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### SAMUEL E. SIMCOE

by Kaye Suttill

Those of you in the Natural History Society who knew Sam Simcoe will be feeling a little bit "less" now, with the news of his death on November 24th. He was 68.

Sam used to go on the monthly bird outings, where we got to know him, but his special place was East Sooke Park, which he knew better than anyone. He liked to go out during the week, had his own names for the various spots, investigated every nook and trail, and was the natural choice to lead one of the Canadian Nature Federation field trips to East Sooke during the 1975 Convention here. Before the signposts were up, Sam helped more than one lost person back to "civilization" from the confusion of wild maze of logging, and was the perfect guide for anyone wanting to explore the park. In August of '75 he came eyeball to eyeball with a Cougar in a ravine near Beechy Head.

But more than knowing East Sooke Park, Sam Simcoe was a man of action in trying to preserve it, and frequently checked into the Regional Parks Office. He was active in keeping all-terrain vehicles off the trails and banning hunting.

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COVER:

*Chrysalis of Swallowtail  
Butterfly*

by

*Mrs. B. McHaffie Gow*

He came out from England, managed a chemical plant in Alberta, and lived here in Victoria for the past ten years. He was a long-standing member of our Society.

We will miss him, but we can be thankful that we knew Sam and that he helped East Sooke Park so much. The Society will be giving thanks, too, for our Scholarship Fund is \$10,000 richer; a gift of Samuel E. Simcoe.

### HERITAGE TREE TOUR

by Merle Harvey

Thanks to Doug Ross, Programme Chairman - who came up with the idea - and Michael Gye of Victoria's Heritage Trees Committee - who led the outing - members of the Victoria Natural History Society were treated to a new twist in botany field trips: a tour of the Heritage Trees of the Saanich Peninsula on November 6. It was an interesting and informative morning but it should have been a full day. Only tantalizingly brief stops were possible; some trees got only a glance as we passed.

The goal of the party was Wain Road Park, a priceless heritage of two acres of first-growth trees. There was a restful hush under these ancients as we walked on unknown years of fallen leaves and needles.

But first we stopped at the former Layritz Nursery to view a Giant Sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) under which Mr. and Mrs. Layritz are buried. Next door, at 4554 Wilkinson Road, we learned the differences between the Giant Sequoia and the California Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*).

Among the other trees seen there were a Normandy Fir, a Ponderosa Pine, and the Lombardi Oak - tall and thin like a poplar - and a Holly Oak and Irish Yew. There were also a Strawberry Tree covered with blossoms, reminding us of its relative the Salal. It also carried fruit, like big round strawberries, which the owner of the house said made delicious jelly.

Many of these trees came from Germany as seedlings in 1890.

At 4480 Wilkinson Road, we got a brief glance at a beautiful Golden-leafed Robina (*Acacia*). Then it was on to 4635 West Saanich Road for a look at what we call the West Coast Cedar (*Thuja plicata*) but which is really not a cedar. This tree was planted 110 years ago by James Murray Yale who was Chief Trader for the Hudson Bay Company at Fort Langley. He retired here in 1868. Planted at the same time was a true cedar (*cedrus deodora*).

There was not time to drop into 9760 West Saanich Road to see the Western Blue Spruce (*Picea breweriana*) which was originally planted in 1930 by a former Attorney-General of British Columbia, Mr. Pooley, in his garden at 1182 Old Esquimalt Road. It was later moved to its present location when the house in town changed hands.

One of the famous Coronation English Oaks (*Quercus robur*) was on view at the Brentwood Shopping Centre. Several more of these well-known trees - planted to commemorate the coronation of King George VI - were seen during the outing, one planted by the Strawberry Vale Women's Institute at 4155 Wilkinson Road.

But we move on; at our second stop, at Mills Road, there were 15 Garry Oaks, more than 100 years old. These trees were saved from destruction by some timely intervention by The Committee. They managed to convince a developer that these trees - such a delight to the eye - were worth saving. Across Mills Road, behind Holy Trinity Church, is another Coronation Oak and a Scots Pine - the former from Windsor Great Park, the latter from Kew Gardens.

After Wain Road Park - which was our next stop - it was on to the Dominion Government Research Station on East Saanich Road where a feast of interesting sights deserved hours of our attention but which had to be savoured only briefly. There was an English Oak, 90 years old, 90 feet high and 90 feet wide, and two Dawn Redwoods which were more like shrubs than the great trees we think of when redwoods are mentioned. Two Sugar Maples (these and another at Sidney are the only such maples in this area) and many Oriental species were also among the sights of the Station.

On our way to the Station, seven Broad-leaved Maples, planted in the 1870's, were seen on Stelly's Cross Road and East Saanich Road.

At the old Prairie Inn on Mount Newton Cross Road there are two Coulter Pines with cones so big and hard they could knock you out if one fell on you. Beside these Coulters was a Monterey Pine (*Pinus radiata*) under which we gathered a large specimen of *Agarius augustus*.

Passing Shady Creek Church, we glimpsed two Lombardi Poplars (*Populus nigra italica*) planted near the gate when the old church was built in 1895. What a wonderful fragrance the fallen leaves gave off as we went back to look for the slaves' graves and to have our lunch in the church parking lot. A Red-tailed Hawk may have had the same idea - lunching at the parking lot - we frightened him off the pigeon he had caught. Not often do we get a chance to see a Red-tailed Hawk so close.

The final stop of the day was at a tiny triangle of green with an exciting variety of interesting trees and shrubs - Mitchell Park on Island View Road. Among the discoveries there was a Spanish Fir (*Abies pinsapo*), a Lawson's Cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*), an Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*), another Coronation Oak, a *Paulonia* (which we must see in spring when it is covered with purple flowers), two flowering cherries, a *Laburnum* and a Holly.

Thanks to Michael Gye for a wonderful morning. Couldn't we do it again, this time a little slower?



## WATCH THOSE CORMORANTS

by Harold Hosford

Three species of cormorant are regularly seen around our shores. Two are permanent residents -- the Pelagic and the Double-crested; the other, generally considered a winter visitor, is Brandt's Cormorant.

Of the three, the Pelagic is by far the smallest, being most easily recognized in all seasons by its small size, slim build, snake-like neck and "square" head, the latter resulting from two crests -- one on the forehead and one on the nape -- that give the head a rather lumpy look. While in some plumages the Pelagic Cormorant has a red "face", this colour is not too apparent in most lights.

The Double-crested Cormorant, on the other hand, is a large, heavily built cormorant with a proportionately thicker neck than the Pelagic and, most important, showing varying amounts of buff to yellow on the face and throat. This light patch, distinctive among local cormorants, is usually readily seen.

If our problem of identification was reduced to these two species, we would have no problem -- the big cormorant would be the Double-crest; the small one, the Pelagic.

Unfortunately, Brandt's enters the picture and the confusion begins because this is also a big cormorant, averaging even bigger than the Double-crest. Fortunately, there are enough differences between the the birds, both in habits and in appearance, that separating them in the field is not difficult -- once you get the knack.

First point: Brandt's is essentially a winter bird -- using the word winter in its broadest sense. They begin to arrive off our shores in August and by May they are gone. So for two months, June and July, big cormorants are almost certainly Double-crested.

Second point: While Brandt's shows some pale buff markings on the throat, these are not nearly so extensive as on the Double-crest and are, to all intents, invisible in the field. So Brandt's look like large, all-dark cormorants.

Third point: Brandt's Cormorants are almost exclusively birds of the salt water; the Double-crest, on the other hand, seems equally at home on fresh water as on salt water. So a large cormorant on fresh water will be a Double-crest; on salt water you'll have to look for the field marks.

Brandt's Cormorants can best be seen in September in Juan de Fuca from Trial Island to the Chain Islands and in outer Oak Bay. According to a count made by Wayne Campbell last winter, they gradually move out of Oak Bay through October and November and, while a few remain all winter in Oak Bay, their main concentrations then occur in Active Pass from December through April.

Brandt's Cormorants are of special interest in our waters because evidence now suggests that at least some of the birds that winter here are summer residents of Farralon Island off the Central California coast.

For the past 6 years, scientists at the Point Reyes Bird Observatory on Farralon have been banding the chicks of Brandt's Cormorants in an effort -- among other things -- to learn more about their migrations. One of these colour-banded birds was seen near Victoria last winter setting the stage for some exciting cormorant watching for those so inclined.

What you should be looking for are brightly-coloured plastic leg bands, yellow for 1971, blue for 1972, white for 1973, green for 1974, black (hard to see from a distance) for 1975, and brown (brick-red actually) for 1976.

If you see one of these cormorants, make a note of the time, date and exact location of the sighting -- and, of course, the colour of the band -- and phone the information to Wayne Campbell at the Birds and Mammals Division of the Provincial Museum (387-3649). Wayne is compiling such sightings and forwarding them to Farralon.

## THE THETIS LAKE MUSHROOM HUNT

by John L. Rimmington

A good turnout of 50 members led by Dr. Al Funk circled Thetis Lake in ideal weather. In a way it is a practical extension of Dr. Funk's lecture to us at the previous General Meeting on "Mushrooms: Good and Bad".

The foragers turned up an amazing quantity and variety of mushrooms including the white, yellow-brown, pink, purple and black-spored varieties. Dr. Funk kindly supplied us with copies of a guide to the identification of the many species. I myself made notes on 32 of them.

We felt we had been living in a blind world as we were introduced to so many fungi we had not even noticed before.

The roots of the mushrooms (*mycelium*) were examined and we understood how in many cases the intermeshed mycelium was so beneficial to the feeder roots of some types of trees.

Plenty of *Agaricus* (edible) and the deadly *Amanita* were found, as well as the spongy *Polyporous*.

There were so many poisonous varieties that could fool the unskilled picker of edible mushrooms that my latest advice to my daughter is: "Beware of all strange men and mushrooms".



## BIRD REPORTS

by Michael Shepard

Although not much was happening along the waterfront, several rarities turned up at various inland localities.

On November 13, Ralph Fryer found a white-phased GYRFALCON at Martindale-Island View flats. The bird remained in the vicinity for a few days and was observed by several birders. This species occurs regularly in southwestern B.C., but most are gray-phased birds.

Vic Goodwill recorded a NASHVILLE WARBLER at McIntyre Road, Central Saanich on November 15; a very late date.

A NORTHERN ORIOLE was observed by Wayne Campbell and I, as it fed on apples along Government Street in James Bay on November 16. This is the second winter record for the Victoria area.

RED PHALAROPES were noted at several localities in mid-November by Vic and Peggy Goodwill. The largest group was 22 birds at River Jordan on November 19.

On November 28, Jeremy Tatum located a TREE SPARROW near the Victoria Airport. This species is a rare winter visitor to southern Vancouver Island.

Please send any interesting December sightings to me at the Birds and Mammals Division, B.C. Provincial Museum, Victoria, B.C., V8W 1A1 by January 7th.

### WHY DON'T WE PLANT ARBUTUS TREES?

*by John L. Rimmington*

The arbutus tree is the only native Canadian broad-leaved evergreen and its distribution is limited to southwestern British Columbia and down the west coast to California.

Many people enjoy the appearance of these trees with their distinctive form and colour, although the fact that the bark peels and the leaves fall in the summer makes the leaf-sweeping job a year-round affair.

For years I have felt that the arbutus has commercial possibilities. One of the chief arguments against it has been that it is an undeveloped, slow-growing tree, but this is because it is usually left to find a difficult foothold on rocks and soils that will not support anything else. In the rain forests, of course, it is swamped by the huge Douglas-fir, cedars, and hemlocks. Tests in Oregon show that given a decent chance and grown in dense stands, it will grow fast and tall and as straight as a hydro pole.

Some of the best specimens in Victoria are at 2483 Cranmore where a stand of six trees reach a height of 60 feet. They must have reached their peak many years ago, because there has been no appreciable change in them in the 20 years I have been in Victoria.

These huge trees were planted 60 - 70 years ago as boulevard trees but are now overgrown for this purpose. They illustrate that given a chance, the arbutus grow over a foot a year; not bad for a semi-hardwood.

Most of the research on the use of the "Pacific Madrone" the name given to it in the U.S.A., has been done at the University of California Forest Products Laboratory. They found that using proper techniques, the wood can be dried without warpage when it becomes a semi-hardwood. The suggested uses included shuttles for use in low-speed looms, as a face veneer for furniture, and for flooring. An office building in San Francisco had its 90,000 square feet of floor space covered with madrone (arbutus) flooring, and after 55 years parts were still in use and in very good condition.

In recent years, many techniques have been developed to use woods in ever newer ways, such as plastic reinforcement and lamination, but at present the limited amount of arbutus available and limited budgets has restricted research in Canada.

Perhaps a new industry for Victoria looms in the far distant future in processing the arbutus wood.

PELAGIC BIRDING TRIP

A winter pelagic birding trip has been scheduled for February 12, 1977. Rare birds we may see include Laysan Albatross, Scaled Petrel and Parakeet Auklet. More information can be obtained from Michael G. Shepard, Birds and Mammals Division, B.C. Provincial Museum, Victoria, B.C., V8W 1A1.

A FALCON IN OAK BAY

by A.R. Davidson

The Peregrine Falcon is certainly not a bird often seen here; nor indeed anywhere in North America, but over the winter months a few are spotted by our diligent and sharp-eyed birders generally in the Saanich farming areas.

On November 23rd, however, one came right into Oak Bay residential district. It appeared over Windsor Park, struck down a Mew Gull, a bird much heavier than itself, brought it to the ground and had a meal right there, much to the astonishment of some onlookers. One of the ladies present immediately phoned Fenwick Lansdowne who was on the scene within minutes, identified the gull and saw the falcon in a fir tree on Currie Road, which borders the Park.

HOT LINE HEATING UP AGAIN

After a couple of months in the cooler, Tim Murphy says the Rare Bird Hot Line is heating up again. The electronic equipment has arrived and all that needs to be done now is get the stuff hooked up. If Tim can get it done in time, a telephone number will appear in this space \_\_\_\_\_; if not, a space will appear in that space. Either way, you should be able to get all the up-to-date bird news you want on the line by next month.

DINNER TICKETS

Vera Guernsey and Dorothy McCann are handling the tickets for the Society's dinner to be held on Feb. 8th. They'll have them at the General Meeting on January 11th, so if you want to be in on this big event, see Vera or Dorothy. Dr. Richard Ring is scheduled to be the guest speaker at the dinner. He'll be speaking on Arctic Insects.

KIDS COUNTRYFALL NATURE WALKS

by Michele Askey

SEPTEMBER 25. We started out in the fall at Francis Park. We went on two trails; Swamp Trail and Calipso Trail. We saw many different mushrooms, heard many different birds, and saw some leaves changing colour.

OCTOBER 19. We went to Simpson Sears Mall and had fun telling people about Naturalists. There was a display of pamphlets, stuffed birds and a tape of bird calls.

OCTOBER 16. This Saturday we went to East Sooke Park. We took our lunch and drove out there at 10:30 in the morning. We went to the new section and went on the new trails. We explored the beach and forest. After lunch we started back slowly. At a field, we stopped and played some games. On the way back, we drank a 5-gallon tank of water. We all enjoyed the trip.

OCTOBER 30. Mill Hill was the place the hike was this time. We walked up to the top on some new trails examining moss and other plants. At the top we were shown some animal fur samples. On the way down we gathered some different seed pods for Mr. Mitchell for the University.

NOVEMBER 13. This time we went to Goldstream and watched the spawning salmon. We also went to the Nature House and saw some slides of the Park. It was fun, but very cold.

NOVEMBER 27. Bear Hill was the next stop. We walked up Bear Hill with Rick Harcombe, on frost an inch thick. It was very interesting; Mrs. Crampton told us some legends and Rick talked to us about erosion and the clouds. Afterwards, we went to Mrs. Crampton's house for a nice cup of hot cocoa.

DECEMBER 11. This being our last fall outing, we went to Francis Park. We went on the Lyre Tree and Calipso Trails, cleaning falling branches off the paths as we went. After the walk, we moved some wood for Mr. P. Dumbleton, and then went to the auditorium for hot cocoa and cookies and a quiz on animals and plants.

THANK YOU, GAIL, FOR MAKING THIS YEAR SUCH A SUCCESS.

#### WHO LIKES READING?

by A.R. Davidson

This is to remind our members that the Society's Library, which is at 2144 Brighton Ave., contains many interesting and informative books on all phases of natural history: Marine Biology, Botany, Geology, Birds, Entomology. Also there are all the handbooks of the Provincial Museum, and many of their "Occasional Papers" on Anthropology and other subjects.

The Library contains about 200 books as well as various natural history magazines, Audubon Field Notes, many of Bent's Life Histories of Birds, and many reference books.



#### ADULT PROGRAMME

SUN. JAN. 8

Ornithology: Dallas Road waterfront  
Meet animal pens, Beacon Hill Park,  
9:30 a.m.  
Leader: Tim Murphy

TUES. JAN. 11

General Meeting, Newcombe Auditorium  
8:00 P.M.  
Speaker: Dr. Ian McTaggart Cowan  
Topic: Predation

SAT. JAN. 29

Ornithology: Wiffen Spit.  
Meet Mayfair Lanes 9:00 a.m. or  
Wiffen Spit, 10:00 a.m.  
Leader: Mike Shepard.  
Bring lunch.

#### JUNIORS AND INTERMEDIATES

SAT. JAN. 8

Logan Park.  
Driver: Belton

SAT. JAN. 22

Witty's Lagoon.  
Driver: Lauzon

Meet - both trips - 1:30 p.m., Mayfair Lanes.

#### AUDUBON

FRI. JAN. 21

&

SAT. JAN. 22

8:00 P.M. - Newcombe Auditorium

Dr. William J. Jahoda  
"Bermuda - Land and Sea"