
THE THRUSH

Published By The
Nanaimo District Naturalists

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VOLUME 8 NUMBER 1 WINTER 1980



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The Goal of a Naturalist

Donna Bohoslowich.

The train pulled into a small station, exhausted from the strenuous climb through the snow laden passes of the high Rockies. The station was not busy, but a quiet expectancy was present along with a feeling of something changed and lost over the years.

A few people detained, waiting for baggage, shivering in the cool mountain air. All marvelled at the snow still left in patches on the streets. Many had left an early spring on the coast, with the dogwood in full bloom and the early trillium already turning pink with age.

Several visitors waited for the one taxi then in service, the yellow cab was kept busy scuttling back and forth to the Banff Springs Hotel. With their hurry to get settled in their hotel rooms and plan out their stay in Banff National Park, few visitors noticed the big bull elk pawing through the snow, not 100 meters away from them, hidden behind freight cars on a side track.

He dug slowly through the snow, finding dried wilted plants that were still in dormancy patiently awaiting the Mountain Spring, which was still weeks away.

Slowly he reared his head up, his antlers held erect by powerful neck muscles, looking around slowly, he reacted to a small sound nearby. Hot air from his nostrils turned to steam against the cold air. Discovering the person watching him, the buck slowly, but warily, turned and walked majestically into the tree cover.

CLICK! My first slide of a bull elk, my first large mammal sighting in Banff National Park. So began my season as a park naturalist in the oldest park of the National Parks system.

In 1885 a federal Order in Council established the Banff Hot Springs Reserve a ten square mile area surrounding three hot springs. The reserve's name changed several times before becoming Banff National Park. The park's borders grew and diminished until settling on the present day size, a 2,650 sq.mile land resource, wildlife and vegetation reserve.

Most people reading this have probably visited the park for a short time, either camping, motelling or by driving through on the No.1 to Calgary. I spent 4 months in the park and barely scratched the surface of what it offers to a naturalist. I could list species names, flowering dates, and geologic terms. These are all important parts of Banff's natural history. But what is probably most important is our initial awareness and feeling for the heritage resource we call a National Park.

Most visitors' first and often lasting impressions of Banff National Park is of wall to wall Winnepegos, traffic jams, high prices, ski lifts, fur shops, and outdoor toilets without toilet paper. Most of us have experienced this facet of Banff. But there is also the vast, virtually undeveloped part of Banff that is easily found but must be experienced to gain that initial awareness and positive feeling for our heritage.

Day hikes take you in to a world remarkably different from downtown Banff.

After a half hour of walking, you gain an impression of freedom, wildness and solace. The indescribable feeling of seeing your first mountain goat and mountain sheep in habitat cannot be duplicated.

Seeing a golden eagle soaring overhead, hearing the shrill cry of the tiny pika or discovering an alpine meadow covered with 20 species of wildly coloured flowers are gifts to be treasured for many years.

With these images comes a feeling, an appreciation, a nebulous but then clearer understanding of our parks, ending with a commitment to our environment.

As naturalists it is our goal to seek out these natural places and to interpret all the images we discover to others. We can ensure some retention of wildlands, whether administered federally, provincially or by a city if we develop a feeling for the heritage around us.

This feeling and understanding for the land is easily found in some people, but must be squeezed, ever so carefully, from others.

This is our continuing function, mandate and goal.

I'M A STARLING ME DARLING

Pam Ayres

We're starlings, the missis, meself and the boys
We don't go round hoppin, we walks.
We don't go in for this singing all day
And twittering about, we just squawks.

We don't go in for these fashionable clothes,
Like old Missel Thrush and his spots
Me breast isn't red,
There's no crest on me head,
We've got sort of hardwearing...dots.

We starlings, the missus, meself and the boys,
We'll eat anything that's about,
Well anything but that old half coconut,
I can't hold it still. I falls out.

What we'd rather do, is wait here for you,
To put out some bread for the tits,
And then when we're certain,
You're there by the curtain,
We flocks down and tears it to bits.

But ~~we~~ starlings, the missis, meself and the boys
We reckon ~~that~~ we're being got at,
You think for two minutes, them finches and
^{linnets,}
~~You~~ ^{just} never sees ~~them~~ being shot at.

So next time you comes ^{and} out, to sprinkle the
crumbs out,
And there's starlings there, making a noise,
Don't ~~you~~ be so quick, to heave half a brick,
It's the missis, meself and the boys.

CLARKE'S NUTCRACKER SIGHTING

Donald A. Blood

On October 26 last, at 1.30 p.m.
I was quite surprised to see a
Clark's nutcracker along Turner Rd.,
near the Island Highway, in Nanaimo.

It was a stormy day with rain and
strong southeast winds. I was driving
by, a little over the speed limit as
usual, when it flew up from the
roadside into coniferous growth
beside the road. I parked around
the corner, walked back, and saw it
again at close range for some time.

This species is a denizen of
alpine subalpine habitats from Coast
Range to Rockies, but occasionally
wanders to the Coast and also out
on to the Prairies. An eruption
of 7 birds was recorded in Victoria
Duncan area in 1972. One was recorded
in the Vancouver area in 1971 and 5
in 1972. All 13 of these sightings
were made in October or early November



THE FALCONS OF WAINWRIGHT

David and Adele Routledge

During a visit to relatives this past summer we had a chance to visit the Canadian Wildlife Service Falcon Breeding Station at Wainwright, Alberta. Wainwright is approx. 130 miles south east of Edmonton.

The station is operated by two full time people, Harry Vanderstrom and Phil Aldridge along with 2 or 3 summer students.

The reason for the breeding station is due to the eastern peregrine falcons extinction because of the heavy use of pesticides, namely D.D.T. during the 1950 and 1960's. The locale is rather remote and in order to enter the place we phoned C.W.S. and received the permission necessary to travel through Canadian Forces Base Camp Wainwright. Part of the reason I suppose for the remoteness would be to keep out intruders.

Along the road past the Forces Base could be seen Bluebird boxes but no bluebirds were noticed. Black terns were skimming over the reservoir which we drove past and a Swainsons Hawk was hovering above. We also stopped to photograph a willet that was sitting on a post.

Upon arriving at the station we were met by the two technicians and a playful golden Labrador puppy which proceeded to rip a hole in David's trousers. The two men Harry and Phil, then gave us the grand tour.

First we entered the main rearing barn to be greeted by the loud cheeps and shrieks from two day old chicks the size of golfballs. The growth rate of these chicks is phenomenal. From egg to fledgling in approx. 14 days.

This rearing barn also contains incubators which produce a 98% successful hatching ratio. In 1971 to 1972 when this programme was started the hatching ratio was only 5%. Also in the main rearing building are kept the tiny quail which are killed and fed to the falcons.

We were then taken to the cages where the hundred or so birds are kept. These cages are the size of buildings approx. 50 ft. x 100 ft x 30 ft. and made of 5 cm. chicken wire with wooden slats on the roof.

Each cage contained two or three T.V. cameras to monitor the feeding and behaviour of the birds. There were about 8 of these cages.

The Coastal Peregrine Falcon *Anatum*, are the main study and breeding birds here. Others included are the Griffalcon *Falco Rusticolus*, 2 pair and 3 young, the very rare Canadian white Arctic Falcon color phase not a subspecies 1 pr.

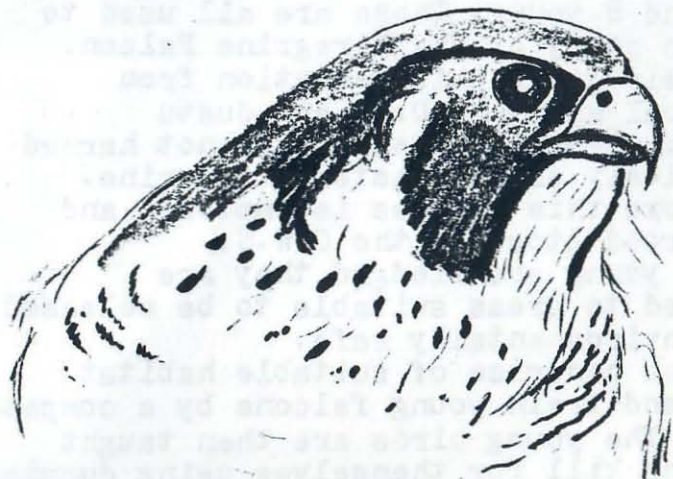
And the Prairie Falcon *Falco Mexicanus* 2 pairs and 8 young. These are all used to aid in the study of the Peregrine Falcon. Due to their geographic isolation from agricultural sprays D.D.T. and dusts the Coastal Peregrine Falcon was not harmed as extensively as the Eastern Peregrine.

Therefore this species is captured and used as brood stock by the C.W.S. After the young are fledged they are transported to areas suitable to be released in, and environmentally safe. These areas comprise of suitable habitat to raise and train young falcons by a competent falconer. The young birds are then taught to fend and kill for themselves using dummies and live prey. A very laborious process over many months. They are then allowed to drift away from the falconer until they have become

completely self sufficient and independent. Phil and Harry said that the Riefel Bird Sanctuary at Ladnor has been selected as a release point early in 1980. Hopefully our club can arrange another trip over and see these and many other rare birds there this Spring.

We thoroughly recommend anyone who visits this area to drop in and visit this very friendly establishment. They will be most welcome.

To see such enthusiasm and to see such a wonderful project working to replace a Canadian species which almost reached extinction is most gratifying and deserves our utmost support.



ARCHOSAURIA A NEW LOOK AT THE OLD DINOSAUR
Author John C. McLoughlin
Publisher Viking Press 1979
Cost about \$10 U.S.

A Book Review by David Richards

As most of you probably know, the subject of dinosaurs has always been a controversial area. For years we have been taught that dinosaurs were generally speaking, dim witted and slow moving creatures.

Some biologists and palaeontologists suggested that dinosaurs walked over cliffs because they were so long, that messages could not be relayed from their brains to their hips quickly enough to stop their rear legs from pushing them over. Other palaeontologists felt that dinosaurs clumsily crushed their own eggs, ate their young or permitted their eggs to be eaten by the small mammals which then existed.

Recently however, the store of information which has been accumulated about the dinosaurs has pointed to a much different conclusion.

Dinosaurs instead of being an evolutionary dead end and a flop biologically speaking, were tremendously successful for about 100,000,000 years.

Man has been around for possibly 3,000,000 years and has been successful for well less than 100,000 years.

Instead of being a cold blooded cannibal or a clumsy semi retarded creature, the dinosauria are now believed to have moved in well organized herds in which they were able to protect themselves and their young.

They are believed to have been warm blooded and in some cases they were covered by fur or feathers.

John McLoughlin has gone even further along these lines with his book, "Archosauria". He has redrawn many of the old pictures to reflect some of the newer ideas about dinosaur's habits and methods of locomotion.

For example, unlike the old pictures which show Tyrannosaurus Rex with its tail dragging on the ground, McLoughlin has drawn its tail sticking straight out as a structure to help balance this animal as it ran. Probably the most dramatic picture however is the one which makes up the dust cover. Here McLoughlin imagines a scene where huge herbivores are being followed by a herd of Allosaurs much like a pack of wolves will follow a herd of elk today. The giant Brachiosauri likely had little to fear from most predators because of their bone crushing bulk but the odd, careless or ill Brachiosaurus would fall prey to the predators, which waited nearby.

The most controversial part of McLoughlin's book is the short section which deals with dinosaurs today. McLoughlin does not believe that birds merely evolved from the dinosaurs, he believes birds are dinosaurs! He says " We are forced to conclude that birds are no more or less than dinosaurs, and that their classification outside class Archosauria makes no more sense than would classifying bats outside class Mammalia because they too can fly "

All in all I would highly recommend this book. It is easy to read and the pictures are a joy to look at. There is a good glossary at the back for the scientific faint of heart and the chapters seem to hang together well.

NANAIMO RIVER HATCHERY FIELD TRIP

DAVID and ADELE ROUTLEDGE

Approximately 23 people came on a field trip Sunday Nov. 18 lead by Gwen and Angus Johnston along the Nanaimo River to the Fish Hatchery.

The field trip began by everyone meeting at the Cassidy Inn at 9.30.a.m. Kim Goldberg lead the group to the fish hatchery where we were introduced to Cliff Shoop, who is the S.E.P. coordinator Nanaimo River.

He then took the group inside the small structure which had been built this past summer. Inside the building which is lit only by red light as ultra violet damages the eggs. Cliff Shoop stated there are approx. 30,000 chum eggs which is the initial startup on this project.

They hope to have chum fry by next spring to release into rearing ponds and then proceed to use other species of salmon, including steelhead.

The two rooms contained incubator boxes in which the chum eggs are kept in darkness with a constant flow of water, fresh water. The hatched eggs become Alevins. In the next two months the Alevins absorb their yolk sacs and become small fry. Then they are released into rearing channels.

Gwen Johnston next led the group along the pipeline to the confluence of the Nanaimo River and Haslam Creek. Peter VanKerkoele spotted what was believed to be a golden eagle gliding in the blue sky above. Along the creek bed could be seen the decaying bodies of salmon that had spawned, their life cycle now completed.

We then drove the short distance to Fry Road on the north side of the Nanaimo River where Peter Van Kerkoele noticed a Peregrine Falcon sitting on a snag watching some common mergansers in the river. Peter stated that the Peregrine only catches prey in flight. We proceeded further down the river noticing some fishermen trying to catch steelhead or trout. At this point many of the group turned back except Bob Graves, Dave and myself. We walked further down river where we noticed some canoeists and more fishermen having a beautiful day enjoying one of our scenic local waterways. A good day was had by ALL.



OBSERVE RECORD AND REPORT

Adele Routledge

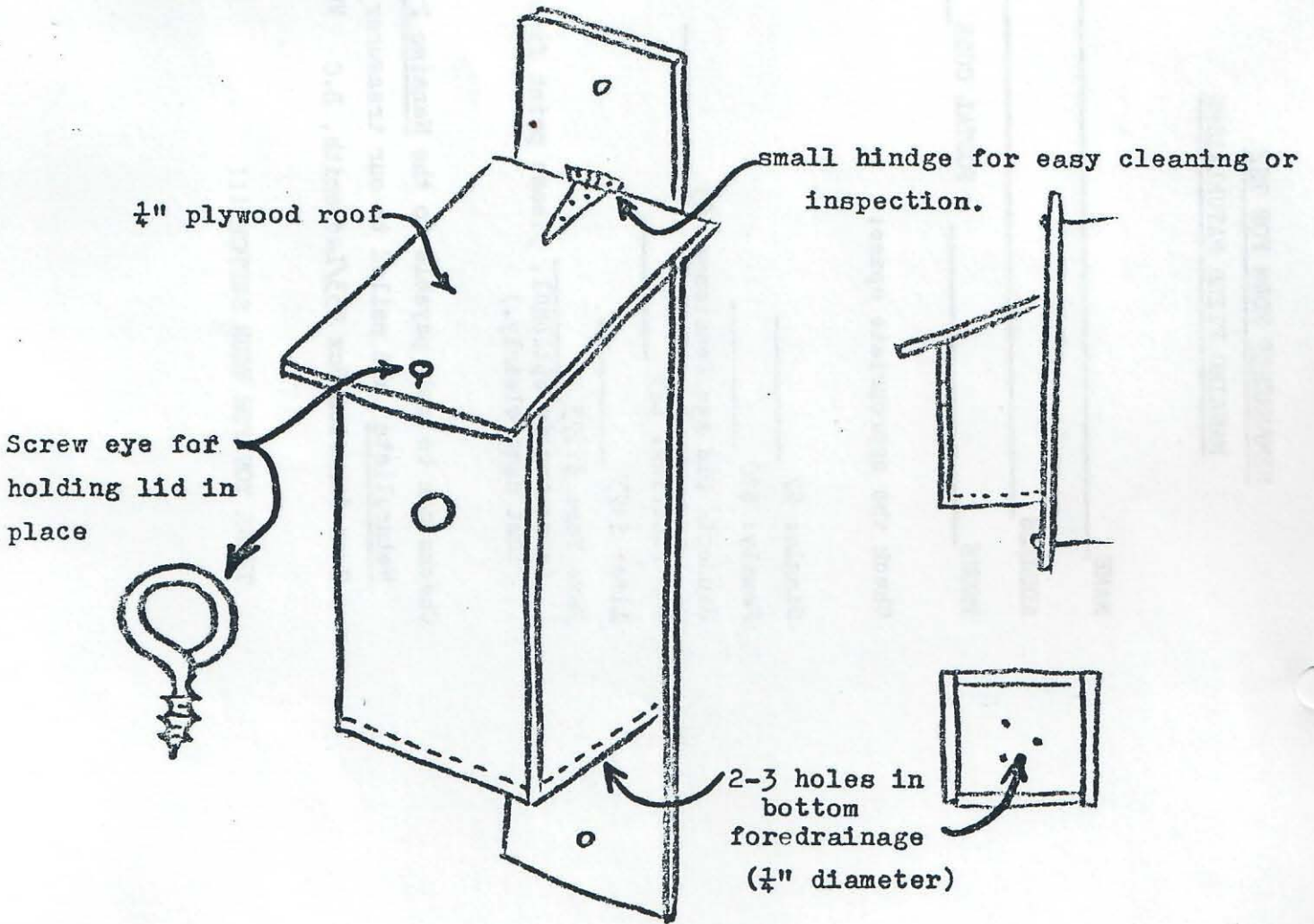
Enforcement Officers from Fisheries and Wildlife Branch have now set up an office where persons can report violations regarding fish and wildlife laws as well as pollution and littering.

This hot line is open 24 hours a day. The number to ask the operator is

ZENITH 2235

Your Resource...Your Future...Be Concerned

A SIMPLE BIRD HOUSE



MATERIALS: 1" X 6" rough cedar for swallow, wren or bluebird box.
 1" X 8" rough cedar for Starling or Kestrel box.

By BILL MERILEES

| SPECIES | HOLE SIZE | ENTRANCE ABOVE FLOOR |
|----------|-----------|----------------------|
| SWALLOW | 1½" | 3" |
| WREN | 1" | 5" |
| BLUEBIRD | 1½" | 6" |
| STARLING | 2" | 10" |
| KESTREL | 3" | 12" |

MEMBERSHIP FORM FOR THE
NANAIMO FIELD NATURALISTS

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ POSTAL CODE _____

Check the appropriate space:

Single: \$7 _____

Family: \$10 _____

Student/ Old Age Pensioner: \$5 _____

Contributing: \$25 _____

Life: \$175 _____

Name Tag: \$1.75 _____
(name tag is optional, please print first and last name clearly.)

Checks can be made payable to the Nanaimo Field Naturalists and mailed to our treasurer,
Gwen Johnston/Box 933/Ladysmith, B.C. VOR 2E0

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!!

| | | |
|-----------|----|-----|
| MEMBER | 30 | 100 |
| ASSOCIATE | 50 | 100 |
| YOUTH | 10 | 0 |
| ADULT | 10 | 20 |
| YOUTH | 10 | 20 |
| ASSOCIATE | 10 | 20 |

(By Signature)



NANAIMO FIELD NATURALISTS