

THREE YEARS COLLECTING IN THE LILLOOET DISTRICT

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Don't let me frighten you, as luckily for my friends, all I know about my collection of three years gathering, or rather the part that may interest you, will not take long to tell, as I will try and omit the part familiar to all collectors.

When a boy my teacher (Morrison) had shown me how to mount butterflies, and if I had known what I know now I expect I could have given the world quite a few new things, as I must have had such butterflies as *Erebia vidleri* before known to Elwes. I believe the type came from Seton Lake. Not knowing how to take care of my collection, of course most of those collected years ago were entirely destroyed, but I found a few specimens a couple of years ago in the attic in shoe boxes, in perfect condition. I can't understand why the moths didn't destroy them, as moths are very hard to keep out of my glass cases. One thing I have never forgotten was getting *Parnassius smintheus* probably var. *magnus*, about twenty years ago, a hundred feet or so above town. Ten years or so ago it seems to me that I saw hundreds near the summit of Mt. McLean. The last three years I have only seen them at from 4,000 to 6,000 feet. Last year there were none on the summit. Can anyone account for it being so low down that one time? It was not likely it was breeding here then, as it lives on *sedum* and *saxifraga*, which are only found high up.

It was our good old friend, the late Tom Wilson, who put me on the right track. I collected *Buprestids* for him, but couldn't resist starting a collection of butterflies, although he told me to leave that to the boys, and for me to take up a group not so well known. The mountains were always my friends, but it was not until I knew how to collect scientifically that they became of such great interest. It was not until after E. M. Anderson had taken two specimens of *Oeneis beani* that I had any conception that I still might turn up something of interest to the outside world. With the idea of becoming suddenly famous, I made up my mind that I would capture an *Oeneis beani* if possible, although Anderson had been a week in capturing two. I watched the barometer until I felt sure that we were going to have fine settled weather. It is no use attempting to collect high up in bad weather. So an hour or so before daylight on an August morning, I started out for a day of chase and destruction that I shall never forget. At about 5,000 ft. I rested for breakfast, and if I were a poet I would be still writing verses describing the grandeur of the scene, the rising sun gilding the top of the mountain in the distance, and the beds of lupins and yellow lillies at my feet. The breathing of an air so pure, the stillness of it all, makes one wonder how poor man has fallen and got away from God's wondrous world. Reaching timber line at about six, I still pressed onward even

though there were plenty of good things at hand. My mind was set on **beani**. On reaching the crest of the ridge that runs to the summit of Mt. McLean, I was surprised to notice two or three of the prize I sought, but I soon found they were a long way from being in the bottle. I noted the spot where I was sure I had seen one alight, but although I got quite close I could not make it out. I found later on that the underside is exactly the colour of the moss or lichen-covered rocks, and that when they alight they turn over on their sides, but they are on the alert, and one does well to get within ten feet. When they start they rise high in the air and are off down the mountain side several hundred feet. After a while I struck a plan by studying its movements. I found if I kept a little down one side of the ridge, they would often fly in my direction or light near me. Even when one had the net over them, one would have to be very careful as they would not rise into the net, but lie flat on the ground and sneak out under the net, but after many hours of hard work up and down the ridge, I was well rewarded. As I got to the summit I noticed that **beani** disappeared and that **chryxus** took their place, and that they did not encroach on each others territory.

This was in 1916. In 1917 there was not a **beani** to be seen on the same ground at the same time of the year. The weather might have had something to do with it, as I did not strike a good day the whole of 1917. I saw a few **beani** near the head of Cayoosh Creek in 1917.

Among my 1916 catch, I got two or three **Brenthis astarte**, but was so intent on **beani** that I did not notice much about the habits of **astarte**. In fact, I did not know I had made such a rare capture until later on. I did not see an **astarte** anywhere in 1917.

Erebia vidleri is fairly plentiful at from 4,000 to 6,000 feet, although fresh specimens are not always easily got.

Oeneis navadensis is found at one or two thousand feet.

Eurymus nastes form **streckeri** is found here at about 7,000 feet. I have never seen many, and they seem the hardest of any to capture, as once they start they do not alight for a long time.

I had the good fortune to get **Heodes cupreus** at about 7,000 feet in 1917. I also got a few at the head of a tributary of Cayoosh Creek. The gold and red gives it a very striking appearance when in flight.

One sight I witnessed on the peak of Mt. McLean struck me as peculiar. The air was literally full of flying ants and lady-bugs (**Coccinellidae**). I intend trying to find out if the ants had their nest there, or if they flew up from the valley.

Danaus archippus was quite common here in about 1915, but now seems to have disappeared.

The same thing seems to have happened to **Pseudohazis hera**. This moth was quite common one season, and I got several specimens, but it

disappeared all of a sudden, and I only got one specimen the following season, although I kept on the lookout for it for two months. I think it was flying some time in July, on very hot days. I gave a couple to the late T. Wilson, who said he had never seen it before.

MOUNT McLEAN

McLean lies to the west of the town of Lillooet. It is bounded on the south by Seton Lake and on the north by the lower Bridge River. The highest peak cannot be seen from the town, but a trail starts from here that is the best possible route to take for one wishing to reach the summit. To climb the 7,438 feet and return to town the same day is not too strenuous an undertaking. Any young man that is a good walker can make it easily. Those who prefer to ride can take horses, and there is a very good trail the whole way. As the town is 862 feet above sea level, it means the peak is 8,300 feet high. July and August are the ideal months for the collector. Those contemplating a one-day trip should start at two or three a.m. There is an excellent place for breakfast at about 5,000 feet. Timber line would be then reached at about six, and by that time the sun would be warm enough to bring out quite a few butterflies. By nine or ten a person could be on the summit. Even on the hottest days it is cool there, as there is generally a breeze blowing. The horse flies might be a little troublesome, but you can have some sport bottling these. There are several lakes and you could work down to these for lunch. Collecting is good anywhere here. The view from the top is beyond description. I think I counted three hundred snow-capped peaks, some seventy miles away. Looking towards the coast, it is a sea of peaks, some covered with perpetual snow down their sides for two or three thousand feet. I can pick out one at the head of Cayoosh Creek that must be 9,000 feet. Frank Gott is the only human being who has ever climbed it, Indians excepted (but I don't think they ever did), so I named it Gott Mountain. I got on top of the next peak and took a picture of it.

The flora is most interesting. J. M. Macoun, Dominion Botanist, collected here in 1916. He got nearly a thousand species, and claims it is one of the best fields he ever collected in. The most beautiful spots lie between 4,000 and 6,500 feet. Here whole hillsides are a mass of purple lupins, dotted with yellow lillies and framed with dark green fir or spruce. In the distance shining snow-banks show through the trees.

There is quite a contrast between the flowers found at the town and those on top of the mountain. Here we have almost tropical vegetation, as cactus, sage brush, and other plants that grow in Arizona, while at 8,000 feet we find alpine flowers that grow up into the Arctic Circle. This should be the ideal field for the collector, and I daresay gives a combination that will be hard to beat anywhere. Then lying between the wet and dry belts, a person has only to go a few miles one way or the other to find the fauna and flora entirely different.