

THE THRUSH

Published by the Nanaimo District Naturalists

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IN THIS ISSUE

Just over one week ago your executive held their first meeting of the fall term. As a result of this meeting the fall schedule of events is to be found in the centre of 'The Thrush'.

One of the two NATURE section articles illustrates how club members on an individual basis can contribute to wildlife conservation while the other reminds us that mankind's bureaucratic inefficiency and senseless cruelty are still with us in the summer of '74.

Since we had only two CLUB EVENTS subsequent to our last publication this marks the smallest of our four yearly issues. Conversely; the next edition will probably be the largest and I hope to be calling upon new names to contribute articles about happenings during our fall term.

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THE BEAVER POND

Peter Van Kerkoerle

The beaver is undoubtedly one of our most interesting animals. With man it shares the ability of being able to change the environment for its own benefit. The results of the beavers work are most pleasing, which cannot always be said of man's work. The saying "eager beaver" is a laudable comment and stems from the beaver's insatiable appetite for work.

Most of the beaver's efforts are directed to building dams so a pond is formed which is used to store branches for winter use and if possible to build a beaver house away from the shore. A first year beaver pond does not look pretty with its dead and dying shrubs and trees, and the scum of rotting vegetation. But soon this will change. With the spring floods scum disappears.

In the slow, moving water of the pond many creatures are finding a home which did not exist in the fast moving creek water before. Also water temperatures are higher in summer, making it more fit for many water insects. Soon we see whirligig beetles, water striders, predacious water beetles, back swimmers, giant water bugs etc. They had arrived probably already the first summer when they flew in from dried up water holes somewhere else. In the second year the pond looks good. Ferns, sedges, grasses, and shrubs use the increase in light along the shore to make abundant growth. Duck weed, probably brought in with the first ducks soon forms mats of green on the pond surface. The first frogs are singing but the real chorus takes several years to build up.

In the evening the deer come to drink. The wet mud along the beaver dam reveals signs of raccoon, mink, and even bear. The dead trees in the pond attract wood boring beetles and these in turn bring woodpeckers and finally tree swallows, bats and maybe a pigmy owl.

Dragon flies, damsel flies, midges, and a host of other insects keep the air above the pond alive with glitter and movement. The prettiest sight however is to see the first mother duck leading a string of little downy young across the pond. What started with a beaver damming a small creek has turned into a big change in the environment beneficial to very many creatures and also to man.

This year our beaver pond is 6 years old. The increase in ducks meeting and making use of our pond was great. The following list of

ducks with young were seen.

| | | | |
|------|------|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1st | May | Hooded merganser | + 8 young |
| 24th | May | Hooded merganser | + 5 young |
| 26th | May | Mallard | + 6 young |
| 26th | May | Mallard | + 8 young |
| 26th | May | Mallard | + 10 young |
| 27th | May | Blue winged teal | + 8 young |
| 10th | June | Hooded merganser | + 2 young |
| | July | Wood duck | + 5 young (Late nesting) |

PELICAN SUMMER '74

Glen Byder

The season started off great with two weeks of warm spring weather. This soon brought forth the first green leaves of the area's 4,000 foot Stum Lake. The first day in, the road, or the ruts where the road should go, was dry for a change. I can go anywhere in my 4 x 4 (four wheel drive) as long as there are these two ruts, which have become deeper and wider from year to year. After a few days the camp was set up for the season and the canoe was placed in the lake.

Stum Lake is about 4 1/2 miles long and 3 miles wide at the widest spot. The lake contains four to five islands. The fifth, an ice pressure island, was pressured too much during spring break up and it seems to have broken up, as it is no longer to be found.

Scaup Island, a very small one, had 46 adult Pelicans nesting on it. A count showed 23 nests, all active, with one to three eggs per nest. Many were very tame and would allow me to get within 25 feet of them as I rested the nose of the canoe on shore.

However it was a different story when it came time to make a count on #2 Pelican Island. At a distance of a half mile the birds all rose from their nests in fear and left the island as the canoe approached. A check on this island showed some 51 nests and a total of 102 adults actively nesting here. This island was later wiped out due to a low flying aircraft, one of many that pass over the area. Although the area has some protection it was necessary for me to have a Notam, or Notice to airmen made up in 1973 to serve as a warning to airmen that Stum Lake was off limits to aircraft and all planes must maintain a height of 2,000 feet during the flight over the area. In 1974 the Notam was never posted and the area again fell to the unknowing airmen. So again I took this up with the Air Ministry in Vancouver, and with Williams Lake transport officials. But somehow the letter was placed on a shelf for safe-keeping, so the planes are still flying too low over the area.

NANAIMO DISTRICT NATURALISTS - FALL EVENTS

- SEPTEMBER 21, 1974 - (Saturday) Winnie Espitalier is leading our first outing to Rosewall Creek Provincial Park and the nearby hatchery. This trip is of general natural history interest. Group leaves at 9:30 A.M. from the log cabin at Northbrook Mall.
- SEPTEMBER 27, 1974 - (Friday) MEETING at 8:00 P.M., Room 108 Malaspina College. Mr. Graham Beard of the Qualicum School District and an anthropologist will be presenting an interesting evening on our local Indian culture. Come and join us for our first indoor meeting of the season.
- SEPTEMBER 28, 1974 - (Saturday) Graham Beard and Winnie Espitalier are going to join forces and lead us on a geology walk. Hopefully we will find a few Indian artifacts. Meeting place is Northbrook log cabin at 9:30 A.M. Bring your lunch if you wish to extend this into the afternoon.
- OCTOBER 6, 1974 - (Sunday) If you have never been to Green Mountain or if you would like to go again here's your chance. Meet at 9:00 A.M. in the Harbour Park parking lot - southeast corner. Bring your lunch.
- OCTOBER 25, 1974 - (Friday) MEETING at 8:00 P.M., Room 108 Malaspina College. Mr. George MacKenzie-Grieve of Malaspina College will be presenting a slide show and talk about his research and development work at Kluane National Park, Yukon Territory, during this past summer. Kluane is one of Canada's newest National Parks.
- OCTOBER 26, 1974 - (Saturday) We are going boating! By ferry that is---to Gabriola Island. A hike along the east coast is planned and we should have a good opportunity to look at the bird population and any other interesting sights. Meet at the Gabriola ferry terminal no later than 1:00 P.M.
- NOVEMBER 9, 1974 - (Saturday) An easy hike up Mt. Arrowsmith plus a walk through Cathedral Grove on the return trip. This trip will start at Northbrook at 9:30 A.M. Bring your lunch.
- NOVEMBER 22, 1974 - (Friday) ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. Be thinking of candidates for next years new executive. Also bring along a few of your best slides from this past summer. We will be repeating last falls highly successful membership slide night after official business and annual elections have ended.
- NOVEMBER 23, 1974 - (Saturday) This trip to the Nanaimo River Estuary will be botanically and bird oriented. Persons from north of town are to meet at Harbour Park at 1:00 P.M. and those from south can join the group at the Nanaimo River bridge on the Cedar Highway about 1:20 P.M.

THIS IS OUR FALL SCHEDULE OF OUTINGS. PLEASE TEAR OUT AND POST IN A CONSPICUOUS PLACE.

EDIBLE AND POISONOUS PLANTS

On Friday, September 6th, Mr. Eugene Hankey of Montebello and Santa Barbara, California (dual address), delivered a most interesting and unusual lecture/demonstration concerning the 'Eating of wild Edible and Poisonous Plants'. It was presented in room 310 of the Malaspina College campus.

Even though notice of the event was extremely short, many only receiving their bulletins that Friday, over thirty interested individuals attended that evening.

He divided his lecture into four topics consisting of:

1. societies dangerous foods,
2. dangerous edible plants,
3. useful forbidden plants, and
4. useless forbidden plants.

Examples of plants which fitted into each of the four above categories were also shown.

Did you know for example that tomatoes, onions, and cayenne pepper can be extremely toxic if eaten in excess. These formed part of his 'societies dangerous foods' discussion. Within the last or 'useless forbidden plants' category Mr. Hankey listed such plants as lupines, foxglove, and oleander to name only a few.

He also illustrated his technique of determining the edibility of a particular unknown plant from the wild and although apparently to date relatively safely used by himself the subjective nature of this method should be attempted by only the most careful of individuals.

The conclusion of his lecture stepped outside the bounds of its original framework by focussing upon the edibility of insects. When asked about a survival situation since his methods of testing plant edibility would be too time consuming Mr. Hankey said that he would eat insects instead. Apparently aphids are some of the tastiest morsels available from the insect world while lady bugs are conversely extremely bitter and unpalatable.

At the end of the evening he gave us his California address if anyone in attendance wished to pursue this topic with him via the mail.

Mr. Eugene Hankey
1237 Le La Guerra Rd.
Santa Barbara, California
U.S.A. 93103

JUNE BARBEQUE

Allan R. Hawryzki

On Sunday, June 9th, the Nanaimo District Naturalists held the final event of their spring term in a windup barbeque at the home of Anaka and Peter Van Kerkoerle.

The weather again proved most cooperative by providing an excellent day the second year in a row for our second annual event. Over 50 club members attended.

Hamburgers were provided by the club while a wide and delicious variety of salads, desserts, and refreshments were provided by individual members. Gastronomically no one should have been dissatisfied since the great diversity of things to choose from offered something for everyone.

The natural setting of the Van Kerkoerle home with its adjacent beaver pond (an article about it occurs in this same issue) furnished an enjoyable site for this event.

Courtesy of Anaka Van Kerkoerle

COOKING

HINT

The following procedure can be carried out after you have spent a day picking wild black berries, red currant, or similar fruit:

1. Mash the berries.
2. Boil 15 - 20 minutes.
3. Sieve.
4. Add sugar to taste. This will also vary depending upon the natural sweetness of the berry used.
5. Cook 5 - 10 minutes.
6. Bottle in sterile jars.

The above recipe provides a delicious syrup which can be used to make an excellent drink, or a topping for puddings, waffles, pancakes or ice cream.



SUMMER

NOTES

BEE STINGS LAST SUMMER? Two remedies for reducing the swelling are:

- a. A wet ice pack on the affected surface or
- b. A damp paper towel containing an amount of meat tenderizer. The papain within the tenderizer diffuses beneath the skin and breaks up the protein molecules from the bee thereby reducing the possibility of swelling. To be effective this method should be carried out within minutes of the actual sting.

RARE BIRD SIGHTINGS:

- a. An American avocet was seen on August 21st at Thetis Island.
- b. On July 18th a Rose-breasted grosbeak was spotted in the Ladysmith area. Grosbeaks are members of the largest North American bird family, Family Fringillidae.

Memo to R.H.

It seems that my original note to you in the spring bulletin was not quite correct. Plants commonly called Azaleas are not usually evergreen. Rhododendrons usually

are but the situation soon gets more complicated. All Azaleas have now been scientifically placed within the genus Rhododendron (except the false Azaleas) so there is no difference between them with respect to genus although many traditionalists among the gardening fraternity still make the distinction. The Van Busen Botanical Gardens in Vancouver contain both an evergreen and non-evergreen Rhododendron plant section. Hope this makes it slightly clearer....clear as mud?

A MUSHROOM FESTIVAL will be held at the Vancouver Museum on Sunday afternoon, September 29th. It will feature a slide show and displays plus on the spot identifications of your specimens by experts on mushrooms of the Pacific Northwest.

Memo to P.H.

REGARDING ARTIFICIAL FEEDERS FOR HUMMINGBIRDS. A controversially development in the media this past summer with respect to their value to hummingbirds. According to Neil Lawe, Chief Naturalist at the Kifle Wildlife Sanctuary, the deleterious effects of artificial foods on the market has probably been overstated although he encourages natural plantings of various flower species within ones yard as more beneficial to hummingbirds. A list of those plant species most beneficial to hummingbirds is available from the editor.

NANAIMO DISTRICT NATURALISTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS 1974/75

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| President | Lavid Kerridge | 758-9727 |
| Plant Director | Mollie Byrne | 758-9773 |
| Rock Director | Mrs. Winnie Espitalier | 758-7606 |
| | Mrs. Barbara Graves | 390-4750 |
| Editor | Allan Hawryzki | 758-9355 |
| Secretary/Treasurer | Mrs. Marg Kerridge | 758-9727 |
| Youth Director | Kathy Soames | 753-1470 |
| Bird Directors | Anaka & Peter Van Kerkoerle | 245-2530 |
| Convener | Elaine Waddell | 758-7485 |

MEMBERSHIPS

There are three types of memberships available in the Nanaimo District Naturalist Society:

- \$5.00/year - Family
- 4.00/year - Single
- 2.00/year - Students & Old Age Pensioners

All new memberships and renewals are payable to the Secretary/Treasurer.

The following is a complete list of this years paid up membership to date:

| | | | |
|------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Mollie Byrne | 758-9773 | Una & Alan Meynell | 246-9703 |
| Lavid Denis | 245-3064 | Kathy & Don Mounce | 754-2460 |
| Mrs. Elaine Loskotch | 245-3289 | Mrs. Phyllis Murdoch | 753-2917 |
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| Mrs. Irma Grew | 245-2876 | Joan & Ray hoy | 754-9247 |
| Allan Hawryzki | 758-9355 | John Russell | 390-4110 |
| Winnie & George Helem | 468-7475 | Kathy Soames | 753-1470 |
| Greta & Rex Hendrie | 758-7949 | Ivor Tucker | 753-5728 |
| Mr. & Mrs. Elvin Isaak | 245-2972 | Anaka & Peter Van Kerkoerle | 245-2530 |
| Gwen & Angus Johnston | 245-2344 | Elaine Waddell | 758-7485 |
| Marg & Dave Kerridge | 758-9727 | Lenise & Gordon Webb | 758-6585 |
| Kitty & Ivan Larnder | 754-2520 | Mrs. Jean Williams | 754-6578 |
| Betty & Don Macrae | 758-6779 | Ina Young | 754-6933 |
| Mrs. Helen M. Matheson | | Mrs. Winnie Espitalier | 758-7606 |