



THE VICTORIA NATURALIST

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JUNE-BUGS AND OTHERS

The photograph depicts a familiar beetle related to the sacred scarabs of Egypt and familiarly known as a June-bug on this continent. As there are over a hundred species in North America, it would be hazardous to identify it from a picture. In Britain the usual name is cock-chaffer, which simply means "large or active beetle," while the Germans call them May-beetles. The month referred to is that in which the adult beetles emerge, though there is an English record from Surrey of one found as early as April 13 in an unusually cold spring.

They tend to swarm around the tops of bushes and trees, and are frequently attracted to lights burning in houses. The whirring of their wings creates a distinctly audible humming. Though the adults are extremely destructive, feeding insatiably on flowers and foliage, their appetite is picayune compared with that of their larvae. These larvae, sometimes known as Rockworms or White Grubs, throughout three years of growth dine at the public expense on the roots of grasses, herbs and trees. The female June-bug lays in all about 70 eggs which take over a month to hatch.

These creatures belong to the Superfamily called Lamellicornia, which means "possessing plate-like horns." Horns, of course, means antennae, as in the colorful group of Longhorn Beetles. As many as the last seven joints of the antennae may be lamellate or flattened; consequently, instead of the usual antennal club, one has something more approximately like a fan.

This great superfamily contains a fascinating variety of interesting beetles, among which are the Dor Beetle, the Rose Chafer, the Japanese Beetle, the Dung Beetles and

the "Shard-borne Beetle" of Macbeth III.ii, which "with his drowsy hums" rings "night's yawning peal." The latter's Linnaean name is Geotrupes stercorarius; he also rejoices -- if that is the mot just! -- in the nickname Lousy Watchman, ascribed to him by virtue of the tiny acarine or mite, Gamasus coleopterorum, which sucks a liquid meal from the beetle's sutures. The Dung Beetle, a creature lovingly studied by Henri Fabre in his native Provence, also has a famous literary association; for it is on his sturdy back that Trygaeus rides up to Olympus in Aristophanes' comedy "The Peace."

Finally, a word about the Japanese Beetle, Popillia japonica. It was introduced accidentally into Riverton, New Jersey in 1916, when ornamental trees were imported from Japan, and spread disastrously throughout many Eastern states, affecting over 260 plants, shrubs and trees. However, many of the Lamellicornia are not only ornamental but useful to man, and deserve our protection.

Story by Herbert Huxley
Cover photo by Ken Lee

BIRDS IN JAMAICA

By Lucienne Bridgen

Birds are more than items to be identified, classified, counted and recorded in census or in bird counts. They are an expression of Life, beautiful in form and colouring, and graceful in movement and flight, and, withal, serving their purpose in the ladder of life.

At a Jamaican hotel where the dining room is quite open with trees and bushes separated from the tables by the width of a footpath, birds were ever present.

The Nightingale (also known as the northern "Mockingbird"), the Bananaquit, the Jamaican Becard, the Great Antilles Grackle, Ground Dove, Jamaican Crow and the Common Starling were among the regular bird population. Among other birds seen were the Herring Gull, Mallard, Least and Western Sandpipers, and Dusky-capped Flycatcher.

One of the most intense experiences we had was in the Rocklands Feeding Station, a bird sanctuary at Anchovy, where four kinds of hummingbirds, the Orangequit, Yellow

and Black-faced Grassquits and many other species seemd to have no fear of humans.

Of the hummingbirds, the most astonishing is the Long-tailed, also known as the Doctor Bird. About three inches long with vivid green plumage, brown wings and a tail with two black feathers about 10 inches long, this is the national bird of Jamaica. There are two varieties, the red-billed and the black. In its darting flight the wing' movements are so rapid as to cause an audible humming.

While at the feeding station, several of the hummingbirds settled upon me; as I held a small bottle containing liquid food, one would perch on an extended finger and thrust its long beak into the liquid, and others followed. Of the hummingbirds, the Long-tailed and the Vervain are found only in Jamaica. The Vervain is only about 2½ inches long, is bright green in colour with a purple tail, and has a very active and bee-like flight. Only one hummingbird in the world is known to be smaller.

Attending grazing cattle were small White Herons and White Egrets, performing the useful service of relieving the animals of parasites. During a rafting trip down the Rio Grande, many small herons, blue and white, were seen in the water on the banks and in the stony shallows. The river winds between high, steep banks, covered with trees and plantations. The bamboo from which the rafts are made is taken from the river banks.

Seen everywhere in numbers was the Turkey Vulture, a bird 2½ feet or more in length, with great wing span, black with a bald head and red face. Graceful in flight, using air currents in a manner so little or no movement appeared, this bird is protected by law for it is a valuable member of the conservation and scavenger departments.

Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder.

Jamaica -- for the Birds.##

JUNIOR JOTTINGS

The junior branch has been busy, and we have had some very good turn-outs despite the winter weather. The younger section went to Francis Park for a moss and lichen survey. Then they went to Quick's Pond where they saw some of the muskrat houses. While there a large bald Eagle was seen soaring overhead, and the many ducks on the pond were in a turmoil while the predator was overhead.

The intermediate section went for a ramble over the power line to the northwest of Francis Park. Her many kinds of lichens were spotted, and many other plants that were taking advantage of the open rocky places. They also did a really fine job of cleaning out the Nature House. All the old displays were dismantled, and the cupboards were cleaned -- it is wonderful the amount of junk that can get tucked away!

The reason for this is that the Nature House has had a new ceiling put in and a complete new coat of paint. We are planning a brand new set of displays with a different theme. This is taking a lot of work for the intermediate group, and we hope to have it ready by the end of February.

The intermediate section also acted as ushers for the Audubon shows, and have done a really fine job. As well as acting as ushers, some of them have thanked the speaker which is commendable. Our young people never hesitate when asked to do this job!

The whole junior branch is planning a display of each boy or girl's work. This will take place early in April, and all those interested will be invited to attend.

We are planning to have a three-man team to operate the Nature House and Park during the summer, as we are getting more and more visitors coming to walk the trails and enjoy the many features of the park.

-- Freeman King

Details of this month's junior program will be found on Page 84.

WEEKEND TRIP TO SALTSRING ISLAND

On Saturday, March 31, and Sunday, April 1, there will be a weekend natural history trip to the YWCA Outdoor Centre on Saltspring Island in co-operation with the Vancouver Natural History Society. The centre, YaWaCa, provides sleeping cabins, dining facilities with kitchen staff, resident nurse and an ecologist. Please meet at the Swartz Bay ferry terminal at 9:10 a.m. Saturday for the 9:30 a.m. ferry to Saltspring Island; we shall be returning on the 4:30 p.m. ferry from Fulford Harbour on April 1. It is a 3½ mile walk from Fulford Harbour to camp. Please bring sleeping bag, personal overnight gear, good walking shoes and two lunches, in a packsack or duffel bag. Highlights of the trip will be marine biology, ornithology (with Genevieve Arnold), and botany.

The total cost for Victoria members will be \$12.00 which includes ferry, two meals (dinner and breakfast), and sleeping accommodation (double bedroom with shared washroom in each cabin). Numbers are limited. Please make your reservations prior to March 15 by sending a cheque payable to Vancouver Natural History Society to Nancy Anderson, 2145 Lloyd Avenue, North Vancouver, B.C. (985-4563.)

-- Rosemary Picozzi

THE GLACIAL CLAYS OF VICTORIA

By John L. Rimmington

While I was examining a trench dug in the clay in Oak Bay, a Portuguese municipal employee said, "If that clay was in California, it would be worth a fortune." As a member of the Chamber of Commerce, my ears flew up, and I asked for more details. He told me that he had a wide experience of clays, and he thought that this might be ideal pottery clay. For one thing, if one stands in a wet ditch and one's feet sink in three or four inches, it is impossible to get out without help because the clay has so much suction.

On the other hand, when the clay is moist, it will flow like lava, as the excavators of the high-rise at View and Quadra found out to their sorrow. When the excavation was boarded around, the clay behaved like a heavy liquid

and pushed in the boards. This is why the Empress Hotel and the high-rises facing the Oak Bay marina are built on wooden piles.

Eventually a check with local potters and W. McCammon of the Department of Mines gave the complete story. It seems that you can't really tell the worth of a pottery clay until you have actually fired it, and the local clay, when fired, is slightly porous by comparison with, say, the china clay found at Giscome Rapids on the Fraser River. However, some local potters have had good results from using the clay, but if used for a vessel, it needs heavy glazing unless the potter has the knowledge to add ingredients to make the clay watertight.

Until recently hobby-potters were helping themselves to the clay from the bluffs at Mount Douglas Park, but this is now forbidden. A similar clay can be obtained at Island View Beach a bit further north. The absence of a cheap fuel for firing does not permit the commercial use of these deposits. It is cheaper to bring bricks in from Lethbridge where they have the natural gas for firing.

One doctor at Kisameet Bay on the Fraser River has used a similar clay there for treating burns, sprains, stomach ailments, and in beauty packs. Down in Alabama, U.S.A., some people even eat the finer local clays.

All the Victoria clays are glacial in origin, and vary in their nature. Unfortunately, years ago, some brick works started up using local clays against expert advice. They produced "soft bricks" which frost causes to crumble.

Mr. McCammon has a selection of clays from all parts of British Columbia, and can talk on each sample at length. He says one of the best local clays was obtained at the brick yards on which the Mayfair Shopping Centre now stands. ##

Selkirk College in Castlegar, B.C., is offering this summer a series of week-long courses in various aspects of natural history of the West Kootenays and Selkirk Mountains. Courses include botany, birds, insects, geology, and mammals. For further details, see the brochure enclosed with this issue of the Victoria Naturalist.

THE ABC'S OF A FIELD TRIP Attitude, Behavior, and Clothing

There is a shortage of trained field observers in most parts of the country. We need more men and women willing to submit detailed and accurate records of their observations. Having taken part in hundreds of bird walks ... I have an idea what the trouble is: competent bird students are unwilling to lead others because the novices simply don't know how to behave on a field trip. The fault is not theirs; they just have not been told. Any set of rules for field trip behavior should cover the following:

Clothing -- Since most birds like wet places, many field groups venture in or near the water. Shoes should be stout and water-resistant. If these aren't available, invest in rubber overshoes and don't be ashamed to wear them. High heels and open-toed shoes are unforgivable.

Wear a sweater or jacket which can be peeled off later in the day. You will enter briar patches and stands of weeds, so avoid soft clothing which will tear or to which seeds will attach themselves readily. Full-length sleeves are good protection against scratches and mosquitoes.

Assembly -- Arrive before the appointed time. That will give you a chance to talk to the leader and others about your objectives. If the group is looking for some particular bird, it will give you time to look it up in advance so that you can recognize it if it appears.

Walking -- A bird field trip is not an Outdoors Club hike. Most walking will be slow, and the best way is to walk somewhat flat-footed; it cuts down noise. Heel-and-toe striding is for hiking, not bird study. Stay a few paces behind the leader, or any other member of the party. You will avoid getting a branch in the face and bumping into the next man if he stops suddenly.

Never walk in front of the leader. This is the cardinal sin, equalled only by the crime of wandering off by yourself. Many a bird trip has been spoiled when some of the participants decided to wander away. Soon there isn't any field trip at all, just scattered bird-watchers somewhere in the woods.

Talking -- Birdwatching is largely bird-listening. There

is no excuse for raising your voice. If you want to talk, don't go on a field trip.

Binoculars -- It is helpful to have field glasses or binoculars but not necessary. It is more important to use your eyes. Constantly without ceasing look around you -- front, back, to the sides and overhead. This is the real secret of finding birds. Never borrow the binoculars of another unless he offers it. You may have his glasses at the critical moment when a warbler comes in view.

The List -- Bring paper and pencil, and keep your own list. Don't list a bird which someone else names unless you have seen or heard it and have satisfied yourself as to the identification. In addition to the names of birds, list the number of each you see. The experts may not do this, because they can remember and because they know which birds are unusual. But the beginner should list each individual bird. He should also list the unfamiliar birds, so that he can study the books more thoroughly when he gets home.

Identification -- Look up every bird not familiar to you. Listen to what others are saying. One good reason for not talking is that you should be listening and learning.

When others identify a bird you don't know, it is permissible to approach someone who seems to be knowledgeable and ask him to review the field marks for you. Do it in a low tone so you won't disturb anyone listening for birds. The smartest thing a novice can do is to attach himself unobtrusively to an old hand and listen to his remarks. The beginner will learn many points of identification in this way.

Freezing -- At intervals, the leader or someone else will stop short and freeze in his tracks. This is the signal for everyone else to do the same, even though you don't see or hear anything. The bird may be invisible to you, but someone else may be in a position to see it. Your movement can flush the bird, so courtesy demands you remain motionless until the original spotter breaks the spell.

Attention to the following items is likely to provide more enjoyable birding:

Pointing -- This is almost a cardinal sin. It frightens birds to point at them. To indicate the position of a bird, describe the location in a low tone -- "straight ahead," "right" or "left." Better still use the clock as airmen do: "The bird is at 9 o'clock low." Tell how high the bird is -- on the ground, 10 feet up, 60 feet up, etc.

Distractions -- It is unpardonable to throw stones into water, pick wildflowers, snap branches off saplings, or otherwise amuse yourself. Small boys need to be taught these good manners, and the adults who bring children should assume responsibility.

Smoking -- This is not objectionable so long as fire precautions are observed. Food and drinks are unnecessary until the leader calls a break for lunch. If you have cigarettes or a candy bar, good manners suggest that you offer some to your companions.

Nature Study -- There is no objection to studying wild flowers, turtles, skunks, or anything else. Just don't distract the rest of the party and don't insist they all wait until you identify a butterfly, etc.

This article was obtained from the Vancouver Natural History Society, who in turn reprinted it from AUDUBON magazine, published by the National Audubon Society in 1964. The original author was Louis C. Pink. Thanks to Ann Knowles for submitting it to the Naturalist.##

BIRDS OF PREY IN DANGER IN B.C.

A major setback in efforts to protect birds of prey took place in B.C. during 1972 when the government accepted recommendations proposed by a group of men known as the "Canadian Raptor Society." The recommendations provide for what is euphemistically known as the 'harvesting' of a 'natural resource.'

The new regulations, which were adopted without consulting any naturalists' group in the province, provide for the issuing of 10 permits annually for the capture each of Peregrine and Prairie Falcons, and no limit on the number of permits that may be issued for the capture of any other species of bird of prey or owl, except for a few which do not occur in the province. Penalties

for infraction are drastically reduced. Most owls and the commoner hawks may be taken by persons over the age of 12. Eagles and Great Horned Owls may only be handled by persons over the age of 18. Ferruginous Hawks may also be taken by persons over 18, although this species has never actually been recorded in the province.

-- David Stirling

SOME COMMENTS ON THE COUNT

By A.R. Davidson

While Christmas bird counts have been taken since this society was formed in 1944, it is only 14 years -- back to 1958 -- since the present boundaries were established, long enough to put the figures into perspective and give us some idea of the fluctuations in local bird populations.

Boxing Day, the count day in 1972, was fine, and there were 56 observers in the field, which included more experienced birders than in any previous year. The number of species, by the way, was identical with that of 10 years ago.

The numbers of individual species were fairly normal, with the following exceptions:

California Quail	143	against a high of	584	in 1965
Killdeer	57	"	375	in 1967
Red-br. Nuthatch	11	"	80	in 1962
Winter Wren	59	"	164	in 1967
Common Bushtit	55	"	305	in 1969
Meadowlark	15	"	111	in 1960
Oregon Junco	843	"	1442	in 1966
Golden-cr. Sparrow	98	"	258	in 1967
Fox Sparrow	48	"	201	in 1965

No crossbills were seen and siskins were few, but they are erratics, and low or high numbers may have no particular significance.

The diminishing Skylark is serious. In the snowy winter of 1965 the estimate was 969, and 812 the previous year. In 1969 the number was 51, then followed 24, then 22, and this last count 4. Any comment on these figures is superfluous. ##

BIRDS REPORTED

Black Brant	(1)	Dec 30	Oak Bay
			A.R. Davidson
Yellow-billed Loon	(1)	Jan 2	Esquimalt Harbour
			Bob Hay
Eastern Song Sparrow	(1)	Jan 13	Tatlow Drive
			A.R. Davidson
Common Scoter	(1)	Jan 21	Bazan Bay
Virginia Rail	(1)	Jan 21	Martindale Road
Short-eared Owl	(2)	Jan 21	Island View Beach Road
Tree Sparrow	(1)	Jan 21	Marsh Road
			Bob Hay
Redhead	(3)	Jan 23	Duncan
			Mr and Mrs Vic Goodwill
Long-eared Owl	(1)	Jan 26	Prospect Lake Road
			Gilbert Calvert
Yellow-bellied Sap-sucker	(2)	Feb 7	Park Boulevard
			Stuart Johnston
Lark Sparrow	(1)	Feb 7	Hobbs Road
			Mr and Mrs Vic Goodwill
Skylark	(5)	Feb 10	UVic campus
			A.R. Davidson

ADDENDA

Apart from the above list, reports have come in of European Widgeon, Townsend's Solitaires, Snipe (on campus), Sanderling, Water Pipits, Meadowlarks, a California Gull, a Sparrow Hawk, a Marsh Hawk and a Peregrine Falcon. And Bob Hay reports sighting from one to three adult Western Gulls each day between Jan 17 and 21.

Two adult Bald Eagles have been reported in the suburbs -- one at Shoal Bay by A.R. Davidson and one on the campus by Linda Slocombe. Mr Davidson also reports a cat snatch by what appeared to be an immature Golden Eagle in Oak Bay. Said cat was picked up by the eagle, carried some way and then dropped in another yard.

The report of 25 White-winged Crossbills in the last magazine was erroneous. It should have read Evening Grosbeaks.

--M. and L. Slocombe
3134 Henderson Road
592-9047

PROGRAM FOR MARCH 1973

- Executive Meeting: 8 p.m. Board Room 104 M
Tuesday, March 6 Provincial Museum
- General Meeting: 8 p.m. Newcombe Auditorium
Tuesday, March 13 (south entrance). Dave Beeching of the SPCA will give a talk on the problems of rehabilitating oiled seabirds.
- Botany Field Trip: Meet at Mayfair Lanes at 9:30
Saturday, March 17 a.m. (north side, corner of Rod-
erick and Oak) for trip to Mill
Hill. Morning only. Leader:
Stephen Mitchell
- Bird Field Trip: Meet at Mayfair Lanes at 8:45
Sunday, March 18 a.m. or Resthaven Hospital. at
9:30 a.m. for identification of
loons, grebes, cormorants, sco-
ters and scaup. Leader: J.B.
Tatum
- Audubon Wildlife Film: "20th Century Wilderness." 8
Fri., March 23 and Sat., p.m. both days, 2:30 p.m. Sat.
March 24 Newcombe Auditorium.
- Field Trip to Saltspring A weekend natural history trip
Island. Saturday, March to YWCA Outdoor Centre. For
31 and Sunday, April 1 full details, see Page 77.

JUNIOR PROGRAM

- Mar 10 Juniors. John Deane Park. Drivers: Farden,
Huggett.
- Mar 17 Intermediates. Witty's Lagoon. Drivers: Mc-
Gavin, Suttill.
- Mar 24 Juniors. Francis Park, work on exhibits. Drivers:
Brigham, Parrish.
- Mar 31 Intermediates. Francis Park, work on exhibits.
Drivers: Sandemann-Allen, Rimmington.
- Apr 7 Both Juniors and Intermediates meet at Francis
Park at 10 a.m. (Anyone needing transportation phone
Gail at 477-9248.) Bring lunch. Set up exhibits.
Parents and adult group invited at 2 p.m.

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New Members joining after January 1 - half fee.

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