



The VICTORIA NATURALIST

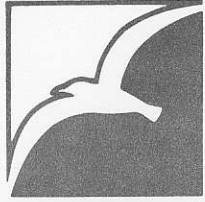
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VICTORIA NATURAL
HISTORY SOCIETY

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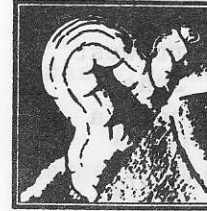
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RARE BIRD ALERT - 382-5562
Phone bird sightings to 382-9652

COVER PHOTO: by Mark Nyhof

Young Great Horned Owl with Male Mallard



A BIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO WINTER MOTH CONTROL

(A summary of Robert Moyes' lead article featured in Monday Magazine - July 18-24 publication)

Introduced into Canada (Nova Scotia) from Europe in the 60s, it wasn't till the mid-70s that the Winter Moth found its way to Victoria. That it had come to stay, was made evident by the gradual year by year increase in defoliation of deciduous trees.

The pest, once thought to be Bruce Spanworm, was later correctly identified as the larval stage of the Winter Moth - the green looper. It was the absence of its natural enemies, due to its recent implantation, which enabled the moth to thrive and multiply in great numbers.

A biological control method developed in Nova Scotia to check Winter Moth infestation has now been in operation in Victoria for the past five years showing very positive results. Sergei Condrashoff, a biological consultant whose fruit farm was subjected to infestation is largely responsible for implementing the non-chemically achieved method. Instead, it uses two parasitic insects imported from Europe to do the work --- *Agrypon flaveolatum*, a small wasp, and *Cyzenis albicans*, a fly. The former injects its eggs into the looper's body while the latter simply deposits its eggs on nearby leaves and these eggs are injected as the looper feeds on the leaves. The eggs hatch inside the looper and these new parasitic larvae slowly consume the looper during its pupal stage.

Condrashoff raised 17,000 of these insects from parasitic Winter Moth cocoons imported from Europe. They were systematically released between 1979 - 1982 in areas containing large stands of deciduous trees. The first two years showed no signs of improvement. In 1981, a small percentage of examined Winter Moth larvae were proven parasitic. The percentage increased in 1982. In 1984, the ratio was 50 per cent and percentages are predicted to keep rising.

SPRING COMES TO THE BARRENS

by Kaye Suttill

Winter lingered later than usual in the barrens of the Northwest Territories around Old Squaw Lodge this year. On the 25th of June, road transport was useless when we dropped down by helicopter onto a land still much covered in snow, a tundra basin surrounded by the cirque-sculptured Selwyn and Mackenzie Mountains. However, joining spring in the barrens is being surrounded by northern life in its breeding/blooming time. Cliff Swallows are hurrying in and out of their mudpie nests under the eaves. Savannah Sparrows dart around singing their northern notes; Lapland and occasionally Smith's Longspurs keep alighting all over the snow-releasing ground. Mew Gulls swoop down and Ravens seem oblivious of the snow. The first Northern Phalarope is noted on the mud of an ice-shrinking pond it shares with an Old Squaw; by week's end, more Phalaropes are seen nodding and prodding in various tundra ponds, and Old Squaw males keep squawking in flight to lakes farther away, where Scaups and moulting Canada Geese are in residence, too. On Marquis Lake, a Red Throated Loon floats within scope vision of an Old Squaw resting on the ice. Footprints in the snow make way for seeing Caribou families eating their way across the barrens, and "Klik Klik," the Arctic Ground squirrels rush out and in to their World War II pipeline homes.

As the days move along the Spring, the more dry herbmat hillside multiplies of wee white *Anemone parviflora* to the tinkling music of Horned Larks in flight, while dormant Moss Campion pin-cushions are just beginning to pink amid ground-hugging willow catkins and the first white heather bells of *Cassiope mertensiana*. Every day more yellow rose blooms of *Geum rossii* appear.

In one water netted barrens area counterpointed by dry "islets", Long-tailed Jaegers appear to take turns on their mossy rock nest and try to distract binocular peering eyes by alighting some distance away; then a pair of Rock Ptarmigan hurry along to a more private spot. Horned Larks and breeding Golden Plovers are all over the tundra.

The constant sound of the wet barrens is the whirring of snipe, while the omnipresent sight is buttercups and coltsfoot. In snow damp tundra, hundreds of Roseroot *Sedum* are waiting in tight dark buds for the stony mud ground to dry. One small clump of sunny lakeshore turf is abloom of *Anemone narcissiflora*, seeming a little miracle for it usually likes dry grassy mountain slopes.

In shrubby tundra - the barrens are Willow habitat from ground huggers to big bush species - Willow Ptarmigan walk around and when occasionally flushed, stretch their white wings in flight, contrasting to their brown bodies. Here bloom yellow *Anemone richardsonii*, pink Arctic Raspberry, white Cloudberry and Drabas, and a minirock garden of cascading pink *Vaccinium caespitosa*, among other flora. In other bushy areas Common Red Polls dart around the foliage and rest briefly on the ground. It seems incredible that these flighty birds survive in the winter cold up the Dempster and have even been reported in northern Baffin Island during the winter, according to Robert Frisch, "The" Ornithologist of the Dempster and Old Squaw barrens whose sudden tragic death sorrowed so many this spring.

Ferrying by canoe across Thompson Creek, the spongy tundra surprisingly comes alive with *Lloydia serotina*, the little Alp Lily usually on high rocky slopes, and the small mauve fingers of *Lagotis glauca*, its stamens not yet fully showing, along with the incredibly colored turquoise, pink and pale green Glaucous Gentian. Clusters of white *Parrya mudicaule* also favour this wettish habitat and the first Woolly Louseworts.

But it is atop Eagle Ridge (above a Golden Eagle's nest) where real floral magic shows this late Spring: Purple saxifrage mats, clump on clump of white Arctic Mountain Avens with its uncrenulated leaves, masses of magenta dwarf *Rhododendron lapponicum*, tiny white Rock Jasmine, masses of low Arctic Lupine so incredibly never so lovely mauvey blue, Woolly Louseworts galore coming out of their soft hairy coats into their pink perfection, and more, all hugging the ground tundra style wild garden, similar to exposed rock sites "down south."

For fanatic birders, this barren land is an obsession to quest ever more species, for flower lovers a time to record new plants and old ones in new habitat. But more than all, this Spring in the barrens is a time for joy in the company of life on the wing and life of the earth, to wonder at the sight of wilderness peaks cloning in wilderness water. That which is most special here is just to be part of this Grand Land in its awakening spring.

AIR FERNS

by Richard Kool
B.C. Provincial Museum

"There's a sucker born every minute." P.T. Barnum said it.

Air ferns. Many of you have them hanging in your house. In your kitchens, perhaps, or in the bathroom. They don't need much light, right? So you can keep them looking cheerful in dark corners. They need no water or fertilizer. They are a joy to behold and need absolutely no care. All they need is air.

What a plant! (to paraphrase Charlotte the Spider). Where do these wonderful plants come from? From under the English Channel, according to plant shop owners. They are dredged up from the darkest depths of the ocean floor. See, that's why they don't need light - they normally live in the abyssal darkness of the oceans. No need for food either - how could you provide the same plant food that air ferns eat under the English Channel. And besides, we all know that there is a lot of air to eat at the bottom of the ocean. Right!

Yet, in spite of their rude removal from their continental shelf abode, transport across North America, and finally coming to rest in your home, they continue to thrive and actually grow. Oh yes, they do grow!

I have been told this by many people; all careful observers of nature and air fern growth.

What do I think of all this: a plant needing no light, water or nutrients? I think it is a damn good way for someone to make money off of others ignorance. Now, I am not saying you are ignorant. But come on, nothing can live on air (except a braggard, perhaps). Everything that lives needs a source of energy. For plants, that energy comes from sunlight. The plant takes in carbon dioxide from the air, water and nutrients from the soil (in most cases) and in the presence of sunlight, makes sugar and oxygen. No plants can live in darkness without water or nutrients and continue to grow. It just does not happen.

Now, the air fern. First, drip a little water on it. Touch the wet area, then look at your fingers. Green, eh? Food colouring. Harmless, I hope. Next, find some sort of a magnifying glass and take a close look at your air fern. Does it look anything like a plant? No, of course not! Air ferns are not really plants at all. I really can't understand why people think they are! Most of the information you get about air ferns are lies. One thing isn't, however; air ferns do come from the marine environment. You can find relatives of the air fern growing on floats, boats or piers that spend time in the ocean. Air ferns are actually an animal, a colonial animal called a Hydroid. Hydroids are related to jellyfish and sea anemones. *Hydroid, an order of colonial hydrozoan coelenterates that have the polyp phase dominant.* The little beasts produce a rather tough outer skeleton and live within small cups at the end of each "branch". There, they wave their tentacles around, catching other small marine animals that pass them by.

So there it is. Air ferns are marine hydroids. Now, go down to your local plant store. Ask, in as sweet a voice as possible, what is an air fern? Don't laugh at the salesperson when you're given a pile of baloney for an answer. Tell them what's what. Fill them in on the truth about air ferns. Help to break the air fern hoax.

And remember what P.T. Barnum said.

LONG-DISTANCE DRUMMER

by Jack Hutchings

A recent press article suggests, among other misconceptions, that woodpeckers find telephone poles "a delicious new treat - a delicacy now widely available".

As the woodpecker drummed on the telephone pole

He marvelled that there could be

A creature so dumb as to think he'd drum

On a barren, man-trimmed tree

For the sake of its taste! - as if he'd waste

His hoarded energy

On foodstuff so debased.

"Don't they know", he said, "that I only drum

To stake my claim by sound

So that all who hear will keep well clear

And recognize my home ground?

(I'm much more quiet about my diet,

As many a grub has found.)"

"So how does this pole assist my goal

Of proclaiming my location? -

Well, the chips are down so I'll risk your frown

And give you the explanation:

I'm just using man to promote my plan

By telecommunication."

PRONOUNCE THEIR NAMES CORRECTLY

by Mark Nyhof

On several occasions I have overheard birders mispronounce common bird names; at least pronunciations that sounded incorrect to me. Most names are easy but some are spelt in such a way that several pronunciations are possible. To set the record straight in my own mind I did some research. What follows is a list of some names and details of their correct pronunciation.

a) Pileated Woodpecker - the I is pronounced as in pile and not as in pill. The name comes from pileus (pronounced pie-lee-us) meaning cap.

b) Ferruginous Hawk - the G is as in gin not as in gift and the preceding U is not an oo sound but rather like the U in full.

c) Gyrfalcon - the G is as in Gypsum rather than as in gull while the Y is pronounced like the I in fir. Therefore, Jir-fal-con.

d) Falcon - not fallcon. After all the Latin family name falconidae is not pronounced fallconidae. The a is as in man.

e) Lazuli Bunting - the I in Lazuli is pronounced eye not ee.

f) Grosbeak - the Gros is pronounced with a grow sound and not like moss. After all it is a gross beak.

g) Jaeger - the J is not as in Jay but rather is pronounced as a Y.

h) Murre - pronounced like purr not like tour.

i) Merganser - emphasis on gan rather than Mer. Therefore Mer-GAN-ser.

These are just a few names that have bothered me but I'm sure there are others that could cause problems. For example I've always wondered how I would pronounce Pyrrhuloxia.

INGENIOUS ENGINEERS

by Bill Whelan

We had always known that the filament spun by spiders for their webs possessed remarkable strength, indeed the strength of steel I'd heard, a fact that was brought to my attention recently in a dramatically visual way. I was casually spraying water from the hose to freshen up the bird bath in the back garden when suddenly I was aware of a fine string of diamond-like droplets suspended in a line descending from somewhere above to the edge of the bath. This caught my fancy.

I moved my position slightly to better my view and played the hose spray again, this time more directly for greater force. But still this single filament stood fast, unmoved and unremoved, refusing steadfastly to yield to the pressure of the hose.

So I left it there. It was, perhaps, a lifeline with an important mission yet to be fulfilled.

FIELD TRIPS

SPECTACLE LAKE BIRDING TRIP

Saturday, June 8th, turned out to be a perfect day for our birding trip to Spectacle Lake. An enthusiastic group of eighteen birders went slowly around the lake, stopping often to quietly listen to the bird songs. A total of thirty-one birds were identified at the lake, most of them being by sound alone.

We then drove to Bamberton Provincial Park to view the bald eagle's nest but unfortunately the eagles were not at the tree. After lunch on the beach, most of the group left, but a hearty party continued on along the Mill Bay Road. In the Bamberton -- Mill Bay area, we recorded eleven species making a total of forty-three for the day.

Some of the highlights of the day were as follows: Flycatchers -- Willow, Western (most numerous), Olive-sided, and Western Wood Peewee; Swainson's Thrushes and Warbling Vireos were fairly common; a Hutton's Vireo was heard singing his loud "Zu-eep" song; Warblers -- orange-crowned MacGillivray's, Townsend's, Yellow-rumped, Common Yellowthroat, and Wilson's, were seen but mostly heard. There was also an unconfirmed sighting of a pygmy owl.

Thanks to all who turned out, making it a happy day for Alice Elston and myself. A special thank you to Jeff Gaskin for his keen hearing, enthusiasm, and knowledge of the bird songs which he generously shared with us. As most of the identification was by ear, his help was even more valuable. This again emphasizes the point that we should learn the songs and thus make our birding more enjoyable and rewarding.

--Anne Knowles

QUICK'S BOTTOM AND BEAVER LAKE

July 20th, a group of sixteen searched the Quick's Bottom and Beaver Lake areas for whatever birds felt like venturing out into the hot sun. Pickings weren't as slim as the sultry weather would indicate.

Quick's Bottom had American Goldfinches, Cliff Swallows and a Tree Swallow along with the more common Barn and Violet-green, Common Yellowthroats, a Warbling Vireo, a Marsh Wren, and an interesting group of Brown-headed Cowbirds with nondescript young.

A check of the east side of Beaver Lake produced Song Sparrow, Red Crossbill, Belted Kingfisher, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Western Flycatcher, Pileated Woodpecker, Cedar Waxwing, Pine Siskin, White-crowned Sparrow, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Northern Flicker and Downy Woodpecker.

Both areas had Canada Geese and Rufous-sided Towhees; also a surprisingly large number of Red-tailed Hawks, both soaring and perched. What was concluded to be an immature Red-tailed at Quick's Bottom, on the basis of shape, had much of the evidence of a Northern Harrier: white rump, habitat, and low flight.

-- Ed Coffin

NOTICES

THETIS PARK NATURE SANCTUARY

The Fall season for the Thetis Park Nature Sanctuary Association will open on Thursday, October 17, 1985 in the Newcombe Auditorium at 8:00 p.m. Our programme chairman, Jessie Woollett, will present "A Glimpse of Scotland" showing some of the slides from her 1984 trip.

Sunday, October 20th - BIRDING FIELD TRIP

- Details to be announced -

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, LAVENDER !

Lavender Moncton celebrated her 91st birthday on last July 23rd when fellow "Tuesday Groupees" presented her a card expressing their most sincere affection.

MEARES ISLAND

Chainsaws haven't cut down every original rainforest in Clayoquot Sound. Large unlogged areas exist, shaded green on the map above, more than remain elsewhere on Vancouver Island. The Sound remained essentially untouched while less isolated and remote areas were being logged out.

But without exception, these uncut ancient forests are condemned. Years ago they were committed to multinational corporations without any consultation with Clayoquot's local residents. Provincial Governments gave away the priceless natural heritage in exchange for a false promise of economic stability. The gift was made under a now outmoded ethical principal that regarded the cutting of old growth forests and consuming their wealth to be the highest social good. This ethic ignored the effect of rapid deforestation on other resources, including a human resource, the local residents.

Unless democratic action changes the situation, in less than two decades these corporations will wastefully clear-cut log all the valleys and mountainsides in Clayoquot Sound. The harm this will cause is already evident. Adjacent logged out valleys are racked with erosion; their streams, choked with logging debris, run brown with their mountainsides' soil every hard winter rain.

If you suppress the thought that the untouched areas left are doomed, and take the time to visit at least one of them, you will experience the ultimate peaceful feeling of being part of a timeless natural panorama. You will be blessed with views of God-grown forested mountainsides unbroken by large scabs of patchy clear-cut. Your lungs will drink the purest air remaining on Earth refreshed on its journey across the mighty Pacific. Your soul will taste nature's perfect liquid, fresh water, filter through mosses of the thick rainforest, oxygenated in splashing of clean mountain brooks. You'll hear tranquility.

As these beautiful forests disappear, one by one, as roads advance and logging trucks haul the giant trees away, that which remains becomes more valuable. Meares is just the first battle to save outstanding areas in Clayoquot Sound. It is time for change. The rate of deforestation must be reduced. Control of logging decisions must again reside with the local residents who live with the results. Herbicide and pesticide poisons must be eliminated. Slash burning must be phased out. Logged areas must immediately be planted and young trees tended during their youth.

Locally controlled, small scale "true" tree farms must replace existing giant so-called tree farms with absentee landlords. Extremely sensitive and beautiful places like Flores Island and the Megin Watershed must have special protection. Environmentalists don't want to stop all logging - they only want a tiny percentage stopped. At least 5% of the natural forests that once covered B.C. must be saved. Only 2% are protected today. Good management on the 95% reserved for logging makes it affordable.

WRITE the Premier of British Columbia asking him to stop advocating the destruction of Meares' ancient rainforest and to begin helping to create Canada's first Tribal Park.

Premier Bill Bennett
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C.
V8X 1X4

(No postage required if mailed in B.C.) DON'T DELAY - WRITE TODAY!

BIRD OBSERVATIONS

JUNE 1985

<u>No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Area Seen</u>	<u>Observer</u>
1	Common Nighthawk	1	Salt Spring Island	Dave Fraser
1	Solitary Sandpiper	1	Duncan Sewage Ponds	Tim Zurowski & Keith Taylor
1	Northern Mockingbird	2	840 Ferrie Road	Alf Lohr
3	"Black" Brant	4	Clover Point	Ron Satterfield
1	Eared Grebe	5	Kitty Island	Mike Edgell
*2	Purple Martin	8	Head of Cowichan Bay	Tim Zurowski & Keith Taylor
80	Black Swift	8	Duncan Area	Tim Zurowski & Keith Taylor
1	Black Scoter	13	French Beach	M.E. & V. Goodwill
1	Mourning Dove	14	Lohbrunner Road	Brent Diakow
1	Eastern Kingbird	15	Head of Cowichan Bay	Joy & Ron

No.	Species	Date	Area Seen	Observer
50	Caspian Tern	15	Sooke River Estuary	Bob Hay
1	Green-backed Heron	16	Somenos Creek	Barbara & Mike McGrenere
3	Whimbrel	18	Sooke River Estuary	Bob Hay
1	Common Barn-Owl	19	Puckle at Lamont Rd.	Dave Fraser
5	Gray Jay	22	Renfrew Road	Peter Bricknell
*12	Northern Shoveler	26	Central Saanich	M.E. & Vic Goodwill
1	Heermann's Gull	28	Clover Point	Ron Satterfield

JULY 1985

1	Great Horned Owl	2	2772 Vantilburg Cres.	Virginia Bartkow
1	Clark's Nutcracker	13	Summit of Heather Mtn.	Anne Laws
1	Wandering Tattler	14	Victoria Golf Course	Ron Satterfield
2	Semipalmated Sandpiper	14	Witty's Lagoon	Keith Taylor
1	Ruddy Turnstone	16	Clover Point	Ron Satterfield
6	Bank Swallows	20	Discovery Island	Mike Shepard & Dave Stirling
1	Baird's Sandpiper	20	Goodwin & Beach	Ron Satterfield
pr.	Western Bluebird	21	Pears Road	Pat Jeffers
pr.	Ring-necked Duck	28	Blenkinsop Lake	M.E. & Vic Goodwill
1	Black-legged Kittiwake	28	Island View Beach	Dave Stirling
1	Lesser Golden Plover	30	Coburg Peninsula	Joy & Ron Satterfield
1	Northern Harrier	30	9350 Cresswell Road	Barbara Begg
1	Red Knot	30	Witty's Lagoon	Barbara & Michael Meiklejohn

* Two pairs of Purple Martins nested in a two pile dolphin at this location. This is the only active nest site presently known in B.C.

** A female Northern Shoveler with 5 young on both McIntyre Reservoir and Martindale 'L' Reservoir - apparently a second and third nesting record for the Greater Victoria area.

PROGRAMME

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER, 1985

Please meet at the location specified for each trip - if no location given, field trips will meet at Mayfair Lanes, corner of Oak and Roderick at the specified time. No cars can be left at Mayfair Lanes. Always take a lunch and dress according to the weather. Always phone the Rare Bird Alert (382-5562) the week before a trip that you anticipate taking in order to obtain full particulars or details of the changes that may have been made. Changes cannot always be avoided. On V.N.H.S. field trips, participants usually pool vehicles to cut down on parking problems and to reduce costs. A considerable fuel bill can be run up on a trip - vehicles usually consume 5-10¢/km. The Board suggests that participants share the fuel costs with the driver.

Saturday, September 7 Birding Field Trip
Witty's Lagoon
 Leader - Harold Hosford
 Meet Mayfair Lanes 9:00 a.m. or at Witty's Lagoon
 Nature House Parking Lot 9:30 a.m.

Tuesday, September 10 General Meeting and Program
 Program Topic "Fire Ecology of Forests of British Columbia"
Speaker - Mr. John Parminter: Fire Ecologist with Protection Branch, B.C. Forest Service.
Place - University of Victoria, Elliotte Bldg., Theatre #168
Time - 8:00 p.m.
 Everyone is welcome - Bring a friend!

Saturday, September 14 Autumn Botany: Island View Beach
Leader - Sharon Godkin
Meet - Mayfair Lanes 9:00 a.m. or
 Island View Beach Parking Lot 9:30 a.m.

Saturday, September 21 Birding Field Trip - Esquimalt Lagoon
Leader - Ed Coffin
Meet at Helmcken Park and Drive 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, September 25 Birders Night
Place - Arbutus Jr. & Sec. School, Edgelow St.
Time - 7:30 p.m.
Leader - Lyndis Davis

- Saturday, October 5 Birding Field Trip - Cowichan Bay
Leader - to be announced
Meet - Mayfair Lanes 9:00 a.m.

- Tuesday, October 8 General Meeting and Program
Program Topic "Wildlife and a Naturalist in a COAL MINE:
 Lessons for the Home Gardener"
Speaker - Mr. Dave Fraser, graduate student BioDept.,
 U.Vic, East Kooteney Plant Ecologist &
 Reclamation Biologist.
Place - Newcombe Auditorium, B.C. Prov. Museum
Time - 8:00 p.m.
 Everyone is welcome - Bring a friend!

- Saturday, October 12 Botany Field Trip "West Coast Rain Forest - Thetis Lake
 Park to Sombrio Beach"
Leader - Dr. Chris Brayshaw
Meet - Mayfair Lanes 9:00 a.m.

- Saturday, October 19 Botany Field Trip "Mushroom Foray at Goldstream Park"
Leader - Keith Egger, Mycologist, Ph.D. candidate,
 Biol. Dept., U.Vic
Meet - Mayfair Lanes 9:00 a.m. or
 Goldstream Camping Parking lot above the Highway
 9:30 a.m.

- Sunday, October 20 To be Announced

- Wednesday, October 23 Birder's night
Place - Arbutus Jr. & Sec. School, Edgelow St.
Time - 7:30 p.m.
Leader - Lyndis Davis

- Sunday, October 27 Bird and Sea Mammal Marine Trip
 \$25.00 including boat trip and lunch
Leader - Mike Shepard
 Call 388-4227 for details.

JUNIOR PROGRAM - OCTOBER

- The Juniors will meet the first and third Saturday morning of each month starting in October.
- Welcome back everyone and welcome to newcomers.
- Junior Leader is Bianca Message - 595-4254 - give her a call for details.
- Saturday, October 5 Opening get-together at Swan Lake Nature House. Sign up for 1985-86. Walk around the sanctuary - "Returning Birds and What They Eat"
Time - 10:00 - 12:00 a.m.
Place - Swan Lake Nature House 3873 Swan Lake Road
Leader - Bianca Message 595-4254

 - Saturday, October 19 "Goldstream - Fish Spawning"
Meet - Swan Lake Nature House
Time - 10:00 a.m.
Leader - Bianca Message & Dr. Alex Peden, Curator of Aquatic Zoology, B.C. Prov. Museum.

SEPTEMBER SKY 1987
STAR GAZING

PLANETS: Jupiter and Saturn are evening planets. Jupiter is brighter than any of the stars and it can be seen, above the southern horizon, before any stars emerge in the evening twilight. Saturn, much fainter and consequently harder to identify, is low in the southwest at sunset, and sets about 2 1/2 hours later. With careful planning and clear skies, early morning risers may see three planets in the east just before dawn. Brilliant Venus, well up in the sky, dominates the scene. Mars displays its ruddy hue low in the east and, early in the month, Mercury, too, can be seen very near the horizon just before the sky begins to brighten. The three planets perform an interesting "dance" - appearing to change partners with Regulus (Leo's brightest star) throughout the month. Mercury is 1° (about 2 moon diameters) north of Regulus on the 6th, Mars passes $0^\circ.8$ north of it on the 9th and, on the 21st, a mere $0^\circ.4$ (less than the width of a Full Moon) separates Venus and Regulus. Mercury and Mars are "cheek to cheek" - only $0^\circ.01$ apart - on the 4th. No wonder the ancients named planets the "wandering stars"!

The Harvest Moon is the Full Moon nearest the autumnal equinox. (It can occur in September or in October.) In our mid-northern latitudes the Harvest Moon rises about 10 minutes later each night (compared to an average delay of about an hour) near the time of sunset, giving early evening light for the harvest.

OCTOBER SKY 1985

PLANETS: Jupiter is the brilliant "star" in the southwest that sets several hours after sunset. Enjoy Saturn now for it is drawing near to the Sun and will soon be lost in its glare. Look for Saturn low in the southwest when the sky first darkens. Venus and Mars highlight the morning sky. Mars is moving away from the Sun and becomes increasingly easy to see. Venus, on the other hand, is closing in on the Sun. Venus passes just $0^\circ.1$ north of Mars on the 4th. A thin crescent Moon enhances the scene on the 9th.

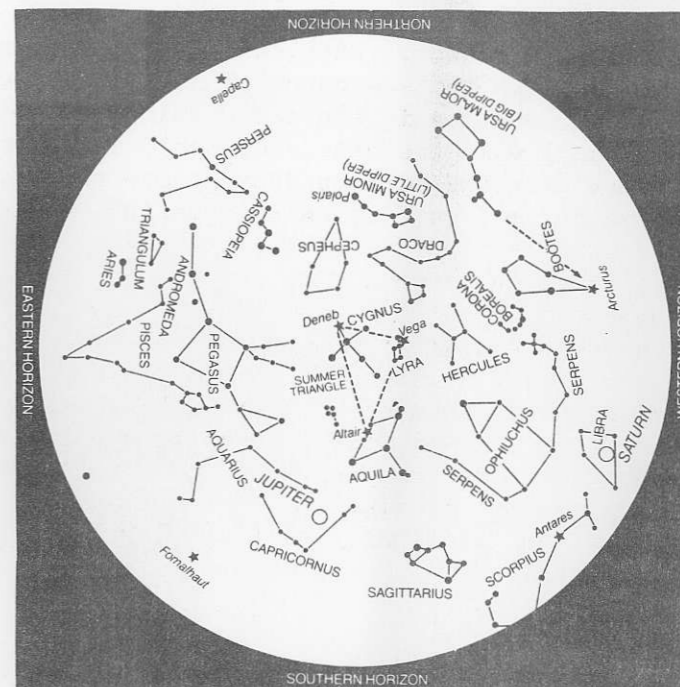
The Hunter's Moon is the full moon after the Harvest Moon. It is said that in the light of this full moon the harvested fields offer little protection from the hunter. During the time of the Hunter's Moon, moonrise occurs shortly after sunset, and is delayed by less than a half hour from night to night.

Orionid meteors are derived from Halley's comet (so are the Eta Aquarids meteors which occur early in May). Normally the shower produces a maximum of 25 meteors per hour per observer when conditions are ideal. The comet is now much closer to earth than it was in May - a good reason to monitor the shower for a few nights around the 11th. A First Quarter Moon sets around midnight so early morning observing should be best. Orionids are swift, only a few are bright, and they may be colourful and produce short lived, wispy trains.

*Courtesy- National Museums
of Canada*

STAR GAZING

SEPTEMBER SKY



OCTOBER SKY

