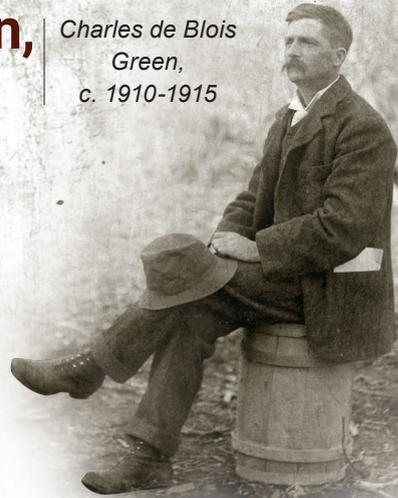


Charles de Blois Green, Okanagan Naturalist

Charles de Blois
Green,
c. 1910-1915



Charles de Blois 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.

De Blois 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, de Blois Green returned to surveying work, mostly on the coast, and continued to collect eggs and nests to further his ornithological studies.

Charles de Blois Green was not only interested in ornithology. 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.

In 1914, the First World War began and de Blois Green, determined to play his part, tried to enlist. At 51, he was too old to stand the rigours of training. Undeterred, 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, de Blois 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, de Blois 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 fencing and other tasks drained his strength. He became increasingly frail and arthritic.

In August of 1929, de Blois 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.

Dennis Oomen

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