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SKIPPER AND BARBARA

Written in June, 1976 (just before she was killed last summer by a grizzly bear near Revelstoke), by Barbara Chapman, and given as a talk to other park naturalists at Jasper, Alberta)

When I was little, I lived in a rambling house; 80 years old! One of my big sisters had a closet for a bedroom. It was just large enough for a bunk bed, and every flat surface except the lower bunk where she slept was covered with moth-eaten, spider-webby bird nests -- even part of the floor. I can remember a mourning dove's nest, and a winter wren's ... but basically I couldn't have cared less about those nests. They all irked me; they were so crawly.

Every Saturday my sister left for the afternoon and would invariably return with some strange thing; a snake skin, a deer skull, another bird nest. Once she came back with a root covered in dirt and told me it was good to eat. "Licorice root" it was called - from a fern. It didn't taste like the licorice I knew: I almost threw up!

One summer my sister went off to "nature camp" (I didn't know what that meant) and I went with my parents to collect her at the end of the week. Big people were busy everywhere -- taking tents down; packing stoves; scolding and not being very friendly. Then I can remember very clearly this old, skinny man standing in front of me. He had a funny grey hat

*A YOUNG ARCTIC PEREGRINE FALCON
photographed in the Northwest Territories*

PHOTO by WAYNE CAMPBELL

with a metal badge on it, dirty glasses, a very thin, brown face with furrows across his forehead and along his cheeks, and a hooked nose that looked like an eagle's beak. I was petrified. This old man bent down and asked me, "Have you been a good girl today?" I looked up, and there in his veined old hand was a chocolate bar; "O Henry". He scrunched up his face and almost touched his beak to my nose and I saw then that his eyes were blue and not old like his face. I think I giggled and ran off with my chocolate bar squashed in my hand. That was the first time I ever met Freeman "Skipper" King. I was seven.

A few years later I began leaving the house on Saturday afternoons with my big sister ... and I found that it was this same old man who'd shown her that licorice root was edible; it was he who'd encouraged her to find the bird nests which filled her cubby-hole bedroom. On these afternoon rambles, along with a whole gang of kids, I learned how to watch the ground for "banana slugs", millepedes; in the grass for snake skins; or in the bushes for spiders. I learned what the flowers of a fir tree looked like; I never knew that fir trees had flowers before. I learned to love the smell of skunk cabbage in spring and the balm of giliad from the cottonwood buds.

Every Saturday a gang of kids would go out with Skipper. He took us to Iron Mine Bay, Mill Hill, Goldstream Flats; we looked at sea squirts, iridescent seaweed and blennies. He taught us the meaning of ecology and conservation. His one motion (a swift "decapitation" with his hand) told us what would happen if we didn't return an overturned tidepool rock to its original position. One time out in the woods at Beaver Lake, we found a human skeleton. We saw how wonderful a dandelion really is -- or a garter snake. We learned the how's and why's of a stinging nettle's sting and how dragonflies or toads "do it".



I made many true friends by rambling with Skipper. How can friendship fade when you have shared so much of life? Life like sneaking out of a summer camp past midnight to go skinny-dipping only to be too petrified of pouncing hoodlums to ever stick a toe in the water; or choking on cigars which we found down by the river; or singing songs 'round a campfire while termites flick past your head; or like tromping through the rain for miles to see your first pink Easter Lily.

So, through the years I came to know kids of my own that I will always know. We shared too much in the out-of-doors to ever grow apart. And Skipper? I learned that he was a rebel at heart; always was -- always to be. He told me once that when he was a youngster, he threw a bottle of ink at the headmaster at school and got whipped by both the master and his father -- and then was expelled. His father forbade him to mingle with the servant class (for the Kings themselves had a huge estate in south-east England). Freeman rebelled; his best friend was of servant class. When he was 17, Freeman jumped a freighter from London to Canada ... found a job as a cowhand in the prairies. Later, he became one of the Northwest Mounted Police and once travelled 1,000 miles alone by dog sled to bring out a dead, frozen, mad trapper.

He returned to England for the First World War; got wounded; got married and came back to Canada with his wife. Years and years of farming the prairies ended in disaster; they moved west to Vancouver Island. Thirty-five years later Freeman retired officially and began taking kids out -- to show them how comfortable; how fascinating; how amusing the out-of-doors can be if you take the time to find out. He never believed in death in the natural world. Everything recycles and goes on; in a different form, perhaps, but in life. I knew him as he passed through his seventies and into his eighties.



Freeman King had his own ideas. Sometimes he was wrong, but who among us is not? He found it hard to admit mistakes; but who among us does not? I only know that he was a very real person and I know I am not alone in feeling this way. I have seen thousands of kids (both young and old) smile, knowing they had a friend in him. I am glad to have known him as a friend. Maybe the common ground was that even in age, he was a kid too -- just a kid who loved this earth. I leave you with his own campfire words, for they speak of the sort of man he was:

*As the sparks leap upward
so may our ideals*

*As the yellow flames rise
so may our hopes*

*As the warm hearth glows
so may our hearts*

*As the grey ash fades
so may our fears.*

For this man, may there be no such thing as death; how could there be?

THE ROCKS OF MOUNT TZOUHALEM

by John L. Rimmington

On Sunday, October 17, a group of 20 of our naturalists, led by Dr. P. Eastood, visited Mt. Tzouhalem near Duncan.

The first stop was at the "Butter Church" near our destination. Climbing the steep hill on which the church stands was quite an effort for our group and one can understand the zeal of its adherents wilting and the church falling into disuse. When standing on the hill beside this famous century-old stone edifice, it is thrilling to think of the cataclysms that have beset this area in bygone geological ages millions of years ago.

The ancient rocks around here are consolidated marine sediments laid down eons ago, but strangest of all is to realize that the rocky ground on which the church stands was at one time at a higher level than the Mt. Tzouhalem which stands 1500 feet above it.

Dr. Eastood, who kindly provided us with maps and instructions, pointed out that a great crack or fault had opened up and let the S.W. area drop 2000 feet. In consequence, the area at the top of the mountain was eroded far more than the lower part. The lower part therefore has the later formations or newer rocks (Upper Cretaceous - Nanaimo Group).

We then moved in convoy style along the Cowichan River, where the blackberries were still yielding good fruit, the split-leaf kind of later maturity doing better than the Himalaya type. Along the river were outcrops at the base of the mountain of some really old rock formations (Permian) and we chipped out samples of hard grey argillite and pieces of granitic rock which had melted its way up into these hardened shales. Chalcopyrite (copper ore) was visible. In the meantime, the bird watchers in the party were busy watching the flights of herons and hawks over the Cowichan River delta and getting vocal details of the geology from the more ardent who scaled the lower side of the mountain.

We then back-tracked to Lake Quamichan where we lunched in perfect sunny weather and saw the anglers pulling in some fine trout.

Then in procession again, we inspected exposures of the rocks second oldest the the greywacke (hard shale) of the Butter Church property. Dr. Eastwood knew where the best exposures of the conglomerate were. The conglomerate resembled coarse concrete, but due to the infiltration of silica (quartz) over the millions of years, it is very much harder. Exposures of quartzite (consolidated sand) were also seen.

We did not have to climb to the top of the mountain to inspect the next youngest rocks because the beds are slanting and therefore reachable at a low level. The last beds we inspected were along Maple Bay and consisted of easily crumbled shales. These shales have yielded fossils which helped to date the rock in geological time. You should have seen our amateur geologists with hands and feet pounding away at the shale in the hope of finding some fossil specimens - like a bunch of gold seekers! Embedded in the crumbly shales were hard siliceous objects the size and shape of human fingers. How nature creates these objects, called concretions, by aggregating the dissolved sand lying in the shales, is a billion-year-old mystery.

IN THE DARK - AT CATTLE POINT

by *Elsie G. Turnbull*
and *Alex E. Peden*

(A lot of field trips go by without a word from the people taking part; a few take place and we get a neat little report but, to my knowledge, this is the first field trip where TWO, yes two, reports came in. So! What to do? Well, since I didn't have the heart to tell either reporter their piece wouldn't get into *The Naturalist*, I've excerpted parts from each to tell the complete story. Elsie's contributions are in *Italic type*; Alex's in *Roman*).

In the eerie darkness of an October evening, 25 members of the Victoria Natural History Society found themselves scrambling over slippery rocks and through shallow pools at Cattle Point. Led by Dr. Alex Peden, they were looking for marine creatures inhabiting the intertidal zone exposed by the low tide. With sturdy sticks they prodded the sand, overturned stones and scraped barnacles, snails and limpets from the boulders, dumping all finds into plastic, water-filled pails. By dragging a big net through deeper pools they caught anything afloat. Out at skyline two lights

flashed warning of rocky reefs. To the right, marina and city shone like a circlet of sparklers but in the darkness the group were black figures marked only by the fluid, moving gleam of flashlights.

The tide should have been lower for our task, but a number of common marine animals were observed. Some of the highest living species were the small periwinkles, limpets and scattered barnacles which are flooded by tide waters for just a few hours each day. A little further down on the rocks, algae, such as bladder wrack and sea lettuce were common, while shore crabs, hermit crabs and a variety of snails were easily found. Some of the avian inhabitants were distressed by our presence, because I heard through the darkness alarm cries of shorebirds which I am sure were quickly identified by the bird-watchers in our group.

One small tide-pool fish was the crested blenny, narrow and eel-like, with the ability to change colour against a varying background. Another fish, found in damp sand underneath rocks, was the sculpin, known as "Tide-pool Johnny". Above a sharply tapering body it has a large ugly bull head. Clinging to a rock was an immature starfish beside a miniscule anemone, that carnivorous creature which looks like an exotic flower.

We all returned to the Provincial Museum by about 9:00 p.m., to view the smaller creatures through microscopes. A colony of bryozoans or moss animals (known as Membranipora) was the most fascinating find. The uniform and delicate pattern of each cell made a beautiful picture. Minute little tentacles could be seen, providing the viewer was careful. The slightest bump against the microscope or table caused these flower-like creatures to retract into their homes.

Sea-life, viewed through a microscope, looked very different. For instance, a band encircling a piece of kelp could be seen as a colony of moss animals opening and closing tiny feelers in response

to water movement in a search for food. So tiny they cannot be seen without magnification, they belong to the Bryozoans and are an important part in the balance of nature drama -- eating and being eaten. Revealed as a living entity by the microscope was the flatworm. To the naked eye it appeared, as the textbook said. "Nothing but a flattened blob of slime on a rock".

Cattle Point was an area where I spent many hours as a youth searching for sealife. I believe the number of species to be found there is now much reduced. As with most of our natural habitats, the pressures of our growing city requires that we go further afield to find some creatures.

It proved to be a fascinating evening. After providing this tantalizing glimpse into marine life, arthropod, isopod, bryozoan, pisces and seaweed were all taken back to Cattle Point and returned to the home waters of Oak Bay.

PELAGIC TRIPS - FALL 1976

by Michael G. Shepard

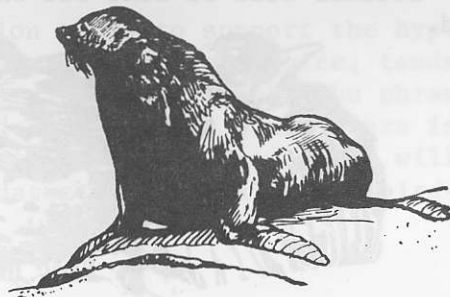
Last fall two pelagic birding trips were organized through the Provincial Museum and Bamfield Marine Station. On each trip, September 18 and 25, we followed approximately the same route, leaving Bamfield at 8:00 a.m., travelling south to Swiftsure Bank, northwest to La Perouse Bank, and back to Bamfield.

Over calm waters and under hazy skies our route took us around Aguilar Point and southwest through Trevor Channel aboard the 55-foot shrimp trawler "Leik". Minutes from the dock we began to feel the effects of the ground swell; wobbly legs and queezy stomachs. The predominant birds in the channel were Common Murres and Heermann's Gulls, but as we approached Cape Beale and the open ocean, Sooty Shearwaters appeared, skimming over the swells and into the troughs. From the Cape south to Swiftsure we spotted relatively few seabirds.

The most interesting birds seen on this part of the trips were an Osprey, on September 18, and several migrating passerines, probably off course due to fog earlier in the morning. A bright Yellow Warbler perched on my head for a brief rest on one trip, and a Common Flicker, and several Water Pipits fluttered by the boat. The Osprey, a strong flyer, would have no trouble reaching land again but many of the small birds would perish at sea, either from exhaustion or from falling prey to passing jaegers or gulls.

By late morning, when we reached Swiftsure Bank, things would begin to even up as the seabirds took over. The shallow waters of the bank produce upwellings carrying nutrients to the surface from below, thus attracting a wide variety of organisms. The water near the Bank was a thick brown soup of plankton; herring balls (dense schools of fish) bubbled at the surface and hundreds of birds congregated to feast. Here we watched the feathered frenzy of feeding California and Sabine's Gulls, Sooty and Pink-footed Shearwaters, Common Murres and Cassin's Auklets. A few lucky birders caught a glimpse of the uncommon Flesh-footed Shearwater as it dashed across the ship's bow. It was lunch-time for us too, and some of us managed to consume a few sandwiches as the boat rolled and pitched. A bucket of giant Barkley Sound shrimp was brought out and we gorged ourselves, tossing scraps overboard to passing gulls and shearwaters.

Once under way again, we turned northwest toward La Perouse Bank. At about 11:15 a.m., an albatross soared into view, about half a mile off the port side. We watched the enormous bird for a few minutes as it sailed to within a quarter mile of the boat. Few birds were seen from this point on but among those which were seen were two Red Phalaropes among floating kelp, a beautiful Pomarine Jaeger and a couple of Northern Fulmars.



The highlight of the September 25th trip was the sighting of two New Zealand Shearwaters at the south-east corner of La Perouse Bank.

From La Perouse Bank our route back to Bamfield took us past Folger Island where a group of sea lions could be seen basking on the rocks.

Sunshine, calm sea, productive birding and good times at the Marine Station added up to two enjoyable weekends. Our thanks to Skipper Siguard Tviet, his wife Valerie, and Phil Rhymas, Marine Station Manager, who all contributed greatly to the success of the trips.

The following is a list of some of the seabirds tallied on the trips:

	Sept. 18	Sept. 25
Black-footed Albatross	1	-
Northern Fulmar	3	-
Flesh-footed Shearwater	1	-
Pink-footed Shearwater	8	5
New Zealand Shearwater	-	2
Sooty Shearwater	662	1699
Fork-tailed Storm-petrel	25	62
Red Phalarope	2	-
Northern Phalarope	26	12
Pomarine Jaeger	2	-
Black-legged Kittiwake	2	4
Sabine's Gull	395	123
Common Murre	818	2121
Cassin's Auklet	381	17
Rhinoceros Auklet	3	2

We hope to schedule several pelagic trips next year. Anyone interested should write me at the Birds and Mammals Division, B.C. Provincial Museum, Victoria, B.C., V8W 1A1. Details will be sent out when dates have been confirmed.



ESCAPE BEHAVIOUR OF STARLINGS AND COWBIRDS TO HUNTING PEREGRINE FALCONS

by Wayne Campbell

Crook (1965), Lack (1968), Goss-Custard (1970), and others have suggested that one of the functions of flocking in birds may be to facilitate the detection of approaching predators. Since this has never been clearly demonstrated experimentally, it is important that field observations of the interaction between a predator and its potential prey are recorded.

On September 25, 1974, while censusing Skylarks on the Saanich Peninsula, an immature Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) was observed flying low over a short-grass field towards a foraging flock of about 60 Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*). When the falcon was about 25 meters away, the flock of blackbirds suddenly flew up and settled among the legs of cattle grazing nearby. The peregrine made several low passes over the cattle, and, surprisingly, the starlings and cowbirds, apparently confident of their safety, continued to forage. Peregrines usually rely on the element of surprise to catch their prey (Beebe, 1974) and in this instance, the falcon probably intended to split the flock and capture its prey by direct pursuit (see Cade, 1960) or by under-flying it (Campbell, 1975).

In an effort to test the importance of the "cattle shelter", I twice scared the cattle into running short distances. Each time the starlings and cowbirds flew along with the cattle, and once stopped, recommenced foraging among their legs. The peregrine followed this activity but discouraged, soon flew off to a nearby perch.

This observation tends to support the hypothesis that flocking, as an antipredator device, tends to benefit individuals within the flock. The phrase "safety in numbers" applies here since there is a greater chance that individuals in a flock will detect an approaching predator more quickly than birds alone.

Another noteworthy aspect of this observation is that starlings were always the first birds to fly up and settle when startled. The cowbirds, then, were indirectly benefiting from this feeding association.

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(Editor's Note: Wayne Campbell's report brings to mind two of my own observations, both in Central Saanich and both involving birds apparently using cattle to escape avian predators. In one, a domestic pigeon took refuge between the legs on a lone cow in a large field when attacked by a falconer's Peregrine. The pigeon remained in its "shelter" during several stoops by the falcon.

On the other occasion, a flock of Starlings and Brewer's Blackbirds remained on the ground among the feet of a herd of grazing cattle while a Cooper's Hawk made several unsuccessful attempts to flush them out.)



WONDERS NEVER CEASE

by A.R. Davidson

The other day my wife and I were walking along one of the woodland trails at Ten Mile Point, listening and looking for birds.

It was quiet; other than the noise of band-tailed pigeons banging into the oak trees looking for acorns, we hadn't heard a thing. Suddenly my wife stopped and whispered "I hear a hummingbird", and, after a few moments an Anna's Hummingbird appeared. It had found a large, red-flowering currant bush full of bloom. It was very visible with its back shining a vivid metallic green as it darted here and there feeding from the scarlet flowers.

A flowering red currant and humming birds belong to spring, but this was October 21. While a few Anna's are found all year here, a red-flowering currant in full bloom in late fall is something we have never seen before.

TRIVIA -- OR NOT!

by Enid K. Lemon

Can anyone tell me why birds of prey appear to pick up their captures with their right claw?

Recently at Rithet's Bog I sat and watched four American Kestrels catch Red-legged Grasshoppers on the ground and consume them in flight. Many years ago, during a watch at a Red Tailed Hawk's nest, I saw the birds bring several lizards, a snake and one small mammal to the nest; all were carried in the right claw.

I have also seen ospreys carrying fish in their right claw when the fish is small enough to be carried in one claw. And, if I'm not mistaken, the Everglades Kites in the recent Audubon film "Hidden World of the Big Cypress Swamp" caught the snails with their right claw.

Editor's Note:

The Victoria Naturalist probably has no more important role than that of providing a forum from which the members of our Society can expound their views and describe their observations. Through the years, reports and observations such as the three printed above, have been used by researchers in more extensive biological works. Many of these observations have been made and recorded by amateurs, a fact which has in no way detracted from the value of the report or observation. Others have been well-documented and extensively researched reports such as Wayne's. Either way, these personal observations should be a much more prominent part of The Naturalist and I'd like to see more of them. If you have something you would like to report, and feel a little insecure about how to prepare your material for publication, give either Wayne Campbell or me a call and we'll be glad to help. Wayne will fill you in on the significance of your observation and direct you to other sources of information on the subject; I'll just help you put the words together. You can get Wayne at the Provincial Museum (397-3649) and me at the Museum too (387-6513) or at home (478-5794).



BIRD REPORTS

by Michael Shepard

October did not bring many rarities to the Victoria scene. Up Island, however, Adrian Dorst found a TROPICAL KINGBIRD at Tofino on October 11th and a SMITH'S LONGSPUR on Cortes Island on Oct. 25th. Tropical Kingbirds nest from southern Texas and western Mexico south, but often wander north in fall.

This is the third B.C. record. Smith's Longspurs, normally migrate east of the Rockies from their northern breeding grounds and are very rare along the west coast.

Other noteworthy sightings included single RUSTY BLACKBIRDS at Tofino on October 1 (Adrian Dorst) and at Quick's Pond on October 27 (Vic Goodwill), and four GRAY-CROWNED ROSY FINCHES at Clover Point on October 23 (George Bryant, Vic Goodwill, Ron Satterfield).

Please send any interesting November sightings to me at the Birds and Mammals Division, B.C. Provincial Museum, Victoria, B.C., V8W 1A1 by December 6.

MAKING A PLASTER CAST OF AN ANIMAL PRINT

by Brenda Curran

The first step in making an animal print cast is to have a pre-made "plaster casting kit". My kit includes three pounds of plaster of Paris, an old but clean toothbrush, and a spoon, all in a metal can for mixing. When your kit is complete, it should be compact enough to fit in a small pocket of your backpack.

When you come across a distinctly formed animal track, make sure it is on suitable ground for casting. Casts produced in gravelly ground end up like pebbly cement, and in this case the print is not recognizable. Soft ground or dry powdery surfaces are good for quick casting. However, thick mud brings out the more distinct tips of your print. For a thick mud cast, you should carefully cut about two inches radius of the actual print. If this is brought home, it can be dried and used for making a good cast.

For the actual casting, you decide how much plaster you will need to cover the entire track. Remember, too much plaster is better than not enough. You mix the plaster of Paris with water, in your can.

The amount of water is determined by how fast you want your cast to dry. A thick mixture dries quickly but does not always get the corners and claw marks, whereas a thin (but not watery) mixture gets all the proper markings but takes longer to set.

With your mix prepared, you slowly pour it into the track, letting it overflow slightly out of the imprint. When this sets solidly, carefully dig it out of the earth and remove the loose pebbles. Now you set the cast in cold water (hot water will soften it) and brush it with the toothbrush 'till it's clean. When your plaster cast is wiped dry, put it somewhere in your pack where you won't break it.



HISTORICAL BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES OF B.C.

Forty-five original pen and ink sketches and watercolours of historical buildings and structures of this Province, some still with us but many now gone forever, will be on display in the Temporary Exhibits Gallery of the Provincial Museum from December 4 to February 13. The work of Mr. Rudy Dangelmaier, these pictures represent exciting documents of an aspect of our history that is only now receiving the recognition it has long deserved. These are exciting pictures and well worth a trip downtown to see.



PROGRAM

- TUES. DEC. 11 - General Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Newcombe Auditorium.
Speaker: R. Wayne Campbell
Topic: Five Weeks in a Dinghy
- SAT. DEC. 18 - Christmas Bird Count.
Bird counters still needed.
Contact: Alf Porcher (477-7777).
- SAT. DEC. 13 - Marine Biology: Beach seining at Mill Bay.
Meet: Main Door Provincial Museum,
at 7:30 p.m. - drive to Mill Bay - spend one hour seining - dress warmly.
If you need a ride, call Alex Peden, days 387-6515; nights 652-3598.
Alex needs a volunteer with a strong back and willing to wear a pair of chest waders.

INTERMEDIATES AND JUNIORS

- SAT. DEC. 11 - Francis Park.
Meet: Mayfair Lanes, 1:30.
Driver: Belton

AUDUBON FILMS

No December Program but keep January 21 and 22 in mind. Dr. William J. Jahoda will be in town with his film "Bermuda - Land and Sea." That's 8:00 p.m., Newcombe Auditorium each night.