



THE VICTORIA NATURALIST

published by the
VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
Victoria B.C

January, 1974
Vol. 30, No. 5

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A PARK FOR ALL SEASONS

Named for the beacons that stood atop the hill, years ago, as a guide for ships, Beacon Hill Park has become a mecca for generations of Victorians. During its 105 years of life as a public park it has silently witnessed everything from stately games of cricket to an irascible parrot who would squawk a very loud "shut-up" at unsuspecting passers-by.

Bird lovers, plant lovers and just plain lovers have all enjoyed the park's peace and beauty. Not least among the attractions are the wild flowers in the Spring - erythronium, buttercup, camas and larkspur, not to mention the broom and the semi-wild daffodils which yellow the hillsides at their appointed time.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the park is that it gives a vast amount of pleasure to those who do not know a camas from a buttercup or a canvas-back from a mallard. At all seasons one will find the young and the not-so-young, many of them tenants in the James Bay highrises, walking in the park. They may not be able to identify the numerous waterfowl, the native flowers or the approximately 75 species of trees. But does this really matter? One wonders if the city fathers really appreciate the vast drawing card the park represents to both residents and visitors. "Our Park" has dwindled from 188 acres in 1940 to its present 154 acres. This decrease must not be allowed to continue. Nibbling away at the park's vital organ - its acreage - should be stopped. Without being in the least facetious, the near future may see, because of the energy crisis, such a revolution in auto traffic that new roads through the park could well be obsolete before the tar cools. And even if we continue to have traffic slowdowns surely it is of little consequence to arrive home ten minutes later than you had hoped. To me (and I happen to be one

of those who "spew out" of the Buildings at 5 p.m.) acres of garry oak and fields of daffodils are much more important than acres of blacktop.

Beacon Hill Park has no one season. Spring and Summer are, of course, the most crowded times. In good weather the number of "paper bag" lunches consumed in the park is incredible, and sun bathers and flower watchers are either prone or perambulating according to their taste. Bird watchers are never absent, summer or winter. A close view of the common waterfowl can be had in the ponds and occasionally one can spot a rarity who has winged in for a rest. Lover's Lane often shelters the beautiful little hanging nests of the Bushtit and numbers of other small birds are to be spotted as they rest or feed their way through the park.

The Cameron Band Shell is in continuous use in summer for concerts and film shows. But perhaps the busiest area of the park is the nursery. Besides numerous other jobs the nurserymen produce roughly 650 flats of bedding plants of which 250 are used in the park. Where do the others go? To other park areas and, of course, to the famous hanging baskets. Victoria has had its hanging baskets since 1937 - 650 of them hung on the cluster lights from June to September. One of the secrets of the success of the baskets is a small tin basin attached by three wires to the lower basket wire. These act as a reservoir to collect the surplus water from the six nightly waterings. If it were not for this little gadget, the baskets would dry out from the heat radiation from sidewalks and buildings. When wet the baskets weigh up to 70 pounds each. Victoria's flower baskets are watered from a right hand drive tank truck, probably the only one in Canada.

In winter all ages feed the waterfowl - the very young getting a great thrill when a duck or swan takes a piece of stale bread from their fingers. Who knows? Here might be the beginning of a budding naturalist. And summer or winter the avid walkers and the dedicated "noon day joggers" are enjoying the park. Should snow appear sleds blossom out and woolen hats bloom. Let us not reduce by even one inch this park which is, indeed, a park for all seasons.

... Enid Lemon

cover photo: Kenneth C. Alexander

BIRD OUTING TO EAST SOOKE PARK

At dawn on November 11th it was raining steadily and seemed set to continue all day. But Jeremy Tatum must have had a word in the weatherman's ear, for by the time twenty-two hardy souls had gathered at the Pike Road parking lot, the rain was over. Our walk along the trail to the coast was accompanied by the sounds of rushing streams, Crossbills high overhead and the occasional irate squirrel. (Does anyone recognise that bird-call?" asked the leader quizzically.) A soporific Pacific Coast Newt narrowly escaped being trodden underfoot.

Down at the coast the breeze was incredibly mild and the Olympics emerged into view, swathed in cloud and seamist. Some interesting Loons presented themselves for inspection, and after due deliberation the diagnosis - "Red-Throated Loons" - was solemnly pronounced. One Loon unilaterally extended his fishing limits, driving off a pair of intruding Pigeon Guillemots, while a Great Blue Heron flapped lazily across the bay to take up sentry-duty on a large kelp-bed. A pair of Marbled Murrelets provided an unusually close view of themselves before they realized their mistake and paddled out to sea at high speed. Then a Steller's Sea-Lion gave us a few brief glimpses of his head and lengthy back as he patrolled along the coast. Meanwhile some of us were watching an acrobatic display put on by a lively group, including Golden-Crowned Kinglets, Brown Creepers and a Winter Wren, in the trees behind us.

Now we returned to the cars (the vanguard finding a Cooper's Hawk watching events from a high perch) and drove around to Becher Bay. The beach below the car park provided a delightful picnic spot from which many seabirds could be seen including Bufflehead and Surf Scoters. After lunch, as we walked towards Alldridge Point, we observed a large flock of Pine Siskins. Shortly after we had turned back, several harsh cries were heard, followed by the appearance of two adult Bald Eagles, the white of their heads and tails quite brilliant in the strong sunlight. Finally, as we neared the parking lot, a prolonged series of reverberating calls caused some speculation; the leader inclined to a Pileated Woodpecker,

the rank and file to a Flicker. Clearly insulted by the very idea, the Pileated quickly put his identity beyond doubt by a personal appearance, at a discreet distance - an exciting finish to a rewarding day.

Many thanks to Jeremy for sharing his expertise, and for organizing ornithologists, birds and weather in such efficient fashion.

... *John and Linda Fitch.*

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GOOD NEWS FROM UP NORTH

A few weeks ago we received a letter from Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. We quote:

"I just had to write to your magazine to let you know of the wonderful sight my husband and I witnessed recently near Haines, Alaska.

In the trees and lining both sides of the Klukwan River were thousands of Bald Eagles. They were fishing for Silver Sockeye and seemed to be uninterested in our presence. We took many pictures and hope they do justice to the scene.

The residents of Haines estimate there are approximately 3,000 at this time of year."

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Harry Johannes."

* * * * *

The deepest visible canyon in the world is Hells' Canyon, dividing Oregon and Idaho. It plunges 7,900 ft. from the Devil Mountain down to the Snake River.

* * * * *

PRACTICAL BUGWATCHING

For years we've heard about birdwatchers. Now there's a new kind of watcher - the bugwatcher. Bugs are not as easy to watch as birds which may account for the fact that there are no bugwatching clubs (there are, of course, many learned entomological societies). Some insects such as crickets and cicadas are "vocal" but most go about their business in a more or less silent fashion (at least to our ears). Birds on the other hand are noted for song.

A birdwatcher and hers/his binoculars are seldom far apart. If binoculars are symbolic of birdwatching let me advocate that a magnifying glass be symbolic of bugwatching.

Bugwatching tries to get away from the old idea of an insector. Insector is the bugwatcher's equivalent of birder. The alternative using the root word bug seemed inappropriate here. Today's insector does not go madly dashing about the countryside waving a butterfly net to acquire a good selection of "cabinet specimens". Instead he wants to pry into the secret lives of insects to learn of their fascinating ways.

The bugwatcher does his collecting with a camera. Photographing bugs can be quite a challenge especially if they are to be photographed "free and wild". There exists a certain group of "nature photographers" who actually take pictures of dead insects - for shame! Some people advocate putting the insects into a refrigerator to "slow 'em down". How much more fun it is to stalk the insects. A useful set-up for capturing insects on film is the combination of a 105 mm. lens, bellows unit and electronic flash. This allows you to fill a good portion of the picture with the subject and the flash gives good depth-of-field and stopping of action. This method has proven to be very effective in photographing butterflies.

One place you will often see the modern bugwatcher is in a flower patch. Here he can see and study beauti-

ful creatures like the hummingbird moth, bee fly, and syrphid fly (a fly that looks like a wasp).

In the flower patch the bugwatcher will be astonished at the various kinds of mimicry. You think you're looking at a wasp when actually it's a moth. Mimicry is the protective similarity of one species with another. There are examples of one of the two species being distasteful and where both species have similar warnings. Look for bugs that resemble ants, moths that resemble wasps and beetles that resemble bumblebees. After you get to know a little about this "masquerade party" you will want to impress your friends. Pick up a syrphid fly on the end of your finger and show them how you can pick up a wasp and not get stung. You can be like one naturalist who found a "beestie" and proudly announced, "watch me pick up this wasp." In his smug confidence he thought to himself, "heh, heh, they think it's a wasp but it's only a fly". Right in the middle of explaining the difference between a wasp and a fly to a gathering of people the naturalist was stung on the finger. His finger wasn't the only part of him that turned red.

Bugwatchers are very fond of following ants about and trying to make some sense of what appears to be chaos. If you take up "anting" don't give up in despair and say "uncle"; just remember it takes a lot of patience. In the summer a good place to look for ants is on young cottonwood trees where you will frequently find them "milking" aphids. You will watch in udder fascination as the ants stroke (milk) the aphids to obtain the sweet liquid called honeydew. Understanding ants may lead you to a new kinship with nature.

We can't fight bugs - there's over a million different kinds! Only a few of these million could be called real pests and with a little understanding maybe we could learn to love the rest.

... Al Grass

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YOUR DELEGATE'S REPORT

Snow greeted delegates to the autumn meeting of the Federation of B.C. Naturalists (F.B.C.N.) on October 6 at Rogers Pass. We met to hear the progress on issues raised at the spring meeting and to discuss new environmental issues affecting all living things in our province.

Mr. Elton Anderson, president, exhorted us all to work harder at the local level to educate the public to understand more about endangered and protected species of plants and animals. He also requested that each club forward its membership to him for an updated head-count of FBCN members.

David Stirling presented an excellent report on threatened species identifying the following mammals and birds as those in trouble here:

Mammals

white tailed jack rabbit
Vancouver Island marmot
Vancouver Island wolf
yellow badger
Roosevelt elk

Birds

sharp-tailed grouse
mountain quail
sandhill crane (greater)
Lewis woodpecker
skylark
purple martin

His report contained wide-ranging recommendations from greater control of biocide use to protection for birds of prey. The report is to be circulated to member clubs for feedback on specific items. The opinions of all will be included in a comprehensive brief to the Provincial government.

Resolutions submitted by clubs usurped most of the day-long discussion but out of it all emerged some very valuable concensus. These are the major concerns:

1. The Parks Branch was encouraged to maintain park environments by:
 - (a) enforcing the leash law on all dogs
 - (b) enforcement of stricter controls on

power boats, A.T.V.'s and hunting
(c) employment of full-time naturalists.

2. That the F.B.C.N. set up a committee to draw up criteria for bird check-lists for use by all groups and organizations in B.C. and that an editorial board be established to review all lists prepared.

3. Victoria's resolution on the varied thrush as our B.C. provincial bird again passed unanimously.

4. The government of B.C. was urged to place an immediate ban on the use of poisons for predator control.

5. That the Boundary Bay area be reserved from further industrial development in order to protect its valuable waterfowl habitat.

6. That all alpine areas be reserved against domestic grazing and that grazing permits on Crown Land only be issued on the assurance that cattle will be adequately herded.

7. That the F.B.C.N. set up a wilderness committee to study and to recommend legislation for the establishment and protection of wilderness in B.C.

8. That the B.C. government halt any further slash burning until better forestry practices are adopted.

9. That the Environment and Land Use Commission actively investigate the recreational potential of sub-alpine Crown lands to prevent their further indiscriminate destruction.

10. That no further Hydro-electric projects in B.C. be developed without socio-environmental studies or without public hearings prior to the commitment.

11. That the use of firearms be prohibited in alpine areas from June 15 to September 1 each year. That the discharge of firearms be prohibited within 1/4 mile of the centerline of all all-weather highways in B.C.

12. That all tidal estuaries be protected from damage by pollution, log storage or development of port facilities by the B.C. government.

The meeting also endorsed a call to protest the

Alaska tanker route through Juan de Fuca Strait to Cherry Point.

The meeting ended with an excellent banquet and a slide talk by Milt Warren of the Fish and Wildlife Branch. Mr. Warren told us of the horrors of the Bennett Dam and its destructive water impoundment.

All who attended felt the meeting had accomplished the Federation's objectives of acting to protect B.C.'s natural heritage.

... Kerry R. Joy

* * * * *

THE AUTHENTIC SPARROW HOUSE?

by Virginia Bartkow

"The woodpecker pecked out a little round hole
And made him a house in the telephone pole."

So went the nursery rhyme by Elizabeth Madox Roberts, but that is not how it happened in our garden.

Several years ago I asked Michael to build me a bird house. He did, but being a perfectionist, had to make it authentic -- an authentic sparrow house. For two years it was empty; no authentic sparrows showed up, and all the other birds ignored it. And then we moved to Langford.

Almost immediately it was occupied by sparrows. However, their tenancy was challenged by starlings, so Michael had to put a new front with a smaller hole, over the opening. The second year, swallows tried to drive the sparrows out but were unsuccessful, and nested instead in a small Tupperware birdhouse at which, Michael said scornfully, no self-respecting bird of any kind would even look. He had barely hung it up before the swallows were in.

The next year, so there would be plenty of nests for

everyone, and stimulated by the bluebird nesting competition, Michael built several new houses, single ones, double ones, round, square and octagonal. We had them all up in plenty of time, but the year was late all down the line, and the birds seemed utterly confused. The swallows and hummingbirds arrived a month late and left before the summer was half gone. The sparrows and swallows fought intermittently over the sparrow house, until finally the swallows got down to business and raised one family in it.

The only birds that were completely organized were the nuthatches. They have a nest in a red alder -- a tiny slit in the trunk, so narrow that even when the bird vanishes you don't believe it. Every year they raise three families in this nest, but last year there was extra activity. One busy little female filled every bird house in the garden, except the sparrow house, with twigs, stuffing the holes so that nothing but a nuthatch or a chickadee could possibly get into them, and after every twig was laboriously jimmied into position, she would carol out a paean of accomplishment.

Now it is late November, and every house is busy with birds. Somehow they have managed to move the nuthatch twigs, and apparently are evaluating the nesting possibilities -- sitting inside, peering out the doors, chirping to their mates. All but the sparrow house, and that has been appropriated by a Hairy Woodpecker! Happy "Hairy" pounded away until the hole was bigger than the original opening, squeezed inside,

"And as I watched, he poked out his head,
Black and white and topped with red."

* * * * *

The longest known stalactite in the world is a wall-supported column extending 195 feet from roof to floor in the Cueva de Nerja, near Malaga, Spain. The rather low tensile strength of calcite (calcium carbonate) precludes very long free-hanging stalactites, but one of 38 feet exists in the Poll on Ionian cave County Clare, Ireland.

BIRDS REPORTED

Rough-legged Hawk (1)	Nov. 17	East Saanich Road Chris Walsh
Gray-crowned Rosy Finch (28)	Nov. 17	Cattle Point V. Goodwill & R. Satterfield
Long-eared Owl (1)	Nov. 17	Beacon Hill Ralph Fryer
Anna's Hummingbird (m.) (1)	Nov. 18	Emard Terrace Mike Miller
Rufous Hummingbird (f.) (1)	Nov. 18	Exeter Road Roy Wainwright
Whistling Swan (2)	Nov. 18	Puckle Road Ron Satterfield
Cattle Egret (1)	Nov. 19	Saseenos Mr. & Mrs. Goodwill
White-throated Sparrow (1)	Nov. 19	Florence Lake Mr. & Mrs. Tom Briggs
Gyr Falcon (white) (1)	Nov. 19	Ogden Point
Tree Sparrow (1)	Nov. 22	Otter Point Ralph Fryer
Bohemian Waxwing (7)	Nov. 24	Prevost Hill Bob MacKenzie-Grieve
Trumpeter Swan (5)	Nov. 24	Sooke River
Yellow-billed Loon (1)	Nov. 24	Clover Point V. Goodwill & R. Satterfield
Snow Bunting (1)	Dec. 2	Esquimalt Lagoon R. Satterfield
Northern Fulmar (3)	Dec. 3	Clover Point Mr. & Mrs. Goodwill
White-winged Crossbill (1)	Dec. 8	Prevost Hill R. Satterfield

ADDENDA

There have been some surprising sightings this month and we are delighted to know that Vic Goodwill got 100 feet of film on both the Gray-crowned Rosy Finches and the Cattle Egret. Our congratulations to Vic for providing incontrovertible evidence that these rarities were

really seen here.

Mrs. Virginia Bartkow has had six Steller's Jays at Vantilburg Crescent since early October and the Tuesday Group spied 18 Pine Grosbeaks at Bear Hill on November 13th. Chris Walsh, a junior, sighted, among other things, a Short-eared Owl on November 17th in Saanich. Keep up the good work, Chris.

There have been several reports of warblers. Greg Scott got a female Townsend's on November 25th at Rithet's Swamp, Eleanor Davidson spied a male Townsend's on November 29th on Old West Road and your editors had a male Townsend's visit our yard on December 4th...(and just while typing this another Townsend's flew into our ash tree). The Goodwills, a bit farther afield, sighted on November 15th at the Duncan sewage ponds 27 Yellow-rumped Warblers and one Orange-crowned Warbler. This has been an excellent month for birders. We wish you all continued good birding and a very Happy New Year.

*M. & L. Slocombe
3134 Henderson Road
Phone 592-9047*

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PICKING THE PAPERBACKS

How to Cook Your Catch! by Jean Challenger

For those who boat or beachcomb and enjoy seafood, this is an invaluable little inexpensive Canadian paperback. Even if your tastes run the gamut from salmon to sea lettuce there is a recipe for you and these recipes are simple and yet sound delicious. There are lots of helpful "how to's" as well. Just reviewing the book made us hungry so we do recommend it as a good buy.

... M. Slocombe

BOOK REVIEW

"Wilderness Man: The strange story of Grey Owl"
by Lovat Dickson

The past year has been a good one for people like myself who have had a lifelong interest in Grey Owl. There were the excellent Radio and T.V. documentaries produced by the C.B.C; the woman best qualified to do so wrote of her years with him in "Devil in Deerskins"; all four of his books were reprinted in paperback, and this reviewer and his wife had the privilege of meeting Anahereo on several occasions and hearing at first hand of those days. Now, the man who published his second and third books in England, arranged the hugely successful lecture tours there, and came to know him intimately, has at last given us what must surely be the definitive biography. The research is thorough and detailed tracing the Belaney family back through three generations. It is all here, from boyhood in England to the final place where it all ended, at a lonely grave on the shore of a northern Saskatchewan lake, bearing just the name Grey Owl. By the time the last page is turned the remarkable metamorphosis from Archibald Stansfeld Belaney to Grey Owl has taken place before the reader's eyes, and all the tantalizing and missing pieces of the puzzle have fallen into place at last. That is, if one resists the siren call of one or two intriguing possibilities!

Interesting as the early years are, I found the book really came to life when the mid-point is reached. This is when Archie, soul-sickened by the industrial devastation and the wholesale slaughter of the beaver, is persuaded by Anahereo to give up trapping. The desperate struggle to survive, while raising the two beaver kittens, leading to the making of the first-ever film of beaver living in free association with man, is graphically described. It was this film, made by the Parks Branch of the Federal Government that started to bring him to the attention of both general public and government. His writing for Forest and Outdoors, and his first article in Country Life, plus the first public lecture given at Metis-sur-Mer were the initial steps on the road to international fame as author and lecturer.

Of paramount importance is the proof Lovat Dickson gives that Grey Owl was not presenting himself to the public as Indian merely as a cheap masquerade for personal gain. He knew that particularly in England he would capture the public imagination by so doing, and thereby attract a large audience to hear his vital message for conservation. He told Anahareo before leaving Canada that he would do anything to make them listen to him. He hated cities, and the pace of the lecture schedule was killing. In three months he gave 140 lectures, and this was followed by the immediate start of another three-month tour in the States. He literally gave his life getting out the message he so passionately believed in. Not once, Lovat Dickson informs us, did he show any interest in how much money was being made, and did not even enquire about it. It was only when on the boat leaving England, when he was sick and weary, that he was shocked when told the figure. In a day that hardly knew the meaning of the words ecology and conservation he was truly a man ahead of his time. His influence was instrumental in bringing about new trapping regulations, and the start of legislation aimed at preserving wildlife and the environment. The book is well indexed, and has interesting photographs. If I may be allowed just one criticism it is that the author insists on referring to Anahareo by that name. In actual fact she had never even heard of it until eight years after she and Grey Owl met, when he concocted it for her in "Pilgrims of the Wild", much to her surprise. Ten books both by and about Grey Owl stand on my bookshelves.....this one I add with a quiet feeling of satisfaction, knowing that at last the whole story has been told.

... Gordon N. Hooper

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Dr. Wayne Campbell of the Provincial Museum and Dr. I. McTaggart Cowan are collaborating on a book on the birds of British Columbia, and would welcome the help of volunteers with some expertise in cataloguing. For those interested further information may be obtained from Dr. Wayne Campbell in the Birds and Mammals Section of the Museum. (Telephone: 387-3649).

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JANUARY PROGRAM

- Monday Jan. 7 Executive Meeting. 7:30 p.m.
Room 402, Elliot Building, U. Vic.
- Tuesday Jan. 8 General Meeting. 8:00 p.m.
Newcombe Auditorium, Provincial
Museum. Speaker: Dr. Richard Ring.
Title: Insects of Diverse Habitats
and Their Adaptations.
- Saturday Jan. 19 Bird Field Trip
Beaver and Elk Lake.
Leader: Ruth Stirling
Meet at Mayfair Lanes at 9:30 a.m. or
Beaver Lake parking lot at 10 a.m.
- Saturday Jan. 26 Botany Workshop. 9:30 a.m.
Morning only. Rm. 2024 Cunningham
Building, U. Vic.

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JUNIOR PROGRAM: JANUARY

- | | | | <u>Drivers</u> |
|---------|---------------|---|--------------------------|
| Jan. 5 | Intermediates | Mt. Douglas
Beach | Nielson
Allen |
| Jan. 12 | NO OUTING: | Audubon Film at Newcombe Auditorium
at 2:30 p.m. | |
| Jan. 19 | Juniors | Niagra Falls | Sandeman-Allen
Martin |
| Jan. 26 | Intermediates | Francis Park | Pollard
Rimington |
| Feb. 2 | Juniors | Cattle Point | Whittaker
Mothersill |

All outings meet at 1:30 p.m. at Mayfair Lanes. If drivers are unable to participate please inform Gail at 477-9248 as soon as possible.

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JUNIOR JOTTINGS

The junior branch have been busy as usual again this past month. The younger section made a trip to Prior Lake making a lichen and moss study.

The intermediates went to Francis Park on a work bee. They changed displays and made a survey of the trails and other work.

The latest hike with the younger group was to East Sooke Park and on to Iron Mine Bay by way of the old trail which was rugged and wet. Almost everyone got wet feet but it didn't seem to matter at all. There were many things to see - among them the large spruce trees that were mingled with the Hemlock, Grand Fir and the Douglas Firs. The fungi were plentiful and many varieties were seen. The ferns were very beautiful especially when you could find the spore capsules on their tiny little thread-like stalks. We also found several kinds of liverworts growing on the rocks and trees.

When we reached the open clearing at Iron Mine Bay the sun shone warm and bright and it was a pleasure to be able to sit down and enjoy our lunches before we explored the trail along the shoreline. Here we spotted a Common Loon and we think we caught a glimpse of a harbour seal in the bay. Some of the gang saw some Gooseneck barnacles feeding as the tide ebbed and flowed.

All in all it was a really good trip and we were pleased to have Barbara Chapman and Pat Swift with us. We hope they come again. Also it was nice to have Jennefer Fisher come along - she is welcome any time.

Many thanks to the parents who supplied the transportation for without them we cannot make such an expedition.

... Freeman King

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The smallest of mosses is the pygmy moss (Ephemerum), and the longest is the brook moss (Fontinalis), which forms streamers up to 3 feet long in flowing water.

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Honorary Life Members

Freeman F. King, Albert R. Davidson, George E. Winkler,
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Annual Dues, including subscription: Single \$3; Family \$6; Junior \$2
Junior Membership is restricted to those not under 9½ years and not over 18 years.
Sustaining Membership \$25

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.