

February, 1968  
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# THE VICTORIA NATURALIST



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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Victoria B.C



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Vol.24, No.6February 1968

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## COVER PICTURE

By the late W.D. Reith

WIND

By Murray Matheson

Small craft warnings and an ominous grey sky over Juan De Fuca foretell of a weather system moving in from the open ocean. To some, a gale may mean a cold meal in a dark house, wind-lashed tides flooding far above normal high water or an all night shift, making emergency repairs to downed high tension lines. To birders, a gale during the migration season sends a tingle up our spines and our thoughts stray to Clover Point and the pelagic species that may be blown up the straits before the gale.

Mention wind in a group of people and everyone will have a favorite tale of some great storm when ---. We all do. Wind is a powerful factor in our lives, it warms us, cools us, brings our rain, clears our air and prunes our trees. Without the ever-present wind, our coastline would be a vastly different place with no wind-carved beaches, or wind-sculpted trees gracefully bending inland to please our eye.

We think in platitudes about wind: North winds are cold, South winds are warm, West winds are wet, East winds are dry. But consider for a moment. In winter the continental air mass is cold and a southerly air movement draws the cold air out over the coast - the cold North wind. In summer, the continental airmass is warm and dry, a southerly air movement gives warm North winds. A south wind in winter draws relatively warm oceanic air over the coast and produces the warm South wind. But in summer, the same wind, because of the small annual variation in oceanic temperatures, is our cold wind. In this part of the world, easterly winds mark the beginning of a low pressure system moving in from the ocean bringing rain and the supposedly wet westerly brings clearing skies after a storm. Perhaps our faulty folklore is due to being transplanted from an old land to a new one.

### HOW TO VISIT A SEA BIRD COLONY

Well meaning but uninformed people, naturalists included, can seriously damage bird colonies simply by visiting them. Because of disturbance a number of dangers confront the birds.

Disturbed birds may fail to breed, desert their nests, or even kill their young.

Eggs and young left unattended may be eaten by predators, or damaged by heat or cold.

Frightened young gulls may fall into crevices, or lose touch with their parents.

Unattended cormorant nests are particularly vulnerable to crow predation.

When in or near a bird colony, observe these rules.

- never take a dog into a colony.
- move quietly and slowly; allow time for the birds to "get ready".
- on the other hand, keep moving; you are keeping birds from their nests.
- watch where you step.
- large groups of people should never enter a colony.
- small groups should remain fairly compact to reduce the area of disturbance.
- one or two people may sit quietly in a colony if they are more or less hidden. Large groups can rarely do this effectively.
- don't stop for long discussions or picnics, while conspicuously located in or near a colony.
- stay in the colony a much shorter time than you would like to.

Well meaning people, even naturalists, can cause more damage to a bird colony than would a party of egg smashers. Obey these rules and the damage you do will be minimum.

Reprinted from General Information,  
No. 1. Parks Branch Nature Houses,  
Dept. of Recreation & Conservation.

### MITLENATCH ISLAND NATURE PARK

Members at the January General Meeting were able to see Mr. Wayne Campbell's slides of this provincial park which, for Victorians, is most easily approached by boat from Miracle Beach.

The island's two low hills, East Hill (105 feet) and West Hill (175 feet) are separated by a lower meadow with picnic tables. A camp naturalist is on the island in the summer months. His cabin is not visible from the meadow and does not give the island a "lived in" look.

Mr. Campbell in his report for the summer of 1966 stated that from May 18 - September 7, 718 parties visited the island. The 1067 visitors in 1965 rose to 2,112 in 1966. An analysis of the visitors' interests showed that oyster collectors accounted for 30.2% with natural history, picnics, diving and abalone collecting, and photography following in that order.

Of oyster collecting, Mr. Campbell wrote that in 1966 they restricted most visitors to one sack per boat. It was pointed out that as collecting is usually prohibited in all British Columbia parks, the gathering of oysters, abalones and clams was a unique privilege on Mitlenatch. If the privilege were abused, collecting would have to be stopped. In the summer of 1966, 347 sacks of oysters were collected by visitors. In May, 1966, a Dept. of Fisheries boat gathered 75 sacks of oysters to be taken to Queen Charlotte City for transplanting.

The sea bird colony on West Hill should be disturbed as little as possible, Mr. Campbell thought. Walks to show visitors the seabirds should be led up East Hill towards the bird blinds.

No definite flora project was undertaken in the summer of 1966, but a few plants were added to the Mitlenatch Island collection in the herbarium at Miracle Beach.

Short nature and conservation talks were given to the oyster-gatherers. Longer talks were given to storm-bound or stranded visitors awaiting rescue by friends or by the R.C.M.P.

A whole section of this report was on the starfish of Mitlenatch Island.

Among birds, the report had an account of the island's oystercatchers. This appeared in the Victoria Naturalist in November, 1966.

An article on the Mitlenatch Island starfish would, it is certain, be equally interesting and enjoyable.

## CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS

SPECIES	A	B	C	D
Common Loon		4	23	1
Arctic Loon				1
Red-throated Loon			13	
Horned Grebe	32	14	90	59
Eared Grebe	2		7	7
Red-necked Grebe	3	4	12	1
Western Grebe	1	2	428	68
Pied-billed Grebe	5	20	1	4
Double-crested Cormorant	3	1	22	18
Brandt's Cormorant			9	
Pelagic Cormorant	1	2	21	22
Great Blue Heron	3	4	17	2
Mute Swan				
Canada Goose		9		49
White-fronted Goose				
Mallard	703	74	99	25
Pintail	29	16	11	
Common Teal				
Green-winged Teal	4	34		
European Widgeon				
American Widgeon	1120	431	185	17
Shoveller	6	4	1	
Redhead		2		
Ring-necked Duck	141	50	4	8
Canvasback	41		2	2
Greater Scaup	4	24	46	85
Lesser Scaup	6		1	1
Common Goldeneye	7	22	26	11
Barrow's Goldeneye	2			4
Bufflehead	45	49	221	87
Oldsquaw			58	4
Harlequin Duck				
White-winged Scoter			190	14
Surf Scoter	10	31	173	3
Common Scoter				
Ruddy Duck	2	26	155	
Common Merganser	98	4		7
Red-breasted Merganser	50	1	16	35
Hooded Merganser		6	4	39
Goshawk				
Sharp-shinned Hawk				

## VICTORIA, B.C. DECEMBER 30, 1967

E	F	G	H	I	J	K	TOTAL
4	8	25		14		8	87
2	45	5		14		200	267
2	3	2		1			21
142	334	192		252		38	1153
14	36	22		2			90
5	31	4		3		55	118
24	115	80	1	266			985
1			1	5			37
31	9	11	10	35	4	108	252
2	67	2					80
29	208	135		7		10	435
3	6			2		1	38
				19			19
				1	18	5	82
			2				2
647	85	110	378	1452	360	174	4107
1			120	14	335	63	589
					1		1
		22	225	105	280	835	1505
		1					1
352	303	410	464	2650	1025	494	7851
3	20		72	48	30	8	192
							2
					87	10	300
2							47
329	1568	195	65	140		50	2506
14	121	2	1	26	22	1	195
40	64	38	4	34		34	280
3	1	1					11
51	452	262	74	144	122	69	1576
86	128	40		25		22	363
19	136	38				2	195
21	118	65		20		17	445
49	146	202		250		110	946
1						8	9
1	13		16	59	8	1	281
				295			404
10	64	27	50	16		45	314
17	7	9	3	81			149
	1						1
	1	2					3

## CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS - continued

<u>SPECIES:</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>
Cooper's Hawk	2		1	
Red-tailed Hawk	3	2		
Bald Eagle	1	1	2	
Peregrine Falcon				
Pigeon Hawk				1
Blue Grouse	1			
Ruffed Grouse				
California Quail	10	36	34	38
Ring-necked Pheasant	3	3	1	1
American Coot	10	32	153	49
Black Oystercatcher				
Killdeer Plover		22	50	1
Black-bellied Plover				
Surfbird				
Black Turnstone			4	3
Spotted Sandpiper				
Greater Yellowlegs		4		
Common Snipe			2	1
Rock Sandpiper				
Dunlin				
Sanderling				
Glaucous-winged Gull	655	164	181	179
Western Gull				
Herring Gull		2		
Ring-billed Gull		1		
Mew Gull	6	9	565	104
Bonaparte's Gull				
Common Murre			40	
Pigeon Guillemot			3	
Marbled Murrelet				
Ancient Murrelet				
Rhinoceros Auklet				
Band-tailed Pigeon				
Great Horned Owl				
Screech Owl				
Short-eared Owl				
Belted Kingfisher	2	2	5	2
Yellow-shafted Flicker				
Red-shafted Flicker	27	23	27	11
Pileated Woodpecker	1	2	2	
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker		4	3	

## CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS - continued

<u>E</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>J</u>	<u>K</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1		3	1	2			10
		1			1	1	8
		2				1	7
1							1
	1						2
							1
				1	3		4
1	82	109	2	8	29	9	358
2	9	18	8	24	5	1	75
1	49	31	32	488	2	18	865
2	17	1					20
7	14	46	45	42	132	16	375
1	58					8	67
1	8						9
38	120	6	7	5			183
1							1
1	8		2	2	6		23
	3	9	7	52	2	3	85
1	16						17
	79		250	16	21	600	966
1	12						13
182	690	772	250	619	160	109	3961
	2						2
3	8	2				40	55
							1
318	511	29	92	251	47	80	2012
1	1						2
3	111			16		18	188
3	38	15		6		3	68
4	8			13		2	27
3	5	40		4		6	58
1							1
3		2	42				47
1				1			2
	1						1
						1	1
1		4	3	2			21
	2	1					3
1	25	78	15	33	8	20	268
1		2			1	3	12
1	2	2					12



## CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS - continued

SPECIES:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	TOTAL
Hairy Woodpecker	2	3	1		1	2	1		3	3		15
Downy Woodpecker	2	4	2	2	2	10	5	5	2		2	36
Skylark				1			28		29		4	62
Steller's Jay	7	20	7	12	1	65	54	17	13	24	7	227
Common Raven	21	16	10	8		2	13	2	6	27		105
Northwestern Crow	180	29	306	160	31	52	204	105	415	78	86	1646
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	85	103	12	38	6	97	222	35	46	45	19	708
Common Bushtit		12			11	48	35			27		133
Red-breasted Nuthatch	2	5	1	2	1		3		2			16
Brown Creeper	5	2	3	1	1	4	7		2	1	1	27
Dipper		2										2
Winter Wren	32	35	8	3	3	22	28	11	12	5	5	164
Bewick's Wren	7	2	8	4	2	6	22	7	2	2	7	69
Long-billed Marsh Wren			2							1		3
Robin	3679	419	2	96	1	105	239	74	19	95	69	4798
Varied Thrush	526	14	14	15	1		49		28	11		658
Hermit Thrush	2		3		1		6	1	2			15
Golden-crowned Kinglet	63	70	20	35		27	110	16	48	12	43	444
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2	4	15	1	1	6	35	15	1		8	88
Water Pipit										19	4	23
Cedar Waxwing					9							9
Northern Shrike											1	1
Starling	650	93	59	26	814	121	168	264	1012	27	442	3676
Hutton's Vireo	1	1						1				3
McGillivray's Warbler						1						1
House Sparrow		10	2	32	13	88	107	28	4		51	335
Western Meadowlark			2	3	5	11	5		14			40
Red-winged Blackbird	17	10				35					25	87
Brewer's Blackbird		63	1		4	112	62	110	13	50	170	585
Brown-headed Cowbird								8				8
Purple Finch		27	8	12		10	19	5	5			86
House Finch	1	16	1	2	2	44	50	2	17		15	150
Pine Siskin		10		1	30		25	70			12	148
American Goldfinch					12							12
Red Crossbill		2	4		14							20
Rufous-sided Towhee	13	11	16	15	3	30	60	6	16	34	13	217
Slate-coloured Junco					1							1
Oregon Junco	151	90	149	63	14	81	417	72	81	50	48	1216
White-crowned Sparrow			1	4			15	7			1	28
Golden-crowned Sparrow	25	22	11	14	4	9	80	28	11	20	34	258

## CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS - continued

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>
Fox Sparrow	9	7	22	9
Lincoln Sparrow				1
Song Sparrow	17	15	45	12
<u>Total Individuals</u>	<u>8538</u>	<u>2229</u>	<u>3643</u>	<u>1536</u>
<u>Total Species</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>64</u>

Total number of birds---52,368      Total Species---125

Seen during count period, but not on count day:

Sparrow Hawk, Orange-crowned Warbler, Mourning Dove,  
Snow Bunting.

AREA A - Prospect Lake-Munn Road. Mr. R. Mackenzie-Grieve,  
Mr. & Mrs. S. Mitchell, Miss Nancy Chapman, Mr. Freeman King,  
Dr. & Mrs. D. Sparling, Mr. Ian Smith, Mr. Paul Douglas,  
Mr. Dan Lockrem.

AREA B - Florence Lake-Goldstream. Mr. & Mrs. T.R. Briggs,  
Mr. J. Meiklejohn, Mr. C. Meiklejohn, Mr. W. Fitzpatrick,  
Mr. & Mrs. J. Palmer, Mrs. P. Lewis, Mr. B. Spriggs, Mr. J.  
Masselink, Mr. R. Huckin.

AREA C - Esquimalt Lagoon - Witty's. Mr. D. Stirling,  
Mr. & Mrs. W. Hesse, Mr. C. Lyons, Mr. S. Street.

AREA D - Portage Inlet - Thetis Lake. Mr. B. Adams, Mr. R.  
Beckett, Miss T. Todd.

AREA E - Beacon Hill Park - Esquimalt. Mr. R. Fryer,  
Mr. D. Gains, Mr. A. Hockley, Mr. & Mrs. Seymour, Mr. & Mrs.  
H. Soulsby.

AREA F - Clover Point - Oak Bay. Mr. G.A. Poynter, Mr. A.  
James, Mrs. M. Winstone, Miss L. Halsal, Miss B. Parlow,  
Miss D. Cogswell, Mrs. L. Parris, Miss M.C. Melburn, Mr. E.  
Tull, Mr. W. Weber, Mr. & Mrs. W. Wilson, Mr. R. Reith,  
Mr. D. Belton.

<u>E</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>J</u>	<u>K</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
7	23	38	4	12		11	142
	1						2
16	85	76	23	17	5	21	333
<u>3491</u>	<u>7067</u>	<u>5258</u>	<u>3558</u>	<u>9397</u>	<u>3245</u>	<u>4406</u>	
<u>88</u>	<u>82</u>	<u>77</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>69</u>	

AREA G - Ten Mile Point - Gordon Head. Mr. & Mrs. A.R.  
Davidson, Dr. C. Carl, Mrs. H. Bell, Mrs. I. Guthrie,  
Mrs. L. Monckton, Miss A. Adamson, Mr. S. Newton,  
Mr. L. Newton.

AREA H - Swan Lake - Panama Flats. Miss E. Lemon,  
Mrs. M. Slocombe, Mr. G. Slocombe, Mr. & Mrs. C. Morehen,  
Mr. J. Morehen, Miss G. Morehen, Miss L. Slocombe.

AREA I - Blenkinsop - Elk Lake. Mr. M. Matheson,  
Mr. & Mrs. G. Hooper, Dr. R. Bird, Mr. J. Underhill,  
Mr. D. Turnbull, Miss Louise Broadwood.

AREA J - Burnside-Quick's Pond. Mr. F. Beebe, Mr. &  
Mrs. D. Hancock, Miss Hilary Stewart, Mr. Keith Hodson.

AREA K - Martindale - Island View Beach. Mrs. R.  
Stirling, Mrs. B. Westerborg, Mr. M. Miller.

Compiled by David and Ruth Stirling.

TAVERNER, THE WRITER

As well as his ornithological knowledge, Taverner had a pleasant, graceful writing style. The excerpts below were taken from his Birds of Western Canada, long out of print.

Of the osprey, he writes, "The Osprey is a most picturesque feature of the broad shallow of inland waters, or the tidal flats of the sea. Sailing at a considerable height over the water, it pauses a moment on hovering wings, and then drops suddenly. It falls, not straight down like a Kingfisher, but in a long spiral, striking the water feet first, with wings raised high over its back. There is a splash of white spray and, for a moment, the bird, except for the black wing tips, is entirely hidden from view; ----"

Of the dipper, Cinclus Mexicanus, Taverner observes, "A very characteristic bird of the mountain streams. It dives and walks into the swiftly running water, disappears and reappears like a witch --- It is a winter as well as a summer resident and is as much at home on the slippery snowy margins and ice-draped rocks as on soft summer moss."

And here is another. "Wide watery tule swamps or quaking bogs grown with cat-tails are the places to expect the Long-billed Marsh Wren. Here in the reedy tangle just above the water it climbs and creeps about, scolding occasionally but usually keeping well from sight."

Former prairie dwellers would agree with this:- "After the long winter, when the Chinook winds have melted away the dreary white expanse of snow surrounding the prairie ranch house, the clear notes of the Meadowlark proclaim the first advent of spring. No bird is as well known or as much beloved by the western plainsman as is the Meadowlark."

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Our November, 1967, issue contained an account by Miss Leila Roberts of sighting a Scissor-Tailed Flycatcher on June 2, on the north side of Booth Bay Canal, Salt Spring Island. Miss Roberts reports a December 26 bird count on Salt Spring Island. There were 43 species and 896 individuals. Of these, the highlights were one European widegeon, and one common scoter.

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BIRDS FOR THE RECORD

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

Common teal (1) - Granville & Hastings -	Dec. 9 -
	Allen Poynter
Orange-crowned warbler (1) - Penrhyn St. -	Dec.15 -
	R. Mackenzie-Grieve
	- Ross Bay -
	Dec.31 -
	Hilda and Werner Hesse, Calgary
'Red-breasted' yellow-bellied sapsucker (1) -	Dec.21 -
	Alpine Crescent -
	Gordon Hooper
Snow bunting (1) - Cattle Point -	Dec.23 -
	A.R. and Elinore Davidson
Audubon's warbler (2) - Glen Lake -	Jan. 6 -
	A.R. and Elinore Davidson
Anna's hummingbird (1) - Comox -	Approx. Jan. 1 -
	Lived only 8 hrs.; sent to Museum by R.L. Nyblett
A hummingbird reported on Queenswood Dec. 16, 18, 21;	
	and on Oliver St. first week in January.

JUNIOR JOTTINGS

This past month - even though most of our outings took place at Francis Park - has probably been one of our best and busiest! The windy weather, earlier in the month, made two good days' work of clearing for the Juniors, along with the rare opportunity to study closely a huge, fallen Douglas fir. We were also pleased to see that the new plantation of oak, maple and dogwood trees was not damaged in the least by the wind, and is showing promise of new growth for the coming spring.

During the Christmas vacation, the leader group went on an all day cookout at Blinkhorn Lake where Skipper gave us a good workout on compass use. Also, in the vacation, a few of the Juniors took part in the annual bird count.

On the weekend of January 6 and 7, we were very busy clearing, burning, cleaning, and making new displays in preparation for the official opening of the new "place to go if it rains" building. The opening will be on January 28. As everyone is cordially invited, we are hoping that we shall see you there.

Barbara Chapman.



ONE OF NATURE'S CURIOSITIES.

During a stay in Jamaica a few years ago in which, aside from a general interest in a place not previously visited, my particular observations were astronomical, a curious incident occurred while I was watching the brilliant night sky from the grounds of a hotel in Kingston.

Late at night, I noticed near where I was seated a lizard on the ground in a most unusual position. It was lying flat, yet moving very, very slowly over the ground with no perceptible movement of the legs or other parts of the body. On the back and upturned side were several small marks, apparently blood, so it seemed to have been killed or injured.

After a while, it came closer and I was able to examine it by the light of a flashlight. I was surprised to find that the movement over the ground was caused by a column of ants, many hundreds of them, apparently dragging or getting beneath the lizard and forcing it forward. The movement continued until the lizard was concealed in the grass.

An examination of the spot in daylight failed to find any trace of either the lizard or the ants.

The ants were, I have since found, the Driver Ants, Dorylinae, a tropical variety which are nomadic and move in dense columns. They are known to destroy all insects or small mammals they meet, and larger domestic animals may be killed if they cannot escape.

E.E.Bridgen.

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KEEP THE WEST BEAUTIFUL: This new, non-profit, public service and educational organization was incorporated on September 25, 1967, under the B.C.Societies Act. Its registered office is Room 516, 736 Granville St. Vancouver, B.C. (Phone 688-4719)

Our Recording Secretary, Mrs. F.A.Sherman, 2168 Guernsey St., Victoria, is also secretary of the new society's local branch. For information, contact her or Mr. Elton Anderson, 3904 Cadboro View Road, (Phone 477-1132.)

The society aims "to promote, educate and encourage all persons, firms or corporations whether resident or non-resident within the Province to exert every effort against littering and dumping of refuse in all areas throughout the province."

PERCY ALGERNON TAVERNER (1875-1947).

No doubt the architects suffered a severe loss when Percy Taverner decided that house-planning was not his vocation in life. Whilst in Detroit, Michigan, he found himself spending more and more time studying birds in the field, in museums, and in the taxidermists' shops. During this period away from his native Canada - he was born in Guelph, Ontario - he met many professional ornithologists who helped to shape his career toward bird study. Taverner became interested in bird banding and thus grew the international bird banding organization now directed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

In 1911, he returned to Canada to become Assistant Naturalist at the National Museum. On retiring in 1942, he had held the position of Chief, Division of Ornithology, for many years.

Taverner was a prolific writer. Of greatest popular appeal was his series of pamphlets on birdhouses published by the Museum, of which, over the years, many millions have been distributed. But Taverner's most important publications were his bird books. All his books and many of his over 300 papers have been illustrated by pen-and-ink drawings by himself. Through his bird books Taverner became known to bird students in Canada and throughout all countries of the world.

Through his untiring efforts, he spear-headed the making of Point Pelee National Park and Bonaventure Island Bird Sanctuary.

During his early years at the Museum, Taverner travelled the length and breadth of the country and visited British Columbia on numerous occasions.

Taverner held no university degree, and, by what seems almost an oversight, no Canadian university conferred an honorary degree upon him.

E.K. Lemon.

MEETINGS AND FIELD TRIPS FEBRUARY, 1968

- AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM: Walter H. Berlet presents  
Friday, February 2 and "Northwest to Alaska" at 8 p.m.  
Saturday, February 3 in the Oak Bay Junior Secondary  
School Auditorium.
- EXECUTIVE MEETING: Dr. Carl's Office at 8 p.m.  
Tuesday, February 6
- BIRD FIELD TRIP: Meet at Monterey Parking Lot at  
Saturday, February 10 9:30 a.m. or Matticks Farm at  
10:00 a.m. for a trip to  
Martindale Road.  
Leader: Mr. M.Matheson  
383-7381
- GENERAL MEETING: Douglas Building Cafeteria at  
Tuesday, February 13 8:00 p.m. Members are invited  
to take part in the exhibition  
of black and white prints.  
Prints should be mounted on  
cardboard and have participants  
name and title. Prints should be  
taken in 1967. Limit - 4 per  
person. Please get in touch with  
D.Stirling, EV2-6111, Local 2498.
- ORNITHOLOGY MEETING: Mr. Porcher is Speaker.  
Wednesday, February 21 8:00 p.m. in Provincial Museum.
- JUNIOR GROUP Meet every Saturday at Monterey  
Parking Lot, Douglas at Hillside,  
1:30 p.m. for field trips.  
Leader: Mr. Freeman King.  
479-2966

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MORE PHOTO SHOW DETAILS: Prints should reach D.Stirling  
by February 7. Address to him at Parks Branch, Dept. of  
Recreation and Conservation. Prints must not be larger  
than 16" x 20". Subject matter to be natural history or  
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