

This recording is an interview with Dr. Robert Butler, a biologist and bird specialist who currently lives in New Westminster and has studied the Fraser Delta over multiple decades. The major themes in the interview are his connection to and history in New Westminster, the Fraser Delta and the avifauna of New Westminster.

Interviewer: Pamela Stern and Ken Bauder

Interview date: 28 May 2013

Date Range: 1940s – 2013

Length: 57:11

Dr. Robert Butler is a biologist and bird specialist who has lived in New Westminster and studied birds on the Fraser Delta for the last thirty years. He was a senior research scientist with Environment Canada and at the time of the interview an adjunct professor of biology at Simon Fraser University. Fraser Delta is considered the primary of all “Important Bird Areas” of the 598 areas in Canada, and Butler describes his work on birds in the area and internationally. Having worked extensively on the Fraser Delta, he talks about the changes to the bird population in the New Westminster area through the process of urbanization, industrialization, and deindustrialization. Butler was a part of a five-year project that resulted in the creation of a British Columbia Bird Atlas and recently completed the first urban bird atlas on the bird population in New Westminster. <http://www.sfu.ca/biology/wildberg/butler.htm>

Butler grew up in North Vancouver. His father and uncle operated Butler Tire on Columbia St. in New Westminster for many years, and his wife grew up in New Westminster. In his interview he speaks about various areas of New Westminster such as Columbia St, Sapperton Landing, the Brunette River and Hume Park.

#### Section 0:00 – 6:40

- In this portion of the interview, Butler talks about the history of his family who arrived from England, settled near Chilliwack, and eventually migrated to Vancouver and New Westminster in the late 1940s. He reports that he grew up in North Vancouver, but his father and uncle ran Butler Tire on Columbia St. He moved to New Westminster in the 1980s, and his connection to the Fraser Delta is as a biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service and as research scientist at the Centre for Wildlife Ecology at Simon Fraser University.

#### Section 6:41 – 14:09

- In this portion of the interview, Butler talks about the Fraser Delta. New Westminster and Queensborough is at the head of the delta, and Butler describes the importance of the estuary, which provides the basis for the rich ecosystem and avifauna on the Fraser River. Many of the millions of birds on the delta are migratory, and come from Russia, Manitoba, Alaska, the Amazon and interior British Columbia.

#### Section 14:10 – 21:29

- In this portion of the interview, Butler talks about how the avifauna in New Westminster specifically has evolved from the 1800s to the 1940s and up until today as a result of

changing agricultural practices, industrialization and later urbanization. He talks about the bird species that have returned as an effect of conservation efforts in the area.

Section 21:30 – 34:22

- In this portion of the interview, Butler talks about how he and a team developed a bird atlas for British Columbia with 320 species represented, and later completed an urban bird atlas for New Westminster. The New Westminster urban bird atlas is the first of its kind in Canada. Furthermore, Butler describes the bird abundance in New Westminster, and mentions Glenbrook Ravine and Queen Park as examples of places with rich bird life. He goes on to talk about the co-existence of humans and birds in urban areas, and the various political and practical solutions to enhance co-existence.

Section 34:23 – 42:45

- In this portion of the interview, Butler talks about the deindustrialization along the New Westminster waterfront, and the correlated positive effect on the bird population. He subsequently talks about the Canfor area and Sapperton landing, and his observations of birds in these areas.

Section 42:46 – 56:51

- In this portion of the interview, the conversation returns to the urban bird atlas and interest from city representatives. He talks about changes he has observed around his house to specific species such as the nighthawk, and suggests bird trips along the Brunette River or to Hume Park.