

# THE Blue Jay

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# Blue Jay Chatter

Lloyd T. Carmichael, Editor

SINCE the "Blue Jay" appeared in its present form it has been our policy to have all subscriptions begin and terminate at the end of each year. This is reason that all of our new subscribers have received back copies from the beginning of 1953.

We thought we were over optimistic in ordering 1800 copies for the spring issue and the same number for the summer issue. But our faith in the future has been justified to such an extent that we now have on hand less than fifty copies of the spring issue and the summer issue.

We have not had an opportunity before of welcoming 62 teachers of the Unity School Unit and 56 teachers of the Milestone School Unit to our Society. It is our hope that they will like our "Blue Jay" and that their students will find something in its pages which will awaken a greater appreciation of birds and plants and wildlife of all kinds. We would be pleased to publish interesting nature observations written by any boy or girl from these schools.

It is from the youth of today that we must look for the naturalists and conservationists of tomorrow. If boys and girls have interests leaning in this direction, they should be encouraged as much as possible to develop these interests and to cultivate a hobby which will bring joy and satisfaction to them as long as they live.

The success of this little magazine depends entirely upon the subscribers themselves. All should avail themselves of the opportunity of contributing items of interest. Neither the longer articles nor the shorter observation accounts which you will read in these pages were found "growing on trees," but were written by active members who wish to share their experience with others, and have a desire to assist in making the "Blue Jay" a more worthwhile publication. Here is a challenge and an invitation to all. Tell the rest of us about these experiences and observations which have given you the greatest thrill and pleasure. If possible illustrate your story with a photograph. You will soon find that participation will bring to you added satisfaction and a keener interest in the Society of which you are an active member.

## IN OCTOBER

"Now comes the rosy dogwoods,  
The golden tulip-tree  
And the Scarlet yellow maple,  
To make a day for me."

"The ash-trees on the ridges,  
The alders in the swamp,  
Put on their red and purple  
To join the autumn pomp."

"The woodbine hangs her crimson  
Along the pasture wall,  
And all the bannered sumacs  
Have heard the frosty call."

"Who then so dead to valor  
As not to raise a cheer,  
When all the woods are marching  
In triumph of the year?"

—Bliss Carman.

# Among the Trees

By C. STUART FRANCIS, Sprucedale Farm, Torch River

**I**T HAS BEEN a good year for our trees. Each season as we try out new species we get more new thrills and surprises.

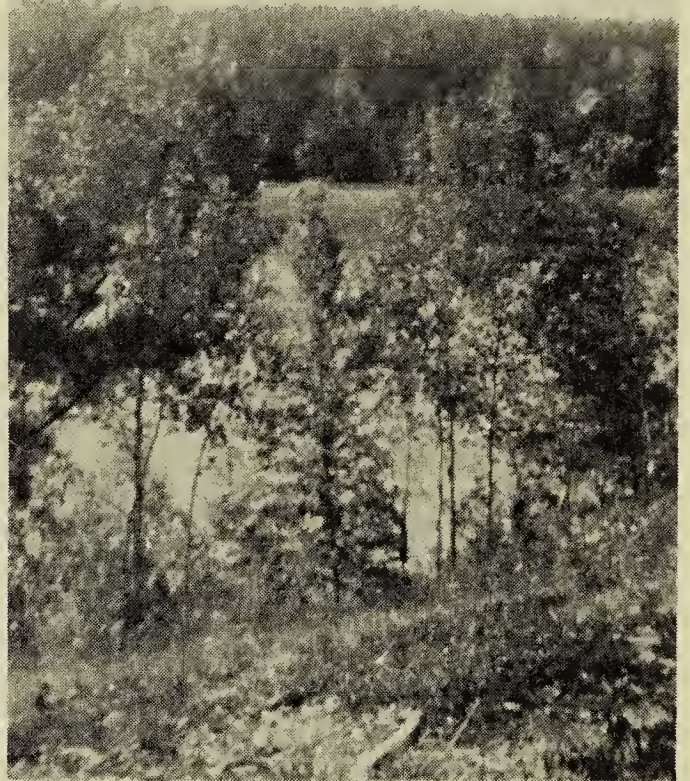
On our farm we have White Spruce, which have only just emerged from the soil, to some huge giants of over 100 feet tall and containing over 1000 board feet of lumber. Our planted White Spruce have grown from one foot to eighteen inches this season, and many of them have good groups of fresh seed cones on them which will be ripening in September and dropping off, or else opening and letting their seeds fly through the air for many yards.

The Jackpine continues to thrive in all-sorts of weather and seasons, and every year produces very large crops of seed cones of varied shapes and colors. This summer I have young seedlings of two selected specimens of Jackpine; one has very long dark green needles and the other has very short needles, growing very thickly on the twig.

Our Scotch Pines made fast growth — most of them grew a foot or more — and several have produced seed cones for the first time this year. They look very beautiful with their dark blue-green foliage.

Our young, Lodgepole Pines just sprang into the air with new growth of over a foot of lovely dark green very long needles. The Red Pines did not grow so fast, from four to eight inches of new growth of light green shade. Last year's plantings of White Pine and Ponderosa Pine are just getting started.

Did you know that different species of pines have different numbers of needles in their bunches where they grow out from the twig. For example: Jackpine, Scotch Pine, Lodgepole Pine and Red Pine have only two needles to a bunch. Ponderosa Pine has three needles to a bunch, while White Pine has five needles per bunch.



*Sprucedale Trees*

Other tiny seedlings of pine, just started from seed this summer, are Austrian Pine and Mugho Pine. Among other evergreen tree species, just started from seed this summer, are the following: White Fir, Colorado Spruce and Himalayan Spruce. Our White Cedar are growing rapidly and are very beautiful in their light green feathery foliage, so different from any of the other evergreens.

If you want to grow trees in a hurry try a few Manchurian Elm — not Chinese Elm — as the latter are not hardy. Manchurian Elm will grow up to three feet in one season, and they are a very pretty tree too, with numerous very small light green leaves.

Our Cottonwood seedlings obtained from the Forest Nursery at Indian Head last spring, have grown rapidly and are pretty to look at, with the leaves sparkling in the breeze. Among them we have discovered two different separate types; one type resembl-

(Continued on Page 9)

# The Autumn Leaf

From "THE MINNESOTA NATURALIST"

NATURE knows no half measures and nothing in her changing seasons becomes her like the leaving of them. Massed in harmonious blend are the deep reds of the sturdy oaks. Maples are legion with shades of crimson; cardinal, coral, salmon and yellow. Sassafras boasts of orange-red and tangerine; birches and aspens dazzle with the richness of burnished yellow or old gold while the leaves of the handsome ash are pasteled with plum and grape and orchid.

If man could create a leaf the mystery of the universe would be solved. It would surpass any of his achievements to date—for a leaf is the basis of all life. It feeds the plant which feeds mankind and it sustains the animals which form the food of mankind. Even the carnivorous animals must depend for sustenance upon those animals which in turn live upon our vegetation. Without a leaf life would soon cease to exist.

Would it destroy some cherished legend or spoil things if the story of an autumn leaf were unfolded and found to contain no deep mystery in its yearly color changes? And what about old Jack Frost who in his natural modesty has never made a claim but who has been credited through all the years with having, by a touch of his magic wand, performed an overnight miracle in the color world? Would one think any the less of him to know that there is no more mystery in the color change of an autumn leaf than in any other thing in nature—and that he does not play a role in the transformation but is merely a bystander even as you and I? True it is that he is often there as a witness because his presence and the first cold nights of fall frequently coincide—an accidental and incidental presence, but never essential. What, then, does happen on these first cold autumn evenings?

The life-giving fluid, or blood, of a leaf is a green substance known as chlorophyll—a pigment which has been aptly termed the world's most potent dye. It has been estimated that some two billion tons of it are

used annually in imparting the greenness to all growing plants and furnishing the vitalizing spark to the vegetable world. The chemistry of all plant life is complex and involved; botanists and plant physiologists do not always agree on the exact causes of what takes place but they do agree on certain basic principles and conclusions—especially as to what has taken place. Thus we have an explanation of what happens to a leaf as it nears the end of its life span.

The leaf has been likened to a tiny factory; a remarkable factory where only nature's raw materials are used. Here in this busy workshop, with the aid of essential light from the sun, green chlorophyll is formed—a substance which endows a leaf with the power to make starch, and sugar, and oils, from Nature's plentiful supply of water and carbon dioxide. The water with its valuable chemical salts enters the plant or tree through its fine hair roots and by various means of travel known to scientists by such strange names as osmoses, capillarity and transpiration—a sort of pipe conveyance—it ascends to the leaf factory. From the air through a myriad of microscopic doors (stomata) in the underside of the leaf, carbon dioxide is taken in. The network of leaf veins and smaller veinlets serve to deliver these raw materials to all parts of the leaf and the factory is ready for operation.

Light from the sun starts the process and with the arrival of the warm, sunshiny days, and in the presence of the master substance, chlorophyll, the manufacture of life food begins. It is called photo-synthesis. The work ceases at night for want of light but in the darkness the starches are changed to sugar, dissolved in water and, through a different set of pipelines, delivered to all parts of the plant for food, growth and storage. This, in its simplest terms, is the normal operation of each tiny factory. Without chlorophyll it cannot operate nor can the processing go on without light. All during the warm summer days the leaf is at work, from morning

until night, in the preparation and the distribution of life-giving food to the plant or tree.

As the leaf nears the end of Summer, and its allotted span, there are many factors which contribute to its maturity and color change. The days become shorter with less and weaker light. The nights become correspondingly longer and cooler. Water with its minerals cease to run up the pipelines with usual agility. The flow thickens and becomes slower. The air and soil are drier and there is a gradual slowing down of supplies to the leaf. The tiny veinlets become clogged with waste and the deposits of unused mineral. Factory operations become tired and sluggish and the processing tapers off toward the inevitable end. It is the normal ending of a life cycle; the natural termination of the work, the purpose and life of the leaf.

Then come the still colder days and nights to hasten the end. The demise is quickened by an extremely cold night. Leaf life would cease anyway but Nature with her sudden cold gives the kindly aid to what might otherwise be a lingering death. The green chlorophyll disappears entirely, leaving exposed some of the unused sugars and pigments to glow in their own original colors of red, yellow, and purple. Chemical changes are brought about by a death pigment called anthocynin. The final waste substances and leftover pigments are capables of a thousand shades and hues. The leaf which has worked all summer must die like all living things and in dying is transfigured. The painted woods bear testimony to the completion of one more cycle. The passing is the fulfillment of a purpose—the nourishment and life of the tree. What a pity it is that all living things do not, in their departure, become transfigured with the beauty and glory of the autumn leaf.

The passing of an autumn leaf takes place where Jack Frost is unknown and rarely if ever appears. That the transfiguration is most beautiful in the northern climates is due perhaps to the colder drier air; the climate itself; the flora characteristics and many factors of plant ecology. In places where there is an early frost of heavy proportions there is little

autumnal beauty for the very touch of Jack Frost's destroying power browns, shrivels and curls the dying leaf. It is his wand that throws down the leaf before it has fulfilled its final function.

How very fortunatet are those who live in the land where abound the Sugar Maples. Maples are without peer in their contribution to the brilliancy and range of color. One of our best known and much admired botanists and naturalists—Donald Culross Peattie, in his new book, "A NATURAL HISTORY OF TREES," says, "The most magnificent display of color in all the kingdom of plants is in the autumnal foliage of the trees of North America. Over them all, over the clear light of the Aspens and Mountain Ash, over the leaping flame of Sumac and the hell-fire flickerings of poison ivy, over the war-paint of the many Oaks, rise the colors of one tree—the Sugar Maple—in the shout of one great army. Clearest yellow, richest crimson, tumultuous scarlet, or brilliant orange—the yellow pigments shining through the overpainting of red—the foliage of Sugar Maple outdoes and unifies the rest. It is like the mighty, matching melody that rides upon the crest of some symphonic weltering sea and, with its crying song, gives meaning to all the calculated dissonance of the orchestra." Anonymously submitted.

## A Pocket Hatchery

*From the Regina Leader Post*

What a small boy has in his pockets has been the subject of many a story and poem, but this one is hard to beat.

The other day, David Fox, small son of Rev. R. Fox and Mrs. Fox in Wadena, found a sparrow's egg lying on the sidewalk. Within a second it was inside David's pocket and he was off to play.

On his arrival home David put his hand in his pocket and was amazed to find a baby sparrow. The wonderful discovery was carefully bedded down in a dixie cup hung by string close to the kitchen stove and the tiny bird was soon chirping so loudly David named it "Chip."

# Crow Sagacity

By H. M. RAYNER, Ituna, Sask.

ON JULY 19th of this year, in the course of a three-mile walk in the country, I saw several families of young crows nearly full grown, and quickly learning the nonchalant independence that is characteristic of crows. Your adult sophisticated crow combines wisdom and ruthlessness with the devil-may-care swagger of a successful pirate. He is a sort of Long John Silver in the bird world.

Two young crows, perched on the topmost branch of a small poplar tree, promised interesting watching. They had not long left the nest, and one of the parent birds perching beside them, mounted guard.

The other parent was away in search of food. The guarding crow at intervals extended its lungs with a lusty caw-caw-caw, and from far in the distance I could hear the answering call of its foraging mate. The answers began to grow louder. Plainly the cruising crow was coming back with provender. The tree in question crowned a knoll of high prairie. Lush grass, with mingling gaillardia, harebells and wild flax, adorned its pleasant slopes. I sat down to enjoy the flowers and watch the crows.

Seconds later, a couple of gaping throats welcomed the provider. What he brought I could not see, and it was soon stuffed out of sight into one of the youngsters. Only one was fed, indicating that the rule was turn about.

The tree the crows were perched in was not more than 12 or 14 feet high. Farther down, the northern slope of the hill was wooded with a growth of older and taller trees, standing in a nearly impenetrable undergrowth of hazel-nut and peavine. Curious to see what the old crows would do about it, I got up and began walking towards them.

The old crows took wing and began circling the tree with much excited caw-cawing. They were trying to alarm the youngsters and draw them off. The youngsters lacked confidence in their powers of flight, and

were more afraid of taking to the air than of danger from me.

Then one of them took wing. One parent flew after it, and saw it safely berthed in one of the taller trees. The other continued circling and coaxing the tardy youngster to follow his more courageous nest-mate. He stuck stubbornly to his perch. I advanced still closer. This was more than the old crow could stand for. Down she swept at full speed. Leveling out, she hit the young one squarely with her breast, and knocked him out of the tree like a nine-pin. One hears about being "knocked flying." That young crow quite literally was.

Once launched into the abyss, he flapped for his life, and managed to make it to the nearest of the tall trees. I went on my way, well rewarded for my time by this demonstration of crow sagacity.

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## Pheasants at Elfros

GLADYS STITTLE

Pheasants were seen in this district (eight miles south of Elfros) for the first time last October 25. My brothers were driving along the road, about three quarters of a mile from home, when the dog chased up a bird. It flew towards them, and as it was quite near, they saw that it had a very long tail, so instantly knew it was none other than that beautifully colored bird, the Pheasant.

The tail, wings and body were rufous, speckled with black. The neck was green and around the eye was a rusty red, but the colors weren't as bright as in some pictures we have seen. We thought that this was due to their taking on colorings in the fall to blend with their surroundings as a protection against their enemies. If seen in the spring at mating time they have brighter colors.

Another Pheasant was seen only a mile from where the other one was found, so we are hoping they may increase in this district.

## Birds of the Mixed Woods

By STUART and MARY HOUSTON

Mr. Breitung's map of "Saskatchewan Plant Formations" in the April-June "Blue Jay" is both interesting and valuable. It not only indicates the type of plants to be found in each section of the province, but because of the interdependence of living things, is equally accurate for bird life as well.

When one is travelling from the "parkland" or "Aspen Grove Section" (which is incidentally the northern part of what biologists call the Transition Life Zone), the first clumps of coniferous trees indicate that one is entering the "Mixed Wood Section" or Canadian Life Zone. And what a difference just a few miles can make! For instance, in a short drive between Kelvington and Greenwater Lake, or between Kamsack and Madge Lake, the bird life changes remarkably. Instead of two resident species of warbler (Yellow Warbler and Yellowthroat), there are suddenly over a dozen species to differentiate between—over a dozen new songs to confuse the unmusical ear!

As an example, birding at Hudson Bay Junction on June 10 and 11 yielded the following definitely identified species of warblers: Black and White, Nashville, Myrtle, Chestnut-side, Ovenbird, Connecticut, Mourning, Yellowthroat and Wilson's Warblers. Though the conifers indicate the southern edge of the "Mixed Wood Section," the new species are not by any means confined to the coniferous woods. Instead, stands of poplar and willow that look the same as those many miles to the south, now harbor an interesting new selection of birds. In addition to the warblers already mentioned, these include the Olive-sided Flycatcher, Canada Jay, Raven, Hermit and Olive-backed Thrushes, and the Purple Finch. Last but not least, the clear whistle of the White-throated Sparrow is heard everywhere.

As well as the new species encoun-

tered, others that occur only sparingly in the "Aspen Grove Section" are much commoner to the north. The Red-eyed Vireo becomes very common in the Mixed Woods Section, and one hears and sees much more of the Alder Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Blue Jay, Sparrow Hawk and American Goldeneye. A Turkey Vulture was noted between Hudson Bay and Armit on June 11. All in all our two days of birding yielded 68 species of birds in the vicinity of Hudson Bay Junction.

## BIRD MUSIC

By CLARISSA STEWART,  
Fairy Hill, Sask.

They've never studied Harmony;  
Their Time is all awry  
To connoisseurs of music,  
But to mortals, such as I  
No philharmonic orchestra  
With fiddles soaring high  
And woodwinds trumpets, cymbals,  
too  
Can with their music vie.  
The lark begins at dawning light  
His early joyous lay;  
"There's nothing here to kick about,"  
Is what he seems to say.  
The thrush prolongs at eventide  
The day's orchestral grace  
With vespers so articulate  
"Come here," is what he says.  
One after one, the whole day through  
Takes up his solo: how  
The Catbird, "Canada's Mocking  
Bird"  
Can sing or harshly "Meow"!  
The tiny Yellow Warbler  
"At his door in the sun"  
Shrills "Seek me! Seek me! Seek me!"  
His song is never done.  
The Yellow-breasted Chat puts in  
His kettledrum effect.  
Such volume from the Jenny Wren  
You scarcely would expect.  
Even the Black-capped Chickadee  
No more does say "chick-a-dee"  
But pipes a whistle sweet and clear  
From out a leafy tree.  
Go plant trees, Prairie Dweller,  
If you would hear this band:  
They'll glorify your country home  
And beautify the land.  
They ask you for so little,  
No box office have they,  
They're on the springtime air "for  
free,"  
Enchanting each new day.

Plan to attend our  
Annual Meeting, Oct. 24

See Last Page

## A New Feathered Friend

By JEAN MAYSON, Prince Albert

**T**EDDY came running into the house quite excited one day early in July. "Mother, you should have been on the golf-course with Dad and I. We saw a woodpecker almost as big as a crow, and its head was red. It has a nest in a hole in a tree." Dad confirmed the report. Then and there I decided I must see this unusual woodpecker. The following morning, quite early, Dad armed with cameras, Teddy carrying the extra photographic paraphernalia and I with my sketch book and pencil, drove to the golf course.

A short walk after leaving the car, brought us to the tall dead tree where a hole high up in the tree was presumably the woodpeckers' nest. "What I can't understand" Teddy kept telling me, "is how such a big bird could get into such a small hole." I was also puzzled and mentally decided my "men" were mistaken as to the woodpecker's size.

While Dad took position in front of the tree for photos, Teddy and I went back a few yards and stood behind a big spruce tree. In a short while Teddy excitedly whispered "Look Mother, the woodpecker's here, high on that next tree." To my amazement there was the big woodpecker, just as big as I'd been told. I watched eagerly for it to fly to the hole in the dead tree, but instead after some dalliance Madam Woodpecker or perhaps it was Father Woodpecker, flew to another tree near us, where we noticed a much larger oval shaped hole. Immediately, with a clamour which reminded me of home, out popped a little head, mouth stretched wide, then another and another. One thing is certain they made enough noise for a dozen. The hungry babies were fed by regurgitation, while we three gazed spellbound, and Dad took some pictures. Several times we watched the same feeding procedure take place. The parent bird and the young paid no attention to us, though we walked around the bottom of the tree.

I tried my hand at a quick sketch on one of these occasions. It had to be quick as the woodpecker stayed

on the tree only a short time before going into the hole. It sounded as if the feedings were repeated inside. Then shortly out popped that head with its ridiculously fiery red top, and away flew the woodpecker. Our bird book proclaimed our large woodpecker to be the Pileated Woodpecker, and according to the pictures it was the father woodpecker, though later seeing both parent birds together, they appeared exactly alike. By far the largest woodpecker in Canada, almost as large as a crow, coloured in broad masses of black and white, with striking pointed red crest, and loud characteristic cries.

It was a real thrill to meet you, Mr. Pileated Woodpecker and we hope to see you again. By the way the smallest hole in the dead tree proved to belong to a Black-capped Chickadee. Dad also took pictures of this bird.

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## National Bird Week

There are many observations throughout the years of national importance. The Western Red Lily and the Sharp-tailed Grouse have received some recognition. It is high time that the birds received some reward as God's working creatures, by giving them a safe conduct return pass to their winter quarters, rather than having them regarded as pot-shot ornaments.

The Wilson's Snipe, one of the most valuable birds of the continent, is to receive, after the 20th of September, a charge of buckshot from the sniper as a reward for services rendered.

I would suggest that at the annual convention this fall of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, that we bring this up for discussion. I suggest that the Dominion Government be asked to institute a National Bird Week every year, so that thanks may be given to the Almighty for the fulfilment of His purpose in bringing the birds back in spring for the benefit of Mankind.

—Arthur Ward



## 1953 YORKTON RECORDS

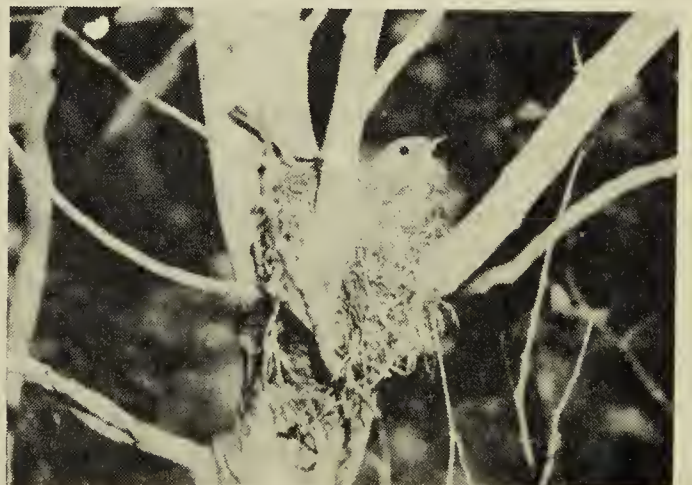


*VEERY NEST (WILSON'S THRUSH)—One cowbird egg and three Veery eggs.  
—Photo by Dr. Stuart Houston.*

A large bush at the southwest end of York Lake proved to be an interesting place for Yorkton birdlovers this year. On May 25, Phil and Tony Pawluck found a Mourning Dove nest with 2 eggs and Ruffed Grouse nest with 11 eggs. On May 31, a Yorkton Natural History Society group discovered a Willow Thrush (Veery) nest with one egg—the first nesting record for the district. One June 7, there were 3 thrush eggs and one cowbird egg in the nest.

A Hawk nest with two eggs was found twenty feet up in a poplar on May 31, but several return trips were necessary to establish the certain identity of the parent bird. It proved to be a Cooper's Hawk, the third nesting record for the Yorkton district. Dr. Stuart Houston banded the young birds on July 12th. Chicken feathers were present near the base of the tree.

Another interesting nesting record was obtained when Tony and Phil Pawluck found a Rose-breasted Grosbeak nest in the same locality on June 14th. It was a poorly built structure about seven feet high in a clump of willows and contained three eggs. Two days later the male was flushed from the nest and there were now two young and one egg in the nest.



*Nest of Rose-breasted Grosbeak,  
York Lake, June 15, 1953.  
—Photo by Cliff Shaw, Yorkton.*

# The Bluebirds of Burnt Butte

By STUART P. JORDON, REGINA

THE Blue head and back against the orange of the burnt shale was as masterful a combination as the blue and the orange of a sunset. This then is my title. Each incident, enough in itself to require a story, will be briefed to a panoramic passage of wildlife the like of which I never have seen. I have travelled from Lac La Ronge to the Cypress Hills and I have walked and lived in the hills for the past three months. Bubbling as nature enthusiasts do, my thoughts must be controlled to a minimum of words.

Well I remember the gravel-throated brothers of the crow at La Ronge. Symbols of the wild north.

The Pileated Woodpecker at Waske-siu flashing through camp—his head afire. How thrilled I was to see this, the biggest and rarest of woodpeckers. How proud Mrs. Merganser looked with her feet of young. So desperately she herded them away from my boat.

The Cypress Hills abound in birds. I have seen at least fifty species. An expert would have identified many more. What a magnificent spectacle they make as they move across the summer scene. Like the flowers there seems to be a different kind for each passing day.

The Rail has ceased its persistent squeak. So persistent and annoying was this squeak that it led Dr. Kupsch, for whom I worked this summer, and I to name a small lake near Eastend—Rail Lake, in honour of this sleep awakening demon of the swamp.

Belted Kingfishers still flash over shrunken waters. But the blue and white have paled. Mourning Doves by the hundreds can be seen every day now as I have seen them all summer. Never have I seen so many. The Ring-necked Pheasant seems to have

stopped squawking so loudly. Papa helps to rear the family so marital duties may be too pressing. I'll never forget the night a pair of Canada Geese kept me awake for hours by honking close by our camp. The positively matchless song in a windless valley of the Hermit Thrush has ceased. The Blue Heron still gracefully and majestically flaps and statue-like stands for fish both day and night. Their call reminds me of someone strangling a low pitched quacking duck! The Lark Buntings no longer whisper music from above. Their tiny forms have vanished from the blue. Crows are flocking, soon their numbers will blacken brown fields. Where is the Osprey I saw this spring? What a magnificent bird this King of the Fishers as it whisked to the water's surface only to fail because of the King of Tormentors—the Kingbird. Does the young Ferruginous Hawk I captured in July soar on high? What huge, impressive nests these birds build. They dot the most rugged cliffs. Still they are found on sloping grass-covered hillsides. Seeing and then climbing up to one of these masterful, poised high structures and then to look down to the valley floor hundreds of feet below makes one marvel at the miracle of flying, makes one feel far away from the crush of living in this modern world.

When the big black shadow passed over me I knew it was not a hawk. And then another. There they were so close as they circled the high butte on which we were working. They made you wonder what they would do if you were a carcass. Their small bare heads looked searchingly downward and then they sailed away in quest of deader game. Turkey Vultures visited us again at other times during the summer but never so closely as the first carrion hunting crew.

I'll always remember the scolding of the Rock Wrens. These brown inhabitants of barren, rocky wasteland enlivened many a hot and dusty day.

The first time that I heard the smashing whap in total darkness of a Beaver's tail, I left the ground in positive fright. Now, in knowledge, I enjoy this warning slap. Enjoy the brown head and furrowed water as he sets out in twilight for food.

The Coyote still howls in the Cypress Hills. May he forever do so. How eerie yet how wonderful. The Hills seems wilder for that call. The night and moon move as they were before man.

Each coulee seems to have its deer family. The deer trails. The stray, white, gnawed, discarded antler. The bedding spots. What a tingling thrill to flush an antlered Buck with flashing tail. What speed, what fluid, effortless jumps.

Snakes have been a rarity in our lives. This rareness was shaken when we met a huge Bull Snake face to face. He was at least four feet in length and I would think one would need both hands to circle his girth. He looked at us with true reptilian disdain and then slowly slithered down into his den.

Here I have seen the Jack, the Cottontail and the Snowshoe Rabbit all living in the same coulee.

On August 27th we encountered twenty mighty Sage Hens. Black-bellied and star-tailed they were a joy to see.

There are still wild herds in the Hills though the Buffalo in their thousands have gone. We thrilled many a time to the sight of from seven to thirty of these brightly colored, faster than all other plain creatures, the true symbol of this corner of the province—the Antelope. Look! See them race over the valley floor then up, up the Frenchman outcrops. See the Buck lagging—guarding the rear. Then they're gone.

Brown and dry is the grass on the Hills as September approaches. Birds have lost their color and their song.

But I have found pleasure that I can never lose. I have found the treasure of blue breasts on orange shale nests.

*“Something hidden, go and find it,  
Go and look behind the ranges,  
Something lost behind the ranges,  
Lost and waiting for you —  
Go.”*

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## Observations from a City Window

By H. A. and FRANCES CROOME,  
Regina, Sask.

Each spring for years we have planted sunflower seed so that in the Fall we may have the pleasure of a visit from the Goldfinches before they travel south.

This year, on August 30, we noticed for the first time a Brewer's Blackbird perched on a sunflower head eating away at the not quite ripe seeds. The next day we counted eight blackbirds swaying on the plants. They seem to have taken possession of the garden and bird bath, chasing from the latter any robin that dares to perch on the edge or tries to go near the water.

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## Among the Trees

(Continued from Page 1)

ing a Manchurian Pear tree more than anything else, while the other type is quite different from the usual Cottonwood also.

Another beautiful tree is the Butternut or White Walnut, with its spreading habit of growth, with light green soft feeling alternate fifteen to seventeen inch leaves, and yellow twigs.

Now if you want to grow a couple of hardy and pretty native shrubs try the following: the first fairly tall and upright is the Highbush Cranberry, with its large bunches of white flowers followed by bright red fruits, and the other is the Shrubby Cinquefoil, or Potentilla. It grows to about three feet, is very spreading in shape and is just covered with bright yellow flowers all summer long.

Now it's time to go. I will stroll with you through some of the other trees next time we get a chance.

## The Dickcissel

By ARTHUR WARD,  
Swift Current

After becoming acquainted with members of the Thrush family one wonders why the bird we know as the Robin does not have the name "Red-breasted Thrush." Its actions, nest construction, and color of eggs are almost identical with those of the English Song Thrush, except that the latter stays more within the woodlands rather than the most unusual places around the dwellings of the cities, occupied by the American Robin.

The name "Dickcissel" too, seems to suggest something apart from the sparrow class to which it truly belongs. Though not a rare bird, it is uncommon in our district. Standing at the door one morning I observed the male and female feeding on the ground. Later on, not far along the creek side, whilst tramping through the long grass towards some rose bushes, where I had a Yellow Warbler's nest under observation, I suddenly flushed a bird. Although my feet were within six inches nothing at first was revealed, but on pushing aside the grass I saw the Dickcissel's nest, made of coarse grass and containing four pale blue eggs with brown blotches at the thick end. I photographed the nest in color.

Looking along the creek towards the nest one morning I noticed two surveyors with tripod fixed so it seemed to be over the nest. I hurried over but found that they were a few yards from it. I showed it to them—they had never heard of such a bird.

I also recounted to them the details of the Yellow Warbler's nest in the rose bushes, referred to above. It contained two eggs—one the Warblers, the other a Cowbird's. The Warbler egg was smeared as though one had been broken. I took out the Cowbird egg, cleaned the Warbler egg and put it back in the nest. Returning two days later I found the nest to be empty. When I took the two surveyors to show them

the empty nest, greatly to our surprise, we found that the Warbler had laid four more eggs. Afterwards these were successfully hatched out. I have seen this done before.

I wonder what observations have been made of the Dickcissal by other members of our Natural History Society.

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## "As Swift as an Eagle in its Flight"

By M. A. WELSH,  
Prince Albert

On June 5th, 1953 I was flying between Prince Albert and Stoney Rapids, a settlement very near the "top" of the province and very near to the centre in an east-west direction. Once we entered the remote area north of Lac La Ronge we noted a great many eagles, both Bald and Golden. These eagles were mostly seen on the wing, hunting. Near Stoney Rapids (about 20 miles south) I noted one Bald Eagle circling about 500 feet from the plane and slightly above us. On checking the altimeter of the plane, I found that we were flying at about 5,000 feet. This eagle when flying in the same direction as we were, was equaling the plane's speed — about 125 miles an hour.

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## Indigo Bunting

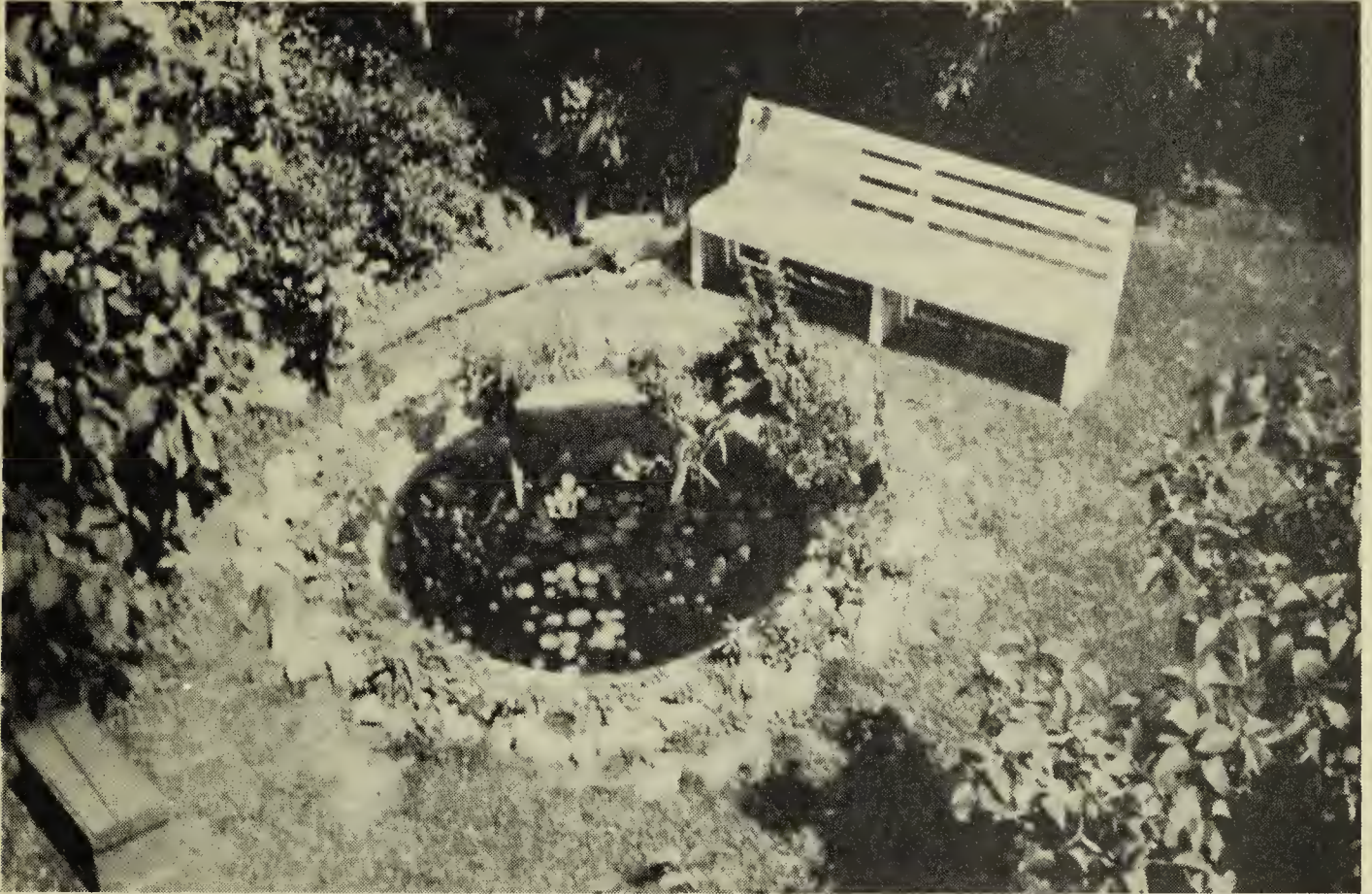
By S. O. JORDHEIM,  
White Bear, Sask.

I wish to report that I saw an Indigo Bunting on the morning of June 22. I managed to get within fifteen feet of it, and at that distance it reminded me of a Goldfinch, except that its body was blue instead of yellow.

On looking it up in the bird book I saw it could only be an Indigo Bunting, and as it says there, that it is a rare bird for Saskatchewan, I thought I would report it. I have never seen the bird since that morning.

## LILY POND

By ALICE McDONALD, Invermay, Sask.



We have a lily pond in our back yard that gives us much pleasure. For years we have been familiar with all the garden plants, but aquatics were unknown to us. Now, Hyacinth, Water Iris, Parrot Feather, Floating Heart as well as the Lilies and Gold Fish are a never ending source of interest.

The birds enjoy the pond too, especially the Robins, who find the moss that borders the pool good building material.

If there is a corner of your garden just crying out for a lily pond it will be well worth your while to build one.

## The Hawk and the Sparrow

By ARTHUR WARD,  
Swift Current

Visiting a grove of trees with a little party of school friends, we found a Swainson Hawk's nest containing two young ones, so we decided to photograph them. Climbing the tree, these were handed down and again replaced in the nest. One little girl member, up the tree, insisted there were more than two "she could hear them," but this was laughed off by the others. It was decided that we return another day to band them. Our girl member did the climbing and let the hawks down in a basket—then out of her pocket

came the proof that there were other young ones up there.

We had heard of the Arkansas Kingbird having its nest in the side of the Swainson's Hawk's nest—this time it was the sparrows. Looking up we could plainly see the sparrow's nest in the underside of the hawk's nest, apparently living peacefully together.

On both occasions of our visit we noticed the well stocked larder, composed of mice and partly eaten rat. To show our appreciation of this companionship the fledgling sparrow was carefully restored to its nest. Again we noted the immense value of the hawks, and that of the owls to the agriculturalists in their partiality to the rodents of the fields, now that the coyote is vanishing from the scene.

## *An Unpleasant Duty*

By H. M. RAYNER, Ituna, Sask.

Walking home to lunch on a sunny day in June of this year, I came upon a hurt robin. It fluttered away from me, its breast dragging along the ground, and I knew that its legs must be broken.

Using my cap as a net, I easily caught it. The poor thing cried out pitifully as I put my hand around it, holding its wings, which were not hurt, in the folded position. I found one leg broken close to the body and badly mangled. The other was broken at the ankle. There was only one thing to be done—kill the robin as quickly and mercifully as possible.

It had stopped crying out and rested passively in my hand as I carried it home. I sought out my small benchaxe, which I always keep sharp. I had decided that instantaneous decapitation was the best I could do. As I prepared for this very unwelcome task, I thought of the young mountaineer in Earle Birney's fine poem "*David*," and of a certain English noble of historical fame who, on trying the edge of the executioner's axe, said drily: "Ay, this is sharp medicine, but it cures all diseases."

In order to expose the bird's neck and save my own fingers, I had to change my hold and take her by the wings. Her first response to this was to twist her head around and deliver a series of savage pecks. These suddenly ceased. The bird's head drooped, its beak gaped, its eyes closed, its muscles went limp. I was to be spared the job of putting her out of pain. She was dying in my hand.

Or was she? Mindful that the game of playing 'possum is one played at

by more than 'possums, I had best wait and see. Soon I felt a slight movement, a slow tensioning of the body. Her eyes slowly opened, bright, full, and alive as ever. When the show of fight had failed, she had tried one more trick in an attempt to escape. An ill advised attempt, had she but known it.

By what freak accident her legs got broken is a complete mystery to me. Perhaps some reader may have an answer.

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## **Sanctuary**

By ERIC A. DOWSON,  
Nanaimo, B.C.

*There is a cabin that I know  
Built on a rise, and down below  
A Prairie stream goes singing by,  
Where poplars etch a Prairie sky.*

*No formal garden stands to grace  
That small and unpretentious place,  
Furnished in such a modest way,  
All so unlike this modern day.*

*But God's green country spreads  
around.*

*There's songs of birds and rustling  
sound*

*Of wind that ripples through the  
grain,*

*And that fresh Earth-smell after rain.*

*Unfrequented save by the few,  
Beauty dwells there, and quiet too.*

*One can find sanctuary there  
From progress and life's hectic stir.*

## Prairie Chickens Were Plentiful

By CHARLEY ABRA,  
Usherville, Sask.

Let us recall the sparsely settled rolling prairie when it was mostly ranching country and small grain fields. In the spring and early summer mornings, on almost every knoll, far and wide, the Prairie Chicken would gather and welcome the day with their booming, cooing song. The prairies would have seemed empty and lonesome without them.

Then later on in the summer, it seemed that wherever you went you would come onto an old Prairie Chicken with her half-grown brood. They would probably fly a short distance and light again, but more often they just ran away in the long grass. It did not seem to matter how far you travelled in any direction, their numbers did not diminish. Then in the fall when they were full grown it almost seemed as if there was just one great flock of them—and they covered the prairies.

In the winter, just at daybreak, they would come to all the settlers' yards and sit in rows along the fences and on the roofs of the buildings. They would be all over the barn yards and come almost up to the house windows. One couldn't count them, as they were always on the move. About the only morning they didn't come was while a blizzard was on.

A person might wonder what they all lived on. In the winter a good portion of their diet was the Wild Rose berries. In the summer months they seemed to live chiefly on grasshoppers. They were there before the settlers and before the grain fields. Those sandy knolls and ridges where the grasshoppers liked to lay their eggs were also the favourite scratching grounds of the Prairie Chickens. What havoc they must have wrought among the eggs and young grasshoppers.

There was no grasshopper infestation then. The Prairie Chickens and other insectivorous birds seemed to

have grasshopper control well in hand, and the small grain fields yielded good crops.

## Garden Tragedy

By DAISY COOK, Regina  
(From the Regina Leader-Post)

Dusk enshrouds my garden, toning its varied colors to one soft green-gray. All the birds are nested, save a slim mother robin, calling, calling, from her perch on the clothesline, her voice an exhausted croak: "Little one, my little one, Where are you? Come to me!"

Earlier today she brought her overstuffed offspring, twice her size, and fed him tirelessly, cramming her offerings down his ever-open beak. Her quest took her to neighboring gardens and from one of her forays she returned to find him gone, easy prey to a marauding cat. An intensive search of the garden followed. Up and down each row of vegetables she went, her beak full of wriggling worms, round the massive delphiniums, in and out of the staked tomatoes. Then she laid the worms carefully on the stoop and perched on the clothesline, calling loudly: "Little one, O little one, here I am. Come to me!" The gardens north and south of mine were visited and between each search she perched for a time in my garden, chirping beseechingly.

She could not reconcile herself to his absence. She made little trips to different parts of the garden, peering under the broad rhubarb leaves and struggling along between the scarlet runner beans and the garage wall. Hour after hour this went on. The heat of the day subsided, giving way to our blessed prairie coolness, so conducive to restful sleep.

It seemed callous to go into the house and leave her there, still calling to her baby, her voice tired and thin. With the world so full of human sorrow, why should the futile anguish of one bird tear at the heart strings? Listen! You can hear her still: "Little one, my little one! Come to me, O come to me!"

# Co-operative Spring 7

Compiled by DR. S

Seventeen Saskatchewan observers contributed first seen spring migration dates to this study in co-operation with the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Unfortunately, 14 of these localities are in the eastern half of the province and only three (Skull Creek, Swift Current and Saskatoon) in the western half. In the following table, localities are listed from south to north. Two Alberta reports are appended for comparison.

It must be kept in mind that even two observers in the same locality would usually report different dates for the same species, the difference.

	NORTH PORTAL (Munro Dunbar)	SKULL CREEK (S. A. Mann)	SWIFT CURRENT (A. Ward)	REGINA (Fred Bard)	GRENFELL (Mrs. Hubbard)	FORT SAN (E. M. Callin)	DILKE (J. B. Belcher)	YORKTON (Houston, Pawluck)	SPIRIT LAKE (Wm. Anakt)	SHEHO (Wm. Anakt)
CANADA GOOSE .....	.....	Mr20	Mr27	Mr28	Mr30	Mr24	.....	Ap7	Mr31	Mr
RED-WGD. BLACK- BIRD .....	Mr29	Ap10	Ap6	Ap3	Ap21	Mr29	Mr30	Ap3	Ap23	Ap
FLICKER .....	Mr29	Ap3	Ap6	Ap3	Ap20	Ap26	Ap29	Ap26	Ap24	Ap
MYRTLE WARBLER ..	Ap28	.....	My24	My1	My14	My3	My7	Ap29	My13	My
WHITE-THR. SPARROW .....	Ap28	.....	.....	My1	My8	Ap28	My17	My13	My9	M
PURPLE MARTIN .....	.....	.....	.....	My28	My14	.....	Jn3	My3	My5	.....
CHIPPING SPARROW .....	.....	.....	Ap15	My12	.....	My15	My8	My15	.....	M
BARN SWALLOW .....	My8	My21	My20	My20	My19	My12	My24	My10	My8	My
YELLOW WARBLER...	My8	My27	Ap15	My16	My13	My10	My20	My14	My28	My
HOUSE WREN .....	My13	My25	My20	My24	My14	My17	Jn2	My31	My17	My
BALTIMORE ORIOLE	My15	My24	My20	My25	My18	My10	My20	My23	My25	My
EASTERN KINGBIRD	My20	My25	My22	My22	My18	My18	My21	My18	My17	My
NIGHTHAWK .....	.....	Jn1	.....	My25	Jn5	My26	.....	My29	My31	My
RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	Jn2	.....	.....	My27	Jn5	J



# Migration Study-1953

ART HOUSTON

depending on the amount of time spent outdoors, the habitat encountered, and chance. On the average, it seems that many species take about a week to move from North Porta. 300 miles to Nipawin. The earlier migrants may take longer than this, and later ones, such as the Kingbird, seem to arrive almost simultaneously. The Myrtle Warbler migration was generally late this year.

The Purple Martin is not of regular enough distribution to be useful. Another year probably the Crow, Marsh Hawk, Killdeer, Slate-colored Junco, Blue-winged Teal and Goldfinch will be added to the list.

SASKATOON (J. D. Hogg)	NAICAM (W. Yanchinski)	WALLWORT (J. Turnquist)	SOMME (R. & D. Hooper)	TISDALE (Van Blaricom)	NIPAWIN (M. Street)	TORCH RIVER (S. Francis)	BEYNON, ALTA. (M. J. Cope)	HUXLEY, ALTA. (W. Malcolm)	
Ap18	.....	.....	My6	.....	Ap5	Ap11	.....	Mr25	CANADA GOOSE
Ap25	Mr31	.....	Ap24	My16	Ap29	Ap24	Ap25	Ap30	RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD
My5	Mr26	My15	Ap24	My3	Ap27	Ap5	Ap10	Ap6	FLICKER
.....	Ap19	.....	Ap25	My16	Ap26	My10	.....	.....	MYRTLE WARBLER
Ap18	Ap26	My8	My8	My6	My4	My10	.....	.....	WHITE-THROATED SPARROW
.....	.....	My5	.....	.....	Jn7	Ap29	.....	.....	PURPLE MARTIN
My18	My21	.....	My22	My21	My21	Ap25	My23	My28	CHIPPING SPARROW
My24	My12	My21	My17	Jn5	My16	My18	.....	My24	BARN SWALLOW
My25	My23	.....	My23	My24	My24	My30	My21	.....	YELLOW WARBLER
My26	Jn5	My27	My23	My20	My21	My27	My23	My23	HOUSE WREN
Jn3	My29	.....	My23	My25	My22	.....	My26	My23	BALTIMORE ORIOLE
Jn2	My20	.....	My22	My28	My20	My29	My22	My27	EASTERN KINGBIRD
Jn2	My28	.....	My28	Jn1	My28	My28	.....	My25	NIGHTHAWK
.....	Jn5	.....	Jn2	Jn1	Jn3	Jn18	.....	.....	RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD

# Lovely Weather for Ducks?

By Dr. Stuart Houston



*Flooded Island Opposite Imperial Beach, Last Mountain Lake, June 28, 1953. Tern eggs and young were clustered on remaining sandspit, left center.*

—Photo by Dr. Stuart Houston

**D**URING THE RAINY WEATHER, many a person remarked to me "Oh, well, it's lovely weather for ducks." But it wasn't at all. In fact, 1953 was a tragic year for the ducks and many other species of water birds in this corner of Saskatchewan.

The freezing temperatures and snowfall on May 10th and 11th forced many ducks to desert their nests. Even if not deserted, many eggs were infertile and did not hatch. Later nesting attempts had to contend with the results of a precipitation twice as heavy as the average. On three occasions — during the last week in June, and again on July 10 and Aug. 2, rains were heavy enough to cause streams, sloughs and lakes to rise suddenly and flood surrounding low areas. These floods covered many nests.

It is true that the broods have been spread over an increased water

area, and that the vegetation has allowed them to hide with more success; but even allowing generously for these factors, the fact remains that we have had fewer broods of ducks in the Yorkton district than any year in the past decade. Every farmer I have talked with has confirmed my opinion.

But it was another group of birds elsewhere in the province — the colonial nesting birds at Last Mountain Lake — that were perhaps the hardest hit of all. The lake had risen several feet during the latter half of June. On June 28, the Belchers and I made a ten hour, thirty mile survey of the north end and west shores of Last Mountain Lake. We found that the island opposite Imperial Beach, usually used by the cormorants, pelicans, gulls and terns, had been flooded. The last land above water in this area was a tiny sandbar with waves washing over

most of it. At the highest spot were a disorganized group of 34 Common Tern eggs — apparently these birds had moved their eggs from their nests to higher ground as the waters rose. There were six cute little downy terns running up and down the sandbar, while other lifeless downy forms had succumbed from being continually wet.

One mile south of this was a small rocky island. Here were 20 ring-billed gull nests, all with eggs, among the rocks. The sandy end of the island was occupied by an almost equal number of common tern nests, but these were in jeopardy, with water washing up over some of them. I suspect from the late date of these nests that perhaps the first nests had already been flooded out, and that the gulls and terns were now nesting for the second time. However, since the lake rose another foot in the month after my visit, probably this small colony was a total failure this year.

The main colonial nesting site this year was on a flat grassy island just offshore, more than 20 miles south of the usual nesting place. Here on June 28th, were 25 double-crested cormorant nests with eggs, and 11 nests with young. Five nests, now

surrounded by water and splashed by waves, contained dead young. Over thirty pelicans were sitting on the island but none were nesting. I banded 91 young ring-billed gulls, 21 cormorants and 4 young marbled godwits.

When I returned to the colony August 1st, I found that the water had risen another 10 or 12 inches, covering about one-third of the previous area of the island. Only a few young cormorants were present, and they were old enough to swim away, leaving only one to band. However, I was amazed to find 35 new cormorant nests with the usual two or three eggs, none of which had hatched as yet. These nests were so extremely late that it is doubtful if many would raise young to maturity.

The only encouraging feature at Last Mountain Lake was that the higher grassy islands at the north end of the lake had heavy densities of nesting ducks. On June 28th, one island of less than one acre had a baldpate nest with 8 eggs, a gadwall nest with 9 eggs, lesser scaup nests with 10, 9, 10 and 11 eggs; blue-winged teal nests with 7, 7 and 8 eggs, and mallard nests with 6, 8 and 7 eggs — a total of 12 duck nests on one tiny island!

## Crow Chuckles

*H. M. Rayner, Ituna, Sask.*

A crow pursued and harried by a kingbird or a blackbird is a familiar sight, and no one feels very sorry for the old black nest-robber. He doesn't need our sympathy anyway, being well able to take care of himself in most situations.

A few days ago, (this is being written in June 1953) I chanced to see Mr. Crow himself playing the kingbird role, and another bird on the receiving end. The other bird was one of the larger hawks—a marsh-hawk, I think.

Though we think of the crow as slow and clumsy when we compare him with a kingbird, he proved far

superior to the hawk in speed and dexterity of flight. He would dive down on the hawk, giving vent to the same throaty squawks as when he himself is attacked and trying to escape.

However, the hawk didn't seem to be greatly concerned, and Mr. Crow soon tired of the game, turned around, and went back to his nest. No doubt he indulged in some crow-chuckles about this reversal of the established order, and bragged to Mrs. Crow and the family of his daring exploit.

## ANNUAL MEETING October 24th

Plan to attend.

## Notes from Rocanville

E. SYMONS

I have picked up a couple of anecdotes which will be probably new to many members as they were to me.

One of my shop men told me this one:

Lawrence Dixon, of this district, observed a Hummingbird's nest built on a branch of a small poplar. It looked like a thimble and appeared to be of similar material of a wasp nest. The interesting thing was that he observed they enlarge the nest as the family grows in order to provide sufficient accommodation.

Another friend told me this:

A year or two ago he was duck hunting somewhere N.E. of Moose Jaw. It was late fall—the sloughs were frozen up but the ice was crystal clear. He saw a muskrat take off under the ice, so decided to verify just how he got air, and followed him. After a short swim he came up under the ice, exhales, waits a few moments, inhales again and swims off. He noted that the nearest airhole was about 200 yards away, and following the 'rat, noted that it went through the same performance four or five times in the total distance.

### A Remarkable Lily

*Charles Thacker, Broadview, Sask.*

While out for a drive early in July, Mrs. Thacker and I observed what appeared to be a large ball-shaped red flower. We turned around and went back to investigate. It turned out to be a clump of Red Lilies, *all on one stem*. From one side of the group to the other measured seven inches one way and six inches the other. The entire group made almost a perfect circle.

The thing that amazed us was that there were nine lilies in the group. I cannot recall seeing more than three or four on one stalk previously, and wondered if any one had seen a similar sight.

The one stalk at the top measured one quarter of an inch each way and was roughly rectangular shaped, but the stalk had five distinct ridges in it, as if five stalks grew in one.

### Floral Emblem is Endangered

*(From a July issue of the Regina Leader Post)*

The Red Prairie Lily, Saskatchewan's floral emblem, is being picked indiscriminately by the thousands in the Pas, Manitoba, area for sale to

tourists, a Yorkton couple reported after spending a holiday in that district.

The salesmen are young Indian boys and girls who pick the brilliant flowers in large bunches and stand on the roadsides, north of The Pas, offering them for a few pennies to passing tourists.

### The Louse Fly

*Arthur Ward, Swift Current*

While banding a thrush, a Louse Fly, slightly bronze in color, rather more flatish than the House Fly, jumped from the bird to my fingers then quickly back to the bird, disappearing in the feathers. Again, when banding an immature Yellow Warbler recently, this again was repeated.

Searching among the feathers revealed nothing. This same bird was captured twice later but the louse could not be found. Having seen this on four different birds and examining several others, it would seem that only when the louse jumps from the bird to the hand is it possible to see it.

The Louse Fly is a species of *Ornithomyia* and is a blood-sucking insect.

## Who Hath Eyes To See . . . . .

By ELIZABETH CRUICKSHANK, Regina

Meadows down East, in memory, were always "daisied fields." In mid-June by Regina Avenue flashed those enchanting scenes before my eyes. Here was not the fulfillment of R. L. Stevenson's wish for all of "Flowers in the garden, a living river by the door, a nightingale in the sycamore" but beauty to enjoy. The snow was not daisies but Yarrow, its beautiful lacey patterns shading from milk white to mauve, providing violet shadow on this sunlit land. The azure blue of flax lent charming contrast.

Livening the scene, where houses now are crowding in on all sides, the three-flowered Avens swung their rose-madder bells or waved their long smoke red feathery styles on their fruiting heads that gave them the name of "torch flower." Beside them colonies of Pussy paws, leaves spread like mats of velvet grey, some groups producing grey furry flower clusters, others greenish white.

Blue-eyed grass, the baby of the Iris family, with its blossoms, globular seed capsules, narrow leaves, formed striking little compositions in line and form nearby.

Cinffoil, Northern Bedstraw, Daisy Fleabane were background for the

stately Alum root, its flowers in narrow panicles stretching tall to display bronzy purple petals not quite enclosing the stamens, their anthers glowing with their burden of vermilion pollen.

Young Gaillardia were present in grey green stems and leaves, some with new green disks but more and more developing fuzzy dark red heads with the golden yellow notched ray florets not yet completely spread.

A few narrow leaved blue Pentstemon kept aloof from the crowd of early varieties.

Silver Groundsel, Chickweed, Androsace, a few Coneflowers, Alexanders, Showy Oxytrope, pink lavender many flowered Broom Rape, Silver leaved Psoralea, Yellow Evening Primrose, Oreocarya, the white forget-me-not of the prairie, and low sweet Roses were in happy association.

Three year old Nancy stooped to kiss her first wild rose and to delight her grandmother's heart "It kissed me too," she whispered.

Did someone say no wild flowers grew near Regina?

Who hath eyes to see . . . . .

## Flowers in Profusion

By MAYLE QUIGLEY, Belville, Ontario

May we tell you how much we enjoyed "A wealth of prairie flowers" in a recent "Leader-Post." It has gone into our scrap book to be used as a reference lest we forget some of our well-beloved prairie flowers. Many thanks.

To a pair of old-timers the statement in a recent copy of the paper that it was not possible to gather a bunch of wild flowers within twenty miles of Regina was somewhat of a shock. We recall that when we were teaching in the Indian Industrial School four miles west of Regina in 1904 we had a visiting professor from Queens University. He took a walk one morning and collected one hundred and fourteen varieties of wild flowers, to his surprise and delight. In 1903 Georgina Binnie-Clark of Fort Qu'Appelle wrote a delightful book, "My summer on the Canadian prairie," long since out of print. In

it she tells of a homesteader who said he could be reconciled to the prairie if there was a single wild flower on it. This while standing knee deep in flowers. So he went home and got a job in a brewery "Eyes have they, but see not."

And we remember places where the lovely red lily could always be found, west of Carlyle, north of Punnichy, east of Whitewood, etc. Hope it is unmolested as the true Saskatchewan emblem.

The "Blue Jay" is a feast and we pass it on to members of the little Nature Club here where we have found kindred spirits.

We hope to attend the Jubilee celebration in 1955. We were present at the inauguration of the province in 1905 and listened to the speeches in Victoria park, then a smallish hay field enclosed by a strand of barb wire.

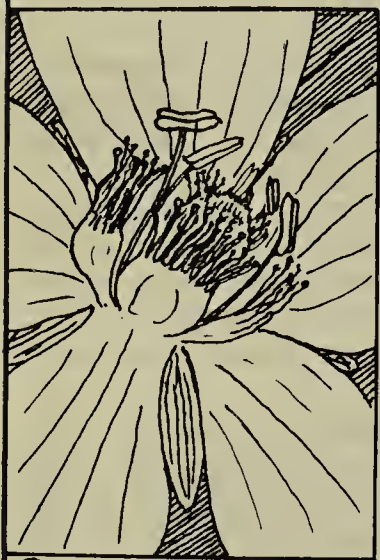
NORTHERN

GRASS OF

PARNASSUS

*Parnassia*

*palustris* L.



Part of flower  
with stamens

0 1" 2" 3" 4" A.C.B. 52

## “When Is A Grass Not A Grass?”

Arch. C. Budd, Swift Current, Saskatchewan

**T**HE GRASS OF PARNASSUS (Parnassia) is not, and does not even resemble a grass. Botanists nowadays place this genus in the Saxifrage family but in earlier times this genus was placed by some in with the Sundews (*Drosera*) and by others with the violets. Why, I do not know. Other authorities make it a separate family, Parnassiaceae.

Grass of Parnassus is a perennial plant with all the flower stems and leaf stalks arising from the crown of the root. The leaves have long stalks and are entire margined, and either oval or cordate in shape. The flowering stems generally bear a stalkless, leaf-like bract below the middle, and

at the summit bear a single creamy-white, delicately veined flower. The flower is very interesting, as besides the 5 sepals, 5 petals and 5 stamens it also bears 5 staminodia or sterile stamens. These are tiny blades bearing from 5 to 17 small gland-tipped hair-like, protuberances or filaments.

In Saskatchewan several species may perhaps be found but the common one is Northern Grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia palustris* L.). It is found in moist, marshy places, and while more likely to be found in the more northerly and wooded areas, it is occasionally met with along stream banks and slough margins even in the drier south-western portions of the Province.

## Key to Flowers of the Prairies

L. T. CARMICHAEL

Readers of the “Blue Jay” who are particularly interested in botany have derived great benefits and pleasures from the drawings and descriptions of prairie flowers that have been prepared for almost every recent issue of the magazine by Arch C. Budd, of Swift Current Experimental Station.

Now we have especially good news for these people. Mr. Budd’s book, “Plants of the Farming and Ranching areas of the Canadian Prairies” has been printed and is ready for distribution. It is a government publication, available without charge, and may be obtained either from the Publications Branch at Ottawa, or direct from the Experimental station at Swift Current.

I cannot recommend the book too highly for those who are seriously interested in our flora. It is a large book 13” by 8”, containing 339 pages. It is a complete descriptive record of practically every plant that grows in this country from Manitoba to the Rockies. It is not a complete pictorial record, but contains many plates beautifully drawn by the author, such as those which have appeared in the “Blue Jay.” The drawing on the op-

posite page is another example. We have never had anything like it in Western Canada before.

Previous to its publication, those of us deeply interested in this subject have had to rely on the “List of Flowering Plants of Saskatchewan,” published by the University of Saskatchewan and compiled by Doctors Fraser and Russel, and on Rydberg’s “Flora of the Prairies and Plains of Central North America.” The latter book is illustrated and descriptive and very complete, but it was not written for the amateur. The ordinary nature enthusiasts can neither read the keys nor understand the descriptions.

Mr. Budd, however, has in some way overcome these difficulties. His descriptions are clear and concise. It was written for the prairie folk, who are keenly interested in wild flowers and who wish to extend their knowledge of that subject. It will become popular in that it meets the need for a fairly simple key.

Mr. Budd must be justly proud of this book—the result of many years of intensive study and work. His ambition in this regard has been realized. The Saskatchewan Natural History Society extend to him their sincere congratulations and thanks.

# TIGER BEETLES

By CLIFF SHAW, Yorkton, Saskatchewan



**T**IGER BEETLES ARE THE MOST agile of all our beetles and although common in most areas of Saskatchewan they are not as well known as many of the slower moving insects. The fastest fliers and swiftest runners are to be found in this family.

Their scientific name is Cicindelidae. They have been nicknamed Tiger beetles because of their predacious habits and the wing cover markings on some species.

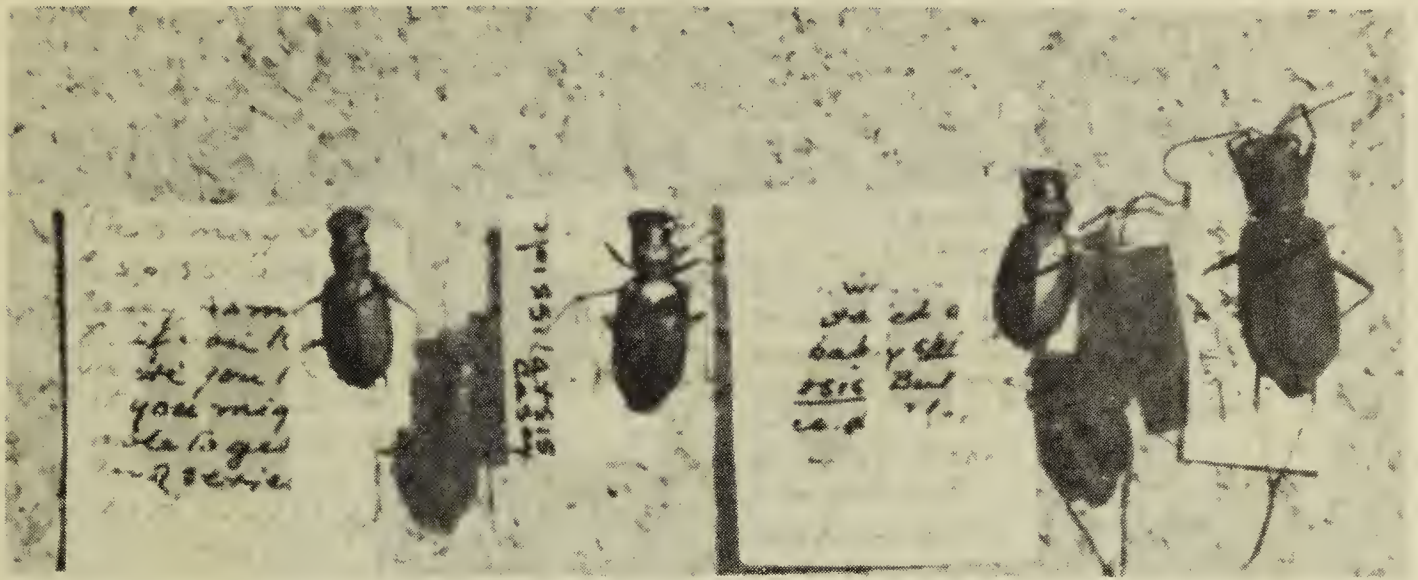
The larvae live in vertical burrows in the ground watching at the mouth of the hole ready to seize unwary victims who are dragged into the burrow and eaten at leisure. On the fifth segment of the larvae are two little hooks curved forward on a hump so that larger insects have difficulty pulling it out of its burrow.

Some species are said to hunt by night. The Larvae's head, which it uses to plug the burrow, is similar in color to the ground hence they are difficult to find. The burrows are usually on dry hard soil or sand. Very little is known of the habits of any of them.

Their favorite haunts vary from sand blows and beaten paths to drying mud flats and the sandy shores of our ponds and lakes. While the most common Saskatchewan species is a sandy buff color with markings similar to those of musical notes their color patterns range from vivid metallic greens to coal black.

With the exception of a black species found among the short prairie grass the adult insects are difficult to catch. Usually they remain ab-





*Method of mounting and recording data*

solutely still until you are within a few feet of them, then flying upwards two or three feet and landing a few yards away most times facing you as though defying the collector to catch them.

Sometimes you can catch them with an old hat but once you lift the brim ever so little they are off like a flash and you are right back where you started. The best method is to use a long handled net. We have found that the most sure way is to put the specimen including a corner of the net into the killing jar and hold the lid on until the insect has stopped struggling. For beetles we use a small stubby vial about an inch in diameter. Place some cotton batten in the bottom of the vial and cover with two or three crumpled cigarette papers and add a few drops of ether. Ether is obtainable at any drug store and is much safer than the deadly cyanide poisons. The photo above shows the species collected by the writer in Saskatchewan.

If you plan to make a collection of insects special pins of various sizes can be obtained from firms handling scientific equipment. Most schools have such catalogues.

With beetles the pin is inserted through the back on the right side so that it comes out between the first and middle leg. Tiny specimens can be mounted with shellac on small cardboard points cut "V" shape. Always make a small label giving the date, place of collection and the name of the collector, otherwise your specimen is of little scientific value. Example:—Yorkton, Sask.

21 VI 1953

B. Jay.

Below this on a separate label you might also list such information as host, if any, or the type of locality, sand, fungi, bark, etc. With some leaf beetles the person making identifications desires to know the name of the plant on which the insect is feeding. The identification label is placed below the others.

Locality labels can be bought ready made if you so wish. One method we have used is to type a large sheet of them leaving out the date. Have this photographed on an 8 x 10 negative. Contact prints on a dull finish paper will supply you with many neat uniform labels. Remember that if a specimen is worth collecting it is worthy of an easily read explanatory label.

## “A Mushroom Hunt”

By RAY PETERSON, R.R.2, Tofield, Alberta

THIS SUMMER WITH its lavish offerings of rain has been a prolific season for the fungus world. Kathryn and I have enjoyed exploring amongst these superstition-veiled plants. We have collected enough specimens to have made dozens of witches brews. Any day, now, we are expecting to remove a mushroom umbrella from over the head of an elf or fairy.

Recently, our “Expedition Mushroom,” was quite a successful affair. Our first find was a clump of dainty Glistening Coprinus. These little mushrooms are of a fine, delicate flavor.

From a clump of grass hugging a poplar tree came a larger member of the Coprinus genus. It was a generously proportioned Inky Cap. It had hardly joined its fragile cousins when a very large Fluted-stem Helvella caught our eye. These curiously lobed mushrooms with their fluted pedestals are very intriguing. This is the first year that we have been fortunate enough to find any of them.

Along the edge of a cool, wooded sidehill, the dull orange caps of Bitter Boletus gleamed in heavy splendor. Nearby, under the canopy of a large, drooping diamond willow, lurked the gaudy, splotched heads of a villainous family; Fly Agaric, or Amanita Muscaria. Using my boots bulldozer fashion, I destroyed them.

Another, first, was a colony of roughly scaled, buff-colored mushrooms. They had thick meaty caps, yellow flesh and gills, and were easily recognizable as Honey Agaric. They were included on our supper menu that evening. We found them strongly flavored and rather offensive of odor.

Embroidering the peaty carpet at the foot of a dense birch grove were hosts of small, heavily frosted fungi. Their pretty grey caps were flushed with a suggestion of purple. A strikingly sharp elevation centered their bell to nearly plane heads. They were entered into the pan reserved for specimens unknown to us. Later we would have an added source of enjoyment in attempting to identify them.

From the same pleasant site we found a number of entirely red mushrooms. A few of them were added to the identification pan, followed by some purplish rosettas of the genus Polyporus.

A few tufts of Golden Clavaria or Golden Coral, too old for table use, were sighted. Then came a pair of dull grey, cup shaped plants and three varieties of little puffballs.

We found only one example of the Ordinary or Common Field Mushroom clan. These mushrooms seem to be scarce in our district this year.

A couple of handsome, reddish-purple samples of Pungent Russula swelled our collection. These small, white-gilled mushrooms certainly live up to the pungent part. A few nibbles of the raw plant is enough to start one's tongue tingling.

Last find of all was a large, very firm puffball that would, and did, provide a goodly number of tasty mushroom steaks.

Along with our sizeable mushroom take, we picked a quart of wild raspberries, and discovered a Dwarf Dogwood that outshone its white-berried relations with an eye-arresting display of deep pastel blue fruit.

This hike, along with similar ones, has given us a wealth of entertainment and heightened our appreciation of Nature's handicrafts.

Here's to more mushrooms.

## A Wise Move

BILL MONCUR, Boissevain, Manitoba

I think it is a wise move for the Archaeological Society to join with the Saskatchewan Natural History Society and to operate as one group. Those of us interested in archaeology generally have a real interest in the early history of our plains.

Besides collecting relics, I have gathered history of the early days in the Turtle Mountain area through interviewing pioneers, collecting stories of their early day experiences, so I am pleased at the move the two societies have made.

## Mutual Assistance

"While we are grateful for the commercial and industrial prosperity Canada is experiencing, it is essential for the well-being of future generations that cultural interests by continued development influence and help the public generally.

I have found the "Spade and Screen" very interesting and informative and hope the amalgamation of the two societies will be of assistance to both."

REV. G. H. RALEY, Vancouver.

## *Historic Sites*

By A. M. PROVICK, Hazelcliffe

It is gratifying to those of us who are interested in Western history and historic sites, that we now have an Historic Sites Board, under the direction of Mr. J. D. Herbert, M.A.

We should have had the services of an Historic Sites Supervisor many years ago, I believe, as many sites are little more than just that. I am personally very interested in the postal history of Saskatchewan, and I think there would have been a splendid opportunity until recently, of photographing many of the old post offices opened while this area was North West Territories and later Assinibcna. Many of the original postmasters could have been interviewed as well and a wealth of interesting information obtained.

There is still time, however, to do some work in this direction. Just recently I had the opportunity to visit the farm of Mr. Charles Sandeen, of Stockholm. On his farm and still in use is the original Ohlen post office shack, built in 1886. The post office was opened in 1887 and it is of interest to note that the original post office sign is still tacked up over the old doorway, although in poor condition.

There is also, near here, an original post office in much better condition, although opened as Tantallon Assa. some ten years later than Ohlen. This is now the home of Peter Arnason, of Tantallon, and once the huge mansion belonging to Senator Thomas Douglas. Only half of the original remains but it is still big enough to get lost in.

It is granted that old post office sites are not, by any means, as interesting or historic as old forts or trading posts, but nevertheless we should not neglect the opportunity, however late it may be, of recording and marking as many as possible for future generations.

I have had the idea that a loose knit organization of persons in this province interested in local history, be formed, with the object of helping our provincial and federal boards in their work, as well as for individual amusement.

I remember seeing a letter in the "Blue Jay" from Mr. Campbell Innes about Historic Sites and would be pleased to hear from him if he is interested in the Postal History of Saskatchewan.

## "There Are Sermons In Stones"

By ALLAN J. HUDSON, Mortlach

Much travelling in Southern Saskatchewan last summer has begotten pleasant memories — some unforgettable. The courtesy and helpfulness of people, the kindness of friends, in retrospect, warm the heart.

On a perfect morning late in July, standing on a low ridge separating a well-filled Lake Johnston from the alkali lake at Bishopric to the east, the heavenly blue expanse reached to the blue horizon in the west. The raised beaches in both lakes leads one to believe that they were originally one.

Incidentally, to mar the picture, there seems to be something lethal for ducks about Lake Johnston water. Full as the lake was last summer, there were dead ducks along the shore in August. It seems to be especially deadly in the fall and in dry seasons.

If Lake Johnston, that morning, left the impression of great beauty, the great gorge of the Big Muddy was most impressive as an effect of glacial drainage, while the most unusual was

the unglaciated triangle from the east. The first warning is the disappearance of Hudson's Bay rocks on the surface. One is used to looking at the morainic knolls and ridges and seeing granite and limestone boulders sometimes perched precariously up the sides, but looking to the south at the edge of the plateau, angling up from the southeast, one notes a complete absence of such boulders. On the plateau to the south of the Rock Glen channel, all the stones on the summerfallows are Rocky Mountain gravel.

Other years I had found locations in the south where the unbroken soil was filled with Indian worked stone. This summer two such places were encountered along the Swift Current Creek and one, with graves, south of Limerick.

But the most pleasurable surprise came last fall. I had examined five collections of artifacts during the summer, but, not until almost the last trip, did any contain Folsam points. A collection in the Cabri district contained two Folsams.

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## Relics of the Past

By M. A. WELSH, Prince Albert

On July 15, 1953, during a visit to Lac La Ronge, I was privileged to have a talk with Mr. Norman Irwin. Mr. Irwin came to La Ronge in 1904 as a trader for Revions and has remained. He now lives on what was the site of the original Hudson's Bay Post in this area. This post, I am informed, was closed in 1830. Mr. Irwin has turned up several interesting things in his garden, over the last thirty years.

He found a roll of birch bark which when opened up was found to contain a number of sterling silver rings and several sterling silver crosses suspended from a fine silver chain. Time has not been too kind to these articles. The rings have become unsoldered; the chains have disinte-

grated and most of the crosses have broken. No doubt some squaw placed these in safekeeping, never to return to reclaim them.

He has also a steel spade head, no doubt discarded as it was no longer serviceable. This spade head bears an imprint "LONDON" on one side and on the other some illegible legend.

The spade head was made from two flat pieces of steel, hammer-welded together to make the bit, but the two separated at the top to form a ferrule for the handle.

He also has several of the old copper kettles and several parts of flint-lock rifles. These items enumerated are mostly of a class which we prefer to call trade goods. From their nature I would assume that they date around 1800.

# Who Are They?

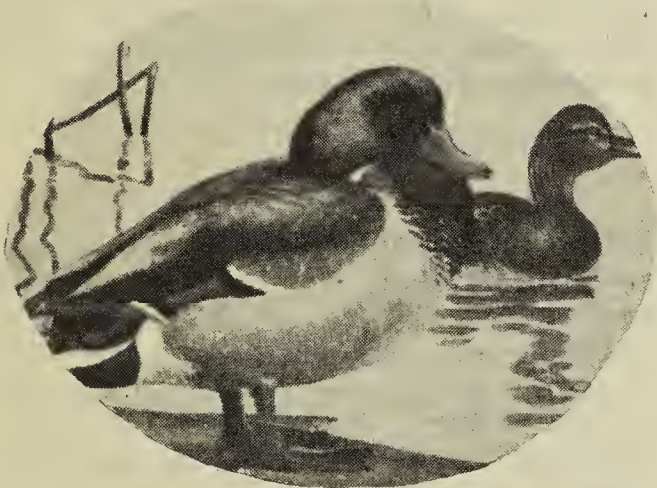
By MRS. JOHN HUBBARD, Grenfell, Sask.



*NOTE: The pictures of the Mallard, the Teal, the Baldpate and the Shoveller are from paintings by Allan Brooks.*



In 1938 when I first started to keep a migration record of birds I made a list of the birds I knew (or thought I knew). There was a bare fifty birds on that list, and I imagine that those fifty birds are the ones known by almost everybody whether they take an interest in nature or not. Early on the list is the Mallard duck and there is a good reason for his being well known. Our domestic ducks originated from the same stock many long years ago.



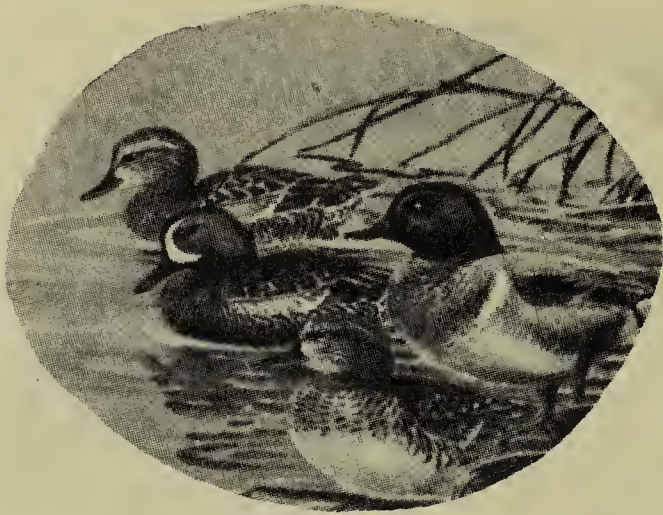
The male **Mallard** with his green head and white neck-ring is unmistakable but the female is a "duck of a different colour". The trouble with her is that she looks like about a dozen other female ducks. However the purple bar (speculum) on the wing bordered before and behind with white will identify her if you get that close.

There is one duck that might be mistaken for the Mallard and as it is not very common here look twice before you say, "It's a Black duck." It's much the same size and shape as a Mallard but lacks the bright colouring, being dark brown. It also lacks the white borders to the purple wing speculum.

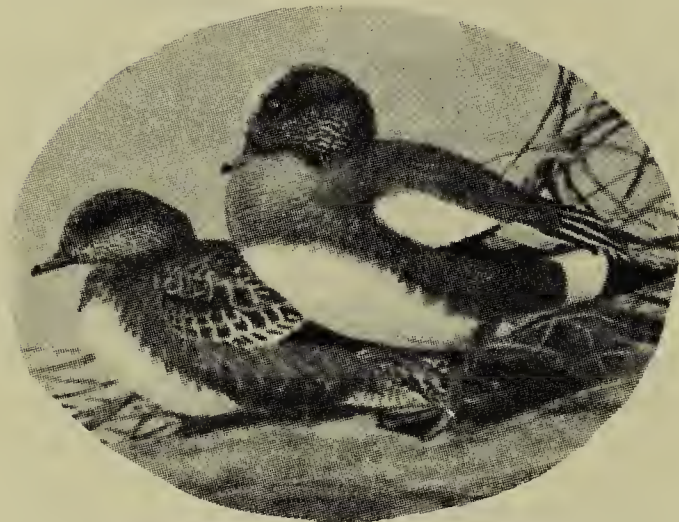
Ducks as a general rule are fairly easy to identify if seen reasonably close or with a good pair of glasses. But they do have a habit of flying or swimming to the other side of the lake or slough. At a distance they can be recognized best by pattern.



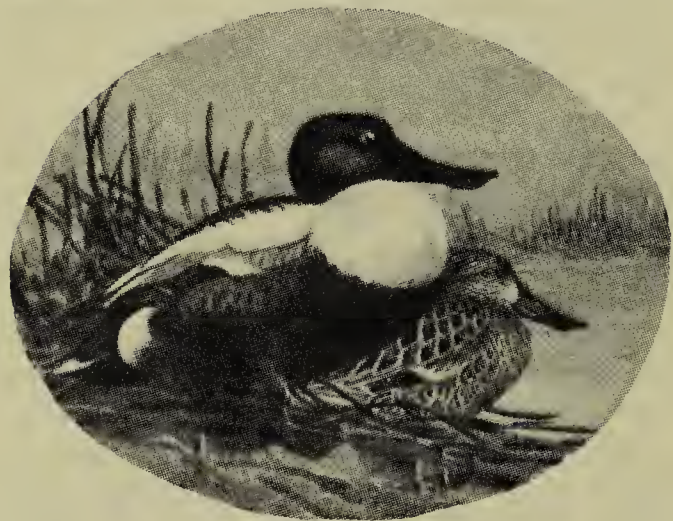
The male **Pintail** with its long neck divided into dark back and white front portion, its dark head, and long pointed tail can be recognized at a distance. The female is another indefinitely coloured duck like the female Mallard but with rusty instead of purple speculum on the wings. Its shape, once you're familiar with it, will be an easier guide than wing colour though.



The **Blue and Green-winged Teal** are small ducks, quick flying, and can be separated from each other by the chalky blue or green on the wing as the case may be. At a distance the white crescent on the dark grey head of the male Blue-winged Teal is very distinctive. A crescent-like white stripe in front of the wing of the Green-winged is a distinguishing mark. His head is red and green. Females which are as usual indefinitely coloured can be separated from each other by their wing patches.



The **Baldpate** and the Gadwall are similar appearing ducks but three white areas mark the Baldpate. His white cap, white upper part of wings, and white patch behind wings show at a great distance. The male Gadwall is grey rather than pinky in colour, and his one small white patch is in the wing. The females though following the usual female-duck colouration have the distinctive wing patterns of the males.



The **Shoveller** bears a general resemblance to the Mallard but his bright red, green, black and white patches are scattered hit and miss over his body making him look like a patch-work quilt even in flight. His green head differs from the Mallard's in matter of bills, his is the huge "spoonbill" that gives him his name. The female is much like the female Mallard but the bill is distinctive and she lacks the white-edged purple speculum.



The **Canvas-back** and **Redhead** are similar appearing ducks having red heads, dark chests and light coloured bodies. The Canvas-back, both male and female, is lighter in colour than the Redhead. The Redhead has a round red head, while the Canvas-back has a red head and neck and is a real low-brow with a flat forehead and long sloping bill.

These are a few of the more common ducks seen in migration or as residents and once identified will be landmarks from which to identify other ducks.

# *The Annual Meeting*

**T**HE ANNUAL MEETING of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society will be held at the Provincial Museum, Regina, on Saturday, October 24th. Registration opens at 9 a.m. and the program will begin at 9.30 a.m., with morning, afternoon and evening sessions.

We hope that you and your friends will be able to attend. You will enjoy meeting other Saskatchewan naturalists, and you will be pleased with the varied and interesting program which has been arranged. Our president, Dr. Houston, started working on this about the middle of August and he has not let up since. Plans have been made for about ten short illustrated talks during the morning and afternoon sessions, and for four outstanding speakers during the evening sessions.

Then there will be the business session which should constitute the most important item of the day. Together we can plan to make the "Blue Jay" a more worthwhile publication; one that will be known and respected as the leading and most interesting nature magazine of Western Canada. We should discuss ways and means of increasing its circulation, and of maintaining our memberships from year to year. We should consider the advisability of extending its influence to the schools of the province. Two School Units have already subscribed to the magazine for all the teachers in their schools.

The "Blue Jay" is Saskatchewan's only publication devoted to the promotion of conservation and nature study. We need your comments, your help and your enthusiasm in order that we may extend this work.

Resolutions at our last two annual meetings have called the government's attention to the need for a new provincial building — and our fondest hopes are soon to be realized. Work began this fall on a magnificent \$600,000 museum building, which will allow Mr. Fred Bard and his staff to show their material to a much better advantage, so that their displays and efforts will play a greater part in conservation education in Saskatchewan. Our Society must work hand and hand with the Museum. We need your suggestions of how this can best be done.

We should discuss methods of preserving untamed natural areas so that our children and grandchildren may still have them to enjoy.

We should make recommendations to the government concerning the above matters and any others which might aid them in wisely administering our resources.

**SO PLAN TO ATTEND THE MEETINGS**

**YOU WILL BE GLAD YOU DID**

**REMEMBER THE DATE — OCTOBER 24**

Mr. William Anaka,  
Spirit Lake, Sask.

Dec. 53

**Authorized as Second Class Mail, Post Office Department, Ottawa.**

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*Edited by Lloyd T. Carmichael*

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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*.

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