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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1747, Victoria, B.C. V8W 2Y1

All correspondence, including membership applications and renewals, should be sent to this address.

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Juniors - \$2.50 Golden Age Single - \$4.00 Regular Single - \$5.00

Family (Golden Age or Regular) - \$7.50 Sustaining - \$25.00

Junior Membership is restricted to those not under 8 years and not over 18 years.

The financial year is May 1 to April 30. New members joining after Jan. 1 - half-dues.

Rare Bird Alert 383-0211

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A REWARDING DAY

by Betty Lothian

Saturday, 24th September, began as a rather dark and damp morning, but 38 birders turned out under the leadership of Doug Turnbull, and as the weather cleared up, 61 species of birds were seen and listed.

The "regulars" were pleased to welcome several newcomers and look forward to seeing them again.

Birds were plentiful. Beyond the usual herons, osprey, oystercatchers, yellowlegs, coot and ducks, (including Pintail and Greenwing teal) there were Western, Red-necked and Horned Grebes, and handsome Common and Red-throated Loons. Also 5 Water Pipits.

Exciting sightings were of Semi-palmated and American Golden Plover among the common Blackbellied; Two Ruddy Turnstones with the Black ones, and an immature Horned Lark. This was when the 'scope was really appreciated.

With the Glaucus-winged, Mew, California and Bonaparte's Gulls were about half a dozen Heermann's, easily identified as a dark gull with a red bill. The terns let everyone know that fishing was good on the incoming tide, and it was fascinating to watch them as we enjoyed our lunch. After a quiet, grey morning, when the reflections caused a discussion as to the actual number of grebes in a group, the warm sunshine was very welcome.

COVER

MIGRATING SNOW GEESE

by Bertha McHaffie-Gow

In the afternoon, we walked over the park at Fort Rodd and saw a flock of Yellow-rumped Warblers disappear among the leaves of a big poplar tree. A Redtail Hawk flew over as we went out to the Fisgard Lighthouse, where we watched a jaeger do his (or her) utmost to deprive a tern of its rightful catch, and then be chased off by an angry gull.

Flocks of Pigeon Guillemots and Murres were swimming and diving out in the open water.

A sighting of 18 Turkey Vultures going west was interesting in view of the check-up on them which is going on here just now.

A pale yellow butterfly puzzled some people, but on looking it up, was discovered to be an autumn phase of the Cabbage Butterfly. (*Pieris napi napi*)

Nine deer, grey squirrels and a Harbour Seal all helped toward making this a very delightful and rewarding outing.

DO YOU KNOW

... That the V.N.H.S. owns a library for reference? Phone Librarian A.R. Davidson if you wish to borrow a book. Other similar societies exchange newsletters with our "Naturalist".

... What CASE stands for?

Citizens Association to Save the Environment, which has just formed an alliance with Bluepeace to work together on the issue of oil tanker traffic on the west coast. The Alliance also intends to act as co-ordinator for all those community groups and interested individuals wishing to make submissions to the community hearings.

If you are interested, please contact P. Moss at Room 420, 645 Fort Street, Victoria, Phone 386-7023.

CAMOUFLAGE

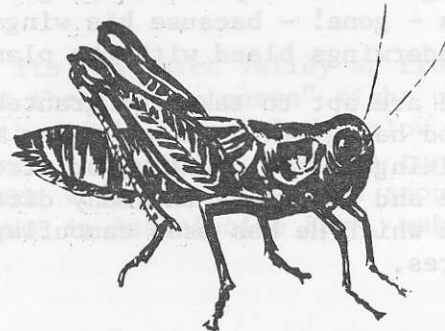
by Anne Knowles

Have you ever thought about the ways in which Nature protects her creatures by camouflage - really thought about it? It is incredible how every living thing can blend with its surroundings.

For instance, the tiny Tree Frog - when held in the hand, his green is so vivid that you wonder how he could possibly escape detection by his enemies. But put him back in the dull-appearing leaves and grasses where he belongs and he instantly disappears, his vivid green colouring now blending perfectly with his surroundings.

What about the snipe, that shy and elusive bird of wet fields and marshy areas? Once, when pond-watching, twenty feet from me was a mound of brown muddy earth with dead, broken bullrushes and bits of pond weed, dry and pale and crisp where it had been exposed for a long time; dark and damp-looking nearer the water. Looking casually at this mound, I found nothing of interest on it. I moved away to the far side of the pond, and with binoculars scanned the area I had just left, and there on my "dead" mound were three snipe! I came back to my previous lookout knowing now that the birds were there, but do you think I could see them? Finally, I saw a dark shining eye and so located them.

Another one of Nature's clever camouflage jobs is the coyote. In the summer, he is quite reddish in colour (usually), and blends with the rich summer hues. But when autumn comes, he starts getting his winter coat of grey.



One October day, I watched a coyote disappear into an area of fir and white birch, relatively clear of underbrush. While I watched, undetected, the coyote walked along, stopped, sat down, and looked out to the fields beyond. I looked away, then back again, and if I had not known he was there, I think I would have missed him. His patchy grey and brown back, reddish-tan legs and ears made him look like an old rotting log lying amongst the orange and yellow leaves of the birches which were scattered around him.

He then lay down in a slight depression, resting an injured paw. Again I left and came back, and thought for sure that he had gone, but then spotted him still lying quietly under the birches.

Even trotting across a stubble field in the early morning with every little stick and blade white with frost, one could easily miss this grey shadow.

Another animal that knows how to hide and is very wary, is the deer. Across an open pasture was a belt of heavy timber - thick cedar, fir, and giant Balm of Gilead. Through an opening in this dense growth was a stand of young Balm of Gilead about ten feet tall. There was a gentle breeze, and the large leaves were slowly moving. My father looked long at this young growth, then said "There is a young deer there - watch for a leaf that blows the wrong way." Sure enough, a Mule Deer was standing hidden in the trees, and only his large ears "blowing the wrong way" gave him away.

Even the lowly grasshopper is invisible until disturbed.

And think about the gaily-coloured butterfly, flitting erratically about the garden. When he settles - gone! - because his wings close, and the drab underwings blend with the plant he is on.

We are apt to take for granted this marvelous gift that God has given so many living things. Next time you are walking in the country, or strolling along a beach, observe and marvel at the many different and ingenious ways in which He has used camouflage to protect his creatures.

MOUNTAIN MAGIC - GROWING GOLD

By Kaye Suttill

Come Fall weather September, the annual alchemy around the Continental Divide transforms green needles into growing gold as high country slopes incandesce Alpine Larch.

This *Larix Lyallii* honours David Lyall, naturalist and surgeon, who came out from Scotland and botanised our West in the mid-to-19th century, particularly while serving with the International Boundary Commission.

The genus *LARIX* - of Western Larch and Eastern or Tamarack, as well as Alpine (Lyall's) - is our only native conifer which is also deciduous, shedding its needles after their autumn candle glow, and Alpine Larch is the smallest of these species, usually not more than 30 to 40 feet in height (although in specially favoured sites we have observed individuals 60 to 70 feet tall), and 1 to 2 feet in diameter.

Homing as it does, along with the Alpine Fir, higher up the mountains than any other tree, from around 6500 to 8000 feet, individuals dwarf as they struggle up into the harsh tundra.

Open stands of Lyall's Larch in Mt. Assiniboine Park are estimated to be 400 to 500 years old, and this five-century lifespan is likely for the Larch ancients in other areas in similar habitat. But there is a saying that old larches never die along the Divide, never rot at the base, they just keep standing, dark skeleton ancients, eventually "disappearing" from the top down. Their being up on the steep rocky slopes is important in controlling run-off and erosion, and their roots give nutrient to the partially parasitic Paintbrush - where Larch Alpine is, so are the flowers in profusion.

Alpine Larch has its own Larch Valley up from Moraine Lake, where it throngs "en masse" right up to isolated pioneers in the alpine zone close below Sentinel Pass. It homes in Paradise (Valley) too, and mirrors its hundreds to thousands selves around its namesake, Larix Lake in Assiniboine Park, making it a living gold bowl.

Mile beyond mile of wilderness glow with Larch candles south to Assiniboine and the Vermillion Range in Kootenay Park. It makes for gold-watching up slopes as you drive through Lake Louise area, and eats up film as fast as you can click, above Lake O'Hara, for Larch, like Garry Oak and Arbutus, is an unending no-two-alike portrait magnet, showing its larch fire most vibrantly in filtering sunlight, but cleanly bright in grey light, and unique in snow "fur" too.

David Lyall's Larch in Canada is mainly endemic close to the Continental Divide in Banff, Yoho and Kootenay Parks, although it does reappear in south-west B.C. around Cathedral Lakes and southern Manning Park. Its northern limit is the mountains just north of the Trans-Canada Highway, none in Jasper or Northern Banff Park. Yet Eastern Larch or Tamarack lives further north (in Labrador) than any other conifer. Why doesn't Alpine Larch home further north? Why does it seem to flourish along the Divide? Has it migrated into Canada from the South and its own travel time not yet enough to colonise beyond the latitude around the Trans-Canada Highway? Or is its northward limit more barriered by the icefield conditions there, which in the Wapta Icefield, reach within a few miles of the Highway - the proximity of the icefields could affect temperatures, and other specifics adverse to Alpine Larch life requirements.

Considering this Larch's habitat, it would seem to require the constant seepage of water; the snowmelt drainage; and "rock dust" in suspension to feed its roots. Sunlight, snowmelt's abundant moisture, soil chemistry and structure, the specific highlife conditions of the Divide in southern B.C./Alberta are the chosen home to Larix Lyallii, which also has little territorial competition from other arboreal species at such elevations, often occurring in pure stands. Its life adaptation and life programming seem to "BE" for the High Country of the southern Canada Continental Divide, Cathedral Lakes, and southern Manning Park.

Of all the mountain magic which gives forth Life today from those shallow seas hundreds of million years ago, most special to us is the alchemy which transforms furry soft green needles in August to September gold, and renews this life miracle for five hundred years, Larix Lyallii, David Lyall's larch.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE BY-LAWS

At the Annual Meeting of May 31, 1977, an amendment to Article 2.03 of the By-laws was approved, which increased the number of Directors, other than the Officers and the Past President of the Society, from five to seven. This increased the total number of Directors to twelve. Owing to my carelessness, Article 2.01, which states that the business of the Society shall be managed by a Board of ten (10) Directors, was not amended to reflect this increase. Accordingly, an Extraordinary Resolution will be presented to the members at the General Meeting on Tuesday, November 8, to amend Article 2.01 as follows:

Change "ten (10)" to "twelve (12)"

Signed ... ERIC M. COUNSELL, President

EDITORIAL

In the September issue, the date of the NOVEMBER MEETING was accidentally given as the 15th instead of the 8th, which is the second Tuesday in the month. Dr. John Harris will be speaking on the "Spruce Budworm Controversy in B.C.". An entomologist at the Pacific Research Station, Dr. Harris has been very active in the Outdoors Club, and Outdoors Unlittered.

The CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT will take place on SATURDAY, 17TH DECEMBER. Harry Davidson would be grateful to have volunteers for this; phone him at 479-1286. Gladys and Alf Porcher have very kindly offered to have the annual Get-Together for the Counters at their new home at 3823 Campus Crescent (last house in the road).

Do you want to know more about World Ecology? Athabasca University is running a course for self-instruction, for studying whenever and wherever you wish. This is for those interested in obtaining general understanding of this field of knowledge, and as the first course for those wishing to specialize in the subject. Further information from: Dept. C.2, Athabasca University, Box 10001, Edmonton, Alberta.

No.	Species	Date	Area Seen	Observer
2	Black Swift	1	McKenzie/Douglas	Peter Bricknell
1	Ruf. Hummingbird	2	Florence Lk. Rd.	Gwen Briggs
1	Black-throated Grey Warbler	"	" " " "	Tom Briggs
3	Sandhill Cranes	5	Oak Bay	Oliver Krohn
4	Piedbill Grebes (1 adult, 3 chicks)	9	Florence Lake	G.W. Calvert
18	Canvasback	"	Blenkinsop Lake	M.V. Goodwill
2	Golden Eagle	12	Goldstream	R. Satterfield
1	Lewis Woodpecker	13	Wm. Head Rd.	Mrs. J. Holt
1	Lapland Longspur	"	Vic. Golf Course	R. Satterfield
1	White Fr. Goose	"	" " " "	"
1	Sprague's Pipit	15	Cattle Point	Alf Porcher
9	Wood Duck	"	Matson Lake	Tom Briggs
10	Ev. Grosbeaks	"	Penrhyn Street	R. McK-Grieve
1	Ruber Sapsucker	17	979 Cardwood	Mrs. W.D. Benton
38	Sanderling	22	Island View Beach	R. Satterfield
1	Marsh Hawk	"	Swan Lake	"
2	Ruddy Duck	"	Beaver Lake	"
1	Swainson's Hawk	"	Mt. Newton X Rd.	"
3	Ringneck Duck	"	Swan Lake	"
1	Am. Golden Plover	24	Esquimalt Lagoon	VNHS Bird Group
2	Ruddy Turnstone	"	Esquimalt Lagoon	VNHS Bird Group
1	Osprey	"	" " "	" " "
1	Semi-pal. Plover	"	" " "	" " "
1	Green Heron	25	Quick's Bottom	Doug Turnbull
1	Pectoral Sandpiper	"	" " "	Eric Counsell
2	Baird's Sandpiper	26	Clover Point	R. Satterfield
50	Water Pipits	27	Quick's Bottom	Tuesday Group
1	Common Snipe	"	" " "	" " "
1	Bl. Cr. Night Heron	28	Vic. Golf Course	R. Satterfield
1	Short-eared Owl	"	" " " "	Mike Shepard
11	Horned Larks	"	Cattle Point	R. McK-Grieve
1	Redhead	"	Swan Lake	R. Satterfield
75	Bandtail Pigeons	"	Langford	Mrs. R.H. Young
1	Sharptail S'Piper	"	Martindale	R. Satterfield
1	Swainson's Thrush	29	Vic. Golf Course	Tim Murphy
1	W. Meadowlark	30	Saanich	Mrs. W.D. Benton
1	Sora Rail	"	Swan Lake	R. McK-Grieve
1	Townsend Warbler	"	Fort Rodd Hill	"

THE SAMUEL SIMCO BURSARIES

Two bursaries of \$400 each have now been established at the University of Victoria in memory of the late Samuel Simco, who died last November and generously bequeathed to the Society \$10,000 "for exclusive use as scholarship funds". The terms on which the bursaries are to be awarded are set out in this description of them, which will appear in the 1978-79 Calendar of the University of Victoria.

"Two Samuel Simco Bursaries of \$400 each, established by the Victoria Natural History Society out of funds bequeathed for this purpose by the late Mr. Samuel Simco, will be awarded annually by the Society on the recommendation of the Department of Biology and with the approval of the Senate Committee on Awards to students entering the third or fourth year of an undergraduate programme in a field of Natural History or any year of a graduate programme in the same area of study, who have good academic standing and are in financial need. If the circumstances warrant, a recipient may receive an award for two successive years."

Although the description does not so state, the term "Natural History" is to be interpreted to mean "field biology", that is, Botany, Zoology, Ornithology, Marine Biology, Ecology, and the like, and to exclude sciences, such as Molecular Biology and Biochemistry, the study of which is more restricted to the laboratory.

The Samuel Simco Bursaries bring to four the number of awards set up by the Society to encourage the study of biology at the University of Victoria, the others being the Freeman F. King and the Victoria Natural History Scholarships. The latter will also benefit from Samuel Simco's generosity and keen interest in the natural sciences, for the balance of the income from the Simco Scholarship Fund is to be used to increase the value of this award to at least \$300.

BOOK REVIEWBy *Reita Sparling*

Pride in our own area takes various forms. One is a publication called "SEARCH", with a reverse sub-title "Pacific Search". It is published 10 times a year, monthly, except January and August, by Pacific Search Press in Seattle.

There are several departments which are in each issue - letters, book reviews, tidal information (some of which is relative to Vancouver Island waters), and what is called "Calendar". To that, someone in British Columbia sends information, such as our museums, and addresses for tours in B.C.

In the U.S. part there is a great deal about Alaska, Washington, and Oregon. For example, in the September copy, the dates are given for a Mycological foray sponsored by a Puget Sound society, giving fees, dates, etc.

Then there are well-written and well-illustrated articles on many subjects. In the June number is one about "The Birth of a Dragon" (fly) with remarkable pictures. Another, also with coloured pictures, is "Lake O'Hara, Hiker's Paradise". And, to mention one more, is about fishing, "The Magic of Local Knowledge".

In the July/August number, the marmot gets high billing, also "Summer in Alpine Meadows", and an article about blackbirds. One about Canada is "Saving the Farms of British Columbia", written by Daniel Jack Chassen.

In September "Search", an article about foggy Pacific weather begins with a quotation from Mark Twain. He was speaking to a gathering in Tacoma, (long ago, of course). "Your climate is wonderful", pause - "but it is out of sight."

There have been a number of articles about fungus, and they, too, are well illustrated. In fact, the pictures each month are a highlight.

My enthusiasm is apparent, I hope! The address is Pacific Search Press, 715 Harrison Street, Seattle, Wash., 98109. \$9.95 per year or \$18.00 for two years.

QUICK'S PONDby *A.R. Davidson*

Just a little way beyond Royal Oak on the West Saanich Road, there is an area of swamp, of no use to developers, or even the farmers who owned it, so over the years it has remained as nature designed it. This is part of the Colquitz Creek watershed.

In extent it covers about twenty acres, composed of grasses, reeds and flowering plants, with no trees or shrubs, making it an ideal natural bird sanctuary. It floods every winter and is one of our favourite places for viewing the different species of waterfowl.

The Municipality of Saanich purchased most of the surrounding land, and there is every reason to expect that this unique swamp will remain as it is for many years. It is unique in that I do not know of any other like it on the Saanich Peninsula. A permanent pool has been dug on the northern edge, the excavated peat being used to help create an excellent municipal nursery, and this is good as it will mean that more diving ducks will use the pond.

The swamp never dries out in summer so the teal, mallards, pied-bill grebe, coot and some shore birds find this an ideal nesting place.

There is an entrance on Markham Road and the Council has made a good path down to and along the border of the swamp and we are assured that the public are welcome at all times.

To those planners of Saanich who co-operate so heartily with our Society in securing the future of this Quick's Bottom, we are very grateful.

Since the above was written, a threat to the swamp has appeared in the form of a lawsuit by a farmer, who is complaining that the rising water of the swamp is flooding his farmland.

It has been suggested that members of our Society and all those interested in conservation, should visit the park regularly. It is always worth a visit, and soon waterfowl of many species will be present there.

JUNIORS ... TAKE NOTE*HEAR YE' HEAR YE'*

THE JUNIOR BRANCH of the Victoria Natural History Society is embarking on a new adventure.

COME AND JOIN US and bring a friend (or two) at the Provincial Museum - Room 112 - on WEDNESDAYS after school from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m., starting November 2nd.

THIS IS THE START of an exciting NEW program of nature photography, archaeology, astronomy, ornithology (bird-life), entomology (insect-life), anthropology (people), marine biology, meteorology (weather), and much, much more.

Experts in these fields will lead field trips, and give us the low-down on these subjects.

SEE YOU THERE.

Gail Mitchell, 477-9248

Nancy Turner, 384-5568

THAT'S NATURE FOR YOU!

by Vera Guernsey

As I was looking out of the kitchen window one rainy day, I saw two baby raccoons sitting on the fence. The water was dripping from the eaves above, and they were sitting up and washing their hands.

As I watched, three more raccoons came out from under a shrub in a corner of the garden, and joined them, and they all had quite a rough and tumble game on the lawn.

I live on Byng Street, an old residential area, but it would seem that raccoons - and there are plenty of them in Victoria - have learned to live their own life among us, and even benefit from being our neighbours.

ADULT PROGRAM FOR NOVEMBER

- TUES. NOV. 8 GENERAL MEETING. Speaker: Dr. John Harris
"The Spruce Budworm Controversy in B.C."
- FRI. NOV. 11 AUDUBON FILM. Norm Wakemen.
- SAT. NOV. 12 "Palm Springs to Lake Louise".
- SAT. NOV. 12 ISLAND VIEW BEACH. Ornithology. Leader:
Ron Satterfield. Meet Mayfair Lanes
9:00 a.m. or Island View Beach, 9:30.
Bring lunch.
- SAT. NOV. 12 LOW TIDE. Ten Mile Point. Leader: Alex
Peden. Meet Mayfair Lanes, 8:30 P.M.
Warm clothing, rubber boots, flashlights.
- SUN. NOV. 27 SWAN LAKE. Ornithology. Leader: Tim
Murphy. Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:00 a.m.
HALF DAY.

JUNIOR PROGRAM

- WED. NOV. 2 Room 112, Provincial Museum, 4:00 to 5:00
Archaeology with Don Abbott.
- SAT. NOV. 5 Archaeology Field Trip. Time and meeting
place available on Nov. 2nd, or contact
Gail Mitchell (477-9248).
- WED. NOV. 9 A tour of the Provincial Museum Native
Plant Garden with Kathy Cowan and Chris
Brayshaw. 4:00 to 5:00. Meet Room 112
in Museum.
- WED. NOV. 16 Room 112 - 4:00 to 5:00. Marine Biology
with Alex Peden.
- SAT. NOV. 19 Marine Biology Field Trip. Time and
meeting place available at the Wednesday
meeting.
- WED. NOV. 23 Room 112 ... 4:00 to 5:00. Ethnology -
Indian Life, with Peter McNeer.
- WED. NOV. 30 Room 112 - 4:00 to 5:00. "Birds and the
Christmas Bird Count", with Michael
Shepard.
- SAT. DEC. 3 Bird Field Trip. Time and meeting place
will be announced later.