

THE THRUSH

Published by The Nanaimo District Naturalists

General Correspondence to:-

Mollie Byrne, President
3324B Stephenson Pt. Rd.
Nanaimo, B. C.

Publication Correspondence to:-

Peter and Anneke van Kerkoerle
P. O. Cassidy, B. C., VORLHO

Volume 3, Number 2

Summer 1975

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GENERAL:-

	Page
Club News - Peter van Kerkoerle	1
The Annual Bar-B-Que - D. Denis	4

NATURE:-

Wild Flower Workshop - Mary Barraclough	2
Honeybees - Joan and Ray Roy	5
The Date Palm of the Southern U. S. - Alan Meynell	8
Owls - Ken Kennedy	9
Field Notes - Peter van Kerkoerle	11

COOKING CORNER:-

Jelly Recipes - Allan Hawryski	12
--------------------------------	----

SERIES #1-3-2

PL. 3 NO. 2
1975



CLUB NEWS

Peter van Kerkoerle

Our monthly indoor meetings were well attended. On February 28th Janet Stein from U. B. C. gave a delightful talk, with slides, on seaweeds along the B. C. coast. She also brought us some samples of edible seaweeds which were nibbled at by some members, but munched on by several others.

On March 21st, Winnie and George Helem took us along on their Himalayas and Punjab vacation. Their slides were fantastic and George's delightful descriptions brought us right there.

As the last of our indoor meetings we had Ted Underhill from Victoria with us. His knowledge of the wild plant world is well known, and this evening his talk and slides gave us a better idea about the berries of B. C. Later that evening he gave us a taste of some of his jellies. The room was crowded.

The annual barbeque was held a week or so earlier than normal due to the fact that Dave Kerridge, our Club's President, was leaving for Texas within that week. Mollie Byrne, our co-chairman, is taking his place. The job of our overloaded Secretary-Treasurer, Marg Kerridge, has been divided into two posts--Kitty Larnder is now our Treasurer and Gloria Knowles has taken on the job of Secretary.

We hope you all have a good summer. Please make notes on what you see in nature and if it is interesting enough give us a little write-up or article about it. This will keep our Club Bulletin alive and healthy. Please play an active role in your club. You will be notified about our first indoor meeting in September. Until then, keep it cool!

The Editor

Mary Barraclough

There was a bit of date-shuffling on the "Wild Flower Workshop to Hornby Island". On Friday night of May 2nd, due to pouring rain and cold winds, it was decided to postpone the trip to the following weekend.

Early Saturday morning on May 10th, with an eye on the weather, we left for Hornby Island. Mollie Byrne, leader of the group, had invited us to stay at her cabin "The Swinging Owl". There were eleven of us--the Graves family, Barbara, Bob, Allison, Karen, and Leslie; the Helems, George and Winnifred; Winnie Espitalier; Jean Williams; Mollie and myself. While this was a small group, it was a nice size. We were able to cover the ground, take a few side trips, and all collect in Mollie's cabin to eat together and chat. The Helems and Winnie slept in their camper vans.

After a pleasant drive up and a scenic trip on the Denman and Hornby Island ferries, we felt we had left the hustle and bustle of the world behind. Mollie's cabin is a lovely rustic log cabin in a wooded setting with a view of the bay looking towards St. John's point. This was Mollie's first visit of the year and she was pleased to find that everything was in good shape. We all viewed her new "outhouse" and admired its solid and attractive appearance both inside and out.



Lunch was quickly had and we hurried off to Helliwell Park to look over the plants, shrubs and wildflowers. This park of over two hundred acres, a gift of John Helliwell (Bless him) leads from a Natural wooded area to the sea, where the coast line rises from sea level to high cliffs. While we were tramping through the wooded area, Bob Graves was paddling

in their canoe to a spot where we would meet and he would ferry us over to Flora Island. While on our walk we saw Pathfinder, Salicornia (Saltwort or Glasswort), two types of field Chickweed, Chocolate Lilies, Larkspur, Shooting Stars, Clover, Blue-eyed Mary, Seablush, Dandelions, evergreen blue Huckleberry, Forget-me-nots (blue and white), Camas, (blue and white), Death Camas, Sanicula,

Trilliums, Easter Lilies, Grove Lover (Nemophila, two types), Prickly Pear Cactus (Opuntia), Monkey Flowers, Fringe Cup, Saskatoon Berries, Western Crab Apple, Wild Cherry, Ocean Spray and little Geranium. It is quite possible I have overlooked some of the other species, such as the different types of grasses, ferns, mosses and shrubs we saw.

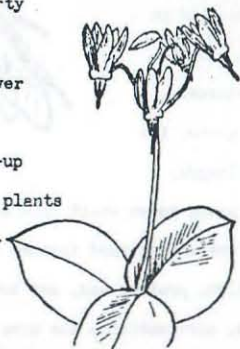
The trip to Flora Island was a first for most of us except the Graves family. We enjoyed the wide display of wild flowers. Beach combing was most fruitful, interesting pieces of driftwood and shells. Mollie was the first to find an abalone shell. Allison Graves found several lowly abalone shells and a rock oyster shell. It was starting to rain and the tide was rising, so we had reluctantly to leave Flora Island.

While Bob and his three daughters paddled back to Whalebone Beach, we continued on the trail through Helliwell Park. Mollie was looking for a Calandrinia (red maid) she had seen last year, but no sign of this plant yet.

By the time we reached the cabin the rain was increasing and it was very pleasant to feel the warmth from the wood stove. Supper was delightful, the food tasted so good. While the rain came down, we chatted and played games. The puzzler of the evening was Mollie's "Black Magic game". Mollie and her helper had to tell us the secret, we couldn't solve it.

The next day started grayish, but by late morning it was warm and sunny. There was a field trip on Mollie's property to discover how many different plants were growing there. The group found over twenty-six species of plants. Jean Williams and Barbara Graves avidly set-up the two microscopes and we studied the plants under magnification. This was very revealing. We were all amazed with the complexity, the beauty of form and the colour patterns that were revealed under the microscope. Even the tiniest and most minute plants had a highly developed structure. For me, it was a revelation.

Time was passing much too quickly. Before we left, Winnie Espitalier took us down to the beach for a study of the rock formations. Hornby Island is famous for its sandstone and conglomerate rocks. Winnie is an expert and I would suggest we ask her to write about this interesting rock formation peculiar to Hornby Island.



This was a delightful and rewarding weekend. Thank you Mollie, for extending this invitation, for sharing your cabin and your knowledge with us. We were all sparked to continue our interest in wild plant life. As naturalists, may we help to preserve, to increase public interest, and to cherish the wild flowers of the field, the marsh, cliffs, desert, and seashore. It was very pleasant to share our enthusiasm for nature and to be together with such congenial, energetic experts.

THE ANNUAL BAR-B-QUE

D. Denis

The Annual Bar-B-Que was held May 25th, under partially cloudy skies with the Van Kerkoerle's again being the gracious hosts at their country estate. A perfect setting for a naturalists' get-together was enhanced by the quarrelling of rufous hummers at the feeder and the acrobatics of a multitude of swallows,

The presentation of the book "Rivers of Canada" and a speech expressing the Club's thanks and gratitude was given to the Kerridges' on their imminent departure to Texas for a year of studies.

Short shift was given to a diverse menu of excellent food washed down by large amounts of fermented grapes.

Some of the humour injected into the proceedings included the eating of Peter's hamburger by his own chicken and the inability of the author to park out of a ditch.

HONEYBEES

Joan and Ray Roy

The antiquity of honeybees is greater than that of man. Honeybees have always fascinated man - their complex, mysterious system of life and their instinctive, yet highly organized, production of honey. Bees were brought from Europe in 1638. They first arrived in British Columbia in 1860.

Honeybees live in colonies which are the basic units. Each unit consists of one queen, several drones, and many workers - up to 60,000 bees in all. The work they do is for the perpetuation of the species only.

Reproduction is through division of colonies by swarming. When the colony is about to swarm the workers feed a few larvae a special substance called "royal Jelly". After these larvae are sealed, guaranteeing a new queen, the old queen and several thousand bees will leave the hive and usually alight on a nearby branch of a tree, forming a large cluster with the queen in the centre. There they wait for the return of the scouts who have gone searching for a suitable home, usually a hollow tree or in the wall of a building, or even in one of Peter van Kerkoerle's bird nests!

Each hive has its own special odor which emanates from the queen. You may have noticed a few bees on guard duty at the entrance to the hive. They sting any intruders and, in doing so, give up their own lives for the colony. Strange bees bringing in pollen and nectar are usually allowed in.

Bees have compound eyes, enabling them to see in all directions at the same time. In navigating they perceive the ultra violet in sunshine and use other physical landmarks.

Bees seldom travel more than two miles from the hive and are guided to plants by colour and smell. After it has filled its honey stomach (separate from its digestive stomach) the bee will take the shortest route (beeline) back to the hive. During this flight home, the nectar is converted to honey. When back at the hive, she transfers this to a housekeeping bee for storage.

The field bee often performs a dance to tell others in the colony where nectar can be found. The direction is in relation to the angle of the sun, etc.

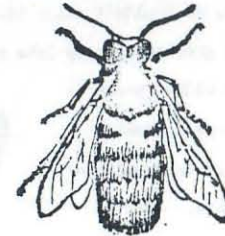
Common bee plants in this area are maple, arbutus, alder, fruitbloom, salal, clover, alfalfa, and fireweed.

There is not much information available, but apparently bees do have preferences to colour, namely white, yellow, blue, blue-purple, purple, pink, red, red-purple, such as alsike clover, red clover, heartsease and fireweed. Brown and green are low on their list.

THE QUEEN rules the colony. She can live up to 4 or 5 years, but only leaves the hive when she is about 7 days old to mate, or later if the colony decides to swarm. She has a barbless stinger, used only on other queens or queen cells. In early spring she increases her egg-laying (mainly workers) up to 1500 eggs per day in anticipation of a honey flow. She can lay fertile (worker) or infertile (drone) eggs at will.



THE DRONE is a male bee. Their only function is to mate with a young queen on her mating flight, after which they die. Usually several drones will mate with the queen on the flight. They have no stinger and contribute nothing to the colony. Workers tolerate them, but will force of them out of the hive in order to starve in order to conserve valuable winter stores. If the colony loses its queen, the drones will be retained longer, since without drones a young queen would remain unfertilized.



THE WORKERS are undeveloped females and as the name implies produce the honey, gather pollen, produce wax, and build combs, feed the young, clean house and act as guards, air-condition the hive by evaporating water and fanning their wings as well as feed and clean the queen.

When first hatched they clean out their own cell, spend the next ten days tending the young, ten more days are spent on housekeeping and comb construction and acting as guards, the rest of their lives are spent as field bees. They literally work themselves to death.





in about six weeks during the busy season. A worker gathers only about a teaspoonfull of honey in its entire life. They fly about 15 miles per hour and travel approximately 35000 miles or more than once around the earth to gather one pound of honey.

If you see a honeybee on a blossom it will be a worker. She may be gathering pollen (colour visible on her hind legs) or nectar which you cannot see. In doing so she is pollinating plants.

The worker has a barbed stinger with a poison sac attached which pulls out of her abdomen when used. To remove a sting, scrape it out of the flesh rather than attempt to pull it out with the fingers, which squeezes more venom from the sac.

Man owes much to honeybees--honey, wax, and most of his crops--so it is not strange that they have been the subject of so much study.

THE DATE PALM OF THE SOUTHERN U.S.

Alan Meynell

It is quite possible that during the next few years we will taste our last dates grown on this continent.

The tall, graceful date palms, gardens of which adorn the roadsides and desert areas of Southern California and Arizona, seem doomed to extinction. The escalating cost of production, together with the enticing prices offered by subdivision developers have resulted in the gradual disappearance of the gardens.

From available information it seems that the date is the oldest known cultivated tree crop, and one of the earliest staple foods. Its origin was in North Africa and Western Asia from where it was imported into the U.S. There are at least one hundred varieties grown now and still more are being developed.

True propagation is by off-shoot. The new shoots begin to bear fruit in about seven years and can continue for two hundred years. Extreme age is not generally gained, however, as the height of the tree makes tending too costly.

The gardens are planted with 48 female trees to one male. When flowering, the male blooms are cut and used to manually pollinate the female trees. This must be continually done during the flowering season as blooms develop, usually every day. The old leaves must be pruned and the sharp spears which grow on the new stems must be cut off to enable the climbers to work safely on the trees.

Great quantities of water are needed, equal to about 120 inches of rain a year. As the fruit develops the clusters are shielded with a waterproof cover to safeguard them from rain showers. When harvesting begins the fruit must be picked every week as ripening is a continuous process for at least three months.

To facilitate the frequent climbing of the trees, which grow from one to two and a half feet per year, ladders are permanently fastened to the trunks.

Since production, which varies from 50 to 150 pounds per tree annually, must offset the cost of continual tending and irrigation, it is small wonder that the continued cultivation is in doubt. However, the date still has a large place in the economy of the South West.

In the Coachilla Valley of California a week-long festival in its honour is held at Indio every February.

OWLS

Ken Kennedy

This group of birds, for many years, has been feared and regarded as evil because of its nocturnal habits. Most people fear the unknown and unless they have the opportunity to come in contact with the owl family they don't really know what an owl is like. What is it about an owl that makes a person fall in love with an owl? Having worked with many different owls in rehabilitation of injured birds, banding, and using those owls that have been unable to be replaced into the wild, it is very hard for me to say what particular feature is most often the attractive force causing a person to fall in love with owls.

The eyes are usually the first thing that one looks at when close to a live bird. The owl's eyes are quite large and located in the front of their head. The iris of the eye is usually yellow and the pupil is dark. The pupil varies in size, depending on the amount of light that hits it. Despite what a lot of people believe, owls can see in the daylight. The eyes are protected with two types of eyelids, those that are similar to humans, and a cloudy membrane or nictitating membrane which covers the eyes, when the hair-like feathers in front of the beak are touched. This allows the owl to still be able to see while it is flying through the bush if a branch hits it in the face. The feathers of owls are very soft and quite often an owl will fluff up its feathers to look fierce and much larger than it really is. The flight feathers of the wings are specially designed so that the bird can fly silently. The colour of the feathers usually matches the surroundings, giving the owls an advantage of protective camouflage.

Owls, being birds of prey, have features which make them more adapted for this type of existence. Two senses, eyesight and hearing, are useful to the owl in locating prey. When the prey has been spotted or heard it is pursued and then grabbed in the talons or sharp claws at the end of each toe. Owls have two toes pointing to the front and two toes pointing to the back on each foot which, when closed, form a very effective mouse trap. If the prey is small enough, like a mouse or vole, then it is swallowed whole. If it is larger, like a rabbit, skunk, or a large bird, it uses its sharp, hooked beak to tear off bite-size pieces.

They do not chew their food and every part of the prey is eaten. The meat is dissolved and the rest--feathers, fur, bone, and dirt--are regurgitated in the form of a pellet. These owl pellets give one a very good idea as to the menu of that particular bird.



Owling is fast becoming a popular sport among birders everywhere. Owls are attracted to any imitation of their sound and respond extremely well to taped owl calls. If an owl call is played near an owl of the same species, the chances of it coming quite close is usually good. To be able to see an owl in the wild is a thrill indescribable ... it is one of fear and excitement. Of the fifteen different types of owls that occur in the Province of British Columbia, it is very hard to see every type. To come across all of the owls in the province takes a number of outings into a variety of habitats and even then it would be dependent on luck. The largest one which is found in the local area is the great horned owl. The snowy owl is usually larger, but can only be found in the winter. The largest number of snowy owls seen in this area is when the lemmings, which the snowy owls feed on in the north, are scarce. The snowy owls are also very active during the daytime. They frequent the level flat areas and are not uncommon in the cities. The great horned owls on the other hand, are found in the forests. The short-eared owl is another diurnal owl and is found in such areas as river mouths, deltas, and flat areas where there are a large number of field mice and other small rodents. The smaller owls such as the screech, saw-whet, and pygmy owls are less than ten inches in height to as little as six inches high.

I hope that this has helped to make you more familiar with the owl. The next time that you are in an area where there might be an owl and have a call recorded on a tape recorder, give your hand a try at trying to call in an owl. Always keep in mind, though, that the main reason why the owl is considered the wisest of all creatures is because it knows whoooo whoooo.

FIELD NOTES

Peter van Kerkoerle

Spring was long in coming, with a heavy snowpack on the mountains. Arrival of most bird species was later than average.

March 9th saw the first arrival of the tree swallows at Cassidy.

Turkey vultures were first seen on March 23rd. Also seen in March was a meadow lark at Bamfield by Barbara Graves.

April 2nd, Rufous Hummingbird.

April 3rd Western Kingbird at airport was reported.

April 15th, at Cedar, a Peregrine falcon was reported.

April 21st, the first barnswallow at Cassidy.

Also occurring during April were several sandhill cranes at Greenaway Lake, near Boat Harbour.

The Siskins returned during May.

A good number of eagles was reported this Spring from Nanaimo.

Have you noticed the exceptionally nice display of spring flowers on open rocky areas this year?

JELLY RECIPES

Allan Hawryski

Oregon Grape Jelly

1. Gather berries when ripe
2. Strip from stems, wash, and put in saucepan.
3. Crush with masher and add water to almost cover.
4. Bring to boil.
5. Cover and simmer 5 to 15 minutes.
6. Strain.
7. Use all grape juice, or mix 2/3 grape juice to 1/3 apple juice.
8. Follow jelly-making instructions on pectin package.
5 cups juice, 7 cups sugar, 1 pkg. MCP pectin.

Hawthorne

1. Gather berries in the Fall when they are red ripe.
2. Place in saucepan and almost cover with water.
3. Cook until soft.
4. Extract juice.
5. Use pure juice or mix 3/4 hawthorne to 1/4 apple juice.
6. 4 cups juice, 1/4 cup lemon juice, 7 cups sugar, 1 pkg. MCP pectin.

Rose Hips

1. Gather fruit.
2. Simmer 15 minutes or until soft.
3. Mash.
4. Simmer another 10 minutes.
5. Set aside for 24 hours, then strain.
6. Add water to this pulp, simmer again, and strain a second time.
7. Use pure juice or mix 2 1/2 cups juice to 1 cup apple juice.
8. Three and one-half cups juice, 4 1/2 cups sugar, 1 pkg. MCP pectin.

NANAIMO DISTRICT NATURALISTS

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

President	Mollie Byrne	758-9727
Plant Director	Jean Williams	754-6578
Rock Director	Ena Young	754-6933
Bird Directors	Anaka & Peter van Kerkoerle	245-2530
Secretary	Gloria Knowles	754-6297
Treasurer	Kitty Larnder	754-2520
Editor	Peter van Kerkoerle	245-2530

MEMBERSHIPS

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

- \$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:

Gloria Knowles,
1021 Nelson St.,
Nanaimo, B.C.

An Honorary Family Membership has been extended to the Kerridge family

The following is a complete list of our paid up membership:

Ed & Mary Barraclough	753-3577	Frances & John Morrison	468-7472
Pat Boulding	754-5819	Mrs. Phyllis Murdoch	753-2917
Jean & Neil Bourne	758-5156	Phil Neaves	758-2856
Mollie Byrne	758-9773	Jean & Bob Nicks	754-9419
Mary Eystrom	245-3629	Joyce & Joe Ovenden	245-3677
Ken Campbell		Joseph Petershofer	245-2683
Carol & David Denis	245-3064	David Richards	753-0395
Mrs. Elaine Doskotch	245-3289	Marion & Bill Kicker	758-5003
Mrs. Winnie Espitalier	758-7606	Joan & Ray Roy	754-9247
Agnes & Alf Flett	390-4331	John Kussell	390-4110
Mrs. Dorothy Gailus	758-6847	Mina Samson	754-6873
Barbara & Bob Graves	390-4750	John Saxer	390-4604
Mrs. Irma Grew	245-2876	Dorothy & Fred Scofield	245-2798
Allan Hawryzki	758-9355	Janet Thompson	390-4266
Winnie & George Helem	468-7475	Helen Timmins	753-8484
Ruth & Edward Hutton		Brenda & Bob Uden	753-4597
Mary & Ernie Jerome	758-9268	Anaka & Peter van Kerkoerle	245-2530
Gwen & Angus Johnston	245-2344	Lottie Vollmers	753-1610
Marg & Dave Kerridge	758-9727	Elaine Waddell	758-7485
Dawn Ketcham	758-1018	Mrs. Jean Williams	754-6578
Gloria & Ken Knowles	754-6297	Ena Young	754-6933
Kitty & Ivan Larnder	754-2520		
Ethel Leyer	758-7160		
Una & Alan Meynell	246-9103		