

THE
Blue Jay

Vol. X

Apr.-May-June, 1952

No. 2



Saskatchewan's Nature Magazine

Founded by Isabel M. Priestly in 1942

Published by

THE SASKATCHEWAN NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

in cooperation with the Provincial Museum
of Natural History.



Blue Jay Chatter

Lloyd T. Carmichael, Editor

The fundamental aim of our Society is two-fold: first, to encourage us to develop an appreciation of wildlife by becoming more intimately acquainted with the rich and varied gifts of Nature, and second, to convince ourselves and others that the conservation of these gifts is essential to present and future happiness, to the maintenance of our way of life, and as an assurance that our children will be able to enjoy the rich heritage which is theirs by right of birth.

During his inaugural address in 1949, Governor Youngdahl of Minnesota had this to say:

“We rob the future by wasting today. Any way we turn we face the inevitable shortage of the means of survival at no distant date, unless we act vigorously to stop the depletion that is now going on. It is for us, in the present, to redeem the losses of the past and to guarantee the gains of the future. Thus we will prove ourselves good stewards of what God has given us and assume for ourselves and our children the means of a more abundant life.”

It is hoped that all BLUE JAY readers interested in conservation, will join in a crusade to carry this message to every corner of our province, and arouse our people to support an all-out program for the preservation of our remaining resources—soil, forests and wildlife.

Our particular field is the study of plants and animals, their intriguing habits and varied habitats, but we must bear in mind that our own welfare as well as that of all life depends also on the care, maintenance and conservation of soils, forests and water.

There are many among our members who are actively assisting this endeavour. Such men as C. Stuart Francis, of Torch River; Ralph Stueck, of Abernethy; Fred Bard, Director of the Provincial Museum; Arnold MacPherson, of Saskatoon; Judge McKim, of Melfort; Arthur Ward, of Swift Current; Dr. Stuart Houston, of Yorkton; Stanley Street, of Nipawin, and many others are, by their work and writings, setting an example for the rest of us to emulate.

I believe that the BLUE JAY has become a potent force for conservation in the province and that its influence in this respect will increase from year to year. That fact, alone, justifies its existence. As members of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, it is not only a duty but a privilege and pleasure for each of us to assist in keeping inviolate those resources which have given us so much pleasure in life.

The next issue of the BLUE JAY will be a very special one. It will mark the completion of ten years of publication. Special plans are being made to make this anniversary number the best yet. Determine to add to its interest by submitting your summer observations, illustrated by clear photos or drawings, if possible. Give us also your opinion of the value of the contribution that our little nature magazine has made and is making to our prairie life.

The Year's at the Spring

By Elizabeth Cruickshank



NO sooner was the curtain of winter raised than "Spring came bursting out all over." It seemed as if one day Fogarty and I watched muskrats swim frantically among ice chunks as their creekside houses were flooded; the next redwings were flinging their "okeree" from the rushes and before Fogey had time to investigate the new fresh earth smells, musineon and prairie bean, little crusaders in golden fleece, had taken possession of the golf course hillside. All at once our walks were studded with new interests. Nothing surpassed in beauty dividends our daily pilgrimages to a crabapple orchard of three old trees. To see them early or late or to stand beneath them and look up into the heart of them, with sunbeams sifting

through the delicate petals that covered the countless twigs on the many-forked branches—was enough to make the heart ache with the wonder of it.

Our first drive to Lumsden found the valley lapped in peace. A mist of white was on the trees, dull gold and brown, with a tinge of blue in the green of the patchwork fields highlighted by patches of lavender and gold.

The flowers had answered Judy's roll-call for the procession of Spring as she remembered it. Each had received a loving welcome. As she examined every new shoot of fresh green for the burden of flowers it should bear she fell on her knees beside a little green rosette with its tiny white blossoms: "Dear little Androsace, I knew you would come with the Onions"

The ground felt so friendly to our step, the wind from the west had a clean washed smell when we reached the hilltop to look down on what was in former years the perfect nursery, sheltered by tule and willow, for young bittern. This year it was a lake where grebes, ducks and mudhens were cavorting merrily. We rested in the shelter of the old ash tree in the pasture, by a knoll jewelled with early blue violets. The moss by the trunk, rich brown when last we saw it, was now a lush green cushion covered with brown stems bearing their spore cases aloft, but which the sun made shining copper columns with green flags at their summits. Again the sun made us pause that day as it shone through a robin's yellow bill, making it appear transparent, fragile, quite different from the opaque yellow bill of the starling, yet not so exciting as the vivid pink bill in the black face of the Harris Sparrow.

The slow buzzing of the clay-coloured sparrow came from the cherry tree as if to accompany the cheerful note of the yellow warbler in the saskatoon bushes. A wren added his spring song as he flitted busily from tree to tree. A robin joined the choir from the hawthorn tree as the rich whistle of the oriole came from the top of the cottonwood. Judy heard singing too from an old flicker's nest. We investigated to find a nestful of wee pink mice, on a cozy bed of cowhair.

What pleasure there is in common things! In spring the tempo of our joy is quickened of course, from the moment when we are wakened by a song like a tinkling bell caressing the early morning air till the evening's purple glow brings the robin's plaintive note and my Te Deum "I thank Thee that I love the things of earth." For before our eyes in spring unfolds:

*"An opulence beyond the dream of kings
After the frugal winter and its cold
Not for the hands, but for the heart to hold."*

WHAT IS NATURE !

By Alan Devoe

(Submitted by Marie H. Millers)

NOWADAYS, it is curious that the more concerned men become with science, the less notice they pay to nature. We have got to the strange state where, in our preoccupation with electrons, we think that the heart of nature is to be perceived only through a laboratory lens.

We do not walk now in wooded places, and mark the look of birch thickets and listen to the calling of birds, and seek knowledge in that way. It seems not to occur to us that the intimations to be drawn from some new chemical formula are no nearer to the core of reality than those intimations which can come to a man when he lays his hand upon

the rough bark of a pine, or squints up at the winter sky to see a solitary hawk hovering there, or listens at night to the cry of foxes in a quiet countryside.

There is an old saying about not being able to see the forest for the trees. Today, we can scarcely see nature for the science. True, nature is a matter of chemical fusings and mathematical formulas; but nature is also the singing of phoebes in country meadows in the spring; and the leap of catfish in rush-ringed ponds, and an exultation and a miracle.

And if we would not lose all poetry from our hearts and all intuitiveness from our minds, we would do well, I think, to remember these things.

The Message of Conservation

C. Stuart Francis

AFTER a number of wet years in Saskatchewan we can expect to have a change any time, and perhaps this spring and summer may be as dry as the last few years have been wet. If such is the case, it is the duty of every citizen of this province to be careful with fire; to be sure every match or cigarette is dead out after use; to see that every camp-fire and every land-clearing fire are dead out also, before it is forgotten, or these same fires may be remembered in a very unpleasant and expensive manner. Also it is the duty of every official charged with authority, to see that careless campers and careless settlers are checked up and if found to be unco-operative, to receive the treatment they deserve. The person who does not consider the rights of others cannot expect to get undeserved consideration himself. As conditions exist in our province today, we definitely cannot afford to waste any more of our rich natural resources, and certainly not for the temporary monetary gain of any individual, or group of individuals, who may consider a few dollars gained today ahead of the future well-being of our country.

It is the duty of every BLUE JAY subscriber to endeavour to pass on the message of conservation to everyone he or she comes in contact with, and especially our children. They are the material we can mould more easily for the future good or detriment of our country, according to the direction of our efforts.

Timely Questions and Pertinent Answers

By Ducks Unlimited

Why does wildlife need protection? Chiefly because natural habitat continues to shrink relentlessly in the face of ever-expanding civilization. . . . Because of an equally deadly increase in hunting pressure as human populations expand. . . . And because these hazards, each of comparatively recent origin, are additional dangers to the age-old one of unpredictable weather. Faced by this terrible trio and receiving no protection, many wildlife species soon would be tottering on the brink of extinction.

* * *

What should we know about wildlife? Experience indicates that we cannot know too much about the subject. The more we find out by re-

The Value of Natural History

OF ALL THE JOYS of life which may fairly come under the head of recreation there is nothing that surpasses Natural History. It opens up a world of interest and beauty whose cultivation brings physical, intellectual and aesthetic satisfactions.

Since natural history is pursued out of doors it satisfies the need for healthful physical exercise and at relatively small cost. There is no end to the intellectual interest provided by an interest in birds, plants, trees, and other features of the natural world.

Nothing is more refreshing or more satisfying to our aesthetic natures than a love of the beauty of the world. Speaking of this, Viscount Grey of Falloden, Foreign Secretary of Great Britain during the First Great War, wrote "It was like a great sanctuary into which we could go and find refuge for a time from even the greatest trouble of the world, finding there not enervating ease, but something which gave optimism, confidence and security. The progress of the seasons unchecked, the continuance of the beauty of nature was a manifestation of something great and splendid which not all the crimes and follies and misfortunes of mankind can abolish or destroy."

—*The Federation of Ontario Naturalists*

search and careful observation; the more intelligently we shall be able to manage these grand resources. . . . To ensure that our children and those to follow can enjoy them to an even greater extent than we do today. Wildlife needs water, food and cover. . . . If we see to it that these basic requirements are safeguarded, added to or provided, we cannot go far wrong.

* * *

Who is responsible for wildlife? Some people say, "Let Mother Nature look after her own." . . . Others retort, "Up to the government." . . . Actually, recorded history reveals that Mother Nature isn't quite a match for man-made pressures on wildlife populations. . . . And government is you, so who is responsible?

Nature's Balanced Equation

By John Clayson

(From "The Wood Duck")

A dirt side road travelled at twenty to twenty-five miles per hour with the driver gawking to right and left does not get you anywhere very fast. It may kick up a little dust behind you, but the varied countryside around you kicks up a very different kind of dust inside you. By alchemy quiet rolling farmland on your left, plus the gentian blue of Lake On-

tario on your right, plus the sounds of animal life all around you, catalyzed by the influence of warm afternoon sunlight at your back, reacts to yield calm yet zestful tranquility as you putter along. Early morning or late afternoon colour, as you come over the crest of a hill gives you a "long" look that is a continuing source of pleasure. On the water, glittering sequins from a shaft of early morning sunlight, breaking through unwashed woolly clouds, can produce a brightness within.

GIVE WILDLIFE A BRAKE

Thousands of animal casualties on highways could be avoided this summer if motorists would apply a little *brake* pressure and toot their horns, the National Audubon Society declares. Blinking of headlights at night will often disperse animals that otherwise are transfixed by a steady beam. A considerate driver is a boon to humans and wildlife alike.

Research indicates that a Blue Goose gosling increases its birth-weight by 16 to 20 times during its first two months of life . . . At this rate of growth, an average human infant would weigh between 130 and 160 pounds when seven or eight weeks old.



—PHOTO BY DOUG GILROY

LONG-EARED OWL

Doug Gilroy, Regina

In this section of the country, five different species of owls have been found nesting. One of my favourites and I believe one of the most beneficial and most attractive is the Long-eared Owl. Many wooded coulees harbour a nest of these owls. I once found five nests in the course of one mile along the creek.

MIGHTY WINGS

Doug Gilroy

ONE morning, early in April the man on the radio announced that the wind velocity was thirty-five miles an hour. Two minuets later I stepped outside in time to see a Great Blue Heron go flying over the house. He was sailing with the wind and his great wings were flopping up and down in seemingly helpless fashion. "That boy," thought I, "will be blown right back to Kentucky if his wings aren't broken off in the meantime."

Then as he passed over a certain part of the creek which is quite often frequented by herons, he set his wings and to my surprise circled right around into the wind, then side-slipped down to the creeks just as easy as you please.

What power that bird must have in its muscles! Truly a master of the air!

BIRD WATCHING

*Helen and Herbert Partridge,
Gull Lake.*

APRIL and May have been ideal for bird watching due to the earliness of the spring season and the almost uninterrupted succession of warm sunny days. We take great pleasure each spring in visiting the one spot in our district in which we have found Yellow Headed Black-birds. We would like to know if other watchers see these in any great numbers.

Today (May 18th) we saw six Avocets, a bird we had not been familiar with before this year. This most spectacular water bird is easily identified by his orange head and black and white wings. We came within fifteen yards of them and watched them feeding.

Dr. Arthur A. Allen's book "Stalking Birds with Color Camera" has added to our reading and watching pleasure. We highly recommend it to "Blue Jay" readers.

BIRD WATCHING

Evelyn M. Casson — Cater.

NOW that spring is here again and our birds have come back from their winter feeding grounds an early morning walk is bound to be interesting.

About two weeks ago I took such a walk and as I was passing a small poplar tree I saw in the branches about ten feet above me what I thought was a woodpecker, but a second look showed it to be a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

He was a very handsome fellow. I had a good look at him as he perched above me. I was able to study him for some time as he was not the least bit afraid of me.

He slipped up and down the branches, whipping over and underneath and tapped and investigated each limb for his breakfast. His red crest shone in the morning sun and the black and red patches on his throat glowed with health and vigour. He was truly a fine bird.

He seemed to be finding some kind of insects on the limbs of the poplar. I am sure these birds will do a lot of good in keeping down the harmful worms that infest our poplars every spring.

Farther on down the trail I was passing a small poplar bluff when I heard a vigorous rustling in the grass and dead leaves near by. I thought it must be a squirrel or some such animal to make so much noise. I was surprised to see, as I came near to the spot, two little sparrows fly a few feet away.

They were obviously a pair and probably hunting for a nesting place. I had a good look at them and after I got home I looked them up in my bird guide and found they were Canada birds or the White Throated Sparrows. It has occurred to me that I really do not know our sparrows even though I have lived among them all my life. We all know the well-known and beloved song of the Canada bird, but how many of us can say, "That's a White Throated Sparrow" by just looking at one.

A night or two later a bird began to sing in the trees just at my bed-

room window. I listened to his sweet canary-like warbling for some time and decided that it was a Song Sparrow, but again I had to turn to my guide book to get a description of this lovely little singer.

Each evening we listen to the Vesper Sparrows as they tune up and sing their evening song which is so carefree and gay, but if he wasn't singing I would hesitate before I could be sure it was the Vesper Sparrow.

Just last evening I could hear a bird singing down in the woods near the house. It was warm and still out and I felt sure a rain was coming. I did not recognize the bird by its song so down the trail I went with my bird guide in my hand.

The song came from the top of a tall poplar. I crept closer and closer to the singer as quietly as the dead leaves and underbrush would let me. The singing stopped so I stopped. I saw no movement, nor heard any sound of wings, but when he began to sing again he was in another tall poplar across the trail.

I quietly stole across the trail and finally stood under the tree where the singing came from, but could see nothing. The song would start softly and then gain in strength and clearness as it neared completion, ringing so free and clear that it seemed to make the whole bluff reverberate. Then silence again, and next I would hear him singing in a tree yards away and still had no sight of him.

By now it was getting dark and the mosquitoes were out in biting hordes so I came home. Who is this shy little singer?

I am determined I shall find out. I am also determined that I shall learn to know our sparrows not only by their lovely songs, but by their colors and habits as well.

Waterfowl species are among the greatest wildlife actors . . . Watch a mother duck or goose the next time you approach her nest . . . She will very likely do everything but stand on her head in an effort to distract you away from the eggs or downy young.

An Amazing Spring

Dr. Stuart Houston, Yorkton

THIS has been an amazing season. The snow was gone two weeks earlier than average, and the trees were in leaf a full three weeks early. The birds, however, are not so far ahead of schedule.

Our first Sunday morning bird hike at Rousay Lake on April 27 disclosed 32 species—an April record.

Our second Y.N.H.S. hike on May 11 found a total of 50 species at Leech Lake. A young Great Horned Owl, just out of the nest was banded. Later that day, on Lower Rousay Lake, I found a Canada Goose nest with 5 eggs.

I spent May 24th and 25th at my wife's home on a farm south of Dilke, Sask. (56 miles northwest of Regina) and on May 24 we visited nearby Last Mountain Lake. 65 different species of birds were observed during the two days.

At Dilke, we watched 12 sharp-tailed grouse "dancing" on a stubble knoll. Previously grassy, this land has been under cultivation for two years and the grouse have continued to use it as a dancing ground in spite of this. They have tramped the stubble flat on the top of the knoll.

The first duck broods of 8, 9 and 7 Mallards, and 10, 7, 5 and 4 Pintails were noted on the 24th and 25th.

Henry McArton and J. B. Belcher report a further increase in the numbers of Hungarian Partridges and Sharp-tailed Grouse at Dilke, and say both species are as plentiful as they ever have been.

Unprecedented Numbers

Arthur Ward, Swift Current.

NEVER, during the term of our residence here, has there been such an array of different bird species on the miniature lakes which dot the open prairie. Grebes, coots, bitterns and many others, frequenters of larger waters, are seen nesting a few yards from the roadside ditches.

I photographed a Horned Grebe's nest, containing four eggs. Just then I was surprised to see a beaver swimming along the water's edge,

though many miles from any natural habitat. I noticed some poplars growing well back from the road which might provide the beaver with its requirements.

There has also been an unprecedented number of thrushes in migration. The Olive-backed Thrush had come and gone before the Grey-checked put in an appearance. Although some species have not yet arrived, others are hatching out their young. The early incubation may induce second batches where not often customary.

Blackie, the Crow

Henry Savard — Carvel, Alta.

I HAVE caught and tamed many birds, mostly juncos, snowbirds, crows and magpies, and I have found the crow to be the most interesting and easily tamed.

Blackie was my last crow. He was very tame and mischievous, and enjoyed playing tricks. Whenever I was building something he would be waiting to hide the nails, ruler or anything he could find.

One day when I was building, I set a handful of nails down within my reach and while I was measuring some boards, I turned to find that the nails were gone. Then I saw Blackie hurriedly trying to hide a last mouthful in some grass. I recovered my nails and had to smile as I heard him squawk disappointedly. He also used to annoy the dogs by pulling and pecking at their tails.

I would like to know where I could acquire bands for crows, magpies and also song birds. I am interested in banding.

(Write Mr. Fred Bard, Director, Provincial Museum, Regina.)

Starlings at Lintlaw

C. St. A. Nixon

I saw five European Starling here on March 31, my first in 42 years. They were foraging on the ground in a neighbour's yard. I think I saw five or six about the same time last year but they were in flight and I could not be sure. On this occasion there was no mistaking the characteristic starling strut. They disappeared, as they did last year, after only one appearance.

Misses the Sight of Saskatchewan Birds

Frank Rouse, Burnaby, B.C.

AFTER living in Saskatchewan for over forty years, most of it on the open prairie, I find it is not so easy to observe the birds in this district of Burnaby; the migration of birds is not as noticeable in the spring and fall, I miss the sight of the flocks of geese and ducks and the meadow larks singing their spring song, and the Baltimore Oriole. We have robins with us the year round, also Spotted Towhees and Song Sparrows, both varieties of which make good use of our feed shelf throughout the winter. We have many Oregon Juncos here through the winter months and a few varied Thrush when the ground is covered with snow.

I am told by Bird Watchers here that both of these varieties go to higher levels in the mountains for the summer. There are many varieties of ducks that winter along the coast a few miles from here. Ring-necked pheasants are quite common near here and the males have been busy crowing since early February. I saw a swallow for the first time this spring on April 5th.

I find each copy of "The Blue Jay" most interesting and appreciate the effort of all those who are responsible for the writing, assembly and printing of such good articles and am pleased I had the opportunity of being a subscriber since 1942.

Whooping Cranes Head North

THE Whooping Cranes, America's most publicized birds, have left the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas to make the long flight to their unknown breeding grounds in the far north, the National Audubon Society reports. Last fall 25 Whooping Cranes arrived at the Aransas Refuge, but two of them subsequently died of gunshot wounds received en route. This indicates that the giant birds run their major risks while en route from the breeding to the wintering grounds.

An encouraging note on the Whooping Crane front is that five young birds were added to the ranks during the summer of 1951. The continental population of "whoopers," which includes the two birds at the Audubon Park Zoo in New Orleans, now stands at 25. Efforts to prevent the extinction of the Whooping Crane are jointly sponsored by the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Audubon Society.

In days gone by when waterfowl were moulting and flightless, Indians staged "harvesting drives." . . . Thus did the tribes add to their stockpile of food against the long winters and possible famine.

Exhausted Bluebirds

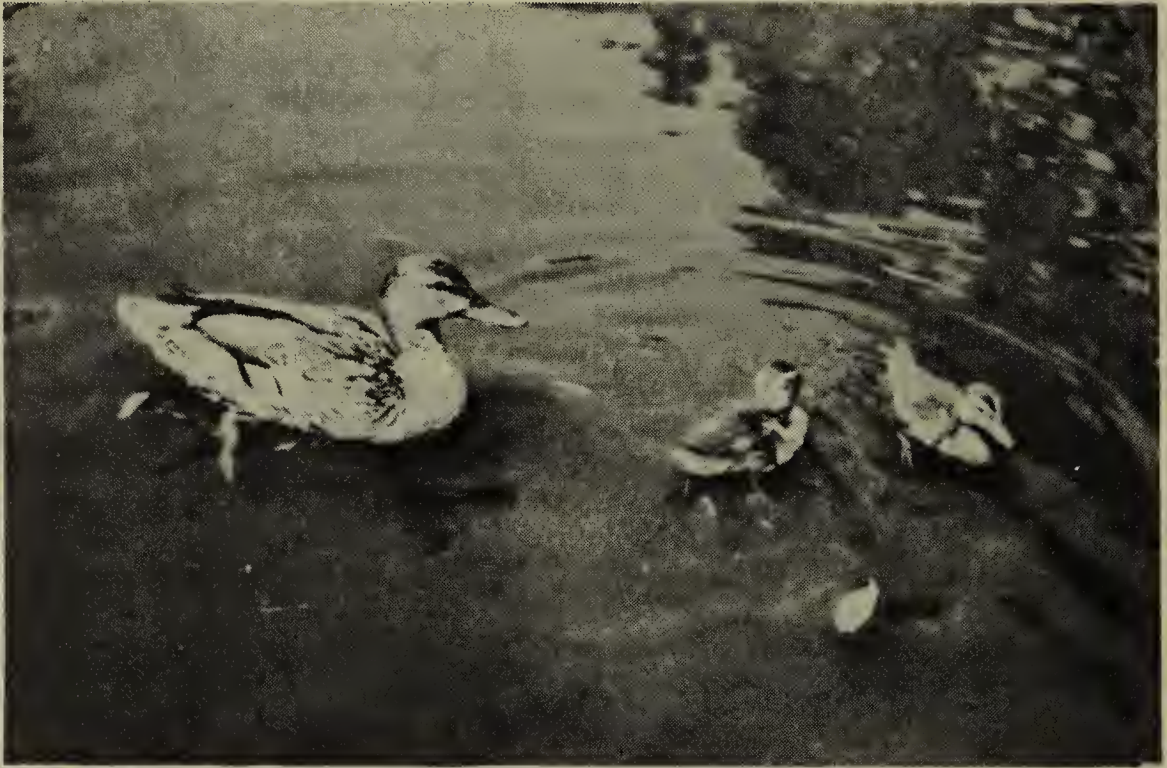
Arthur Ward, Swift Current

IT DOES not always require warm days of sunshine or budding trees to stir the migratory instinct of some species. Even the Juncos and Sparrows, so prevalent in our experience as the forerunners of the northern trek were lacking in this respect.

Such was the case on the 17th of March. In the face of three days continuous snow and cold blustery weather there appeared four Bluebirds in Mr. Pearson's garden, Swift Current. They were in such an exhausted condition that John and Judy (twins of the family) just picked three of them up. The fourth, having more energy, struggled away. One of the captives succumbed to the ordeal; the other two were fed and after careful treatment, released on the 27th of March.

Having just returned from Saskatoon where I had the pleasure of showing bird pictures on the screen to our ardent naturalist, Arnold MacPherson and Mr. H. E. Wood of the Nature Column in the Star-Phoenix, I went over to the Pearson's home hoping to band the two Bluebirds, only to find that they had already been released.

More than Ever Before



—PHOTO BY DOUG GILROY

DUCKS

I believe we have more ducks here this year than ever before. They can be seen in the fields, on the roads, pastures, etc. In fact, everywhere you go you seem to be scaring up ducks.

Soon sights, like this photograph will be very common. They are Mallards.

Blind Teal Duck

Dr. V. Rondeau, Rouleau.

A TEAL DUCK, which is the smallest of our ducks, was recently attacked by a dog, at Milestone, and blinded.

A young banker there gave it to me after he had tried to restore its sight. I kept it for a few days thinking I might tame it. It would eat from my hand and would bathe in a dish of water, but it kept trying to get away. Finally I decided to take it to a friend of mine who lives about six miles from our town and who has a large dug-out—and no cats and dogs.

The Teal, which is a green-winged one, was delighted to be released and swam towards the tame ducks, which started to talk in the language which all ducks understand universally.

My friend informed me lately that the Teal disappeared a couple of days after I brought it over. They looked high and low but, at first, could not find it. Finally it turned up by itself. It seems to be feeding and happy, though blind.

Dumb but Communicative

Frank Baines, Saltcoats

THE story in the December issue on page ten regarding the robin whose young one had a worm stuck in its throat, reminded me of an old cow pony that came home one morning before daylight, whinneying around the house. My father got up and followed her over half a mile to an old well. There he heard the colt down the well about fifteen feet, in about a foot and a half of water. He came home for me and I went down, tied a rope around it and came up. Between us we got it out safely and delivered it to its mother amid much rejoicing.

If birds and other animals can't talk, they do sometimes deliver messages in a very real manner.

Did you know that waterfowl each year are refused flight clearances by Mother Nature? . . . In mid-summer both male and female go through a period of moult when they are unable to fly.

Mummy's Bestest Puddle

Mrs. John Hubbard, Grenfell, Sask.

TAKING the children to school, a four-mile drive, is a task that cuts into the time of a mother-of-five. It's not without its compensation though, and if one can spare a moment, there is usually something to see at "Mummy's bestest puddle" if not elsewhere along the road. Said puddle is a deep little slough made deeper by the recent grading of the road. The birds seem particularly fond of it and pretty near everything that is seen elsewhere in the district turns up there.

The early Mallards and Pintails were seen there, followed by Blue and Green-winged Teal and Baldpates. Something unusual on so small a piece of water was a pair of Scaup Ducks that stayed there for a couple of days. One week both Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers were seen. Several pairs of Horned Grebes were seen and I won't be at all surprised if at least one pair nest. Judging by the past years, Mallard, Pintail and Baldpate will raise young there. In its willowy margins Red-winged Blackbirds sing and will later nest. From all around small birds come to drink and bathe.

A regular oasis on the prairie this deep "puddle," and the birds should be very thankful that the farmers on each side of the grade have not burnt out the trees that ring it round and thus spoil their summer resort.

Meadow Lark Sings Goodbye

ONE cold November day, Sidney Walton, C.N.R. carman, was walking along the repair track in the railway yards when he found a meadow lark all but frozen to death in the snow. He took it to his home at 621 Main Street, Riverview. There he and his wife nursed the bird back to strength. He made a cage for it out of an orange crate and after it had built itself up and put on weight, whenever the two Walton canaries would start to sing the meadow lark would join in with them.

"It was like having spring in the house all winter," Mrs. Walton says.

Last Sunday, April 13th, Mr. Walton carried the crate out on the lawn. He fastened a piece of string to the door, stood back a ways and pulled it. The meadow lark hopped out.

He gingerly put his beak in the ground a few times and then flew to the rooftop. Then, with a burst of melody, he soared high into the air and sailed for the flats by the river, leaving a trail of lovely music behind.

—*The North Battleford Optimist*

CIRCUS HODSONIUS

When one sees a male Marsh Hawk doing loop-the-loops, barrel rolls and other aerial stunts for the edification of a mate present or prospective, it becomes clear why scientists named it "Circus hudsonius." Other spectacular avian performers, high in the air, on or near the ground, and on the water, all motivated by what some call "the ecstasy of spring" will be going on in our bird-world by the time this is being read. Are you watching for them? Do you recognize them? Ain't Nature wonderful!

—*South Dakota Bird Notes*

SCARED PAIR

FLIN FLON, Man., April 28 (CP). —It was a question, who was the most scared.

Taxi-driver Don Black came face to face with a big brown bear when he stepped out of his cab in the dark to check the tires. He fell flat on his back in a water-filled ditch.

The bear was startled too. It fell on top of him.

The bear made it to shore first and high-tailed it for the woods.

Passenger Ross McDougall stopped laughing long enough to haul Black out of the ditch.

—*Regina Leader Post*

Martins, Swallows and Sparrows

Cecilia L. Hill, Nanaimo, Vancouver Island

IN the January to March edition of "The Blue Jay," Mr. J. Isinger asks if anyone can substantiate the story that Martins will plaster intruding Sparrows in their nests.

I well remember my grandfather in the old country knocking down Martins' nests which had been taken over by Sparrows. He told me the Martins plastered up any nests taken over by the Sparrows with the Sparrows in them. Year after year the House Martins returned to nest under the overhanging eaves on his two-story home on the north side, and each year grandfather with his long pole removed nests with intruding Sparrows.

I looked up House Martins in J. Lewis Bonhote's "*Birds of Britain*" and found their Latin name was *Chelidon urbica*, (*Lunnaeus*) whereas the Purple Martin in Travener's "*Birds of Western Canada*" is *Progne*

subis. Both books mention that Sparrows will take over the nests of either species but neither mention that Martins will plaster them in. Would it be possible to plaster up the entrance to a bird house as easily as the one to a mud nest?

We had an interesting experience with Barn Swallows in Manitoba some years ago. Each year a pair built a nest in the cow barn but one summer morning my husband found the nest and tiny birds had fallen on the floor and the parents were flying around in great distress. He nailed a small strawberry basket on the beam where the nest had been and put the little fellows into it and hoped for the best. To our great joy the parents continued caring for them and shortly after the wee fellows clambered on to the edge of the basket, and remained monarchs of all they surveyed till they were ready to fly.

Bird Migrants and Visitors in April

Cecilia L. Hill, Nanaimo, Vancouver Island

UNFORTUNATELY I did not make a note of the date we heard the first geese going north but during April I have noted a few migrants and their date of arrival. We are later here than in Victoria also though we saw Swallows first on April 2nd. They were reported in the south end of the district nearly a week earlier.

The first Rufus Hummingbird was noticed April 4th working on the peach blossom and since they have been very busy on the wild currant. The female was a few days later in arriving.

The next migrant noted was the White Crowned Sparrow on April 10, then on the 11th an Audubon's Warbler both male and female were seen. The male stayed over for a bath and one has been here again this week making a nice splash of colour amongst the early green leaves. It is the first time I have seen this species here.

Several Goldfinches stopped a short time on April 22nd but they must have been on their way further north

as I have not seen them since. Usually they are about our last migrants to stay, it has always appeared to me.

The Robins were collecting nesting material on March 7th but I have not observed them carrying worms so far though they have been collecting nesting material again as though their first efforts have not been crowned with success. Pine Siskins have been gathering nesting materials at two different times. They come quite frequently to drink and pull off the plum blossoms, it seems. A Chickadee came for nesting material on April 5th, some fluff swept out of the house and it seemed most particular in the way it combed it this way and that before flying away.

Purple Finches came occasionally right through the year. We have had a few other migrants who have not stayed long enough for certain identification. More birds are coming now that our trees are growing up and with water always available they are finding it more attractive, we hope.

(Continued on Page 16)

“NEWFOUNDLAND ON”

THROUGHOUT the winter, Dick Bird, Canada's foremost nature photographer from Regina, has been lecturing in various cities of the States on the natural life and beauty of our newest province, Newfoundland.

An Audubon Wildlife Program presented by the Detroit Audubon Society, was sent to us by H. L. Paine of Moose Jaw. In it there is an outline of Mr. Bird's lecture there on January 17, which gives one a good idea of the scope of his illustrated talk, called "Newfoundland On."

"Introduction to Canada's newest province, the land of John Cabot, the island of the caribou, its flora and fauna. Rugged coastlines of eastern Canada, sea bird islands, Kittiwakes, Murres, Puffins, caribou, moose, bear and smaller mammals. Exciting pictures of salmon fishing, whaling and trout fishing, Canadian industries, handicrafts, and its natural resources, the great forest, immense marshlands with typical wildlife, its network of lakes and rivers and the rugged coast of Labrador with its interesting bird life."

Because of his assistance to and continued support of our efforts over a period of years, and in view of his outstanding contributions in the field of nature photography, Dick Bird was made an honorary life member of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society two years ago.

Nature Notes from Spruce Dale Farm

C. Stuart Francis, Torch River

SPRING came with a rush this year, with abnormal high temperatures and resultant very early plant growth. We expected this might be followed by later severe frosts and cold weather which might have done severe damage to new young growth and fruit and flower bloom. However, the expected cold snap has not materialized, in this area at least, and native plants are all away to a good start with Buffalo-berry bloom on April 30; Mertensia, or wild Bluebell, on May 15. Honeysuckle had grown up to 9 inches of new growth, with flower buds on May 15, and Manitoba Maples were loaded with a new seed crop on the same day. Native White Spruce had grown as much as 3 to 4 inches by May 24; Saskatoons and Pincherry had already a well-formed fruit set by May 24 also, and on Victoria Day the spring northward migration of nearly all the birds had been completed, except for a very few species, such as the Hummingbird and Nighthawk, which have not been seen here as yet.

The trees around our buildings now look beautiful in their new growth and the well established species, either growing naturally or planted are as follows: White Spruce, Black Spruce, Jackpine, Scotch Pine, Lodgepole Pine, Balsam Fir, Tamarack,

Manitoba Maple, Green Ash, Bur Oak, Aspen Poplar, Balsam Poplar, Laurel Willow, Red Elder, Ginnalian Maple, Siberian Crabapple and Native Plum.

This spring we have planted the following species of trees, some in considerable numbers, and others, only single specimens; Red Pine, Norway Spruce, European Larch, Siberian Larch, White Cedar, Manchurian Elm, Manchurian Pear, White Ash, American Elm, Basswood, Butternut and Mountain Ash.

Some of the Red Pine we planted has needles over six inches long, and we are hoping they will be able to stand out severe north-western climate. They surely must look beautiful when they have reached a size of ten or fifteen feet.

All along the creeks the Beaver have repaired their dams, after the damage caused them by the rapid spring run-off, and are busy building new dams everywhere. And so, more small lakes and ponds are created, where more wild ducks and other waterfowl can find more nesting sites in which to raise their broods. I can stand on a beaver dam on my own land and count as many as five different species at one time, which are spending the summer at this particular farm. They are: Green-winged

(Continued on Page 14)

DR. H. R. LILLIE

H. M. Rayner — Ituna

UNDER the caption "Natural History Museum praised," *The Saskatchewan Municipal Record* for March 1952 refers to the activities of Dr. H. R. Lillie of Dundee, Scotland. These activities, I think, deserve attention from all who interest themselves in the welfare of wild animals. That probably takes in every reader of *The Blue Jay*.

The Record describes Dr. Lillie as "a globe-trotting medical doctor who spends much of his time preaching conservation and the humane treatment of wild animals."

The question of cruelty to wild animals, and in particular to wild mammals, has been engaging the active attention of nature lovers in the United Kingdom for some time. Some two years ago last autumn, their government appointed a committee to inquire into practices and activities which may involve cruelty to British wild mammals.

The Countryman, a quarterly review of rural life and work (a publication about which I shall have more to say in a future letter) features in its autumn 1951 issue five brief commentaries on the report of this committee by five eminent authorities in the field of natural history.

There can be no doubt that much cruelty to wild animals follows from thoughtlessness, and not from deliberate intent to be cruel. Few trappers, I believe, when setting the ordinary steel trap (called a "gin" in the U.K.) give a thought to the suffering of an animal caught in one. Many who use these traps would be shocked if the realization of the suffering caused could be brought home to their consciences.

I think we should all lend support to the movement to outlaw the "gin," as it is already cutlawed (according to Dr. Lillie) in Norway, Austria, and Germany.

If death-giving traps were more in demand, manufacturers would soon improve on them to the point where it would pay trappers to use them. Other things being equal, a death-giving trap is advantageous to the trapper. It eliminates the possibility of escape, and the captured animal

will not injure its fur.

We have one pitfall to guard against. An over-sentimental approach may defeat our own end. Certain wild animals *must* be killed. In the United Kingdom, as well as in Australia and New Zealand, rabbi's are a serious menace to agriculture. Systematic destruction of them is almost a matter of survival.

To come nearer home, we have crows, magpies, gophers, rats and coyotes. No one, I think, will contend that it is not necessary or desirable to reduce the number of any or all of these species when by their numbers they threaten the continuance of other species, or become a menace to agriculture. I repeat, some wild animals must be killed.

Can we kill without cruelty? The whole question of cruelty to wild animals is far from a simple one. Let us take a familiar example. A magpie comes within range of your gun. Here is a chance to kill it. But even the best shots can never be quite sure of a clean kill. You may only wound the bird, with all the consequent suffering that no doubt follows. If you don't shoot, the magpie goes on his way, hunting the young ducklings along the lake shores and over the marshes. He will find and kill many of them. Nor will he be troubled with any scruples about merciful methods.

Professor J. Ritchie of Edinburg points out that while the naturalist regards wild animals as having rights of their own, the law gives man the power of life and death over them. Surely then, all wild animals, where the death penalty is involved, deserve no less than that it be carried out as mercifully as possible.

However, amending the law is not enough. Professor Ritchie goes on to remind us the prosecutions and penalties will never eradicate cruelty. A better, more fruitful approach must be kept constantly in mind, to wit, cultivation in the young of an interest in, and understanding of, wild life. To this end he pleads for more inspirational biology in the school room.

Kerry Wood's "The Sanctuary"

Lloyd T. Carmichael

THERE is no feeling of exhilaration comparable to that experienced by the gang, who set out on a fine spring morning to explore the hidden mysteries of the forest path, and revel in the silent grandeur of the mirror-like surface of a hidden lake.

When I was a boy in New Brunswick, the gang consisted of five—all brothers—the oldest being about seven years senior to the youngest. The suggestion for a hike was usually proceeded by the oft-repeated expression, "What would you rather do or go fishin'?"

Armed with crooked poles and a can of worms, we would strike back over the hills, and up the winding path which led in the general direction of Puddington's Lake. A brook flowing down to the Kennebecasis crossed our path. We would stop at the "Falls" and cast for a trout in the eddies below—we had all day, and there was no hurry.

The forest was carpeted with mosses of various shades of green; the path was bordered with ferns of many species. Fresh tracks of deer and moose would cause us to proceed with caution in single file—not a twig would snap as we turned the bend, hoping against hope to catch a glimpse of these wary animals. Among the spruce branches the squirrels would chatter and scold; rabbits would stand on their hind legs, peering at us through the bush. The tap, tap, tap of the woodpecker would resound clearly from the hardwood grove, through the still damp air; the Blue Jays would defend their nesting areas with shrill cries as they flew from tree to tree, like bits of the clear blue sky against a setting of green. From time to time we would pause to gather amber-like lumps of spruce gum, to examine the polypody ferns on the face of the cliff, to admire the Jack-in-the-pulpits, the Dutchman's Breeches with heads hanging pendant and nodding in the breeze, the clumps of Indian Pipe in the dim seclusion of the thick woods, the Star Flower with its golden yellow centre and the Bellwort with its graceful curving stem and

modest lily-like straw colored drooping flowers.

Each bend in the path would disclose new wonders—each bird song would add new thrills. It was not so much the fishing that made the hike worth while as the "going fishing."

All of these thoughts rushed back into my mind as I read Kerry Wood's new book, "The Sanctuary"—for it is also the story of a gang, one of which was Kerry. Their path was through the forest of Gaetz Lake Park; a 230-acre wildlife sanctuary on the outskirts of Red Deer, Alberta.

The book is beautifully written. The gangs' interest in wild flowers and birds and mammals; their concern for the lonely blind deer; the stories of fun and tragedy read from animal tracks; their horror at the destructive forces of the blazing forest, and the peacefulness of a canoe ride among the birds on the water, in the air and on the shoreline, all combine to give the reader a sense of tranquility.

Behind it all, Mr. Wood tries to point out the value of wildlife sanctuaries. He believes that every city and town and village should endeavour, before it is too late, to set aside an area where Nature, unharmed by man, may be left to work out its own balance; where boys and girls can learn their first valuable lessons of appreciation of Her gifts; and where tired men and busy housewives may find a haven where the beauty of surroundings will render them oblivious to common daily tasks.

The author writes: "We need to escape for awhile from the furious turmoil of the workaday world, and go again along the quiet trails that lead to the beautiful blessings of nature. Here the human spirit can always find happiness and peace, and reassurance of the presence of God."

(Note: This book will not be available through the stores. Only a limited supply has been published. Should readers care to get an autographed copy (\$1.50 each, post-paid) they may send direct to Mr. Kerry Wood, Red Deer, Alberta.)

"People of the Deer"

by Farley Mowat. McLelland & Stewart, 1952

(Reviewed by Dr. Stuart Houston)

THIS is without a doubt one of the most interesting books that this reviewer has ever read. It is a superb adventure story, very well written. But it is much more than this. It is the story of the Caribou and of the little-known and now vanishing tribe of Eskimos who depended on the vast herds of caribou for their livelihood. It portrays the tragic results of the white man's greed, and the calamitous effects of his neglect for the basic principles of conservation. The book is of special ethnological interest, too, because it portrays the life and habits of a tribe of Eskimos who have probably had less contact with the white man than any other native group on this continent. Finally, the book is of interest because the territory it covers includes the far northeastern corner of Saskatchewan, and because its author is a naturalist and former "Blue Jay" contributor, who was raised in Saskatoon.

Farley Mowat was born in 1921 at Belleville, Ont., but the family later moved to Saskatoon where his father became city librarian. Farley spent most of his time, after fours and weekends, mousing about in the

swamps and bluffs looking for birds. In 1939 he spent the summer with three other young naturalists studying the fauna of Saskatchewan, and his "Notes on the Birds of Emma Lake, Sask.," recording 156 species, was published in the May 1947 "*Canadian Field-Naturalist*." Toward the end of 1939, he enlisted in the Army, was commissioned as a lieutenant and served in England, Sicily and Italy. He served as an Intelligence officer during the invasion of Europe. On discharge from the Army in the spring of 1946, he bought a jeep and came back to Saskatchewan to study the birds at Dundurn and Lac la Ronge. (Members will remember the article he wrote for the Sept. 1946 "Blue Jay" about his observations of that summer.) 1947 and 1948 were spent in the arctic Barren Lands, studying the Ilhamuit, the People of the Deer. He is now married and living at Palgrave, Ont.

Mowat's book is currently becoming a best-seller in the United States, and is a book that no Canadian should miss reading. It is published in Canada by McLelland and Stewart and may be obtained through any book store.

Appreciation

Ronald Hooper — *Somme*

My brother and I are amateur ornithologists and taxidermists. After being advised by Mr. Fred Bard, the Director, we recently made a trip to the Provincial Museum in Regina.

Readers are missing a great deal if they have not visited this museum. Seeing it gave us many ideas for improving our taxidermy work. We were invited into the preparation room and did some mounting, using improved methods taught to us by Fred Lahrman, Mr. Bard's taxidermist.

We were encouraged to proceed with nature photography. The 35 m.m. Retina camera was recommended. This is a "honey" of a camera which is relatively cheap in spite of its efficiency.

We greatly appreciate the willing co-operation of the museum staff in helping amateur naturalists.

NATURE NOTES FROM SPRUCE DALE FARM

(Continued from Page 11)

and Blue-winged Teal, Mallard, Golden-eye, and Baldpate.

You can see a big bear crossing from one bluff to another; a deer standing out in the open field, to get away from the flies which torment it in the thick forest growth; a Vireo or a Robin singing from the top of a sixty or seventy foot aspen tree. A few fleecy clouds may be floating across a rich blue sky, and the hum of many kinds of farm tractors can be heard in every direction—such is a spring day in Saskatchewan's North Country.

Weasel—A Friend or Foe !

Austin W. Cameron, Biologist National Museum of Canada

I WAS PLEASED to see my article on the Least Weasel reprinted in Vol. 10, No. 1, issue of "The Blue Jay." I am even more pleased to note that it brought a response from a number of readers. Their comments provide valuable data for our files. It was my hope that the article would bring to light a number of records, especially from Eastern Canada. It seems quite clear now that Saskatchewan has as great, if not greater, population of these mammals than any other province.

I am quite aware that public sentiment is not always on the side of the weasel and it is sometimes rather difficult to appraise the economic status of our carnivores. Possibly it depends a good deal on local conditions. Until someone undertakes a careful study of the food habits of the weasel we shall never be certain whether to regard it as a friend or foe.

Most Useful in the Hands of the Furrier

F. L. Trego, Rosedale, B.C.

IN your latest issue of "The Blue Jay" I read with interest the three articles concerning weasels, and was very much surprised to note that there were persons interested in their protection. Having had a great deal of association with them, both as a farmer in Alberta and trapping in the north, I feel that I am to some extent an amateur authority on them.

In all my experience with them I have yet to find any evidence where the damage done by them is in any way outweighed by any good they might do.

Granted they do kill mice, but the various hawks do that for us with the assistance of many other of our feathered friends, and in the process do not harm the other birds or cause the poultryman any damage if he gives his flock reasonable attention.

On the other hand, the weasel will get into a chicken house and in one night cost the farmer many dollars and weeks of work. I once had a pair of old weasels get into my chicken house where they had a litter of kittens. Before I managed to do away with them all I lost over two dozen laying hens. Consider the cost of the hens, eggs, and time spent in raising them, to have them killed in a few nights by the old and young weasels alike.

In the woods where there are no henhouses I have found birds killed on the nest where they were hatching their eggs, and the evidence against the weasel was strong enough

to support a charge of murder.

Why then would anyone want to protect any animal that is as destructive as they have proven themselves to be? In my mind their most useful place is in the hands of the furrier, and the only way they should be protected is with moth-balls.

Hard Working Mice

Doug Gilroy, R.R. 2, Regina

THE mouse population in this district this spring was terrific. The Meadow Mouse seemed the most abundant species.

One evening when I had finished seeding for the day I forgot to pick up a large sheet of canvas that I used to cover over the seed wheat, and went away, leaving it on the ground. Also lying on the ground, not far away, was a piece of rope about three feet long.

The next morning when I returned to the field and began gathering up the canvas, out tumbled two White-footed Mice along with a large ball of brownish material. This, of course, was a nest that they had constructed in the course of one night. At first I was puzzled as to what the nest was made up of, then I noticed the rope was no longer three feet in length but was reduced to a mere six inches.

How those two must have toiled through the night, unravelling that rope and spinning it into a nest!

Supposing you and I worked all day, happily putting up a building—then at the end of the day a great force came along and destroyed all our work. I wonder if those two mice would feel as badly as we.

Botanical Articles Interesting

Marianne E. Clark, Terrace, B.C.

There are one or two articles in last year's "Blue Jay" that I would like to comment on. In one you mentioned the finding of a yellow choke-cherry and invited comments as to its prevalence.

A clump of yellow choke-cherry was found on a farm on the Wilson River in the Dauphin district in 1935. I was given a plant of it by Mr. W. Boughen, of Valley River. It is a fine tree here now and bears clear, light yellow fruit, sweeter and not so choky as the usual dark species. The robins are very fond of them and so are the squirrels. As we have a lot of fruit we seldom use it, but it is an oddity and a handsome ornamental shrub, whether in fruit or flower.

Your botanical articles have interested me greatly and I marvel at the number of legumes listed for Saskatchewan. We have some here, but I cannot think of more than the Purple Vetch, a white Lathyrus, Lupines (mostly blue, though one sees an odd white or pink), a small Trefoil, and a yellow "Bajitimia" that grows in our meadows in thick matted clumps. The roots are black and matted, about like bale wire in size. Where it takes over, nothing else grows. It is about two feet high with fine leaves and yellow blossoms. The seeds are speckled like tiny beans and are hard to germinate.

We lived on Queen Charlotte Islands for several years and there I found a native Yellow Alfalfa growing wild. It thrives on the upper gravelly places, old beaches and hard meadows. Under those conditions it is a small prostrate plant. They flower at every joint and spread out over the ground. The nearest relative seems to be the Siberian "prostata," but I believe that in that the seed pods are hairy; in this they are almost smooth and shiny. When a plant gets in a fertilized garden it grows over two feet high but since its stems are fine and weak the cattle eat it greedily. There it is called Yellow Clover, but the coiled seed pod indicates that it is a true alfalfa.

Our mosses sadly need revision. I wish someone would illustrate them in an enlarged manner, giving par-

ticulars of leaf, plant and fruit. We have many kinds here.

Purple Moss Phlox

MOST Saskatchewan folk are familiar with the Moss Phlox, that harbinger of spring, with its moss-like cushion of stems and leaves and profusion of white flowers. It dots the dry hillsides in snow-like patches, even earlier than the Crocus and Tufted Milk Vetch and long before the Robin makes its first appearance. This spring the phlox was at its best during the last two weeks of April.

On April 27, Mrs. Harry Flock, of Regina, came across a patch of phlox, growing in the Qu'Appelle Valley, with distinct purple blossoms. It was the first that she had seen. Have other readers seen the purple variety? Mr. O. A. Stevens, in his "Wild Flowers of North Dakota," writes: "North Dakota leaves behind the tall pink and blue flowered phloxes of the eastern prairies and woods and enters the territory of the tufted mountain species of the west." It seems quite unlikely that those found were the eastern species, but rather a variety or sub-species of our own Phlox hoodii.

BIRD MIGRANTS

(Continued from Page 10)

We certainly do not get anything like the number of birds here that we did on the prairies; whether because we are on an island, it is hard to know. Other prairie folks have said the same thing.

Our early spring flowers have been over for some time and now the Dogwood is coming along fast. Soon the white bracts will make a wonderful show in amongst the dark green of the evergreen trees and the pale green of the deciduous ones which are now donning their new spring gowns. The cherry blossom is past its best but other blossoms are taking its place. The Magnolia is at its best and so the procession goes on. It is April 26th, the peas and beans are up in many gardens though there is still snow on the mountains.

The First Spring Flower

Dr. George Ledingham, Saskatoon

THIS story started late last fall as a mistake and a violation of conservation of one of our native plants. It ended early this spring as a joyous experience in appreciation of natural beauty which we would like to share with every one who reads the *Blue Jay*.

Early last October two roots of the Stemless Lady's Slipper were brought to me from Lac la Ronge. The leaves and flower stalk were dead and brown, but the roots are perennial so they were potted and kept in the potato cellar until the middle of March. Early this spring, each root sent up a fat bud and we could wait no longer and brought the pot up to light and warmth. Growth was rapid, and soon the plants were complete with two leaves and one flower each, as shown in the picture.

The Stemless Lady's Slipper is unlike all other Lady's Slippers in three main respects. These differences are so striking that Small separated this species out of the genus *Cypripedium* and called it *Fissipes acaulis*. In the first place, it is without a true stem, the two leaves and flowering stalk coming from below the surface of the ground. In the second place, it grows in dry, rocky exposed places. Its growth is limited and it flowers early, frequently in April in the south-eastern part of its range. In Saskatchewan, it occurs in the far north on Precambrian rock, and there it does not flower till after the middle of June. In the third place, as stressed by Small, the toe of the slipper is split on top. This means that the bee will enter well forward between the two halves of the lip and then climb up to his reward. As he rises, his head and back will brush against, and leave pollen on, the moist, roughish stigma. Above, and on either side of the column which bears the stigma, are two round openings by which the insect may leave the slipper. The upper side of each exit is a fertile anther. The back of the bee is covered with pollen as he climbs out and says goodbye.

After several days of enjoyment of



—PHOTO BY L. G. SAUNDERS

these floral harbingers of spring, we took them to the Biology Department of the University to share them with our associates. It was then that Dr. L. G. Saunders took the picture which we are sharing with you. The last days of these two flowers were spent with our honorary president and his wife.

OILING UP

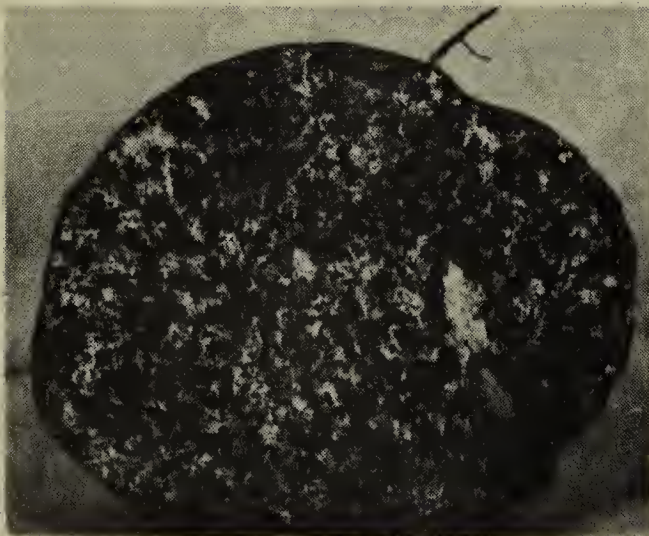
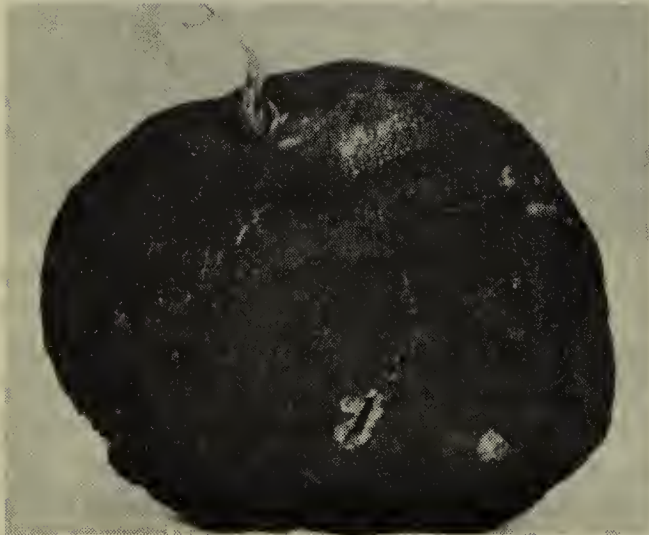
Elizabeth Barker, Regina

Although I have, at various times seen small birds working over the soles of their feet, I never realized until a few short weeks ago that they oil them with as much care as they bestow on their feathers.

The bird in question was a male House Sparrow, perched on a stick outside my window, cleaning himself up. He would draw a beakful of oil, oil perhaps a wing top or part of his tail, then go at the underside of his spread out foot and work carefully up and down each toe in turn, finishing up with some feathers. Then back for more oil—repeat the same process over and over (three times in this case) till the job was complete.

The Canadian Tuckahoe

By T. C. Vanterpool, Professor of Plant Pathology, University of Saskatchewan



The Canadian Tuckahoe, a fungus storage body—not pemmican. The top figure shows a tuckahoe and a mushroom-like fruiting structure to which it has given rise. The centre figure shows a surface view, and the bottom figure an internal view of a tuckahoe.

DO you know the Canadian Tuckahoe? It is the large black storage body or resting stage of the mushroom-like fungus *Polyporus tuberastrer* (see figures). The tuckahoe is found in the black soil of the park belt where the aspen flourishes. Collections have been made as far south as the Pembina Hills in Manitoba and in a rough line extending northwestward through Saskatchewan and Alberta to 70 miles north of Kamloops, B.C.

A few specimens are received at the University every year from the parkland belt where virgin land covered with poplar groves is being cleared and brought under the plough. Many of them come from school teachers to whom they have been brought by curious children. They are sometimes referred to as "Indian bread" or are wrongly mistaken for pemmican or dried buffalo meat of the Indians, but even the softest are much too tough to be eaten and do not soften appreciably when boiled. One very young specimen was soft when received and it is just possible that in such a condition they may have been eaten, though there is no record that this is so. However, they do appear to have been used by the Indians for poulticing and for rheumatism and were called "grund medicine" by them.

The bodies are spherical to oval and occasionally slightly flattened. They are of a hard, rubbery consistency when fresh but dry out to the hardness of a stone. Such dry specimens will absorb about 50 per cent of their weight of water. They vary in size from about 2 to 8 inches in diameter, and the largest may weigh between 8 and 9 pounds.

The mushroom-like growths to which the tuckahoes give rise vary from 23 to 6 inches in diameter and from 2 to 5 inches in height. These structures are not edible. They may be obtained by burying fresh tuckahoes from one to three inches below ground level either directly in poplar groves or in pots of soil buried level

with the ground and kept moist. Tuckahoes, collected in May and buried immediately, often produced the fruiting structures ("mushrooms") the same year in late June or early July, but more often the fruit bodies are not produced until the following summer. Sometimes more than one fruit body may be attached to a single tuckahoe; also a single tuckahoe may produce fruit bodies several years in succession. It is believed that the tuckahoes grow in association with the roots of the aspen, but conclusive evidence on this point is lacking. A careful search

in poplar bluffs in northern Saskatchewan during early July might reveal some of these fruit bodies which have tiny pores or holes under the cap instead of gills, as in the common mushroom. If one digs beneath the fruit bodies one might be rewarded by finding the tuckahoe to which they are attached.

NOTE:—Anyone requiring further technical information on the tuckahoe should consult a paper by T. C. Vanterpool and Ruth Macrae in the *Canadian Journal of Botany*, 29; 147-157. 1951.

The Naturalist's Library

FLORA OF MONTANA. Part 1, Conifers and Monocots. By E. W. Booth, Montana State College, Bozeman, Montana, 1950, pp. 232, illustrated with 83 figures. \$3.00. Keys and descriptions of the species are given.

WILD FLOWERS IN THE ROCKIES. By G. A. and W. V. Hardy. H. R. Larson Publishing Co., Hamilton, Saskatoon and Vancouver, 1949, pp. 125, illustrating in color 200 wild flowers occurring in the Canadian Rockies. \$7.50.

NATIVE ORCHIDS OF NORTH AMERICA. By D. S. Corell, Chronica Botanica Company, Waltham, Mass., 1950, pp. 399, 146 plates in superb line drawings. \$7.50.

NATIVE TREES OF CANADA. Dept. Mines and Resources, Dominion Forest Service, Ottawa. Bull. 64, 4th ed., reprinted 1950, pp. 293. Profusely illustrated, including range maps and a Forest Classification Map of Canada. \$1.50.

WILD VIOLETS OF NORTH AMERICA. By Viola Brainerd Baird. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1942, pp. 225, 77 color illustrations by F. S. Mathews. \$10.00. This book endeavours to provide those interested in violets with a simple means of identifying the different species.

BOTANY OF SOUTHEASTERN YUKON. By A. E. Porsild. Dept. Resources and Development, Nat. Mus. Canada, Ottawa, 1951, pp. 400. \$1.00. Describes the vegetation of the region including an annotated catalogue of the vascular plants of Yukon, totaling 894 species. Of this number 28 are new or recently described species.

A GUIDE TO BIRD SONGS. By A. A. Saunders. Doubleday & Co., Inc., Garden City, New York, 1951, pp. 307. \$3.00. This book is by one of America's leading authorities and is the most complete and comprehensive volume on American bird songs ever published including over 200 diagrams by the author.

AUDUBON'S BIRDS OF AMERICA. MacMillan Co., New York, 1950, pp. 320. \$3.95. Illustrated with 288 magnificent full page color plates. Each plate is accompanied by a concise descriptive text. Audubon bird painting are unsurpassed in the century following the artist naturalist's death in 1851.

THE INSECT GUIDE. By R. B. Swain. Doubleday & Co., Inc., Garden City, New York, 1949, pp. 261, over 450 illustrations, many in color, representing 251 different insect species in the United States and Canada. \$3.50.

POPLARS OF CANADA

A. J. Breitung

EIGHT species and two varieties of poplar (*Populus*) are native to Canada and are commonly known as Aspens, Cottonwoods and Balsam Poplars (Plates I and II). They are usually tall, rapid-growing, short-lived trees, possessing an abundance of attractive foliage. A unique character of the Aspens and Cottonwoods is that the leaf-stalks (petioles) are flattened at right angles to the blades and this causes the leaves to tremble and rustle even in the slightest breeze. Poplar leaves, in their autumn colors, display the brightest yellow hues of our landscape.

The winter buds of certain poplar species are covered with a fragrant, sticky resin that is said to protect the enclosed, undeveloped flowers and leaves from an injury against drying out and rapid changes of temperature. However, since not all species contain resin in their buds, other physiological factors may be responsible.

Poplar flowers are small, numerous and borne on elongated, drooping catkins, staminate (male) and pistillate (female) on separate trees (dioecious). They emerge in early spring before the leaves unfold, thus ensuring efficient wind-pollination. Petals and nectarics (honey glands) are absent, consequently the flowers do not attract insects. The staminate catkins fall soon after shedding their pollen. The pistillate catkins, however, persist until the 2- to 3-valved capsules have matured, falling before the leaves have fully developed. From the ripe capsules escape the minute, short-lived, innumerable seeds, which are borne on the wind for long distances by their cottony down. At times the air is so full of flying down as to create the effect of a snow-storm.

The wood of all poplars is soft and light and a number of species are of great commercial value, used for lumber, pulp, building, fuel, fence posts, furniture, etc.

1. **Populus Sargentii** Dode (*P. deltoides* Marshall var *occidentalis* Rydberg). **WESTERN COTTONWOOD**. A tree 60 to 90 feet high with large, wide-spreading branches forming a broad round-topped crown. Leaves broader than long, having from 5 to 15 coarse teeth on each margin and bright green on both surfaces. The sound produced by the restless leaves, beating against each other, recalls the lapping of wavelets on a pebbly shore. Habitat: river valleys; plain. Range: Man.-Alta.

2. **Populus deltoides** Marshall (*P. virginiana* Fourg.; *P. balsamifera* of Sargent, not Linnaeus). **EASTERN COTTONWOOD**. Large tree 70 to 100 feet high, the upper half is frequently divided into 3 to 5 large, spreading branches forming a broad crown. Leaves bearing from 15 to 30 teeth on each margin. Habitat: along streams. Range: s. Que.—s. Man.—s.e. Sask.

3. **Populus grandidentata** Michaux **LARGETOOTH ASPEN**. Medium-sized tree 40 to 70 feet high with spreading branches forming a narrow, round-topped crown. Bark greenish-grey; old trunks dark and deeply furrowed. Winter buds hairy. Leaves coarsely and unevenly toothed, white-hairy when young. Habitat: well drained soil. Range: N.S.—s.e. Man.

POPLARS (POPULUS) OF CANADA

Typical Leaves, Reduced

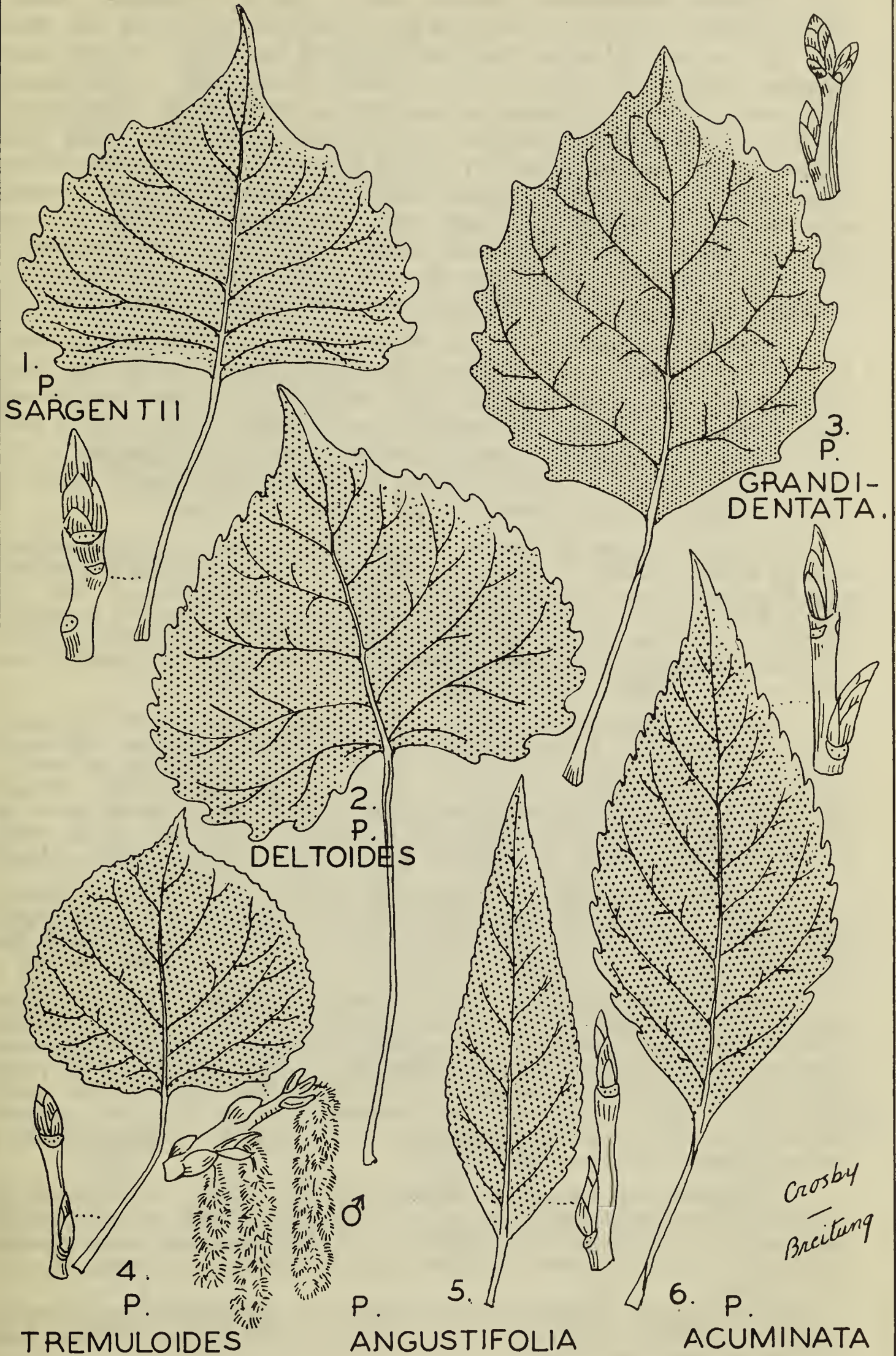


PLATE I

4. **Populus tremuloides** Michaux ASPEN POPLAR; TREMBLING ASPEN; WHITE POPLAR. A tree 30 to 90 feet high; in dense stands slender and often free of branches for more than two-thirds of its length. Winter buds glabrous, shiny. The bark of trunk is usually covered with a white-mealy substance and from a distance the tree may be mistaken for White Birch. Its leaves tremble with the slightest air movement, even more readily than any of the other poplars, hence "Trembling Aspen." The silvery-grey trunks and dancing foliage, always cheerful and restive, makes the Aspen a much admired tree. It regenerates readily from root-sprouts following fire and clearing. Habitat: well drained soil. Range: Nfld.—B.C.—Yukon—Mack.

In the Prairie Provinces, Aspen occurs in a zone, known as the Park Belt, between the grassland to the south and the coniferous forest to the north.

5. **Populus angustifolia** James NARROW-LEAVED COTTONWOOD; WILLOW-LEAVED POPLAR. A medium-sized, pyramidal tree 20 to 40 feet high, growing singly or in small groups. The leaves are yellowish-green above, paler and more veiny beneath; margins finely crenate; petioles 6 to 10 mm. long; winter buds 5-scaled, resinous. Distinct from all other poplars by its very narrow leaves and short petioles resembling more closely those of willows. Habitat: along streams. Range: s. Alta.—s.w. Sask.

6. **Populus acuminata** Rydberg BLACK COTTONWOOD. A medium-sized tree 30 to 50 feet high with stout spreading branches forming a compact, round-topped crown. The branchlets are pale yellowish-brown and the winter buds are 6- to 7-scaled, resinous. Its leaves are lanceolate, gradually tapering at the apex, rounded or wedge-shaped at the base, coarsely toothed to crenate, bright green on both surfaces and borne on slender, slightly flattened petioles. Habitat: river valleys. Range: s.w. Alta.

7. **Populus balsamifera** Linnaeus (*P. tacamahacca* Miller). BALSAM POPLAR. A tree 50 to 90 feet high; trunk 1 to 2 feet in diameter with stout erect branches; branchlets grey to brownish; winter buds saturated with a fragrant balsamic sticky resin, hence the name "Balsam Poplar." Mature leaves thin, dark glossy green above, paler beneath, veiny, mostly twice as long as broad. Stamens 20 to 30 on short filaments. Capsules oblong-ovoid, 2-valved. Habitat: poorly drained soil. Range: Nfld.—e. B.C.—Yukon—Mack.

7a. **Populus balsamifera** var. *subcordata* Hylander (*P. Michauxii* Dode). This variety is associated with the species, differing by its broader, more heart-shaped leaves and minutely hairy petioles. It has been mistaken for the cultivated Balm-of-Gilead (*P. candicans* Aiton) of unknown origin.

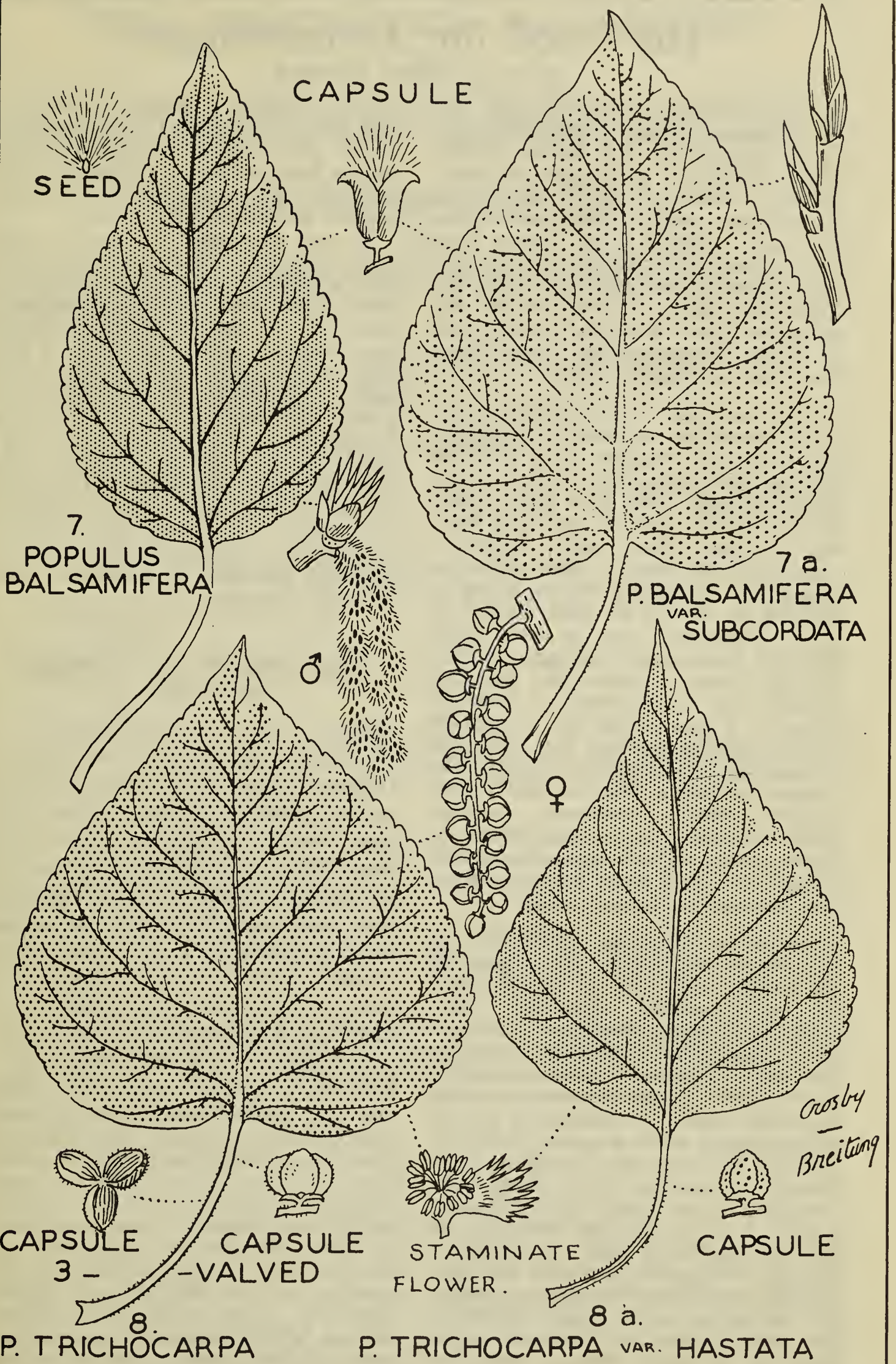
8. **Populus trichocarpa** Torrey & Gray WESTERN BALSAM POPLAR. A large tree 80 to 125 feet high, 3 to 4 feet in diameter with stout upright branches; branchlets lustrous, chestnut brown to reddish-yellow; winter buds resinous. Mature leaves thick, leathery, dark green above, whitish beneath with rusty resin patches, prominently veined, scarcely longer than broad; petioles minutely hairy. Stamens 40 to 60 with filaments longer than the anthers. Capsules sub-globose, 3-valved, minutely hairy. Habitat: banks of streams. Range: Yukon—B.C.—s.w. Alta.

8a. **Populus trichocarpa** var. *hastata* (Dode) Henry. This variety is associated with the species, differing by its glabrous, slightly warty capsules and narrower, more ovate-deltoid leaves. It is designated as a distinct species (*P. hastata* Dode) by some authorities, while others do not regard it even as a variety.

Western Balsam Poplar is most abundant in the Pacific coastal region where it attains immense size, dominating the landscape, forming long picturesque lines along rivers.

POPLARS (POPULUS) OF CANADA

Typical Leaves, Reduced



The Need for Archaeologists

Allan J. Hudson, Mortlach

IT'S a curiously inverted idea that Western Canada, archaeologically, is an adjunct of the United States, to be examined at leisure and as a sideline. Maybe it needs mentioning that those early adventurers who crossed to Alaska didn't know anything about New Mexico and it may have taken a thousand years for the great trek there. So it's a fair assumption that Western Canada has an older archaeological inheritance than the continental U.S.

The idea that we can dawdle any longer needs to be blown up quickly. We need the nucleus of a staff of trained archaeologists, able to seize opportunities when and where they occur. In the case of our own local site it was three years before a trained archaeologist ever came to inspect it. Normally what's going to happen to a site in that length of time? Somebody, one of these days, is going to be lucky enough to find a Yuma site. It is evident that the culture was widespread in Western Canada. Yuma points are a common find in Saskatchewan. Just recently I had the opportunity to examine a small collection from South Central Alberta which contained, amongst other things, a fine assortment of Yuma points. What's going to happen to such a site if there are no trained men around to take it over?

As to the when and where of that wandering migration, if it was by an inland route east of the Rockies, the environmental conditions must have been good enough so that our early adventurers did not starve on the way. It doesn't seem reasonable that at the widest extension of the ice-sheet when the Keewatin glacier intermingled with glaciers from the Rockies that the route could be used. Either the earliest group must have travelled south ahead of an advancing ice front or the journey was delayed till the ice front had retreated far enough to restore favorable environmental conditions. There are reasons for believing that suitable conditions for both plants and animals would exist at no great distance from an ice front.

But when one comes to enquire, one soon finds that not much is known about the retreat of the ice front across South-Western Canada or even what glaciation is represented by that further extension of the ice.

If one considers it vital to take into consideration the whole problem, Canadian as well as American, then, until there is a more adequate study of the last glaciation in Western Canada, our archaeology is trying to get along on one leg. Actually, the dating of the early occupation by man in the U.S. can be questioned on two counts. It has been based on the links between early sites and pluvial periods which may or may not have been correctly correlated with glaciation events—and, second, there has not been, until recently, any way of accurately dating such events.

Mammals at Tisdale

K. E. Baines

THE animal commonly known as a mole, but really the Pocket Gopher, is gradually moving into this territory from the west. Their digging was first observed five miles west of here. Now they are common in town and seem to be moving several miles each year. Timber wolves have been seen only a few miles from Tisdale. Beaver have dammed up every stream with any water in it. The dams are only one hundred yards or so apart. They are considered a nuisance by some but most people are glad to see them back. Coyotes are common and spend practically all their time in the unharvested wheat fields catching mice, which are numerous. Skunks are common here and spend considerable time scratching on front of beehives, apparently to eat the bees. They are rarely bad enough to necessitate any special measures to get rid of them. Woodchucks or Marmots will also bother beehives, and occasionally a porcupine will chew on the hand hold.

YOUR SUBSCRIPTION HAS EXPIRED

if

the date on your address label is December, 1951, or if it is marked June 1952. Will those who joined the Society last summer please send fifty cents to bring them into good standing until December 31, 1952.

THIS IS YOUR LAST ISSUE

if

you have made no payment on your 1952 subscription. Due to its limited resources, the Society cannot carry on unless all fees are paid in advance.

It is the sincere hope of the Executive that our full membership be retained. Although we solicit and welcome new members, our chief interest is centered on those that we already have.

We hope to gain many—we can afford to lose none.

To Contributors of Articles and Observations

It seems necessary from time to time to offer the following suggestions and reminders:

Stories for publication are to be submitted in the form that they are to appear in the BLUE JAY, and are not to be embodied as part of a letter to the Editor.

If possible have articles typewritten. This procedure, however, is not necessary and all hand-written articles will receive the same consideration as the others. They will be typed by the Editor, as the publishers accept them only on typewritten form.

Two pages, double spaced, or about 700 words will fill a page of the BLUE JAY, unless a picture also is to be included on the page. One page seems to be a desirable length for any one article. Short notes or stories, taking up one-quarter or one-half or one column are always very welcome. Should a space of two pages or more be required please make special arrangements with the Editor in advance. For lack of space it has been necessary to omit many interesting and timely contributions from almost every issue.

An illustration makes a story much more interesting. Neat drawings or clear photographs are most welcome. Do not submit negatives. The pictures should be either the size that you wish to appear or larger. These can be reduced to a suitable size. Clear prints, which relate to the story being told will also be accepted.

The deadline for our special anniversary issue will be September 1st.

THE ANNUAL MEETING

It is not too early to start thinking about our annual meeting, which will be held in Regina on the last Monday in October. Plan now to attend. The Executive are already working on a program which promises to be interesting. Among our outside member speakers will be K. E. Baines, of Tisdale, Mrs. John Hubbard of Grenfell, Hugh McLaughlin of Lewvan, and Arthur Ward of Swift Current. Others have been contacted and no doubt will attend and contribute to the program.

WILLIAM ANAKA
SPIRIT LAKE SASK

Dec. 1952

Quarterly bulletin of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society

Published by
THE SASKATCHEWAN NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
in co-operation with the Provincial Museum
of Natural History.

Edited by Lloyd T. Carmichael

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The BLUE JAY is published quarterly at a yearly subscription rate of one dollar. Anyone interested in any phase of nature will be a welcome member of this organization. All subscriptions will start and terminate on the first day of January.

The deadline for the reception of material to be printed will be March 1, June 1, September 1 and November 20. All matter intended for publication in the BLUE JAY should be written as *it is to appear in the magazine*.

Mail all communications to the Editor at 1077 Garnet St., Regina.