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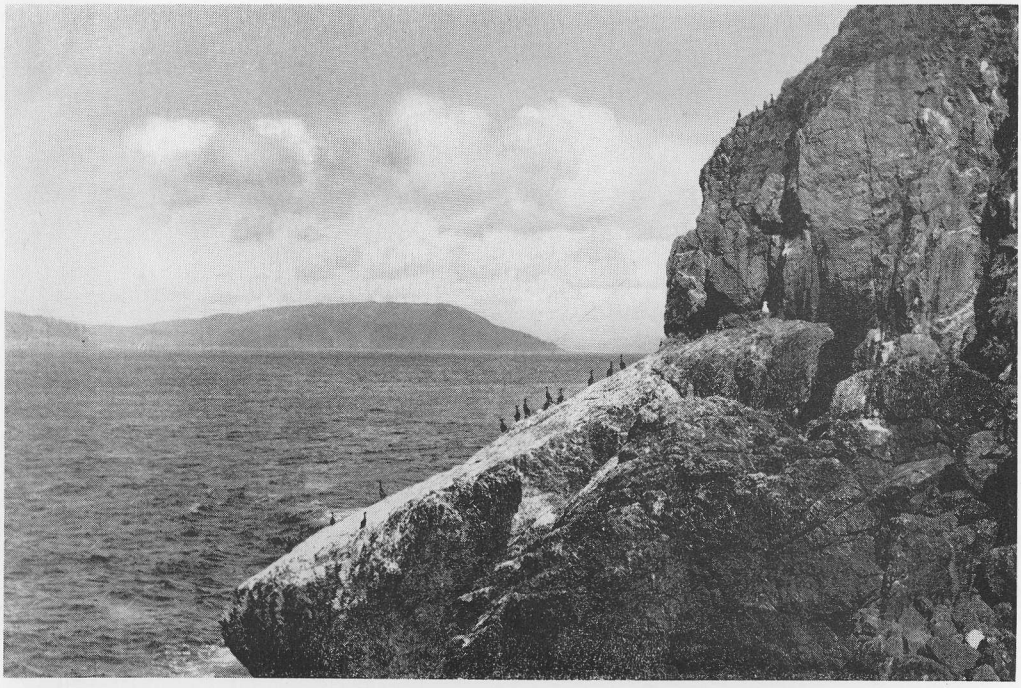

Pelagic cormorants, Beresford Island, Scott Island Group.

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## THE CHRISTMAS TREE

By Eric Druce,
Public Relations Officer, British Columbia Forest Service.

One of the minor industries dependent upon British Columbia's forest resource has just passed the peak of activity for the current year. It is an industry that is becoming increasingly important in the localized areas where it is followed and with great regularity is the target of vigorous criticism from areas outside the circle of activity. The industry in question is, of course, the growing of Christmas trees and it is, perhaps, timely to tell something of this vigorous industry, the extent to which it effects the economics of the Province and to eliminate some of the misconceptions present in the minds of many people.

The use of green boughs or fronds for decorative purposes at the Christmas season had its origin very long prior to the Christmas era. In the Mediterranean countries and elsewhere throughout the East greenery represented the birth of the new year, and evergreen boughs, palm leaves, and other living foliage was used quite generally.

The Christmas tree as we know it first became the custom in the Germanic countries and was adopted in England following the marriage of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort, and the idea was brought to America by Hessian soldiery in early days of the American colony. In British Columbia we are particularly fortunate in having areas where soil and climatic conditions are optimum for the growth of high-quality Christmas trees; and where, moreover the forest growth--by virtue of site -- will not attain the quality necessary for the production of saw timber. The industry centres around the East Kootenays and in the vicinity of Kamloops. There, early frosts result in a sealing-off of the needles of the young fir trees from eight to twelve weeks before Christmas with the result that the harvest can begin in ample time to ensure the product reaching distant markets. The growth being slow on the low-quality sites the trees do not exhibit the long, slender leaders typical of our

coastal areas but are slow-growing and bushy. The open spacing of the stands moreover results in an attractive conical shape that has the greatest appeal for decorative purposes.

Christmas trees have come to be recognized as a legitimate forest product and their perpetual production on growing sites which are of poor quality can be good forestry practice if properly managed. At the same time, one must keep in mind that, on the greater proportion of forest land, it is more profitable to produce saw-timber and other forest products so that on such areas the second growth or reproduction must be preserved for restocking purposes. It is often stated that Christmas-tree harvesting in young stands is beneficial in that such cutting is primarily a thinning and will improve the final crop of timber. Unfortunately, such claims are not borne out in actual practice.

The Forest Service has kept the Christmas-tree industry under close observation since it assumed prominence some years ago and, with the expansion of the output year by year over the past decade, there arose a demand for extension of cutting rights from private lands, where it first originated, to Crown lands in the Douglas fir regions of the Province. Douglas fir has been found to be the most desirable species and no finer trees for this particular purpose are produced in the Pacific Northwest than those young-growth Douglas fir found on the poorer, slow-growing-sites in the fir region of the Interior portions of British Columbia.

From observation it was found that, with few exceptions, harvesting methods employed were destructive and improvident; in other words, the Christmas-tree lands of the Province were being "mined" instead of "farmed". A continuation of this short-sighted policy would only result in a decreased and unstabilized production within a comparatively few years. To maintain the output at its present level, or to increase it, demands that lands best suited to permanent production of Christmas trees be placed on a sustained yield, or tree-farm, basis as soon as possible. Rational management and improved harvesting methods can be expected to increase materially the annual yield per acre and maintain that yield indefinitely in contrast to a few years of overcutting resulting in denuded lands and loss of income.

In 1941 a survey was made of suitable Crown lands and sixty-two Christmas-tree farms in the East Kootenays were established. Each farm varies in area, depending upon the calculated sustained yield, the aim being to provide an



eventual annual harvest under management of 5,000 trees. Permits for cutting are issued to bona-fide settlers living nearby and, as long as the permittee adheres to the conditions embodied in the permit, he is assured of continuity of tenure as long as he complies with permit requirements which, in turn, are based on sound management principles.

Permit conditions are designed to produce the greatest number of trees from the Christmas-tree farm year after year. However, provision has been made for considerable freedom in the conduct of operations so that the permittee may be encouraged to develop better practice by experiment. It is required that certain stand improvements shall be introduced, such as trimming or pruning individual trees, thinning thickets, encouraging the growth of "limb" trees, regulating grazing, cutting excess mature timber, and, possibly, planting or transplanting seedlings. Of these measures trimming is probably the most important and the one likely to prove most profitable. On the other hand, the growth of "limb" trees is of greatest interest to the uninitiated. A "limb" tree is the result of a Christmas tree having been cut from the upper portion of a tree leaving the lower three or four whorls of branches on the stump. Subsequent to cutting, the upper branches turn up to form a new tree and in effect what happens is that a three-foot-horizontal limb on a stump becomes a three-foot tree when it assumes a vertical position. Compared with naturally-grown trees these "limb" trees grow remarkably fast, due to the greater development of their root system, thereby producing Christmas trees in a shorter period of time.

It is anticipated that these permitted areas will demonstrate the practicability of Christmas-tree "farming"; in other words, a sustained and increased annual yield of improved quality trees can be attained, and will be found to be more profitable, over a period of years, than short-term exploitation of Christmas-tree lands. The principles and techniques demonstrated on these farms can be applied equally well to operations on private lands and it is hoped that the ultimate result will be that all lands, both public and private, which are considered best suited to the growing of Christmas trees, will be managed on a sustained yield basis.

# OBSERVATIONS AND REPORT OF BIRD-BANDING in the Vicinity of Victoria, B. C.

By E. D. Wood

Bird banding on most of the North American continent is considered to be a seasonal activity. We on the lower tip of Vancouver Island are fortunate in the respect that we have the usual migration and also a wide variety of wintering birds so that banding can be carried on the year round. Rather than list the birds observed during banding operations I will go through the banding records that I have and mention certain observations I have made and birds that I have banded since February 1952.

I have traps set up at the Goldstream Flats and at my home in Victoria; I have also banded certain birds at the nest in various localities within the city. First of all we must note that part-time bird banding must be done on a more or less limited scale, drop nets and box traps being the type that I use. Grain and fruit such as berries are the acceptable baits. Therefore we cannot expect to find birds in our trap that are not attracted by these foods.

In the Goldstream flats we find as common winter visitants such birds as Oregon juncos, song sparrows, fox sparrows, varied thrushes, and occasionally the California purple finch, white crowned sparrows, golden crowned sparrows, Forbush's or Lincoln sparrow and savannah sparrows.

On the 18th of February I banded 10 birds, song sparrows and Oregon juncos. Returns or retraps of this group amounted to one Oregon junco that was retrapped on the 8th of March and a song sparrow retrapped on the 23rd of February. From the 18th of February to 1st of March I trapped and banded 52 birds, including a robin, glaucous-winged gull and a bufflehead.

(x) From the 1st of May to the 6th of June I trapped and banded 66 birds that include the following - white crowned sparrows, chipping sparrows, Lincoln or Forbush's sparrow, purple finch, bluebill or scaup duck, golden crowned and savannah sparrows. My most noteworthy retrap of this group was on the 4th of May when I retrapped a white-crowned sparrow that was banded on the 20th of December, 1951, in Beverley Hills, California.

From the 1st of July to the 1st of September I banded 181 birds that include the following - chipping sparrows,

(x) Paragraph omitted is printed on page 82.)



blue grouse, song sparrows, white crowned sparrows, golden crowned sparrows, robins, red-wing blackbirds, Oregon juncos, glaucous-winged gulls, barn swallows, Brewer's blackbirds, goldfinches, and cedar waxwings. Returns from this large group are very scarce so far, the one and only return being a dead redwing blackbird that was turned into me on the 20th of October which was banded by me on the 17th of August.

From the 1st of September to the 25th of November I banded 28 birds that include spotted towhees, chestnut-backed chickadees, Oregon juncos, song sparrows, white crowned sparrows and fox sparrows. The returns from this group include two song sparrows; one was banded on the 5th of October, and retrapped on the 11th of October; the other bird was banded on the 9th of October and was retrapped on the 23rd of November.

Observations of nestlings banded indicate that the redwing blackbird and the chipping sparrow fair very poorly in the Oak Bay and Beacon Hill park area as far as parasites are concerned, particularly the maggot of the parasitic fly Protocalliphora. From the number of nests observed I judge roughly that 25% of the chipping sparrows and over 35% of the redwing blackbirds were victims to this maggot. One nest close to my home was under observation for the period that the young birds were observed in the downy stage until they left the nest. I removed nine maggots from the heads of the four young and treated the cavities with disinfectant. These birds grew amazingly fast and they soon left the nest. I banded the birds and for three weeks they stayed in the vicinity of my aviary. One bird did not fair too well however; it was trapped and placed in captivity for further observation and was found to be totally deaf. It was possible to walk up from behind in a noisy fashion and pick it up;the eyesight was apparently unimpaired which was much to my surprise for I removed three maggots from the head of this bird which together measured the size of the normal head. The maggots must have left a terrible cavity; it is truly amazing that this bird survived the ordeal at all.

I have a Brewer's blackbird acquired from an infected nest in July, 1951. A maggot was removed from near the right eye. The left eye did not develop the yellow colour that is characteristic of this species for nearly a year and

to this day the right eye is still much under-developed though it now has full colour.

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## A MESSAGE FROM AND TO NEWFOUNDLAND

Before presenting his beautiful film, "Bonaventure Diary" at the Audubon Screen Tour on December 12th Mr. Hermes delivered the following message:

NEWFOUNDLAND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

St. John's, Newfoundland 14 Forest Ave.

From the most easterly province the Newfoundland Natural History Society sends greetings to Victoria in the most westerly province, and we hope you too will enjoy Mr.Hermes' Audubon Screen Tour as much as we have done.

R.S.V.P.

In reply our President, Professor J. A. Cunningham, writes as follows:

"It gave our society great pleasure to receive greetings from the Newfoundland Natural History Society through our mutual Audubon friend, Mr. Robert C. Hermes. The inspiration which prompted this message was a most happy one and has made us feel that distance cannot separate friends and fellow workers. May we extend to your society our very best wishes.

In the one experience we have had in common, that of seeing and hearing "Bonaventure Diary", we are positive that our delight could not have been exceeded by yours."

Ed.

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Doug Wood, our energetic bird bander, wishes to acquire a number of nail kegs to be used as nesting boxes for wood duck and other birds this spring. Empty out your old kegs and drop them off at the Museum or phone Mr. Wood at E.1610 and he will pick them up.

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## REPORT OF THE DECEMBER GENERAL MEETING

The General Meeting of the Victoria Natural History Society was held December 9, 1952, in the Provincial Library. After the minutes of the November meeting were read and adopted, new members and visitors were introduced.

The President announced that he could obtain a good leader for an Entomology group should enough people agree to attend his lectures. A sheet of paper was passed around to find out how many would be interested in such a group should such be started next year.

A resolution recommended by the Executive was then put before the meeting. This was that the Natural History Society endorse the suggestion of the City Council, Chamber of Commerce, Outdoor Club, Reeves of the City, etc., that the Government buy available acreage at Witty's Lagoon and make it into a public park and that Professor Cunningham accompany the proposed delegation. This was moved, seconded and carried by the members present.

The guest speaker, chief naturalist of Olympic National Park, Mr. Gunner Fagerlund, was then introduced. From his wide experience in Parks in Hawaii, Virginia and Yellowstone, he explained how they were trying to overcome problems in Park work. By holding camp meetings, establishing museums and providing literature, they are hoping to educate the public in protecting and preserving their parks. His coloured slides taken on mountain tops, in the dense forests, by the sea, of animals, birds, and flowers, showed what a lot of trouble had been taken to obtain such a lovely collection and gave one an urge to visit Olympic National Park immediately.

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THE DIPPER, or WATER OUZEL: This is particularly British Columbia's resident bird. Wherever there are clear, swift, shallow streams whether in cold, dark canyons in winter or in hot, bright valleys in summer you can find the dipper and listen to its song. The bird seldom leaves the stream. Wren-like he is always busy and always cheerful. His manner of feeding is astonishing. He wades into the water and crawls along the pebbly creek or flies into a pool and swims with his wings. In the air he flies swiftly and directly. The nest is large,round,covered, and made of moss. He has a clear, white, nictitating eyelid, itself a curiosity. He is very similar to his British cousin

in call song and habits. Nowhere else in Canada excepting the mountains and foothills of Alberta is the dipper found.

This species, if suitably protected and publicised could be well-known to bird observers wherever there are clear running streams in mountain or lowland.

J.O.C.

VARIED THRUSH:

The swamp-robin, painted robin, or varied thrush is one of our most beautiful birds both in form and colour. It is a bird of big timber and cool, damp places. Like that of several of our thrushes the song is loud, clear, ethereal. It is composed of a series of very slow whistles, calm and deliberate, pitched on differing notes. Louis Agassiz Fuertes said of this bird, "The Hermit thrush himself is no more serene than this wild dweller in the western spruce forests." The bird is shy and retiring in its nesting haunts. In cold weather it migrates to warmer areas, often visiting city gardens where it becomes comparatively tame.

Of its song Fuertes writes further "... It is the most unique and mysterious song. It may be heard in the deep, still spruce forests for a great distance, being very loud and wonderfully penetrating. It is a single, long-drawn note uttered in several keys, some of the high-pitched ones with a strong, vibrant trill. Each note grows out of nothing, swells to a full tone, and then fades away to nothing until one is carried away with the mysterious song. When heard nearby, as is seldom possible, the pure yet resonant quality of the note makes one thrill with a strange feeling, and is as perfectly the voice of the cool, dark, peaceful solitude which the bird chooses for its home as could be imagined. This is a brave and hardy bird but shy and wild in its nesting haunts."

J.O.C.

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## THE ICE MOVES IN

Sun worshipper, sage, treasure your blazing noon,
The agony of your puny night-eclipse:
As death, as fate, the climate's pendulum swing.

Not in your meagre span,
Your hundredth-hundredth in succession child
Suffers the bitter prospect. First
The melting run-off when the glacier slips
And snow lily, pink laurel, heath, star the moraine.
Ah, brief and brief the moment of the flowers,
Each year a wink in time.

Now arctic winter, summer of shrouded sun,
Come tailing one to one as migrants fly;
The glaciers, deepened, snow-packed to iron weight,
Devour the last moraine.
Cower in your tunnelled palace, little man,
Harness your atom now to homelier use
Than maim and blind and kill.

Eras, eons pass, seasons rotate a million plus,
As, sinister in its inexorable sloth,
The ice moves in.

M. Eugenie Perry.

Previously published in Canadian Poetry Magazine.

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Recent Bird Notes, Provincial Museum:

Several records of the great-horned owl have been received at the Museum this fall and winter; after a notable derth in the past four years. One was killed locally on Fairfield Road last week. Others were heard at Tofino, Discovery Island, and one was seen in flight by day near Wolf Lake.

Goshawks appear to be more plentiful this year as well - Museum records - 7 observed in area of Tofino mud flats - working waterfowl, two observed at Discovery Island, one

Bird Notes cont'd:

within the city, and two in the Langford Lake area.

Aleutian sandpipers were first recorded this year by Miss Betty Hatfield at Clover Point on December 14, and at Chatham Island on December 17th, subsequently they have been reported from several points along the water front.

Museum workers watched a Bald eagle take a greater scaup duck, one of a flock of six, at Chatham Island last week. The eagle soared in low over the trees bordering a shallow lagoon, causing the ducks to dive. Five broke from the surface behind the raptore which had apparently singled out one. The eagle kept that bird under water by short stoops until it was exhausted then deftly seized it and flew off, causing a great furor among the cormorants, herons and waterfowl in the area.

Red-throated loons observed daily passing northward in the Oak Bay area probably indicates local movements rather than migration.

Double-crested cormorants are more plentiful in this area than in the previous four years according to Museum records.

A single crane, (probably little brown) has been reported in the fields near the junction of Interurban and Grange Roads.

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Cont'd from page 76: Observations & Report of Bird-Banding by E. D. Wood.

From the 1st of March to the 1st of May I trapped and banded 32 birds which included the following: song sparrows, red-winged blackbird, varied thrush, fox sparrow, purple finches, savannah sparrow, golden crown sparrow and Oregon juncos. There were but two returns of these birds; on the 8th of March I retrapped an Oregon junco that was banded on the 1st of March and on the 8th of October I retrapped an Oregon junco that was also banded by me on the same date.



## JUNIOR PAGE

Editor: Alex Peden. Phone G.7518.

Notes from George Merrick's letter to Mr.Guiguet, Dec.4, Portland, Ore.

"I have a list of 19 birds with the date, I stuffed them. I just finished stuffing a crow. I finished up all my cotton. What's new around the museum? I am going to enclose a bird skin which I think is a bush tit. (It was). The commonest of birds about now are golden-crowned kinglets, bewicks wren, robin, house, golden-crowned, song, fox, and white-throated sparrows. There are also herring gulls, both waxwings by the hundreds; never have I seen so many towhees at one time, chick-adees, finches, crossbills and juncos..... It was so windy that in the school grounds a flock of killdeer plovers was forced down. The wind was so strong they couldn't fly. I got out my net and chased. I had to run fast as they ran around in circles. I caught one which I released.

Crows are pretty scarce around here, I have only seen them twice since I've been down here. I got one from a friend of mine whose dad shot one. Hawks are plentiful and I found a dining place of one. Around it were 43 dead robins, 3 sparrows and 1 towhee."

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On Saturday, Nov.27,1952, Alex Peden and Bruce Colvin went bird watching in Beacon Hill Park especially for this page. They saw the white mallard duck and about 80 others, one coot, 13 scaup ducks, 25 canvas-backs, 500 widgeon, the usual glaucous-winged gulls, two flickers, a female wood duck and a pintail.

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Has your ruler a centimeter measure as well as an inch one?

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The tree frog Dennis Gillespie left at the museum eats one one-inch long worm a day. If sometimes there are no worms she will eat three pieces of red beef each about as big as a fly. She likes flies best. She is given meat from the tip of a paint brush handle.

This tree frog sits on a dampened paper hand towel folded into a wad. Dr. Carl says that the frog would die unless it sat on a damp place. This tree frog is 3½ centimeters long and has green back, gold legs and dark red markings.

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## NOTICE OF MEETINGS

1953

Tuesday Jan.6: ORNITHOLOGY: Provincial Museum, 8:00 p.m. Mr.Frank Beebe, Provincial Museum Illustrator. Illustrated.

Tuesday Jan.13: GENERAL MEETING: Reading Room, Provincial Library, 8:00 p.m. Speaker: Dr.Albert O. Hayes, noted geologist, authority on sedimentary ores and author of many scientific publications. In 1928 he was named head of the Geology Department of Rutgers University where he remained for 18 years. During his distinguished career his investigations have taken him to Argentina, Bolivia and Ecuador; in Canada, to British Columbia,New Brunswick, Alberta, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and throughout parts of the United States. Subject: "Undersea Iron Ore of Newfoundland". Illustrated.

Saturday Jan.17: ORNITHOLOGY OUTDOOR MEETING: Beacon Hill to Clover Point. Meet at Beacon Hill Park Aviary at 2:00 p.m. As transportation will be needed will those members with cars kindly make a special effort to be present.

Tuesday Jan.27: BOTANY: Provincial Museum, 8:00 p.m. Dr. R.Foster of the Dominion Forest Service. Subject: "Some Problems in Forest Pathology". Illustrated.

Saturday Jan.10: JUNIOR NATURALISTS meet at Museum at 10 a.m.

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Friday Jan.16: Meeting of those persons interested in the establishment of a Botanical Garden in Victoria: Provincial Museum at 8 p.m. For details--phone Dr. Gussow, G.1254.

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*To*