

# THE OTTAWA NATURALIST

Vol. XXXI.

NOVEMBER, 1917.

No. 8.

## NOTES ON THE WINTER BIRDS OF THE OKANAGAN VALLEY.

By J. A. MUNRO.

In comparison with eastern Canada, the winter season of the Okanagan Valley is mild, with a lighter snowfall and a greater number of clear sunny days. In normal years the first cold weather comes towards the end of November. Between November and the first of March there are usually three or four cold snaps, when the temperature drops to ten or fifteen below zero. By the end of February the snow has melted and warm sunny days are the rule.

During the severe winter of 1915-16, zero weather lasted almost continuously from January 9th until February 4th. There was an unusually large amount of snow and Okanagan Lake was frozen over. The lowest temperature at Okanagan Landing was 24° below zero.

Along the lake shore and in the river bottoms various wild fruits, such as snowberry and rose hips insure an abundant food supply. The fruit of the Black Haw (*Crataegus douglasi*) usually dries on the bushes and is greedily eaten by Bohemian Waxwings and Pine Grosbeaks. Introduced weeds are well represented along roadsides and on waste ground. *Amaranthus retroflexus*, *Chenopodium album* and *Melilotus alba* are the commonest and the seeds form the staple diet of Sparrows, Redpolls and Juncoes.

The following notes cover the period between 1911 and 1917, inclusive.

WESTERN GREBE—*Echmophorus occidentalis*.

A few winter on Okanagan Lake.

HOLBOELL'S GREBE—*Colymbus holboellii*.

A few winter on Okanagan Lake. Both this species and the former, die in large numbers every fall. Specimens examined were in an emaciated condition and contained several species of parasitic nematodes. In several cases a mass of wire-like parasites, clustered between the leg muscles and the skin, caused the knee joints to swell to twice the normal size. A segmented tape-worm was present in several specimens.