



Charles deBlois Green, Okanagan Naturalist

Charles deBlois Green was born in Cambridgeshire, England in 1863. He turned down a university education to pursue his interest in Ornithology (the study of birds). In 1888, he came to British Columbia, trained as a land surveyor and eventually moved to the Okanagan.

deBlois Green had interests beyond ornithology and was interested in all aspects of the natural world. In 1893, he and a collaborator published a listing of the butterflies and moths of British Columbia. This work featured the first illustrations of BC butterflies ever published.

Eventually, deBlois Green settled and built a cabin on Osoyoos Lake where he and his wife

Margaret raised two daughters. He was an excellent shot and kept his family well supplied with game. After a stint at sheep farming, he returned to surveying work, mostly on the coast, and continued to collect eggs and nests to further his ornithological studies.

In 1914, the First World War began and deBlois Green, determined to play his part, tried to enlist. But at 51, he was too old to stand the rigours of training. Determined to serve, he cashed out his life insurance and volunteered as an ambulance driver for the French Red Cross. The work was dangerous, as drivers were often under fire.

During the war, deBlois Green continued to collect nests and eggs wherever he could, even on the battlefield. In one instance, he saw a magpie nest in a tree that was in danger from shellfire. He dashed out under fire and removed the nest, which earned him the name of the "the mad Englishman" from French onlookers.

At war's end, deBlois Green returned to the Okanagan to raise sheep. However, life became increasingly difficult. His daughter returned home with her four children after an unfortunate marriage, coyotes threatened his sheep, and the never-ending chores that are part of ranching life drained his strength. He became increasingly frail and arthritic.

In August of 1929, deBlois Green died from heart failure while on a visit to Penticton. His lifelong passion for ornithology enabled him to make significant contributions to the study of birdlife in BC. Many of his egg and nest specimens, including some of those collected on the battlefield, are in the collection of the Penticton museum.



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