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AN ILL EAGLE

The Bald Eagle is considered to be an endangered species in the United States. It is rare in most of Canada except for the West Coast where it remains fairly common.

Bald Eagles were around in greater numbers than usual in the Campbell River area last summer. The main concentration appeared to be at Shelter Point where they were noticed by many people. One early morning in June I counted fifteen. Most of them were on the beach, sitting big and sombre on the largest boulders.

What brought about this concentration of eagles? A little investigating showed that salmon fishing was particularly good and fishermen cleaned their catches on shore in the evenings. The eagles finding this source of food had moved in at daybreak before the ever-hungry gulls had a chance to begin their scavenging. They had become quite unafraid of people, a reflection of the tolerant even protective attitude toward eagles of most Vancouver Island residents. This is in contrast to the mood which still prevails in many other parts of Canada where eagles are often shot for targets or trophies.

In mid-July the eagle shown on our cover was picked up by the construction crew in a Miracle Beach Provincial Park campsite. It was unable to fly and obviously very sick. We took it to a woodshed, offered it food and drink, and hoped it might recover. Two days later it was dead.

The skin is now the property of the Parks Branch and the carcass awaits analysis by the Fish and Wildlife Branch. As yet we don't know the cause of death. Perhaps it was old age but possibly D.D.T., mercury or some other poison helped to bring about the end for this magnificent bird.

Cover Photo and Story by David Stirling

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Being a country dweller, I am used to the query "Aren't you lonely living away out here, so far from town?" I find it hard to explain that so many feathered visitors use the patio and garden that I can hardly call it my own.

The Song and Fox Sparrows are the untidiest, and every evening I have to replace the soil in my planters which they have industriously kicked out in their search for food. Their lovely song from the bushes while they keep me busy is my reward.

Yes, that fat on a string is ugly, and it does drip when the sun shines, but the chickadees do love it, and it is fun to watch them bring their babies to help themselves - it must save them endless hours of searching.

Joining the resident sparrows and chickadees are the juncos and towhees, although the juncos depart in the spring to the hills to nest and do not return until September. However, their place is taken by the spring visitors, the warblers, usually the Orange-crowned and occasionally the Audubons and McGillivrays, and the Olive-sided Flycatcher; the latter chooses a different tree each season for his stand, this year it was the oak bordering the patio and his "quick three beers!" was heard for some weeks. The Warbling Vireo also comes in the spring, but it keeps to the firs and arbutus and I have to be quick to identify her.

Glimpses of the Hermit Thrush are caught during the winter when its cousin the Varied Thrush is around, but it is in the late spring that I hear the lovely ethereal song of the Swainson's Thrush which seems to fill the air from all directions. Suddenly you hear them and just as suddenly a few weeks later they cease.

Spring also brings the shimmering hummingbirds, usually the Rufous. At first they come for the flowering currant, but the females stay to enjoy the fuchsias and to bring up their young, while the males go off to haunts of their own. During their nuptial season I can count on getting dive-bombed every time I poke my nose outdoors!

The Downy Woodpeckers love the fat as much as the chickadees and the nuthatches do. The Downys rear their young in a hole in the willow beside the stream and I enjoy seeing three little heads appear with mouths agape to enjoy

the tidbit when mother returns. For many years I heard the nuthatch in the nearby firs, but this year he plucked up courage to take the fat, perhaps encouraged by seeing the Brown Tree Creeper in the Arbutus trees. A rare visitor to the arbutus one morning was the Yellow Bellied Sapsucker, but he did not find the fare to his liking and he soon went off, never to be seen again.

About June I hear the liquid note of the cowbird and wonder whose nest will be chosen to nurture her egg. This year it was the Song Sparrow's and I was sorry to see her constantly at work trying to fill the fat and raucous changeling, following her screaming for food. Summer brings the Cedar Waxwings, who teach their young to hawk for mosquitoes on the lower lawn, and this year for the first time in years the soft summer evenings echoed to the call of the nighthawk.

One little resident I must not overlook is the Bewick's Wren, busily searching out insects and spiders from the nooks and crannies around the house, silent and quick until the spring, when his lovesong sounds all out of proportion to his size and is the first one to be heard.

Drifts of Bush Tits sometimes fly in, and the spirea and red osiers bend and sway as they cling upside down searching for a meal. Very rarely is the Ruby Crowned Kinglet seen, but he does visit the conifers.

This was a happy little Eden, with the wild visitors joining two little black bantam hens at the feeding station, until it was rudely disturbed by the sudden arrival of hordes of Quail, that must have tuned in to the feathered grapevine. They came scurrying in, over eighty strong, and cleaned out all the food in a matter of seconds. This caused quite a problem, for the bantams had to be fed even if the others could fend for themselves, so now someone stands guard while the little birds feed and the human presence keeps the quail away, although their irritated chattering can be heard from the bushes. However, one little hen had no such fears, for she comes running in giving me a look which plainly says, "you do not scare me one bit!" while the rest of her family wait until the others have finished and then come down for their share.

The country is a busy place when visitors are welcomed and invited to stay a while.

Sybil McCulloch

A SILVERY-HAIRED BAT IN ESQUIMALT

In the late afternoon of October 2, 1971, a keen-eyed young naturalist, twelve-year-old Eric Porcher of Murray Drive, Esquimalt, found a bat resting on the trunk of a fir tree there, hidden from view by the remains of some fat that had been hung from the tree the previous winter for feeding birds. His father telephoned me, and, knowing how rare it is to have an opportunity of accurate bat identification, I dashed down to see the animal. Some bats can be hard to identify even at close quarters, but this one was relatively easy, and its handsome black fur liberally sprinkled with silvery hairs on its back told us that it was a Silvery-haired Bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*). We confirmed the identification by noting that its fur extended well on to its interfemoral membrane. It was too active for us to photograph it or to obtain accurate measurements without unduly disturbing it, but a rough measurement of its tail was 42 mm. The frightened animal squeaked loudly at us as we tried to measure it, and we were very glad to see it fly off into the dark.

This bat, the only member of its genus, has a very wide distribution across Canada and the U.S., though it is not often encountered. Enquiries have turned up a very few records of its certain identification from Vancouver Island, but this one is probably the first from the Victoria area. We therefore congratulate Eric on his very interesting discovery.

A study of the literature has revealed some quite contradictory statements. For example, that it is one of the earliest bats to fly in the evening, or that it is one of the latest. Or that it is a solitary bat, or that it congregates in dense flocks of hundreds. Which all goes to show that we still have a lot to learn about it. It seems to have been established that it is a highly migratory species. Probably it is solitary during the breeding season but gregarious during migration. There is also some evidence for segregation of the sexes in the migratory flocks. It does not regularly inhabit caves, and the site where the Esquimalt animal was found is typical.

Some people have a horror of bats that is quite unfounded. They certainly do not attack people. If you pick up a sick bat that is suffering from rabies (this is rare) and you manhandle it, do not be surprised if it bites you; this is your fault, not the bat's. They feed on flying moths and beetles and altogether are fascinating animals, which should never be harmed or molested.

J.B. Tatum

DECEMBER GENERAL MEETING

Sixty-two people were present Tuesday December 14, to hear Mr. J.E. (Ted) Underhill's talk on the Okanagan Valley. Illustrated with excellent slides of the plants, animals, and insects and topography of the area, his lecture described this unique part of Canada as it must have been in the early 1800's before the advent of the white man. Then he showed some of the dramatic changes that have taken place since man with his cattle and fruit trees has come to live on the land. Even the common grass today is an European import.

Situated on the dry interior plateau, the Okanagan receives very little annual rainfall and it has been estimated that over 350 years are required to make one complete turnover of the water in Okanagan Lake. At present this figure is on the increase as the communities along the lake often use more than the annual inflow for their own needs. If the present trend of rapid population increase continues it will soon be necessary to find new sources of water for urban development. It has been suggested that water be diverted from either Shuswap Lake or the Kettle River.

Mr. Underhill certainly revealed a "Pandora's box" of problems and any solutions will be of vital interest to naturalists. The many questions from the audience showed the concern for this most desirable region of British Columbia.

A short business session followed the guest speaker, and this will be the order for future meetings. Announcements were made regarding the Canadian Nature Federation (membership forms can be obtained from Doctor Tatum); the list of people willing to help with oiled sea birds has been set up in a file and Ray Halliday of the Wildlife Branch is working on plans should an emergency arise; Mr. and Mrs. Abbott requested that a letter from Mr. C.B. Schneider of the Alaska Wildlife Service be read. He

writes that many sea birds, otters and fish were killed, in many cases more than expected but that no permanent effect should result from the Amchitka blast; twenty skylarks were counted on the UVic Campus during the last snowfall.

Doctor Sparling described the work of the Friends of the Museum and asked for volunteers to work in the Museum Gift Shop, especially on Sunday afternoons. The G. Clifford Carl Memorial Fund will be closed in May after a series of events organized by various groups. The Natural History Society will be sponsoring a lecture by Bristol Foster in the Newcombe Auditorium.

After the meeting was adjourned, many of those present enjoyed the opportunity for tea, coffee and conversation in the upstairs lounge.

Jennifer Brown

BUSINESS MATTERS

For the remainder of this session we are going to try a little experiment at our general meetings. This is, to have our invited lecturer give his talk right at the beginning of the meeting, and have the business matters at the end. We think that this arrangement will have many advantages, and certainly will be more courteous to our speaker who often has had to sit through a long business meeting.

It is very important that our members know about major decisions and recommendations made at the meetings of the executives; and it is also important in a healthy and vigorous society for the members to take part in formulating policies and debating proposals. We hope, therefore, that you will stay through the business session which will be kept as short as possible, and that you will be able to come to the coffee session after. At the same time, if you have to leave early for some reason, you will at least have had the opportunity of hearing our guest speaker.

It is the hope of your executive that this change may result in a larger turnout to the meetings, and as you have seen from the report of the December meeting, there is usually something of interest to all members.

Jeremy B. Tatum

BOOK REVIEW

Environment and Good Sense by M.J. Dunbar
McGill-Queen's University Press, 1971
\$4.50 Cloth: \$2.25 Paperback

Many books have been written about pollution, but not many about the problems specific to Canada. Doctor Dunbar talks about Canadian pollution in such an urgent and convincing fashion that the reader wants immediately to join in the fight; this is, perhaps, the book's main value. *Environment and Good Sense* is not written for the scientist of Canada or the engineer, but for the layman, and it leaves the reader feeling very concerned.

This short book is the first in a series sponsored by the Canadian Society of Zoologists. The society contends that although many excellent and sincere protests have been made about pollution that "they were often too emotionally presented....and that there (is) a need for statements from professional bodies, emotionally cold but professionally warm, which would arm the biological side of the dialogue with far more formidable weapons...." It is this reader's impression that Professor Dunbar is extremely armed about the pollution problem in Canada, and that he contains his anger in presenting his arguments objectively and accurately. His message comes across loud and clear - if more attention is not paid to our environment and soon, man will extinguish himself.

This book deals briefly with all the main areas of pollution in Canada. The problems pertaining to air, water and land are examined, with a separate section on the special problems of the north. Doctor Dunbar states that Canada is not yet in as serious a situation as is the United States, but that we are quickly closing the gap.

Closer to home, Beautiful British Columbia is mentioned often as an example of what not to do. There is the coal strip-mining operation in the East Kootenay region which is threatening the Elk and Kootenay river systems; there is the Bennett Dam which is changing the ecological balance on the Peace River; and there are the beaches of Georgia Strait which are badly hit by the pollution of the sea. Raw sewage and harmful chemical effluents have caused the oyster populations to decline quite apart from the aesthetic and recreational effects.

Doctor Dunbar's book is not completely pessimistic. He mentions the proposed dam on the Southern Indian Lake in Northern Manitoba which was scrapped because the environmental consequences were considered. He praises the number of concerned associations that have formed across the country, and the marvellous efforts of the Wildlife Federation and other agencies. However, he stresses again and again that although all battles against pollution are excellent, much more is needed. The public must become aware of the problems and above all press for their correction.

If you are concerned about this problem and want to find out more about it and what to do, *Environment and Good Sense* is for you.

Reviewed by Ann Eberts

ANNUAL BIRD REPORT

Just a reminder to all observers that records for 1971 should be in to me by February 14 for inclusion in the 1971 Report. New Record Sheets for reporting your observations have now been produced, and it is a great help if records are sent in on these. They will be available at meetings of the Society - the best time to pick one up would be at the January meeting.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all observers who have supported this project - I have been most encouraged by the response. This is a going concern now, so help to keep it so by sending in your records.

Some copies of the 1970 Annual Bird Report are still available. The prices are \$1.58 for Members and \$1.84 for non-Members of the V.N.H.S. (these figures include tax). There is a 15¢ postage charge, though they are always available at meetings. If possible I'd like to sell most of the first printing so that the project is financially soluble. I'd be very glad, therefore, for any further support.

Jeremy B. Tatum

FOSSIL HUNTING ON VANCOUVER ISLAND

To anyone interested in fossil hunting, Vancouver Island offers a wonderful opportunity.

As the Island was once under the sea, there are many varieties of tropical sea life to be found. I am not going to try to identify these, as I think it would be more interesting for the hunters to identify them. The field is large; it covers most of Vancouver Island.

I have placer mined in most of the rivers and that is where you find the fossils - you must look in the shale and sedimentary deposits.

First, there is a wonderful collection in the Nanaimo area. Nanaimo River has a large fossil bed, and many kinds are to be found under Mount Benson. In Englishman River you will find the casts of great clams, and in French Creek the prehistoric oyster and many other specimens.

Going over on the Alberni side in the Arrowsmith country, on Riger Creek we find a great variety. Along the Ash River, where the river cut through the old sea bed, the fossils are higher and some very old ones can be found. One I had identified was classed as ninety million years old.

Where the Alberni Canal once went on through to Comox, species similar to those in the Ash River can be found.

Up the Oyster River are more of the same. At an elevation of 1,500 to 2,000 feet you will find the old sea level and in the sedimentary deposit there, you will find the casts of the same grass and leaves that are seen there today. This deposit is very thin and is found on Mount Benson and in the Englishman River valley and no doubt could be found elsewhere, as this was the sea level at that time.

A. George Tranfield, Sr.
Parksville, B.C.

President:
Arrowsmith Natural History Society
Parksville, B.C.

THE EDITOR'S MAILBOX.....

Editor
The *Victoria Naturalist*

After my show "The Intertidal Zone" several people made enquiries about reference books on the subject and I would like to list those I use. Mr. David Stirling has kindly given me the name of one or two others which he recommends. Perhaps the *Naturalist* readers might find them interesting;

BETWEEN PACIFIC TIDES by Ricketts and Calvin, Stanford University Press.

Habits and habitats of 500 common conspicuous seashore invertebrates of the Pacific Coast, Mexico to Sitka. A very readable book with black and white illustrations.

SEASHORE ANIMALS OF THE PACIFIC COAST by Myrtle E. Johnson and Harry J. Snook, Dover Publications, New York.

Written to fill need of naturalists, teachers and others. Many illustrations, a few in colour. Much research done in Puget Sound areas and at Friday Harbour.

SEASHORES: A Golden Nature Guide. A small inexpensive pocket size book in colour. Many of the animals live in our waters; also seaweeds and shore plants.

ANIMALS OF THE SEA SHORE by M. Guberlet

MARINE SHELLS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST by Tom Rice

These last two are especially good for the Vancouver Island region.

The Parks Interpretation Branch uses a very interesting booklet entitled *SHORE THINGS* by David Stirling and is illustrated with sketches of animals, shells and seaweeds. May be bought at most book stores for \$1.00.

(Mrs.) Jessie M. Woollett

A Reminder: to Naturalist-photographers: The Photo-duplicate File of B.C. Vertebrates is very much alive and waiting for your contribution. Just in case you have forgotten or have never heard about it we refer you to page 73 of vol.27: No.5 for January 1971.

BIRDS REPORTED

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

Fulmer (1) - October 25 ----- Clover Point
D. Stirling
Snowy owl (1) - November 11-18 ----- Trial Island
Mr. and Mrs. Horne
Ancient Murrelet (5) - November 11 ----- Clover Point
Water Pipit (1) - November 11 ----- Esquimalt Lagoon
Ron Satterfield
Slate Junco (2) - November 14 ----- Beacon Hill Park
Vic Goodwill
Snow Bunting (1) - November 17 ----- Cattle Point
S.H. Clarke
Harris Sparrow (1) - November 20 ----- Esquimalt Lagoon
Bird Group
Heerman's Gull (1 adult) - November 27 ----- Clover Point
Hutton's Vireo (1) - November 28 ----- Munn Road
Ron Satterfield
Long-billed Marsh Wren (4) - November 28 -- Rithet's Swamp
J. Tatum
Loggerhead Shrike (1) - December 1 ----- Radcliffe Lane
Dr. G.F. Houston
Black Brant (1) - December 3 ----- Esquimalt Lagoon
Vic Goodwill
Virginia Rail (10) - December 5 ----- Rithet's Swamp
Barbara McLintock
Rufous Hummingbird (1) - December 7 --- Queen Anne Heights
Mrs. G.C. Carl
Mourning Dove (4) - December 11 ----- Martindale Road
Audubon Warbler (2) - December 12 ----- Langford Lake
Ron Satterfield
Barred Owl (1) - December 12 ----- Queenswood
Mr. and Mrs. A.R. Davidson
Bullock's Oriole (1) - December 12 St. Patrick Street
Mrs. Grace Bell
Western Gull (1) - December 12 ----- Clover Point
D. Stirling

ADDENDA: Reports have come in thick and fast this month. Our apologies to those who don't find their bird on the list. Don't let it deter you from phoning next month. A number of reports have come in of European Widgeon, White-fronted Geese and Short-eared Owls. Here's hoping we got all of them on the bird count.

PROGRAM FOR JANUARY 1972

- Executive Meeting: 8:00 p.m. Board Room 104M
 Tuesday January 4 Provincial Museum
- General Meeting: 8:00 p.m. Newcombe Auditorium Pro-
 vincial Museum (south entrance)
 Tuesday January 11 Mr. David Stirling presents:
 "Hopping about in Australia"
- Audubon Wildlife Film: 8:00 p.m. both evenings and
 Friday January 14 2:30 p.m. matinee on Saturday
 Saturday January 15 Newcombe Auditorium
 Lyle K. Moss: "Mule Deer Country"
- Bird Field Trip: Meet at Mayfair Lanes parking lot
 Saturday January 15 (north side - corner Oak and
 Roderick) 9:30 a.m. or at Bazan
 Bay at 10:00 a.m. Bring lunch
 Leader: Rod Muirhead 384-6005
- Botany Meeting: 8:00 p.m. Board Room 104M
 Tuesday January 25 Provincial Museum
 Miss Edith Valens: "A Collection
 of Wild Flower Slides"
- G. Clifford Carl 8:00 p.m. Newcombe Auditorium
 Memorial Fund Program: The Barbershop Quartet and
 Saturday January 29 Reg Stone at the Organ
- Junior Group: Meet every Saturday 1:30 p.m. at
 Mayfair Lanes parking lot
 (north side)

Please Note: Meeting place for outings is northeast corner of Mayfair Bowling Lanes parking lot. From downtown via Douglas, turn right on Tolmie which is first street north of Mayfair Shopping Centre, then first left on Oak to first street which is Roderick. Turn in to left to the parking lot north of bowling alleys.

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David Stirling, 3500 Salsbury Way - - - - - 385 4223
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Ornithology Records: Dr. Jeremy Tatum, (see address above)
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Annual Dues, including subscription: Single \$3; Family \$5; Junior \$2
Junior Membership is restricted to those not under 9½ years and not over 18 years.

Financial Year is May 1 to April 30.

New members joining after January 1 - half fee.

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