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THE VICTORIA NATURALIST



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OIL AND THE STRAIT OF JUAN DE FUCA

The photograph of an oiled Common Murre on the cover of the May issue is not intended as a sign of summer. At the same time it is most fervently hoped that it is not a sign of the shape of things to come should the oil firms be allowed to make their own private decisions as to how the oil from the new northern fields will be moved to market. The possible impact of oil spills on our coastal environment has been dramatically brought to the attention of the public by such organizations as our Canadian Audubon Society, and it is to the great credit of our M.P., Mr. David Anderson, that he has spoken forth strongly.

There are those who do not approve of societies such as ours getting involved in controversial issues, and who believe that we should stick to our traditional roles as birdwatchers and nature lovers. True we are not set up to engage in lobbying and other such tactics which are best left to groups like SPEC and Pollution Probe, but we should surely get our ire up when we are sneered at as the "lunatic fringe" and "the so-called environmentalists". We have among our membership many who could qualify as ecologists as well or better than many who are now using the title as a badge of authority. Our new role as defenders of our environment, combined with our traditional one can make for a more interesting and a more alive society, and with a unity of interest and purpose we can better serve our members and our community.

At present it begins to look as if the protests of environmental groups in the United States and Canada have made the oil industry and government agencies stop in their tracks and consider alternatives and safeguards, so that when the oil inevitably begins to move, at least we may be spared the sight of thousands of oiled birds and sea creatures.

On the next page, Dr. Jeremy Tatum outlines a constructive plan in which our Society can show leadership.

(photo by Ralph Fryer) The Editor

OILED SEABIRDS

Plans will be laid during the coming months, as a result of discussions between myself and officials of the Fish and Wildlife branch and the Vancouver Island Cage-bird Society, to set up facilities and stockpile materials in advance in order to rescue and rehabilitate oiled seabirds or to kill the more severely oiled birds. At present the outlook for an oiled seabird is very poor, and rehabilitation success is almost nil. However, those involved believe there is still scope for carefully controlled attempts at rehabilitation, and will be apprising themselves of all current information available on the subject. Comments are welcome.

In the meantime I would like to compile a list of V.N.H.S. members and others who are able and willing to give practical help with this task. I am not asking for a long list of people who feel sorry for oiled birds and who think something should be done about them. I am asking for people who are actually prepared either to get out and scramble over the rocks and cover themselves in oil in the event of a spill, and rescue or kill oiled birds; or who are willing to keep and look after rescued birds for a period of months pending complete plumage change.

It will be possible to provide tuition in techniques, permits to allow this work to be done, and a certain amount of materials, such as wire netting and stakes for pens, and food, etc.

Will those who are willing to help please write to me (#416-3187 Shelbourne Street) giving information as in the format detailed below. I must appeal strongly for volunteers to adhere very strictly to this format, since departures from it will cause a great deal of extra work.

1. Name _____
2. Address _____
3. Telephone No: Home _____ Office _____
4. Are you willing and able, if called on in an emergency, to collect, rescue and/or kill oiled sea birds.
 - (a) at any time _____
 - (b) weekend only _____
5. Are you willing and able to care for oiled seabirds for an extended period (probably months), and if so, how many birds could you manage?

Jeremy B. Tatum

GOLF COURSE GULLS

Victoria's golf courses are all close to or beside the sea and the behaviour of sea gulls on the links has some points of interest.

In very stormy weather the gulls come inland and may stay overnight on the course but just as many may be seen after any heavy rain later in the year when they come to gather worms. After gorging themselves with worms many gulls throw up and handfuls of dead worms litter the fairways.

This regurgitation is thought to be caused by the gulls being disturbed and disgorging as they fly away. Although very keen-eyed, the gulls will swallow non-food items and disgorge them, because in one worm unfeast I found a rolled up chocolate bar wrapper and in another the discarded interior of a golf ball.

I have examined hundreds of these wormy spitballs but have never yet seen a live worm in them. Apparently the interior of a gull is fatal to the worm although all are swallowed whole. Strange to say, although birds as a whole are not fussy about their food, no bird ever takes a second taste of this disgorged food, as if instinctively suspecting that there might be something wrong with it.

In their search the gulls annoy golfers by pulling up and turning over the divots (pieces of turf chopped out by the golf clubs) previously replaced by the golfers. The search is for worms found beneath and divots.

Any large flock of widgeon ducks which winter on the course at Victoria Golf Club usually contains a few gulls pecking around too. Apparently they like the company of the ducks.

John L. Rimington

ODE TO DIVERSITY

If I were an insect and Moses asked me,
 "Why don't your kinfolk inhabit the sea?"
 I'd be hard put to answer, for what could I say?,
 Since history's vague for insectious ways.
 How come the moon glows? Why does the sun shine?
 Ask me these questions, the answers are mine,
 But Moses has asked me the question of brine.
 Oh sure it is salty but that's not the test,
 Our suits are protective, our armor the best.
 The salt in our diet and I'm sure that is all
 For few salts will pass through our body wall.
 This excess we'd lose as fish lose theirs still,
 By forcing it out a functional gill.
 If gills are now used for osmosis and stuff
 Don't think that our breathing will be too tough,
 Some could stay near the surface and use rectal
 places,
 Others could carry their air in elytral suit cases.
 It's not lack of food that prevents our invasion,
 There are diatoms suited to any occasion.
 We'd get setaceous hairs and current beaters
 And in no time at all we'd be filter feeders.
 Others would stay macrophagous I fear
 And prey on the others as cougars do deer.
 I can't see Odonata giving up face
 To fit passively in a phytophagous place,
 Nor could I see mantids scorn diets of flies
 Munching on algae or sea-weed pies.
 Moses looks for the answer in what we can't do,
 But I think he should look at the present sea-zoo.
 There are worms and chitons, hydroids and clams,
 Sponges and jelly fish, snails and sea fans,
 More yet of welks, veliger larvae and slugs,
 So many niches yet no room for bugs.
 The crustacea however are the biggest bug-bear,
 They've filled all the niches that ever were there.
 It's competition my friend, believe it or not;
 We are as a whole, one lazy lot.
 Call us determined as beetles or busy as bees,
 But we don't want to fight for crustacean seas.

D. Wood
 Former Entomology Student (1969-70),
 Biology Department, University of Victoria

The preceding poem was a rather original response to my question: "Insects have invaded almost every imaginable habitat except the sea. Drawing from your knowledge of insect morphology, anatomy and physiology suggest some explanations for this failure".

Richard A. Ring

IN MEMORIAM

Many tributes have appeared in the press to Dr. Margaret Newton, whose death occurred in April, and we need not repeat how much her researches have meant to Canada. Suffice to say that we were honoured to have had her as a member. Doctor Newton, in her turn, greatly appreciated the Society, and attended meetings and outings whenever her frail health would permit. To her fellow members, and especially to those in the "Tuesday Group", she was a warm and friendly person, possessed of great courage and deeply appreciative of the smallest kindness shown her. Only two days before her death she took part in a Botany outing, even climbing to the top of Seymour Hill. We were glad that she had this last opportunity to enjoy nature in the spring.

K.S.

THE DR. G. CLIFFORD CARL MEMORIAL FUND

It was Dr. Margaret Newton who, shortly after the death of Clifford Carl, urged that some form of scholarship be set up in his honour. Now that the fund has been established, I am sure that nothing would please Margaret Newton more than to have us make certain the Fund reaches its goal.

Send your contributions to:

"The Friends of the Provincial Museum"
 c/o The Provincial Museum
 Victoria

marked "Dr. G. Clifford Carl Fund"

THE EDITOR'S MAILBOX

Miss F. MacGregor writes from Vancouver to say that after reading Jeremy Tatum's article in the October issue about the water deprivation experiments carried out on birds she wrote to the president of the Animal Welfare Institute in New York. He agreed that the experiments with the Brewer's sparrows were pointless and that there was no discovery of new information: however, he felt that there was possibly some value in the Turkey Vulture experiments. Miss Stevenson, a reader in the Woodward Bio-medical Library at U.B.C., feels strongly, however, that "far too many research projects are done for 'scientific curiosity' with little regard for the suffering so unnecessarily inflicted, and the water deprivation experiment is but one unhappy example". What do you think? Have we really tried to understand the scientific goals and to weigh the pros and cons before condemning?

There is a long summer coming up with no issue of the *Naturalist* until September 1st. This is a chance to thank all those who helped to make the last nine issues possible, and to tell our other readers that we would like to hear from them if they have articles, stories, or pictures which they think may be of interest. After the completion of the long summer programme which has been prepared, we should be swamped by material. Have a good summer!

1597 Midgard Avenue
Victoria, B.C.
April 4, 1971

The Editor, *Victoria Naturalist*

Dear Sir:

In early March I was attracted to our kitchen window by the sound of red-shafted flickers. To my delight and amazement, a male and female flicker were performing a courtship ritual perched on a thick bough within a few feet of the window. Uttering somewhat unusual "wah-a-wah" cries, they bobbed up and down, tails spread fanwise, wings extended, literally dancing as they turned from side to side. All this continued for several minutes before they flew away. My bird books do not mention such behaviour amongst flickers, and I would be interested in knowing whether any other members had seen this courtship dance.

Yours truly, *Kay Dickieson*

BIRD TRIP - MARCH 20 - MARTINDALE

The weather seemed a bit uncertain in the morning, but for the duration of the trip we were fortunate that it remained fine. Birds seemed at first to be scarce but as we stood overlooking the flats and searching carefully we found Mallard, Widgeon and Shovellers in the flooded fields; Quail and Meadowlarks in the uplands; Snipe, Killdeer and Green Wing Teal hiding in the lowlands, and in the distance a Blue Heron. Overhead flew Violet-Green Swallows, a Red Tail Hawk and some pigeons. Along the woods' edge were found Bewick's Wren, Creeper, Brewer's Blackbird and Red-wings as well.

For lunch we went to Island View Beach, calling at Puckle Road to see Skylarks although not too many of them, and some interesting Snipe and Killdeer. At lunch on the beach we were able to watch all the local common sea birds including some Common Loons, Pigeon Guillemots and Old Squaw far out. A short walk after lunch along the flats yielded Towhee, Skylarks, Song Sparrow, a Bald Eagle and more Redwing Blackbirds.

About forty-five members attended with the majority staying for the whole trip.

Rod Muirhead

THINGS ARE LOOKING UP

Everything starts to look better when May arrives in Victoria. This year it is not only nature that is living up to its promise, but we read that the Provincial Government has introduced two Bills which were promised in the Speech from the Throne on January 21. The first of these is the Ecological Reserves Act which was introduced by Resources Minister Ray Williston and which provides for the creation of one hundred reserves by 1975. The Bill says that these may be areas set aside for scientific and educational purposes, areas representative of natural ecosystems, areas showing the effects of development on natural ecosystems, areas which are the natural habitat of endangered plant and animal species, and areas containing "unique and rare examples of botanical, zoological or geological phenomena". The proposed development gives the government wide powers to control or prohibit development or to order anything necessary to protect an ecological reserve.

The second Bill is the Environment and Land Use Act which establishes the Environment and Land Use Committee and sets out the Committee's duties. These include the establishment of programs to foster increased public concern and awareness of the environment and ensure all aspects of protection of the environment are fully considered in the administration of land use and resource development. The committee may hold public hearings and call witnesses. It will consist of cabinet ministers only.

This last sentence is a bit mystifying, and before going into raptures of delight it might be wise to give more study to the Bills and to the way in which they will be administered.

As we say, everything looks better in May.

Starfishes and their relations - by Ailsa M. Clark
Published 1968 by Trustees of the British Museum
(Natural History), London

This book is not a field guide but a manual written by an expert on a fascinating group of marine animals. She gives a clear and concise treatment covering all phases of the life history, structure and importance of the Echinoderms, which include the starfishes, brittle stars, sea cucumbers and sea lilies. This book should be of interest to students of marine life, because the author has the rare ability of making her technical knowledge clear to the layman and still have her work authoritative for other scientists who are not well informed about this group. As the waters of British Columbia are unusually rich in both numbers and varieties of Echinoderms, this manual should be useful for the study of the natural history of the local starfishes and their relations.

Review by J.F.L. Hart

The Succession of Life Through Geological Time

by K.P. Oakley and Helen M. Muir-wood
Published by British Museum (1967)

This ninety-page booklet has been reprinted many times and would make good reading for general interest or for serious study. The reader's imagination is captured as the authors trace step by step the evolution of life forms as unfolded by fossils found in the hardened rocks in different parts of the world. These rocks are divided into four eras, the early life, the old life, the middle life, and the new or later life.

The eras dealt with are treated under the headings: name of period, origin or meaning of the name, duration of the period, geological conditions.

After a short description of the Precambrian rocks, the gradual development of life forms through the Cambrian period to the Quaternary period is traced in some detail. The reader is shown how present life forms emerged at the various stages. A series of twelve plates illustrate different types of life during the various periods, and four maps showing the sea and land areas between Cambrian and Eocene times are included.

Reviewed by A.H. Marrion

NEW MEMBERS

Miss Jennifer Brown	809 Selkirk Street, Victoria
Miss Violet Burgess	#401-450 Dallas Road, Victoria
Mrs. C.J. Douglas	919 Sluggett Road, Brentwood Bay
Miss P. Downey	3190 Beach Drive, Victoria
Mrs. Norah Dunsford	245 Stormont Road, Victoria
Mr. and Mrs. John Eltringham	606 Niagara Street, Victoria
Mr. and Mrs. L.R. Flegal	1349 Minto Street, Victoria
Mrs. A.L. Harvey	937 St. Charles Street, Victoria
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hill	#1-1305 Manor Road, Victoria
Mrs. H.C. Holmes	677 Beach Drive, Victoria
Mrs. A.E. Hughes	P.O. Box 423, Kingston, Ontario
Mr. and Mrs. P.L. Mathewson	2081 Windsor Road, Victoria
Mrs. Jean M. Muir	3113 Glen Lake Road, Victoria
Mr. Leo Unger	536 Cecilia Road, Victoria
Mr. and Mrs. R. Varney	844 Wollaston Street, Victoria
Miss Dorothy White	1215 Richardson Street, Victoria
Miss Rose White	1215 Richardson Street, Victoria
Mr. John Comer	R.R. 1, Duncan, B.C.

BIRDS FOR THE RECORD

by M. and L. Slocombe, 3134 Henderson Road (592-9047)

Pygmy owl (1) - March 14th - - - - - Goldstream
J.B. Tatum
Long eared owl (1) - March 19th - - - - - Newport Avenue
(died same day) Dr. and Mrs. J.L. Climenhaga and others
Bank swallow (1) - March 20th - - - - - Beaver Lake
Mountain quail (5) - March 20th - - - - - Munn Road
Keith Taylor and Ron Satterfield
Arctic loon (200) - March 20th - - - - - Mount Douglas
A.R. Davidson
European Widgeon (1) - March 21st - - Victoria Golf Course
E.K. Lemon
Trumpeter swan (1 imm.) - March 21st - - - - Prospect Lake
Keith Taylor and Ron Satterfield
Kittiwake (1) - April 1st - - - - - Hood Lane
Ron Satterfield
Savannah sparrow (1) - April 10th - - - - - Mill Bay
Golden eagle (1 adult) - April 10th - - - - - Mill Bay
A.R. Davidson
Mountain bluebird (1) - April 10th - - - - - Royal Oak
J.B. Tatum
Lincoln sparrow (1) - April 15th - - - - - Alpine Crescent
Mrs. G. Hooper
Least sandpiper (1) - April 16th - - - - - Clover Point
Mrs. A.R. Davidson
Yellow throat (1) - April 16th - - - - - Pike Lake
Terese Todd

ADDENDA

This is the "welcome back" month. Returning turkey vultures have been reported at both Sooke and Peder Bay and Aleutian sandpipers have been migrating up the coast all this month. Bush tits are brooding eggs and Black brandt are abundant with Betty Gibson spotting 100 at Esquimalt Lagoon on March 24 and Mr. Davidson finding 360 at Cherry Point on April 10. Mr. Davidson also reports an orange crowned warbler, a rufous hummingbird and a white crown sparrow at Towner Park on April 3. On the same day Keith Taylor and Ron Satterfield spotted 3 Yellow billed loons out Sooke way. Their sighting of an osprey at Schwartz Bay March 27 is also good news. Considering present weather we should be grateful to the birds for reminding us it is spring after all!

SUMMER PROGRAM 1971

Executive Meeting: 8:00 p.m. Board Room 104M - Provincial
Tuesday May 4 Museum

Botany Field Trip: Meet at Mayfair Lanes parking lot
Saturday May 8 (north side) 10:00 a.m. or Gillespie
Road at Sooke Road 10:30 a.m. for trip
to East Sooke. Bring lunch.
Leader: Terese Todd 479-2816

General Meeting: 8:00 p.m. Newcombe Auditorium, Pro-
Tuesday May 11 vincial Museum (south entrance)
Annual Business meeting and election
of officers only.

Bird Field Trip: Meet at Mayfair Lanes parking lot
Saturday May 15 (north side) 9:30 a.m. or Sooke River
Road Junction 10:00 a.m. Bring lunch.
Leader: Ruth Stirling 385-4223

Entomology Field Meet at New Biology Building,
Trip: University Campus 10:00 a.m.
Saturday May 29 Bring lunch.
Leader: Dr. R.A. Ring 656-2246

JUNE

Botany Field Trip: Meet at Mayfair lanes parking lot
Saturday June 12 (north side) 10:00 a.m. or Rodd Hill
10:30 a.m. Bring lunch.
Leader: Terese Todd 479-2816

Bird Field Trip: Meet at Mayfair Lanes parking lot
Saturday June 19 (north side) 9:30 a.m. or Goldstream
Park 10:00 a.m. Bring lunch.
Leader: R. MacKenzie-Grieve 477-2402

Tide Pool Meet at Mayfair Lanes parking lot
Exploration: (north side) 10:00 a.m. or 10:30 a.m.
Saturday June 26 Smugglers' Cove. Bring lunch.
Leader: Dr. Jeremy Tatum 592-1332

(continued)

July Vict Nat Hist Soc

Botany Field Trip: Meet at bus on Black Ball (Port Angeles)
 Saturday July 10 Ferry Wharf, 814 Wharf St. 10:30 a.m.
 for trip to Hurricane Ridge. Details
 of trip in April *Victoria Naturalist*.
 SEATS MUST BE RESERVED BEFORE JULY 1.
 Leader: Terese Todd 479-2816

Bird Field Trip: Meet at Mayfair Lanes parking lot
 Saturday July 17 (north side) 9:30 a.m. or Clover Point
 10:00 a.m. Bring lunch.
 Leader: Ron Satterfield 383-6257

Vict. Natural History Society

Botany Field Trip: Meet at Mayfair Lanes parking lot
 Saturday August 14 (north side) 10:00 a.m. for trip to
 Mill Hill. Bring lunch.
 Leader: Dr. T.M.C. Taylor 478-2098

AUGUST

Bird Field Trip: Meet at Mayfair Lanes parking lot
 Saturday August 21 (north side) 9:30 a.m. or Robert
 Service Memorial 10:15 a.m. for trip
 to Cowichan Bay. Bring lunch.
 Leader: Enid Lemon 598-3517

Junior Group: Meet every Saturday 1:30 p.m. at
 Mayfair Lanes parking lot (north side)
 for field trip.
 Leader: Freeman King 479-2966

Every Sat.

Note: Bird Recognition Course Field Trip Francis Park
 8:30 a.m. Saturday May 15. Bring lunch.

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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A. H. Couser, #403, 435 Michigan Street - - 384-0832

Group Leaders

Botany (Summer) Miss Terese Todd, Barker Road, R.R. 6 - - - - 479-2816

Botany (Winter) Mrs. J. M. Woollett, 624 Harbinger Avenue - - - - 384-4836

Entomology: Dr. R. A. Ring, 1467 Jamaica Road - - - - - 477-4883

Ornithology: A. C. Schutz, 2060 McNeill Avenue - - - - - 386-0541

Marine Biology: Freeman F. King, 541 McKenzie Avenue - - - - - 479-2966

David Stirling, 3500 Salsbury Way - - - - - 385-4223

Junior Naturalists: Freeman F. King, 541 McKenzie Avenue - - - - 479-2966

Mrs. E. C. Osborne, 1536 Vining Street - - - - - 385-8164

Ornithology Records: Dr. Jeremy Tatum, #416, 3187 Shelbourne Street 592-1332

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University Liaison: Dr. Jeremy Tatum, #416, 3187 Shelbourne Street 592-1332

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Junior Membership is restricted to those not under 9½ years and not over 18 years.

Dues and changes of address should be sent to the Treasurer.