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## VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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### THETIS BLOSSOM-HUNT

by Agnes Connor

"This is a soopalalie bush (*Shepherdia canadensis*). The Indians used the berries to make what we call Indian ice-cream." This was one of the first bits of information given to us when Mrs. Rosamund Pojar led us on our spring-flower hunt in Thetis Park, on March 26. The lush new spring growth needed Old Sol to help show itself to us in the fullness of its beauty, but, in spite of shade and occasional drizzle, enthusiasm waxed, all 17 of us enjoyed a rewarding morning. Mrs. Pojar, who teaches "Botany for Hikers and Campers" at Camosun College, Adult Education Division, has a great deal of botanical knowledge which she shared with us. Being a rank amateur in botany, I learned much - some of which I shall try to pass on correctly, I hope.

The trees had our first attention as we took the trail toward the sundial. We learned that the Douglas-fir is not a true fir because its cones hang down instead of pointing up as on the true firs; also that it is fire-resistant, a quality owned also by arbutus and Garry oak. We learned that the Grand fir is different from others in having uneven-length needles; that the holly is not native and tends to spread rapidly, so needs curbing.

### COVER:

ONE OF THE ORB-WEAVING SPIDERS, *ARANEA TRIFOLIUM*

By BERTHA MCHAFFIE-GOW

We admired the beautiful lichens which were extending tendrils to the fullest - they liked the moisture in the air and were busy soaking it up, all the while looking rather like silver-gray baby octopi. We were told they do not harm the trees as their nourishment is taken from the air.

The Indian plum, or osoberry, was hanging its upside-down cones of white blossoms, some staminate, others pistillate. The fruit is not often seen in its ripe purple because the birds eat it before maturity.

The red alders bore catkins. On the ground, Mrs. Pojar found broken branches of it showing brilliant orange-red colour. She told us the Indians obtained their red dye from it.

We learned to distinguish the two varieties of Oregon grape - the short one has two sharply visible veins, one on each side of the mid-rib; the tall variety does not show these.

On the forest floor were licorice fern, sword-fern, gold-backed fern, and many mosses. One moss, the name of which eludes me, showed the male as a flower-shaped tuft. To me the most attractive was the steppe moss with its lush growth of slightly-brownish plumes an inch or more in length.

The flowers that we found as we climbed the hill included shooting stars, spring gold, Easter lilies (dog-tooth violets), beautiful cerise-coloured satin-flowers, clumps of early saxifrage, tiny geranium philarea, wee blue collinsia, montia (blue-eyed Mary?). There was also mescanella oregana, a tiny white poppy - one needed the magnifying glass to see the poppy-like structure.

Other flowers were sea-blush, buttercup, fringe-cup. Nearer the sundial we found false box in bloom, its four-petalled, maroon-red flowers contrasting with glossy green foliage. Little flies were busy pollinating them.

We had seen several small patches of the two-inch high whitlow-grass, but near the top of the hill it was mingled with a taller variety of the same species. When tested, the latter tasted like cress.

On the side of a log, we found "British Soldiers" - lichens (clodonia) standing out horizontally from the log and sporting red "busbies". Farther along on the rocks we found white "parasols" one to two-inches high. To me they looked like especially beautiful white fungi, but we were told they were fruiting structures of a basidio lichen.

On our way back on the other side of the lake we found red huckleberry bushes decked with beautiful tiny red leaf-buds. The striking magenta-coloured blossoms of salmonberry mingled with the remains of ocean-spray tops from last year. The ninebark was not yet leafing. We saw promise of future delights in the buds of fairy slipper and rein orchid.

In the water, near the bridge, we saw water parsnip and on the banks, the snowy beauty of trilliums against their three-leaved dark green background. Along the edges of the lake the golden-yellow glow of the yellow arum lily (skunk cabbage).

An added bonus for cooks was the information that an equal mixture of salal and Oregon grape berries gives a delicious product when used for jelly-making.

It was a morning to remember for all, thanks to Mrs. Pojar and Mother Nature, so bountiful in our area.

## NATURE "ON THE ROCKS"

by J.L. Rimmington

We were conducted on this trip by Dr. R.A. Brown who, to put it mildly, did some exceptionally fine guiding.

Our first stop was Holland Point near the duck pond on Dallas Road. Dr. Brown pointed out that this southern part of Vancouver Island has had a turbulent



past. About 200 million years ago, in the Triassic Era, a large part was flooded with basalt lava like Hawaii today. As the lava melted its way from below, it took chunks of the overlying rocks with it. Subsequent flows from the same subterranean basin, but somewhat changed in character, then melted their way through the solidified lava and repeated the performance, but one can tell by its lighter colour the new lava from the earlier black basalt. This is why they are referred to generally as the Vancouver Volcanics. Last phase of all, a burst of very liquid lava, forced its way upwards and filled and expanded the existing cracks.

Then Dr. Brown led us to Cordova Bay to see more of his "pet rocks", passing the oldest rocks exposed in the area at the Quadra overpass. Space forbids describing the interesting items Dr. Brown indicated. My interest was captured by a big chunk of limestone as big as a cottage which had been engulfed by the rising lava. It is the only piece of its kind around that area, although there are beds hundreds of feet thick not too far away. Where did the rest of the limestone go?

Our next stop was a large gravel pit nearby. The gravel, scraped and carried southwards by glaciers from many miles away to the north, was spread out on the sea floor by the outwash streams rushing from the front of the melting glacier. Experts estimate the gravels are considerably older than those at the Colwood pit. As the rivers weakened, only sand was carried so we have beds of sand at the top.

Dr. Brown jokingly explained that the old-fashioned "attacks of the gravel" were of physiological and not physiological origin.

Around noon, we had lunch and took our drinks "on the rocks" at the top of John Deane Park. The rocks of the Park are granitic and it appears that this particular lava stayed below the surface in a huge pool and cooled there. Subsequent upheaval and erosion has left the harder rock of the Park sticking up like a boil over the neighbouring district.

In spite of the blustery rain-spattered weather, the party kept on and made visits to Land's End and Moses Point where entirely different types of rocks were exposed along the beach, consisting not of volcanic rocks but consolidated marine sediments of seams of sands, shale, conglomerate, and even thin seams of coal. The beds have been tipped topsy turvy by subsequent earth movements and are now nearly vertical. Conditions must have varied considerably over the millions of years these sediments of the "Nanaimo Group" were laid down. They were the youngest rocks we saw, being about the same age as "the white cliffs of Dover".

A vigorous search along the beach revealed many shells of clams, mussels, oysters and limpets washed by the tide, but a thrill was finding some fine specimens of fossil clams (lamellibranchs) in some of the fissile sandstone, but about 150 million years too old to serve any culinary purpose.

#### A SPECIAL BIRD

*by Ruth Dickson*

Cowichan Bay was the area chosen for an ornithology outing March 19 with Ron Satterfield as the leader. We discovered that one hour should be allowed for the drive from Victoria. More than 20 people gathered at the Robert Service Memorial, where there is adequate parking space.

Walking back along the road from the Memorial we followed a path beside a field. In the distance Ron pointed out Trumpeter Swans. He had heard them earlier in the day, although they did not perform for us. Green-winged Teal appeared and off on a hummock, we saw a pair of Canada Geese apparently searching for a nesting site. En route back to the cars, we saw flickers and Brewer's Blackbirds.

We then travelled about a mile back along the road to a wharf and log boom, where our leader hoped to surprise us with a rare bird. Soon we were delighted to view a Yellow-billed Loon, clearly visible beyond the pilings but keeping at a discreet distance. Common Loons and Red-throated Loons were

also in evidence. Several kingfishers cried greetings to us from people-watching posts nearby. A number of Common Mergansers, Buffleheads, Goldeneyes, and Double-crested Cormorants shared this spot, and all four grebes were seen - Red-necked, Eared, Horned, and Western.

Well satisfied with our birds so far, we again took to the cars and drove to the lumber road leading to the C.N. loading docks. There we found Canada Geese, beautiful Pintails, busy Shovelers, many coots and Lesser Scaup. Short-eared Owls were flying about near the dikes so we walked along the ridge trying to obtain a closer view of them. We were not successful but decided it was a "thrill" to see owls at all. Lunch was enjoyed near the dikes and we saw a Bald Eagle during the break.

Amongst the shrubs and trees near this area were Song Sparrows; chickadees, juncos, more flickers, Purple Finches, and one Varied Thrush.

Two Violet-green Swallows and one Tree Swallow made their appearance. Bewick's Winter Wrens were seen and heard, and the Red-winged Blackbird as well as the Brewer's. The only shore birds noted were heron and a Kill-deer.

Proceeding to the Holding Ponds, we found a Green-winged Teal, one Ruddy Duck, four Wood Ducks, scaup, coot and shovelers. A dead Kittiwake, picked up as we left the Ponds, will be taken to the Provincial Museum.

At Lake Somenos, our last stop, we found Whistling Swans, three Mute Swans, 20-30 Ring-necked Ducks, heron, Common Mergansers, Canada Geese, Pintails, Buffleheads, and one immature Trumpeter who appeared to be making his way towards town on his own.

Ron Satterfield gave us a most interesting day, which we all enjoyed immensely. We arrived home about four o'clock, pleasantly tired and happy.

#### PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE BY-LAWS

*by Eric Counsell*

In the past few years, the running of the Society has become a really big job. This is the result of several factors. The Society has grown and now has a

membership of well over 500. This increase is, of course, very gratifying, but it adds to the administrative work-load and it demands that we continue to improve and expand our programmes, so as to retain the interest of our present members and keep on attracting new ones. The Nehring inheritance has been an inestimable boon to the Society; but Mr. Nehring's generosity demands of us that we invest the funds he gave us wisely and profitably, manage them efficiently, and use them in the best way to promote the objects of the Society, as defined in the Constitution. This requires close attention on the part of your Officers and Directors, and involves, among other things, the careful consideration of pleas for help from other nature societies. Finally, the greater public interest in nature and the environment and the spread of movements to save wild life, such as the whale and the peregrine falcon, or environments, such as Panama Flats and Quick's Bottom, are resulting in a spate of protest meetings, at which it is desirable that the Society should be represented by a spokesman, if possible.

To spread the work-load of administering the Society's affairs and so lighten the burden, your Directors feel that it would make it easier for them, if their number were increased from 10 to 12, and if they had the power to appoint from their own number additional officers, such as, for example, a Second Vice-President or a Corresponding Secretary. Accordingly, an Extraordinary Resolution will be presented to the members at the Annual General Meeting on Tuesday May 31, to amend Article 2.03 of the By-Laws of the Society as follows:

1. At the end of Sub-Section (a) change "and five other Directors" to "and seven other Directors".
2. Add new Sub-Section (d):

"The Board of Directors may appoint from their own number additional Officers, who shall not be members of the Executive, as defined in Article 2.02."

## K I D S C O U N T R Y

THE WEST COAST TRAIL  
(conclusion)

by Brenda Curran

An hour-and-a-half and 4 miles later, we found our camping spot at Hitchie Creek. Nancy had strong arms and had no trouble paddling here, but she was still very sick. This was a nice place with lots of tent room. A few of us explored a bit of the creek and Cindy and I tried to go swimming in the Lake. After dunking in the icy water, we got out.

The next day was our last and we had a lot to do. We broke camp at 7:00 and canoed the rest of the Lake to a swampy trail which we would have to carry our packs across. We didn't tie our packs in the canoes at the creek in case they overturned, which was very likely.

Nancy stayed at Nitinat Lake, where the trail ended because she wasn't well enough to do the lining. On our return, it continued raining. The lining was tough but at least the rain didn't bother us (we were getting in and out of the icy water continuously anyway). Since I was the shortest person in our group, I was up to my neck in the rapids in some places.

By the time we reached Nitinat Lake two and a half hours later, we were all soaked and cold. The last part of our trip was to simply paddle three miles to Knobb Point where the other group had driven the previous night. Nitinat is a 30-mile long salt-water lake. In it we saw starfish and a harbour seal.

When we finally arrived at the others' camping place, they gave us "canoe relief" while we rested and drank their hot orange juice. We were going home now. By the time we arrived at school, the Grade 10's Graduation Dinner had already begun. Our West Coast grads looked great.

## BIRD REPORTS

by Michael G. Shepard

Few bird sightings for the Victoria area were received for month of March. It appears that migrants were generally on schedule, with Yellow-rumped Warblers and Turkey Vultures reported mid-month at several Vancouver Island localities and north to Cortes Island.

Huge concentrations of sea ducks gathered at herring spawning areas. On March 25, a Provincial Museum crew censused Ganges Harbour, the vicinity of Dodd Narrows, and Nanoose Bay, tallying 6200 Western Grebes, 9600 Greater Scaup, 1600 Oldsquaw, 800 White-winged Scoters, and 8200 Surf Scoters. Perhaps a field trip could be arranged next year to visit some of these places.

Please send any observations for April to July to me at the Birds and Mammals Division, B.C. Provincial Museum, Victoria, V8V 1X4 by August 7, 1977.

Good birding this summer!

SUMMER TRIPS - THE DETAILS

The summer programme, on the following pages, gives the bare essentials of the Society's summer activities this year; what follows here are the details you'll need to know to get in on some of the more ambitious outings.

MIRACLE BEACH (MAY 13-15)

- a two-day camp-out for those with a camping bent; for those who prefer more substantial accommodation, several motels are available in the area -- among them:



Oyster River Resort,  
R.R. 1, Campbell River,  
V9W 3S4 (337-5170)

Saratoga Beach & Trailer Park,  
R.R. 1, Campbell River,  
V9W 3S4 (337-5511)

Miracle Beach Resort,  
R.R. 1, Black Creek,  
VOR 1C0 (337-5171)

The Breakers Resort,  
Saratoga Beach,  
R.R. 1, Campbell River,  
V9W 3S4 (337-5411)

Pacific Playground Ltd.,  
Saratoga Beach,  
R.R. 1, Campbell River,  
V9W 3S4 (337-5600)

and many others.

This outing will feature birding, botanizing, beach-combing, and possibly even a little owl-calling; there'll be something for everybody. For more information, call Alf Porcher (477-7777).

#### BOTANICAL BEACH (JUNE 4-5)

While this is planned as a two-day outing, arrangements have been made so that those wishing to take part on only one day can do so by meeting at the Government Wharf at Port Renfrew at the time prescribed for the day they plan to attend. It is about a 3-hour drive from Victoria to Port Renfrew.

Camping facilities are available at Fairy Lake (B.C. Forest Products) and two motels are listed for Port Renfrew:

Renfrew Beach Motel  
Port Renfrew,  
VOS 1K0 (647-5437)

Elliott's Cabins  
address as above  
(647-5405)

Bring the whole family!

For more information, phone Alex Peden (office: 387-6515; residence: 652-3598).

#### HURRICANE RIDGE (JULY 17)

This trip is planned to see the spring flowers, but birds and mammals will be an added bonus. Breakfast will be available on the ferry and some food service is available at the Ridge, but it would be wise to take along a lunch.

A 45-passenger bus is being laid-on and the cost (including transportation and ferry fare) will be about \$14.00 per person. Reservations are required and should be made by June 30. Tickets should also be purchased by that date. Phone one of the following to make your arrangements:

Up to June 8 - Bertha Gow (595-5529)

After June 8 - either Vera Guernsey (598-4968)  
or Dorothy McCann (592-1992)

#### S U M M E R P R O G R A M M E

- SUN. MAY 1      ORNITHOLOGY - SPECTACLE LAKE FOR MIGRANTS. Bring lunch. Meet Mayfair Lanes Parking Lot, 7:30 a.m. or at Spectacle Lake at 8:00 a.m. Leader: Tim Murphy (385-5357).
- SAT. MAY 7      MARINE BIOLOGY - WHIFFEN SPIT. Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:30 a.m. or Whiffen Spit 10:30 a.m. Bring lunch. Leader: Alex Peden (0-387-6515), (R-652-3598).
- SUN. MAY 8      BOTANY - COWICHAN LAKE. Meet Mayfair Lanes, 8:30 a.m. or Honeymoon Bay, Wildflower Reserve, 10:00 a.m. Bring lunch. Leader: Nancy Turner (384-5568).

- FRI., SAT. & SUN. MAY 13-15 A FAMILY AFFAIR - MIRACLE BEACH  
Meet at Miracle Beach Nature House, 9:00 p.m., Friday May 13, or 9:00 a.m. Saturday, May 14.  
Leader: Alf Porcher (477-7777). See page p. 118 & 119 for more details.
- SAT. MAY 28 ENTOMOLOGY - UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA  
Meet at Cunningham Building (Biology) at 9:00 a.m. Short field trip followed by lab session, ending at 1:00 p.m.  
Leader: Dr. R. A. Ring (0-477-6911, Local. 4741) (R-656-2246).
- TUES. MAY 31 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - NEWCOMBE AUDITORIUM - 8:00 P.M. A business meeting followed by a social hour and refreshments.
- WED. JUNE 1 INSECTS AND TREE DISEASES - FRANCIS PARK. Meet Mayfair Lanes, 1:00 p.m. or Francis Park, 1:30 p.m. Trip will take about 2 hours.  
Leader: Colin Wood (0-388-3811, loc. 215) (R-385-5313).
- SAT. & SUN. JUNE 4 & 5 A FAMILY AFFAIR - BOTANICAL BEACH  
Meet at Government Wharf, Port Renfrew at 7:30 a.m., Saturday June 4, or 8:30 a.m., Sunday June 5.  
Leader: Alex Peden (0-387-6515) (R-652-3598). See p. 119 for more details.
- SAT. JUNE 11 ORNITHOLOGY - SIDNEY ISLAND - Leave Sidney Wharf, 9:00 a.m. returning about 3:00 p.m. Bring lunch. Cost about \$4.00 per person. Phone Tim Murphy for reservations (385-5357).
- SAT. JUNE 25 BOTANY - ISLAND VIEW BEACH - Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:30 a.m. or Island View Beach, 10:00 a.m. Bring lunch.  
Leader: Terese Todd (479-2816).
- SUN. JULY 10 BOTANY - FRANCIS PARK - Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:30 a.m. or Francis Park, 10:00 a.m. Bring lunch.  
Leader: Jean McInnes.

SUN. JULY 17 A FAMILY AFFAIR - HURRICANE RIDGE - for flowers and birds. Meet at Government Employees Parking Lot east of the Executive House at 5:00 a.m. for the 6:00 a.m. ferry to Port Angeles. Returning by ferry at 5:15 p.m.  
Leader: C. A. Trotter (477-4365). See page 120 for more details.

SAT. AUG. 6 ORNITHOLOGY - COWICHAN BAY. Meet at Mayfair Lanes, 8:00 a.m. or at Robert Service Memorial at Cowichan Bay, at 9:00 a.m. Bring lunch.  
Leader: Tim Murphy (385-5357).

SAT. AUG. 20 FUNGI - GOLDSTREAM CAMPGROUND. Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:30 a.m. or Goldstream Campground, 10:00 a.m. Bring lunch.  
Leader: Dr. Al Funk (0-388-3811, loc. 155) (R-479-6546).

SUN. AUG. 28 ORNITHOLOGY - WITTY'S LAGOON. Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:00 a.m. or the new parking lot at Witty's (on Metchosin Road opposite the clubhouse of the Metchosin Golf Course), at 9:30 a.m. Bring lunch.

#### JUNIORS AND INTERMEDIATES

SAT. MAY 7 FRANCIS PARK. Meet Mayfair Lanes, 1:30.  
Driver: Dr. Hambleton.

FRI., SAT. & SUN., MAY 13 & 15 & SAT. & SUN. JUNE 4 & 5 -  
(See Adult Programme)

SAT. JULY 9 JORDAN MEADOWS & KOKSILAH RIVER - Bring lunch, and swim suits. Leave Mayfair Lanes, 10:00 a.m.

SUN. JULY 17 (See Adult Programme)

SAT. AUG. 6 EAST SOOKE PARK - A FAMILY PICNIC and NATURE HIKE. Bring lunch. Meet Mayfair Lanes, 10:00 a.m.

Watch for Future Announcements of  
An Archaeology Field Trip for Intermediates and  
A Two-Day Camp-out for Juniors