUSEUM is Naturalist's Guide to the  
Victoria Region. Prepared by the British Columbia  
Nature Council, edited by R.Y. Edwards, dedicated to  
the late W.D. Reith, this 37 page booklet has articles  
on rocks, botanizing, seashore and birding. Contributors  
are Marrion, Melburn, Carl, and Stirling.  
Priced at \$1.00, this guide should make a useful Christ-  
mas gift.

A Happy Christmas and a pleasant 1968 to everyone!



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