

# *The* **VICTORIA NATURALIST**

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West Coast Indian fish-trap.

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Indian Fish-traps

The Indians of the British Columbia coast were acute observers of the habits of the fish that abound here, and developed a great variety of ingenious traps to catch them. The basic idea of all the traps was the same: make it easy for the fish to get in, but next to impossible for them to get out. Most of their fish traps were wooden open-work boxes placed in streams, usually in conjunction with weirs or stone dams which directed the fish into the trap. Once in, the fish were unable to find an exit, or found themselves in long narrow "baskets" in which they couldn't turn around. Other traps were simply stone dams constructed in tidal river-mouths, diverting the fish bound upstream into side pools which were cut off from the river by the fall of the tide.

The fish-trap pictured on the cover is of still another type, which was often used among the Kwakiutl for catching perch. A box-like structure made of sticks, it is placed on the beach just above low-water mark and weighted down with stones. On the beach side are two narrow vertical entrances, formed by sharpened sticks converging inward from the sides until they almost meet. Herring-roe was put inside as bait. The fish entered the trap, then found their exit blocked by the sharp sticks, and were left high and dry when the tide went out.

W. D.

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Gow Parsnip (Heracleum lanatum Mich.) Mr. J.O. Clay brought a specimen of this plant to the editor one Sunday evening and, extending beyond either end of his car, it looked more like a small tree than a herb. It measured 9 ft. 3 in. in length and 2 in. in diameter at the base of the stem.

The basal leaflets were 45 inches across and the central 30 inches long. This was one of a group of Cow Parsnips, growing on rough ground at 169 Beach Drive, all of almost equal stature.

#### OCTOBER MEETING

Because of a conflict of dates with the Audubon Screen Tours the October general meeting was not held until the third Tuesday of the month. A satisfactory number of members and visitors were present and the meeting was called to order on time by Mrs. Hobson the President. Mr. Taylor read the minutes of the September meeting, substituting for Mrs. Bland whom we were all sorry to hear was ill.

An exceptionally large number of specimens were exhibited including a number of fossils by Mr. Whitehouse, a collection of fungi by Mrs. Hobson and odd bones, shells, moths, and plants by other members. A perfect specimen of Golden-crowned Kinglet that had been picked up dead earlier in the day was exhibited by one member. Mr. Clay displayed two very large cones of Sugar Pine which he had collected while in California last summer. He also brought an illustration from the "Calgary Herald" of an eagle of tremendous wing spread which had been shot by some so-called sportsman. This illustration was the basis for a protest, voiced by Col. Woodward, against the publication of pictures of slaughtered animals and the parading around the streets of, game animals tied across the bonnets of cars as though the killer had done something he should be acclaimed for. A resolution was passed unanimously instructing the president to write or have written a letter of protest to the local press and to the "Calgary Herald" asking them to discontinue publishing the type of illustration that glorifies the killing of animals.

W. T.

#### BIRD GROUP FIELD TRIP TO WHITTY'S LAGOON

September 30th: On a warm, clear Saturday afternoon 28 members drove out for a few very enjoyable hours of bird study at Whitty's Lagoon.

A representative number of species were seen of which four were birds of prey and seven were waders. Eighteen species were counted. A guest of the afternoon was Mrs. J.W. Kelly, lecturer, of Alameda, California, whose knowledge of birds is well known. The tameness of the Dowitchers and and Pectoral Sandpipers interested her greatly as they allowed an approach of less than three feet, as they did in the same area last year.

J.O.C.

#### VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY HAS MOVING PICTURE PREMIERE

For a while it seemed that Dr. Clifford Carl would not be able to make his promised first showing of the latest Museum film on "Nature's Sea Creatures" at the Provincial Library on Tuesday night, but after a protracted struggle the caretaker persuaded the last of the lights to stay out and the "Premiere" proceeded on schedule. The picture itself was most certainly worth waiting to see, being quite up to the standard we have come to expect from such experts as the Audubon camera men. Dr. Carl's accompanying lecture was, as always, a model of clarity and understanding.

A good deal of the film was shot in the Tacoma Aquarium, and the exciting detail of movement and colour obtainable under those conditions should be a good argument for the establishment of the same kind of aid to marine biological study here in Victoria.

In his opening remarks Dr. Carl pointed out that while we in Victoria were three parts surrounded by sea the average citizen gave very little thought to that element in his surroundings, and was thereby passing up one of the greatest potential sources of enjoyment and enlightenment. Man's overwhelming preoccupation with the world's land mass, is probably understandable because he happens to live on that



small fraction that sticks out of the water but that is less than one third of the total. If that were all flattened out it would be  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles below the ocean surface. The immensity in size of the sea is only matched by the quantity and variety of the life contained in it. After seeing the film one could not question these remarks.

W. T.

### A DAY WITH THE BIRDS IN A SAANICH GARDEN

by G. A. Hardy

In the fall of the year bird enthusiasts look forward to the advent of migrants as a source of inspiration and as a change from the accustomed resident birds, no matter how interesting they may be.

The following notes refer to October 1st of this year and to birds seen in or from our garden on that date.

The most notable species was a Marsh Hawk, a female or juvenile, judging from the dark plumage, the conspicuous white rump showing plainly as it quartered the adjoining grassy fields and waste lands skimming low or soaring with easy grace over shed or wooded point. Backwards and forwards it glided wheeling hither and yon with an occasional fluttering check to examine a likely place more closely.

In no time at all every inch of the field seemed to have been effectively covered.

One of the chief attractions to birds is water, and we have found that our pools are the object of regular daily visits, especially during the dry season of the year. During the summer about 4 p.m. is one of the regular times of arrival. Before that period on the date in question, birds were not particularly noticeable about the pool, but punctually at 4 p.m. as we watched, as if by a preconcerted agreement, there was a rush of wings and soon the pool margin and neighbouring bushes were

covered with a varied flock of birds, milling about and jostling one another in a kaleidoscopic haze of wings, tails, flashes of colour and sprays of water for a sip and a bathe.

Among them were half a dozen robins, two flickers, a sprinkling of juncos and chickadees, several purple finches, a golden-crowned sparrow, a song-sparrow, a fox sparrow, a Steller's jay, two or three young goldfinches with smooth plumage of a dove grey colour set off by a lemon yellow throat and black-marked wings and tail, an Audubon's warbler, and a western flycatcher which can always be singled out in a flock from its habit of dipping into the water while in flight, then immediately going up to a nearby branch to shake and preen itself. Mixed with this heterogeneous assemblage a couple of red-breasted nuthatches added their lively actions and distinctive colour to the gay party. To complete the gathering a dozen or so house sparrows crowded in at one end vociferously proclaiming their unwanted attendance.

In about ten minutes the pool was free from bird visitors. They melted away into the woods and thickets as silently and as unobtrusively as they had arrived, the only evidence of their presence being a few feathers lightly floating on the surface of the pool and droplets of water glistening on the nearby herbage.

A total of 14 species of birds were thus seen within the space of about 10 minutes, among them one or two that are not readily recognized at this season of the year.

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN NOVEMBER

While November is a very interesting month for those interested in birds because of the arrival and departure of migrants, and the chance of spotting an unusual visitor, the botanist has to get out and hunt for the few plants that are flowering at this time of year. One aspect of our flora that is at its height in November is the abundance of fruits and berries that clothe many of our trees and shrubs. It is interesting on a nice clear day to take a walk through an outlying area and count how many different

species of trees and shrubs you see carrying fruits of one kind or another. Another little exercise in taxonomy is to see how many different species of wild rose you can identify from their fruits. There are still some plants in bloom if you know where to look for them. The rocky banks by the sea are still clothed with that pretty pink Wild Buckwheat or Knot Weed, (Polygonum spargulariaeforme Mein.) and closer to the ground and harder to see are the less showy Knot Weeds. (P. aviculare L.). Both the cosmopolitan invader and the native species (P. Nuttalli), grow flat to the ground with their stems bordered with tiny white and green flowers edged in pink. The last of the showy yellow and purple Compositae, Goldenrod and Aster, may still be showing belated heads of colour, but more interesting to look for are signs of the early spring plants which may be showing first stages of development. For instance along Lorne Terrace the earliest willow, Salix Scouleriana, is almost ready to bloom.

Those interested in fishes will be repaid by a visit to Goldstream during this month where salmon may be seen on their spawning migration. The greater proportion of the fish are Pinks or Dog Salmon but a certain number of Cohoes may also be seen. Large numbers of gulls and other scavengers will also be on hand to add interest to this annual event.

#### BIRD NEWS FROM PROVINCIAL MUSEUM FIELD NOTES, OCT.

C. J. Guiguet

The "hot spot" for bird watchers at the present time (late October) is the Saanich Peninsula. Provincial Museum observers have recorded many interesting species there in the past week. The more interesting records include the American Rough-legged Hawk (2), the black Pigeon Hawk (observed) and the Marsh Hawk (four). Marsh Owls are plentiful but must be flushed from the grass to be observed. Eight were seen in one field, and single birds are continually flushed when tall grass

fields are traversed.

Waders are plentiful, Black-bellied plover, Killdeer plover, Greater and Lesser Yellow-legs. Wilson snipe are especially numerous and observers who haven't seen them whispering (in flocks) may do so at the McHugh Valley.

Ducks and geese have been using the grain fields in large numbers during the past week. White-fronted geese are now passing through in number. Several hundred birds were observed in flight Wednesday at the McHugh Valley. Over one hundred Canada geese (B. C. canadensis not occidentalis) have been observed continually in the late afternoon feeding in the grain fields south of Elk Lake. This represents a large increase in this population of geese, which appear to be resident here. The original stock some half dozen birds were introduced at Elk Lake about seven years ago by Mr. Jones of the Game Department. The race canadensis normally occurs east of Vancouver Island.

Coot, Widgeon, Mallard, Pintail and Green-winged teal are very plentiful at Elk Lake and on flooded fields of the Saanich Peninsula. The coot, to date are confined to Elk Lake, having arrived in numbers some ten days ago. The evening flight of duck at the Chinese vegetable gardens in the McHugh Valley is well worth the trip out.

The best point of observation is at the Taylor Pond on Martindale road. Take the third road to the right after passing Elk Lake.

Sooty Shearwaters appeared in large numbers off the Sooke traps on September 17, and again off Trial Island on September 12. The appearance of these pelagic birds appears to be correlated with the occurrence of fog.

We have several records of these birds appearing in Oak Bay during the month of November in 1948. These were observed from Cattle Point, working the passage between there and the light.

#### Saw Whet Owl at Victoria:

Of interest to members of the bird group is the recent influx of Saw Whet Owls into Victoria.

Five adult birds were taken, three unharmed, between Saturday, October 14 and Thursday October 19. The bird taken Thursday was sent in from Sooke by Mrs. A. Simpson. Two of these birds are at present residing at the Provincial Museum office pending sunshine requisite for photography. They feed readily on live mice, sparing off the



framed quail mounts for a clean efficient kill, which is done by severing the skull from the vertebral column with the bill. Any small object dragged across the floor on thread will entice the birds to strike.

Subsequently these individuals on hand will be banded and released. It is hoped that the specimen at the S. P. C. A. and one at Mrs. Thomas Hart's home on Quadra St. will eventually be treated likewise.

While not considered a true migration, in that individuals are found throughout the range the year around, the erratic movement of populations of this species in the month of October have long been known and it is interesting to add other records of this phenomenon to the literature.

The Saw Whet Owl is silent during the greater part of the year. Almost completely nocturnal, it roosts by day in dense thickets and thus is seldom observed. It is indeed a rare pleasure to observe their feeding behavior.

C.J.G.

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#### BOTANY NOTES

Our first field trip out to Ten Mile Point on April 18th was favoured with good weather, good company, and good hunting. Even the "Princesses" and the R.C.N. appeared at the meeting place at 2 p.m. right on time, as were most of the botany group although one party managed to get lost and arrived "the long way around".

All the early spring flowers were growing in abundance along the rough open land behind the point. Back in the deep woods the sight of clumps of that loveliest of our orchids, Calypso bulbosa, was worth the whips and scratches necessary to penetrate to them.

The most pleasing feature of this field trip was a visit to Dr. H.T.Gussow's garden. Just to have visited the garden alone would have been a great pleasure but under the guidance of the owner it was an education. As Dominion Botanist Dr. Gussow was well known in most of the botanic gardens of the world and he has used these contacts to good advantage in obtaining seeds and plants to test their adaptability to local conditions. The

sight of these interesting plants was greatly enhanced by our host's explanation of their requirements, natural habitat and the hundred and one interesting comments he could make from his vast experience in the field of botany. Beside the lovely garden and view Dr. Gussow had more technical things to show us, the most interesting probably being his interspecies crosses in the genus Primula. We all hope to have an opportunity to observe the progress of this at a later date.

#### Third Field Trip June 3rd:

Mr. John Nutt took charge of the botany section's visit to the Provincial Forestry research plots in Mount Douglas Park. His demonstration of methods used to study rates of growth and yields of Douglas fir and explanations of the plant associations which indicate the value of the land for this crop. A random sample of trees is selected and marked with metal tabs; each year or at definite periods the girth and height are measured and the increase, if any, is computed. Health records and data regarding the optimum age for cutting are collected.

The area visited has been loaned to the Province by the city of Victoria, and has been under study now for about twenty years. With the exception of a few large old trees which survived a devastating fire in the early days of settlement, the present stand has become established within the last hundred years.

After answering the questions of his very interested audience Mr. Nutt entertained the members to tea at the Mount Douglas Tea Room.

Forty members enjoyed this hospitality; an extremely pleasant afternoon was concluded by a vote of appreciation proposed by Rev. Tom Taylor and most heartily endorsed by all those present.

W. T.

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#### EDITOR'S NOTES

Following a suggestion by our president, Mrs. Hobson, the notes on "What To Look For Next Month" will be a regular feature of the Naturalist and it is hoped that they will be instrumental in persuading small groups or

individual members of the Society to get out and really look at nature. Nothing that I know of will give the inner peace and tranquillity that the quiet contemplation of nature will, and goodness knows we need some escape these days from our man-made chaos.

Mr. Clay would like to announce that migration statistics will be collected and published from November onwards. Dates of spring, summer, fall and winter arrivals will be made from data collected by the members and other sources of information. Will members please write their observations on a postal card or letter and send it to Mr. J.O. Clay, 169 Beach, as soon as possible after the observation is made? Information that is not accurate and specific is of very little value for lists of this kind so please give species and variety if possible, number observed, date, time of observation and location i.e. Ten, Oregon Juncos, Ross Bay area, forenoon, Oct. 7th, 1950. Other information would be welcome such as duration of stay, feeding material, if any, and direction of passage but the first three items are essential.

We have the good news of twelve new members in one day from Mr. Adshead and the return of some older members including Col. and Mrs. E. Woodward who have always been so active and hard working in previous years.

The editor wonders if the opening of a question and answer column would increase the usefulness of The Naturalist to its readers. We are not hanging out our shingle as The Biology Orical but if any of our readers have questions in this field they have difficulty with we can probably contact the people who know the answers or can tell us where to find them.

If anyone missed the Walt Disney film "Beaver Valley" when it was in town they should keep their eyes open for its return. Besides being one of the best nature pictures yet produced commercially it has the best musical score we have heard for this type of picture and - wonder of wonders - the commentary is good. Those of you who saw the Audubon picture "Beneath Buckeye Skies" will recognize quite a number of the shots. Karl H. Maslowski was one of the Disney cameramen.


W. T.

# JUNIOR NATURALISTS' PAGE


Editor:  
Doreen Wilby

October 14: A short eared owl was shown.

It was found by Dr. Carl on a road with a bird it had killed. We also had a lecture on Butterflies - Moths; (Lepidoptera)

Butterflies (Rhoterocera)  Club-like antennae

Moths (Heterocera)  have different antennae

Head	---		) Characteristic of insects.
Thorax	---		
Abdomen	---		

On October 14th Dr. Carl found a short-eared owl which had been injured. This bird is a true marsh owl and is often seen in the dusk of the evening beating over the marshes in strong hawk-like flight. It is very useful in the destruction of rodents and insect pests. Most owls eat mammals (rats, mice and squirrels).

The Western Robin and other birds are migrating. Listen and watch for them. Our big, fat garden robins are receiving their visiting cousin robins from further north. These robins will go south and return about the first week of February to swarm on hawthorne and other berried trees. The robin's real cousin is the varied thrush. The English robin is a bit smaller than the sparrow and has a bright red breast like holly berries.

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If you wake up at night and hear a lot of honking it might not be motors -- it might be Canada geese in the bird traffic lanes in the sky.

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# NOTICE OF MEETINGS

- MONDAY      SECOND LECTURE AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR: Crystal  
Nov.6th:      Garden, 8 p.m. G. Harrison  
                 Orians, - "By Eries Changing Shores".
- TUESDAY      GENERAL MEETING, Reading Room, Provincial  
Nov.14:      Library, 8 p.m. "Parasitic Fungi" Illustrated  
                 lecture by Walter Jones, Dom.Plant Pathologist,  
                 Saanichton.
- TUESDAY      GEOLOGY SECTION, 8 p.m. Museum, Mr.J.H.Whitehouse  
Nov.21st:
- TUESDAY      BOTANY SECTION, 8 p.m. Museum, Rev. T. Taylor.  
Nov.28:      Study of Diatomes with the Aid of the Microscope.
- SATURDAY      BIRD GROUP FIELD TRIP, Clover Point to Shoal  
Dec.2nd:      Bay; Observation of Shore-Bird Migrants and  
                 Winter Residents. South Fairfield Bus to  
                 Dallas Road; 2 p.m. Cars will be available  
                 from Clover Point to Shoal Bay.

## NOTED ORNITHOLOGIST VISITS VICTORIA:

During the last days of September Mr. Clay had the pleasure of escorting Mrs. J. W. Kelly, well-known lecturer of Alameda, Cal., on a tour of this district to observe the local bird life.

Mrs. Kelly who is president of the Northern Section of The Cooper Club, which is the scientific ornithological society of the western U.S.A., was on her way to the annual convention of the American Ornithological Union (A.O.U.) at St.Paul, Minn.

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Mrs.A.H.Ford,2064 Hampshire Rd,had the following amusing incident related to her by a friend last spring: "As I was sitting in my truck on Cadboro Bay Rd. I noticed a crow flying head on towards me. It was obvious the poor begger was having trouble by the way he was laboring along,barely making headway.Just as he got near the truck I could see he was carrying a large white object in his feet - but he spotted me. His legs suddenly gave out and smack down onto the bonnet of my truck fell a large chicken's egg splattering in all directions. The poor crow flew into a nearby tree, cawing mournfully. He wanted that egg in the worst way but did not have the nerve to come and get it."



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To