

THE

Blue Jay

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Golden Jubilee Issue



FIRST SIGNS OF SPRING

—Photo by Doug Gilroy

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Blue Jay Chatter



LLOYD T. CARMICHAEL, Editor

We hope that our readers will enjoy and approve of our new cover set-up. The idea is to get something different, yet pleasing, for the four issues marking the celebration of Saskatchewan's Golden Jubilee. The eight cover photographs, being selected, will all be characteristic of our prairie scene.

We would like all members of the Society to assist to make these issues as appealing, as interesting and as instructive as possible. I have already received some encouraging letters from people who have enthusiastically volunteered articles based fundamentally on the general theme of protection and conservation of our precious wildlife natural resources.

Although it is our wish to maintain a high standard throughout the year, we are selecting our April, May and June issue as a Special Jubilee Number. It is hoped that this will be the most ambitious and worthwhile BLUE JAY yet published by the Saskatchewan Natural History Society — one which we may proudly pass on to our friends and visitors as proof that this province is rich, not only in grain, oil and minerals, but in amateur naturalists whose aim is to enjoy, and whose concern is to conserve for others our extensive wildlife heritage.

Plan right now to have an article of yours in this issue, illustrated if possible with **clear photographs** or carefully made ink sketches. Should your story or observations be built around the necessity of protection or conservation it would be well to refresh your mind with the fundamental beliefs of a true naturalist and a general statement of Audubon philosophy now recognized throughout America.

WE BELIEVE in the wisdom of nature's design.

WE KNOW that soil, water, plants, and wild creatures depend upon each other and are vital to human life.

WE RECOGNIZE that each living thing links to many others in the chain of nature.

WE BELIEVE that persistent research into the intricate patterns of outdoor life will help to assure wise use of earth's abundance.

WE CONDEMN no wild creature and work to assure that no living species shall be lost.

WE BELIEVE that every generation should be able to experience spiritual and physical refreshment in places where primitive nature is undisturbed.

So WE WILL BE VIGILANT to protect wilderness areas, refuges and parks, and to encourage good use of nature's storehouse of resources.

WE DEDICATE ourselves to the pleasant task of opening the eyes of young and old that all may come to enjoy the beauty of the outdoor world, and to share in conserving its wonders forever.

If Spring Should Come

*If spring should come my hands will turn
 To things like dusters, mops and brooms,
 Though all the while my heart may be
 In pasture spread with Crocus blooms.
 The mauve and purple flower cups, the sages' silvery green
 Make sodden fields sweet April's own
 Where winter's snows have been.*

—Mary H. Keyte, Pollockville, Alta.

WINTER'S GOLD

By ELIZABETH CRUICKSHANK, Regina

If winter is just a time for memories, enjoy the living present: Join a Bird Group!

When George Watt, with great vision, planned our Parliament Buildings' grounds he could not have foreseen that one day an enthusiastic group of bird-watchers would have named certain sections Redpoll Row, Nuthatch Drive, Kinglet Corner, Chicadee Place and Predator Hill.

As the flocks of Redpolls and Kinglets dwindled we began to hope that we would fail to find the Pigeon Hawk or Northern Shrike on their tall tree watch tower.

The area covered on Saturday afternoons was small but then did not White, Burroughs and Thoreau find their treasure at their door? Humble followers, we.

One day, near Fred Bard's Sanctuary, we waited in the car while the others scouted for water fowl. A heavy fog hung over the marsh, "all the air a solemn stillness holds" save for the reeds and weeds rustling, brittle in their winter dryness. The prairie, now a blurred etching, became fused with sky, the birds' world, our world, at one with the Infinite. Then a little twitter and a small flock of Snow Buntings settled nearby, with a few Redpolls, to bring us back to reality.

Every trip is an adventure — somehow, sometime we shall touch the superlative. But it will provide no greater thrill than the sight of two Red-breasted Nuthatches, in bitter cold, clinging, feathers fluffed, to the tree trunk near us; and a Robin alone on the tree top adding its crimson to the gold of the sunset.

We have our gilded memories to enjoy too. At November's end exploring the depths of the valley ravine we know so well we walked in unforgettable beauty. Water gurgled over a fallen log. A stump, arch-shaped, formed a doorway to an emerald fairy-glen. Mosses and lichens gleamed green and amber amid intricate silver traceries with tangerine and iris and ruby glow, a mosaic to conjure up if ever the day may be lonely.

The same ravine, near Christmas, was a plastic-sheathed world. Icicles hung from every low branch — jewels that tinkled, and tinkled until we felt like St. Joan, that we were hearing the bells after they had stopped ringing.

A whirring of wings and a family of six bush partridge flew up over our heads. Then Judy and I held our breath for more beauty to pass by as three young deer, their tails like white flags flying, leapt out before us and with such grace made the next tree shelter. Nancy, that night, disappointed at missing the sight, sleepily concluded that Santa's little reindeer were hiding in Judy's valley.

Shortage of time makes the moments of every nature ramble memorable. With the best of companions we know that "we are weaving in the web of life a bright and golden filling."

Soon the silence of winter will break when "Everything must flower or sing, who hears the bugle-call of Spring."

But this winter has given us so much to record.

First Signs of Spring

By DOUG GILROY, R.R. 2, Regina

The scene on the front cover is a small portion of Boggy Creek. The time is late March. This creek is typical of hundreds of other streams that wind their way across the prairies.

Usually in March the creek begins to open in places where there are springs and never actually froze too hard at any time during the winter, but just back around the bend the ice is still two feet thick.

Each day as the sun rises higher its rays grow stronger; the winds no longer possess the icy sting of winter but seem to have taken on a softer warmth. The snow on the slopes and in the surrounding fields begins to melt at a surprisingly rapid rate. Gurgling water comes hurrying down natural drainage systems and soon spills out onto the frozen surface of the creek.

At first this water lies quietly in

a flooded condition then as more is steadily added it suddenly breaks free and the small peaceful stream of summer has now become a rushing torrent.

What a pleasure it is when we go outside in the twilight hours of a spring evening and just stand there breathing in the sweet spring smells. From down at the creek comes the steady serenade of rushing water. We find ourselves listening for another that is almost bound to come and then sure enough there it is — the clear, sweet call of the Kildeer Plover. From down in the elm grove comes another voice heard above the sound of rushing water, deep and mysterious — whoo! whoo! whoo! tis the voice of the Great-Horned Owl.

Fortunate indeed are the people who can watch a prairie stream awaken from its winter sleep.

Nature's Blessing

John A. Popoff, Yorkton

I love the little birds and bees,
I love the flowers and the trees,
I love the grass and love the sky,
I love the people living by.

My heart is open to each thing,
Be it on foot or on the wing;
It will accept with equal zest
The things with which this world is
blest.

I love the rivers and the hills,
The valleys, creeks and tiny rills,
The oceans deep and mountains wide,
The creatures living by their side.

Good Mother Nature in her way
Has given us the night and day,
Has planted in the azure sky
The friendly moon and sun on high;

Provided us with eyes to see
The wonders of her symmetry,
And filled us full of heart and mind
As well befits our humankind.

May we, with blessings so endowed,
Proclaim our love for them aloud;
We'll find it meets our every need.
To live our love in word and deed.

The Faith of a Jack Rabbit

William E. Jasper, Struan, Sask.

I was walking beside my wagon one evening, just as it was starting to get dark. I could hear some other teams coming along behind. Then, like a streak, a half-grown Jack Rabbit passed me, followed some five or six rods behind by three hungry hounds in hot pursuit. Soon they were all out of sight ahead of us. Ten or fifteen minutes later, back they came. But this time the hounds were within a few feet of the poor rabbit. It was just about exhausted. He knew there was only one hope in the world left for his life. That hope was me. Would he reach me before the dogs got him? He put every ounce of strength into those last few feet, but alas, he was one second too late! Before I could reach down and grab him up, the hounds had him. Doesn't this prove that even these wild creatures know, deep down in their hearts, that we have a God-given responsibility to protect them in a time of great need?

Unexpected Residents of the Qu'Appelle Valley

By E. M. CALLIN, Fort San, Sask.

On June 13, 1954 I had the good fortune to find my first nest of the Redstart when I watched a female building her nest in the crotch of a tree on the banks of a small creek bordering the west side of the town of Fort Qu'Appelle.

On June 25th I had the great pleasure of a visit from Dr. and Mrs. Stuart Houston of Yorkton. Visiting the nest we found the female incubating and the nest contained 4 eggs. Dr. Houston, with his boundless enthusiasm, was "well armed" with camera equipment and took several pictures, one of which is included here.

As most of the readers of the Blue Jay know, the Qu'Appelle Valley originates in the centre of the Transition Zone of Saskatchewan and, travelling in an easterly direction, bisects the eastern half of that zone. It has various favorable topographical features such as brushy hillsides, many fine groves of decidu-

ous trees and a number of lakes along its route.

In addition to the usual Transition Zone species such as the Catbird, Brown Thrasher, and Oriole, many years of birding in the Qu'Appelle Valley have disclosed unexpected species to be resident here. Some of them are birds which do not normally nest south of the Canadian Zone — the evergreen belt much further to the north. A couple of them are birds of more southern distribution which have been attracted to the valley,

Although a considerable number of bird families are represented in the Qu'Appelle Valley, I am restricting the present list to those species which are of special interest. As my personal observations have been divided between the Round Lake area (north of Whitewood) and the Fort Qu'Appelle area (north-east of Regina) I will deal with each species in each area.

Northern Birds and Birds of Local Distribution in the Transition Zone

	Fort Qu'Appelle	Round Lake
REDSTART	Summer resident, regular, not common (Nest discovered).	Probable summer resident, regular, fairly common.
ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER	Probable summer resident, regular, fairly common.	Probable summer resident, regular, not common.
WATER-THRUSH	Summer resident, regular, fairly common (Nest discovered).	Probable summer resident, regular and fairly common.
OVEN-BIRD	Migrant.	Probable summer resident, regular, not common.
MOURNING-WARBLER	Migrant.	Probable summer resident, irregular, uncommon.
CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER	Not recorded.	Probable summer resident, regular, fairly common.
BLACK & WHITE WARBLER	Migrant.	Probable summer resident, regular, fairly common.

	Fort Qu'Appelle	Round Lake
CANADIAN WARBLER	Migrant.	Probable summer resident, irregular, uncommon.
ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK	Summer resident, regular, fairly common.	Summer resident, Regular, common, (Recorded as nesting by Fred G. Bard).
TOWHEE	Summer resident, regular, common.	Summer resident, regular, common, (Nest discovered).
CRESTED FLY-CATCHER	Not recorded	Probable summer resident, regular, not common.
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW	Migrant.	Probable summer resident, regular, not common.
SLATE-COLORED JUNCO	Migrant.	Summer resident, regular, not common, (Nest discovered).

Birds of more Southern Distribution

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT	Rare summer resident, (Nest discovered 1953 Blue Jay March, 1954, Pair certainly nested same location 1954).	Not recorded, (Hypothetical record 10 miles south of the Valley May 31, 1954).
LARK SPARROW	Probable summer resident, regular, not common.	Probable summer resident, regular, not common.

Winter Visitors

Mrs. JOHN HUBBARD, Grenfell, Sask.

There have been few complaints about the weather this winter because it has been so mild; so mild in fact that most of our winter birds have failed to visit us. Instead of flocks of pine grosbeaks we have seen two and those back in November. We hear the chickadees off in the bush but they hardly ever come into the yard and Craig's piece of suet on the honeysuckle has not been touched.

Saturday, Jan. 15th, however, eight Bohemian waxwings did turn up to gorge on crabapples in the orchard. You would wonder how on earth any bird could eat frozen crabs but these birds have the beak for the job. It's strong and sharp as an awl. I'll accept no argument on this point. One fall at Indian Head I came on a flock of Cedar Waxwings

(a smaller and yellower summer edition of the Bohemian Waxwing) feeding on rose hips. As they refused to pay any attention to me I picked a young one up. I don't know if it was mad or hungry but it bit my finger (I mean bit not pecked—it simply opened its mouth and grabbed). Needless to say I dropped it quickly and I'll vouch for the sharpness of its beak.

These visitors had human traits too. Though there were three trees loaded with fruit and only eight birds they had to fight over the same crab. I imagine it helped to keep them warm.

The Bohemian Waxwing with its soft grey colouring tinged with rust, striking crest, yellow-banded tail and identifying red wax marks on wing is a welcome winter visitor.

“Funny Little Ground Owl”

By HUGH McLAUGHLIN, Lewvan, Sask.



There is a shrill wailing in the still summer night — quite haunting and out of place it seems. Visions of the source seemed to conjure a water bird, long-legged and restless. But why would such a bird be active at night? It was finally discovered that the wailing one was a Ground Owl, and that its nocturnal noises were quite in line with owl activities.

They are quite a curiosity, as though Mother Nature had said, “We will make this one different.” Other owls are not very noticeable except in flight, while these little sentinels perch on the mound — generally thrown up by a gopher, beside the hole which contains the nest. Quite the determined little birds they are. One summer they contested keenly with the gophers for a choice knoll and the accompanying hole. What went on below ground I do not know. There was evidence of trouble in the nest and only a couple of owls hatched the first clutch. Above ground, the gophers would chase them into a short flight, but they never left and eventually the feud simmered and the owls and gophers raised their families twenty feet apart.

The baby owls sit in a little row and there is much excitement when one of the parents returns home to distribute food. They are quite hard to approach and quickly disappear down the hole. The best view I ever

had was when on horseback I could get close, as they were accustomed to grazing animals. As they grow larger, (like adolescent children) they seem to be more reluctant to go underground at the first warning of the parents. The retreating heads and scolding parents present quite a family scene.

From now on life is more hazardous — they leave home. An open hole seems an invitation. Once I had discovered two that had walked through a small hole in the top of a cistern to their watery death. They apparently like to hunt mice along the roadside. The mice, scurrying from one side of the road to the other, as we often see them at night by car light, are quite exposed for a few seconds to the owls, and is the only reason I can see for their choice of spot to spend the evening. For this reason, approaching cars take quite a toll — and flat bodies, belying the appearance of size created by feathers, dry into dust.

But some grow up, out of two hatches a summer, and in the colder fall the little family gather again around the ancestral home. They perch together now of course, and fly away instead of retreating underground. Home is the focal point of existence until practically freeze up, when they migrate. The same hole may be occupied several years in a row as family quarters.

A Walk in the Forest

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

In late November while at Foot-hills, Alberta, which, as the name suggests, is close to the Rockies, I enjoyed a leisurely hike. Exceptionally mild weather and a remarkable absence of snow enhanced the outing.

Leaving the camp on one of the many logging trails that fanned out from it, I was soon engrossed in comparing the semi-mountainous region to the farm back home. Even a casual eye can see striking evidence of how Nature adapts herself to different terrains.

The bulldozed road swung along a ridge of slim, clean-boled lodgepole pine that reached up into the sky like flag poles decked in green bunting. A squirrel eyed me brightly from an old stump, scolded briefly, then resumed twisting a pine cone between deft paws as he nibbled at the seeds. With a raucous voice that belied his quaker suit, a whisky jack followed me for a short distance. Prize pan-handler of the bush, he seemed to be hoping that I would stop to have lunch.

The trail dipped through a belt of spruce and balsam fir, and entered a muskeg dotted with tamarack and clumps of oddly twisted black spruce.

I left the trail, there, and crossed to a small, pine-covered hill. Moss, four inches thick in spots, spread a luxuriant carpet through the trees. Enthroned on little mounds of green were necklaces of frost-sweetened cranberries. I gathered some of the fruit and crimson stained fingers and mouth attested to my greediness. Here too, were a few bunchberries, still well preserved, and further on surprisingly fresh-appearing mushrooms. Small, cream colored plants, they had a sweet, very pleasing taste.

From a clump of alders a flock of chickadees dee-ed for attention. The brownish markings on their fluffy bodies labelled them as Brown-headed chickadees, back-wood cousins of the common, black-capped chickadee. Closeby, that trip-hammer artist, a Downy woodpecker billed a resounding din from an old pine rampike. A raven passed overhead, his melancholy voice sounding like a crow with

a bad cold. In contrast came the soft, muted whistlings of a flock of colorful pine grosbeaks.

Nearing camp, I followed a little stream that was noisily adding its song to the rushing voice of the nearby Pembina River. A plump, grey bird flickered suddenly into view. Wading sturdily in the sweep of the ice-lined brook, it plunged head and shoulders into the water. Then, uttering an odd note that seemed to blend with the cry of the water, it darted over the wet rocks of the stream, and flipped up to perch upon an overhanging windfall. Never still an instant, its body teetered, up down, up down, turning in an erratic circle at the same time until one would think that the bird would surely make itself dizzy and fall back into the water. It was my first sight of a Water-ouzel, or Dipper, and I watched it fascinated for quite a few minutes. Eventually, however, its strange antics in the icy water made me shiver and I moved on.

Mingled with the scent of spruce and pine came the clean tang of woodsmoke. A late sun glimmered redly through the evergreens and touched the roofs of the camp. My hike was over.

Executive Meeting

The first executive meeting of the Society for the year was held in Regina on January 26. Among many topics of importance which were discussed was the desirability of joining with the Alberta and Manitoba Natural History Societies. At the annual meeting a resolution dealing with this problem was set aside pending further consideration and discussion by the executive.

We decided to postpone action on this question for the present because we have been fairly successful in getting the Blue Jay into Saskatchewan schools, and because administration, even at this level of our development, has not been solved.

The executive meeting did suggest, however, that certain pages of the Blue Jay be set aside for the use of

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Diminishing Species

By ARTHUR WARD, Swift Current

The 50th anniversary of the Province reveals many changes in respect to wild life on the prairie. Many species have almost completely disappeared from our district, though where the habitat has proved more favorable for their needs, they still can be seen further north.

The shy Kit Fox, its yapping bark heard every night, numerous then and always cautious in providing at least three exits from its shallow den, quickly retreated to other secluded areas.

Chestnut-coloured Longspurs in their thousands filled the air with song as they soared up, returning downwards with wings over back. Only in pasture lands are these now seen — and in depleted numbers.

The Prairie Chicken have retreated to the scrub areas and are no longer heard booming in the early morning. Very noticeable too is the decrease of the Hungarian Partridge which in its early introduction seemed to have difficulty in avoiding the barbed wire fences during flight. Many were often seen lying in the ditches by the roadside.

With the exclusion of the coyote from our territory it was expected

that the gopher would be seen in much larger numbers but the extreme wet weather has greatly reduced them by drowning them out. Jack Rabbits, too, are not often seen. Considered a delicacy by the old homesteaders before, they were afflicted by parasitic blisters. The badger also, its presence marked by numerous dirt mounds, is in the declining state.

Circumstances prevailing, caused by wet weather, do not allow for full concentration of migrant birds in the groves of prairie sanctuaries, thereby eliminating the banding of the much rarer species. For the first time in our observation not one of the Olive-backed, Grey-cheeked and Hermit Thrushes was seen in migration last fall.

The absence of many otherwise usual species is giving cause for alarm, and has been very disappointing to the bird bander. Returning from the farm on two occasions, during the early fall evenings, it was amazing to see millions of gnat-size insects flying in front of the car. For fourteen miles the edge of the road was flanked by weeds, three feet tall. These may have caused the insects to congregate there.

Nature Notes from Crocus

North of Minnedosa, on Clear Lake Highway

by Mrs. Ellen Averill

After a short spell of winter in October and real seasonable weather in November, we enjoyed an unusually mild climate in December, sometimes scarcely freezing, which has lasted well on into the New Year. The bright sunshine, warming up the daytime proved a boon to the farmers whose work was much delayed by the inclement fall. They were able to finish out small pieces of breaking in late November, and do feed cutting in comparative comfort in December.

Albinos have been noticed here; a white swallow was seen several times among a number of Tree

Swallows in our yard, and a piebald rat was trapped under the granary. (Incidentally our farm was named "Swallowdale" before I came to it on account of the large numbers of these birds always around. Eave Swallows just piled their nests under the eaves of the barn and granary, and Tree Swallows were equally abundant in the bluffs. Now swallows almost hide the telephone and hydro wires, when they gather in late summer).

Muskrats seem far more abundant than in recent years, every little slough and hay meadow has its quota of rat hills and many have been trapped. More ravens have been seen than I ever remember before; many people take them for crows, but their wing-spread is larger and their call hoarser.

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A Happy Memory Now

By MRS. O. L. WOLTERS, Tolland, Alberta.

Last summer, although a very wet one here, proved to be an enjoyable one for me. After trying to attract Bluebirds near our dwellings for years, we were richly rewarded. A pair occupied the birdhouse near our gate (last year occupied by Tree Swallows) and another pair nested in a twine box in the binder on the other side of the bush, about 400 yards apart. The young seemed to hatch at the same time, five in binder, four in the bird box.

Early one morning I heard Bluebirds making quite a fuss, and surmising the young had started to fly I looked out and saw mother bird fly over a youngster squatting on the ground and then to the trees. She did this several times to one or two and they finally realized it was time to take to the trees. Later in the day, as I was going out for strawberries, Bluebirds flew up on all sides. How thrilling! Both families were present.

Once, earlier in the spring, during a heavy downpour, I saw a pair of Bluebirds fly across the garden to sticks I had for marking dahlias. They took turns looking over spruce and willows and studying the situation, when all of a sudden one disappeared into a particularly thick spruce. Seconds later the other followed and I knew then where Bluebirds go to keep from getting drenched.

Another morning, after about three days of heavy rain, when the birds must have been trying to keep dry mostly, our yard teemed with bird life. As I stood and watched, sever-

al Goldfinches were in the Cut-leaved Birch, then a pair of Cedar Waxwings flew in. The mother got a Honey-suckle berry from a near by bush and lovingly dropped it into the youngster's mouth. A "daddy" Robin, hopping along, cocked his head, made a dive and came up with a four-inch earthworm. It picked it once and then stood watching it for awhile, before gobbling it up. Young swallows were lined up on the telephone lead wire, some facing east, some west, in order to take their turns getting insects from Ma and Pa. A very hungry Bluebird was chirping from the clothes line. I tried to interest him in cottage cheese but am not sure if he got some, although I saw him flying inches from it.

I was watching all this panorama from two windows, so was bound to miss seeing some movements, but could hear the delightful choruses and chirpings of all these birds, with many others including House Wrens, Orioles and Flickers.

All of this is a happy memory now, and something to think about as we observe the Chickadees and a pair each of Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers. One evening I saw a Brown Creeper. I have suet stuffed in a wide crack on a telephone pole, near our house. They seem to enjoy it.

A Hawk in Training

William E. Jasper, Struan, Sask.

As I was gathering up oat sheaves in the fall, I was interested in watching some Red-tailed Hawks. Three young had been hatched and reared, not far from where I was working. These, with their parents, were watching for the mice that ran from under the stooks when the sheaves were lifted.

I saw one of the old hawks swoop down, catch a mouse and fly up again above one of the young that was flying some seventy-five feet above the ground. From about forty feet above it the mouse was dropped. How the young hawk caught that mouse I do not know, but I do know that it did not get by this keen-eyed child, in training.

Lost Through Fear

William Jasper, Struan

A Brewer's Blackbird was feeding in the pasture just behind the barn. As I came by I noticed the old cat creeping up on the bird. I did not think it necessary to alarm the bird as there was nothing to hide the cat from her. When the cat got within about twelve feet the bird saw him. But instead of flying away, the poor creature just stood there and shook. She was too afraid to move. And the cat just ran in and took her.

Sandhill Crane Nesting at Rokeby Marsh

by DR. STUART HOUSTON



Photo by Dr. Stuart Houston

Sandhill Cranes nested in many places throughout the Yorkton district fifty or more years ago, but settlement forced them to leave most of their former haunts. However, each spring the farmers near the Rokeby Marsh report that at least one pair to be present. Mr. McInnes last found a nest in 1940.

I have made numerous sorties to the Rokeby Marsh, hoping to find a Sandhill Crane nest, but without success. This year, Johnny Maddaford found a crane nest with one egg on May 5th, while he was trapping muskrats. I visited this nest on May 10th, and found that there was still only one egg, partially incubated. The nest was a platform of dead bulrushes in 21 inches of water.

I had foolishly taken two cameras with me, one for color and one for black and white. I took some pictures of the nest, but each time the cranes flew nearby, I either didn't have time to change focus or I fumbled for the wrong camera. However, the sight of these tremendous birds so close to me,

and the sound of their loud, resonant, almost trumpeting call, made an indelible impression on my mind. These birds are the almost vanished symbol of the marsh primeval.

Catching Snowflakes

Margaret Belcher, Regina

Perhaps no bird's habits are more picturesque than the waxwing's. I remember one day last March watching Bohemian waxwings drinking on a sun-warmed roof. They sipped the water as it ran down the shingles from the melting snow. I have also read of cedar waxwings chasing and capturing whirling snowflakes. Perhaps they, too, were slaking their thirst, although they may only have been amusing themselves. Has anyone seen Bohemians catching snowflakes?

Moose Mountain Trip

Mrs. John Hubbard, Grenfell, Sask.

The blacktop has cut a wide swathe thru' the prairie and sometimes I wonder if it hasn't taken some of the picturesqueness from the countryside. In its wide bare ditches excess rain had cut channels of their own when we travelled along it to Whitewood early in November. There was more water than ever in the sloughs, a thin layer of ice on the sloughs, and on the ice muskrats sunning themselves — fat lumps of fur.

Harvest was still progressing in spots, a threshing outfit, a combine and several balers. And in the fields the same evolution, stooks, swathe and (the new look) bales both round and square.

At Whitewood we turned south on an older highway. A weasel shot across the road, pure white and startling against snowless ground. No traffic victim this fast moving little animal.

Crossing the Pipestone we actually found it labelled with a single unelaborative sign "Pipestone Creek". Not so Moose Mountain Creek and the Souris River (Jubilee Committees please note).

Our introduction to the Moose Mountains was a thickening of the bush and an increase of slough and hill. Then mile on mile of white trunked poplars splotched with black, with here and there the buffy-pink and white of birch. Glimpses of water thru' the trees. An oil well, its machinery working — again the evolution, first the yellow gold and now the black.

Then out of the Moose Mountains and we were looking down on the plains, smoky blue in the distance, flat and fertile. And farther south the even more fertile Oxbow plains.

We crossed Moose Mountain Creek with its low rounded grassy banks, scanty trees and stony bed. And south of Oxbow we ended our southward journey at ranch buildings perched precariously on the banks of the Souris, dropping almost perpendicularly into a small yard and giving thanks for good brakes.

Coming back we viewed the Moose Mountain Range from a distance and spotted one bare peak above the rest of the hills — White Bear Mountain?

Twilight and Whitewood's skyline of elevators and trees against a grey fall sunset brought back memories of a grimmer trip earlier that fall. A stormy winter sky black with snow-clouds, the sun sinking in a ball of flaring red, and against this small brilliance in the flat vastness of the Regina plains in black and perfect silhouette, the Legislative Buildings. A picture long to be remembered.

And our count in wildlife for the trip? Besides the muskrats, which were plentiful, and the weasel we saw two flocks of snowbirds, one chickadee, several flocks of pigeons, many magpies, one male marshhawk and two or three unidentified small birds.

Petroglyphs

By J. Turnquist, Wallwort, Sask.

While visiting at Nanaimo, on Vancouver Island, I had a trip to Petroglyphs Park. It got its name from the strange carvings on the sandstone rocks. I spent some time there copying them on paper. They are interesting in that the people who put them there had so much to tell on the designs, probably written at various times, under conditions that we do not understand today. A bronze plaque explains that mystery surrounds the origin and meaning of the rare rock carvings found in the park.

Indians of this area first showed them to the white man in 1860, but even they were unable to interpret the strange examples of aboriginal art. I also had a trip by boat to Jack's point, where on a lone rock there are pictured four fish and one bird — a real masterpiece — and it has not been spoiled by white man's initials and names. I saw one place where some party had had a campfire on one of the rocks with carvings on it. How thoughtless some people are!

'Cannibalistic' flora —

The Pitcher Plant

(And Other So-Called 'Cannibal Plants')

ELIZABETH BACHMANN

From "The Conservation Volunteer"

Sarracenia purpurea displays discriminating taste when it comes to choosing its habitat. In cool, wet, sphagnum places from Labrador to Florida and in the Great Lakes region it appears in the most idyllic locations.

Besides the inky black waters of the quiet lagoon linking Sawbill Lake and the small lake-of-no-name rimmed round about with water lilies, the pitcher-plant (which is *Sarracenia's* common name) grows and holds erect its beet-red, nodding flowers. Its pitcher-shaped leaves are all but hidden by the pale-green grasses which border the water.

In the dim swamp north of the Itasca Park boundary it grows beside the showy pink and white lady's slipper. The few rays of sunlight which penetrate the dimness and filter through the canopy overhead glint on the shining red petals of the flower held high above the bog.

A dozen miles east of the little village of Effie is a tamarack swamp spangled with the "small fry" of the orchid family, ladies' tresses, the pyrolas, the buckbean, as well as the showy lady's slipper. There too the pitcher-plant grows in abundance.

A quaking bog on tiny Mott Island which lies like a chip off Isle Royale in Lake Superior is also the home of the pitcher-plant or "side-saddle flower," as it is sometimes called. Its leaves have the grace and symmetry of a Grecian urn and the lovely lines of a French curve. The dozen-or-so leaves radiate outward from a central point and curve upward with the sweep of a hunter's horn. Each has a broad wing extending to the open end of the "pitcher," the inside of which is lined with fine hairs extending downward. From the center of the whorl of leaves rise the strangely formed flowers on their tall green stems which are a foot or two in height.

Each flower has five sepals with three or four bracts at the base. Its five red petals are fiddle-shaped. In

the center is the style which is expanded at the top into quite a broad, petal-like, five-angled, five-rayed, umbrella-shaped form, the five delicate rays ending underneath in five little hooked stigmas. Intricately designed, the flower is exactly the right type to harmonize with the strangely formed leaves. Long after the deep red petals drop, the sepals and the style retain their fresh greenness and present a striking geometric design.

It derives its name from that of Dr. Michel Sarracin, who was a physician in Quebec early in the eighteenth century. Evidently a botanist as well, it was he who sent our northern species to Europe and introduced it there.

"Huntsman's cup" is another name for it. The urn-shaped leaves are usually half filled with water and a number of drowned insects. The general belief has been that the unsuspecting insects are lured to the plant by a honeyed liquid on the rim and inside the pitcher, or by the ruddy coloration which it attains in the fall, and once inside the cavity they are prevented by the hairs from climbing out and finally drowned. It has been maintained that the plant feeds on the decaying bodies of these luckless insects, and so it has been called a cannibal plant. For pitcher-plants in terrariums, it has even been suggested that a few dead bugs be fed them from time to time.

A new theory has sprung up which dispels the stigma of such cannibalism from the good name of this interesting plant. Now, instead of the plant feeding on the drowned insects, their dead bodies are presumed to furnish the food for the larvae of a fly which is instrumental in the pollination of the flowers, a necessary procedure since the plant is propagated by seed. It would seem, therefore, that its purpose in capturing insects (which, by the way, enter of their own free will and are not trapped as the tropical Venus fly-trap captures its prey), is not for its own preserva-

tion but for the perpetuation of its kind, and thereby refutes the contention that it is a "wolf plant in sheep's clothing."

In the regions where the pitcher-plant thrives you will also come upon the little sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) whose flower opens only in the sunshine and whose ray-like leaves give off drops of a clear, sticky fluid which glitter like dewdrops. The entire plant is reddish in color, and only a few inches tall.

The pitcher-plant and the sundew, although very unlike each other in appearance, have one characteristic in common, and that is the ability to catch insects. Any little insect that comes in contact with the sticky dewdrops of the sundew is promptly clutched by the ray-like leaves. Another flower which has the power to ensnare insects is the butterwort (*Pinguicula caudata*.) This violet colored flower has soft, fleshy, broad leaves of a yellowish-green, quite greasy to the touch. Small insects alighting on them stick to the leaves as they would to flypaper. It grows on the North Shore of Lake Superior, in crevices in the rock just below Father Baraga's granite cross erected near the mouth of the Cross River, and in a few other sheltered rocky spots protected from buffeting winds and eager hands alike.

Executive Meeting (from Page 6)

Alberta and Manitoba, and maybe even for local societies in Saskatchewan.

The question of enlarging our membership and strengthening our organization was still left open for further discussion. Should we join with Natural History Societies in Manitoba and Alberta? This would mean that the Blue Jay would then be published by the Natural History Societies of the Prairie Provinces. One member from British Columbia has asked: "Why not include British Columbia too?" This question will require much study, so please send in your ideas.

The first executive meeting also discussed the desirability of having membership cards. Do you want membership cards, or are you willing to continue to use the Blue Jay as the symbol of your membership in the society?

Dirt Hills in Winter

Dorothy Durr, Bromhead, Sask.

Along the line of snowy hills
The frozen prairie lies,
And all along the silver plain
The wind, a spectre, sighs.

Small paths upon the virgin white
Are tracks where rabbits run.
They sit in frozen form all day,
But moonlight nights are fun.

A trodden yard beside a slough,
A pilfered stack of hay
Show where White-tailed Deer have
been
By night, and too, by day.

Once when land settlement was new,
These hills were filled with life
Homesteaders all a new life sought
Whose hearts with hope were rife.

These hills are left to nature now,
A hunter's paradise
Across whose silent, frosty cold,
The wind, a spectre sighs.

Friendly Birds

By Vernier Rondeau, D.D.S., Rouleau

Last summer, we became intimately acquainted with a pair of Arkansas Kingbirds. In the thirty-five years that I have resided at Rouleau I never had birds to nest so close to our door. It was very interesting to see the pair raising their family of four. I used to imitate the plaintive notes of the father bird and he could not figure out where that other bird was. Those birds certainly destroyed a lot of moths.

Some time ago I decided to send one of my bird houses to Queen Elizabeth's children. It is a Wren house and I hope that it will be hung and that wrens will occupy it.

These last few years I have sent to the Department of Resources and Development at Ottawa for copies of "Bird Houses and their Occupants" and "Attracting Birds with Food and Water". These I have passed on to my young patients, to Normalites, etc. I have also made bird houses which I donated to school, to encourage children and others to build bird houses and to attract birds.

The Most Common Birds of the Somme Area

By DONALD and RONALD HOOPER, Somme, Sask.

Since October 1st, 1953 we have kept a record of every bird we have identified, on sheets of squared paper. From them one can easily figure out the species most commonly seen. Following are the ten commonest species in the Somme district from Oct. 1, 1953 to Sept. 30, 1954. The number after each species is the number of days that species was seen during the year.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. English Sparrow — 248 | 6. Sharp-tailed Grouse — 125 |
| 2. Black-capped Chickadee — 213 | 7. Song Sparrow — 119 |
| 3. Raven — 181 | 8. Barn Swallow — 118 |
| 4. Hairy Woodpecker — 148 | 9. Vesper Sparrow — 111 |
| 5. Robin — 144 | 10. Killdeer — 108 |

If one made his observations in the close vicinity of a lake or river, the Mallard Duck would probably be among the ten commonest species.

Following are the three most common species for each month:

October, 1953 — English Sparrow, 27; Slate Colored Junco, 24; Magpie, 22. Total 53 species. Grand total including other Octobers, 80 species. Best day, Oct. 19, 27 species. (Best day for Oct., 1954, 32 species.)

November — English Sparrow, 28; Magpie, 18; Chickadee, 16. Total 34 species. Grand total, 42 species. Best day, Nov. 10, 18 species.

December — Chickadee, 27; Raven, 25; Hairy Woodpecker, 25. Total 29 species. Grand total 33 species. Best day, Dec. 4, 15 species.

January, 1954 — Raven, 25; Hairy Woodpecker, 22; Brown-headed Chickadees 15. Total 22 species. Grand total 28 species. Best day, Jan. 13, 13 species.

February — Black-capped Chickadee, 26; Raven, 24; Brown-headed Chickadee, 15. Total 22 species. Grand total 25 species. Best day, Feb. 1, 12 species.

March — Black-capped Chickadee, 31; Hairy Woodpecker, 26; Canada Jay, 25. Total 27 species. Grand total 30 species. Best day, Mar. 8, 15 species.

April — Black-capped Chickadee, 27; English Sparrow, 22; Horned Lark, 22. Total 53 species. Grand total, 68 species. Best day, April 27, 27 species.

May — English Sparrow, 31; Mallard, 30; Robin, 30. Total 113 species. Grand total 137 species. Best day, May 31, 60 species.

June — Song Sparrow, 30; Robin, 30; Clay-colored Sparrow, 29. Total 95 species. Grand total, 111 species. Best day, June 8, 53 species.

July — Barn Swallow, 31; English Sparrow, 29; House Wren, 27. Total, 72 species. Grand total, 96 species. Best day, July 29, 41 species.

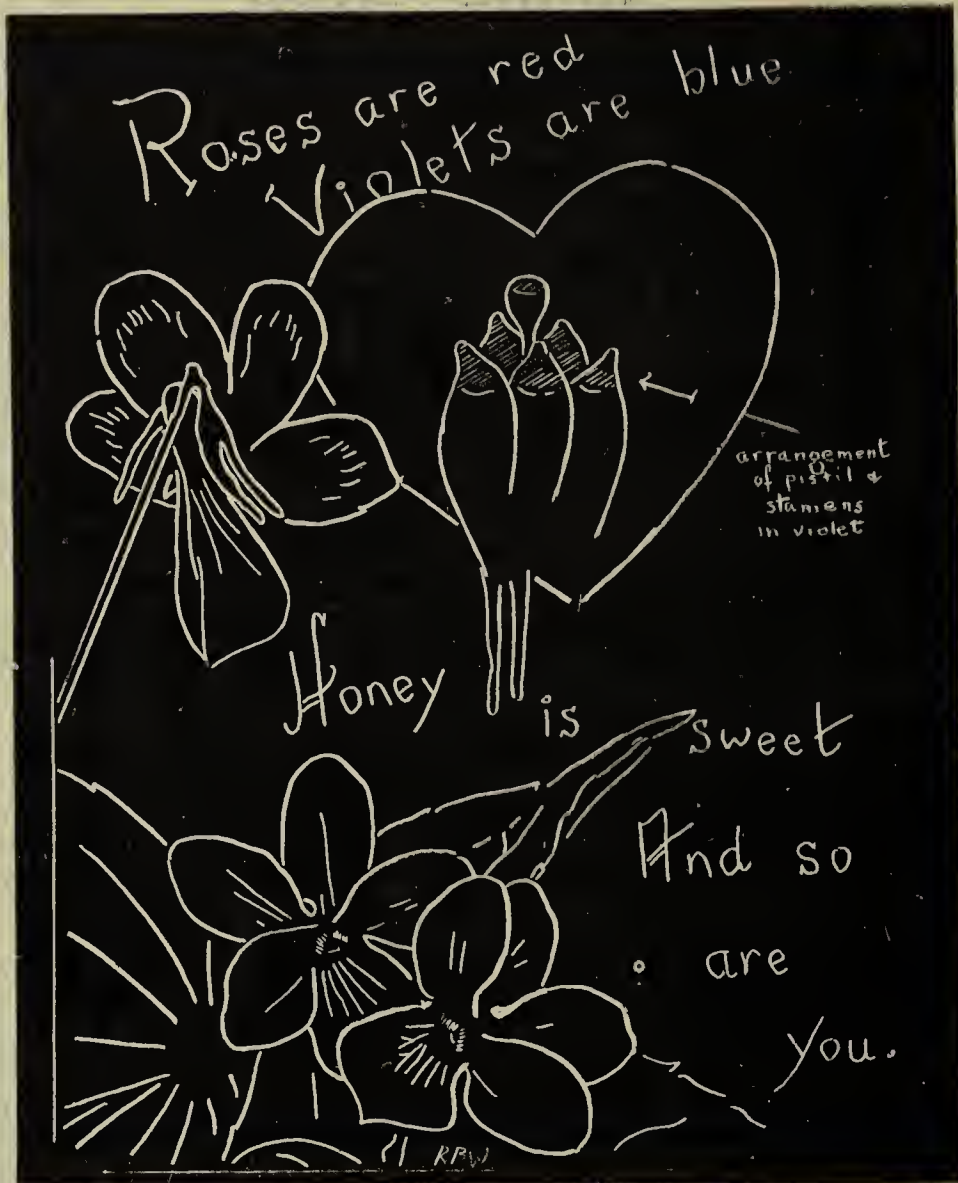
August — English Sparrow, 31; Barn Swallow, 27; Goldfinch, 24. Total, 88 species. Grand total, 98 species. Best day, Aug. 5, 32 species.

September — English Sparrow, 27; Robin, 22; Goldfinch, 20. Total, 66 species. Grand total, 104 species. Best day, Sept. 14, 25 species.

It is encouraging to notice that with the exception of the English Sparrow, the ten most common species are among the most beneficial and interesting of our birds. It is true that the Raven is a rascal at times, but I am sure that he more than makes this up with mice, insects and carrion that he eats.

Roses Are Red . . .

By R. B. WILLEMS, Edenwold, Sask.



Our Saskatchewan winters are rather suitable for reminiscing, and then, of course, in February we all become sentimental. Valentines suggest roses and violets. Friendly acquaintances with these flowers last summer, reminded me of some fascinating plant lore related to these posies.

"Have you ever pulled the colored petals away from just one violet and found the little lady wrapped in an orange robe bathing her feet in the calyx cup?" Even though I had been aware of this legend since childhood's happy years, it was not until last summer that I took time to verify the scientific fact underlying it. It so happened that one morning Dr. Leddingham brought in some violets for identification as part of our laboratory assignment in plant taxonomy. (Incidentally, I enjoyed six interesting weeks last summer at the University of Saskatchewan

taking Biology S24.) When I put the violet under the binocular microscope there was the little lady all wrapped in an orange robe splashing her two legs in the calyx cup, not in water, but in the richest champagne that has made more than one bee tipsy. I made the accompanying diagram of the pistil and stamens in my laboratory manual. The information sentimental in nature was disclosed orally to the professor.

Centuries past certain rose-lovers who studied behind convent walls recorded their observations in Latin verse. One couplet referring to the sepals of the rose has been handed down to us today:

"Quinque sumus fratres,

Unus barbatus et alter
Imberbesque duo,

Sum semiberbis ego."

Translated it becomes:

"Five brothers are we,

(Continued on next Page)

The Lake Among the Qu'Appelle Hills

By Mrs. C. A. STEWART, Fairy Hill, Sask.

Up among the hills there lies a tiny tarn. This miniature lake is a crescent-shaped basin curving round a grassy slope, which reaches back in rolling tiers to the top of the basin's rim, from where it descends in softly rolling slopes to the valley floor, broken by small wooded ravines and coppices. Here and there huge boulders lie, as if a giant hand had thrown them there at random. The green meadows of the valley floor extend to the valley wall on the south side, where the small hillocks separated by wooded ravines, rise to the prairie.

Above the convex side of the lake the hills rise somewhat abruptly with wooded ravines reaching from the high escarpments almost bare of vegetation so steep are they, and flattening out near the edge of the water.

At either end of the crescent is a round clump of thickly leaved maples, their leaves in the tender green of early summer, interspersed with drooping bunches of near crimson keys, which bend the twigs on which they grow. The whole effect of the red pendicles among the green leaves is one of unusual and striking beauty. Only for a short time can the phenomenon be observed. In a week or ten days the keys will have elongated and become a scarcely lighter green than the leaves.

Just where the inner curve of the crescent begins to bear downward, stands a twin ash tree, its two stems separating above the parent root, and merging again in a perfect oval of long green leaflets which shine with a polished lustre, given to none other of the common trees in the valley.

All around the edge of the water, standing upright in the shallows, are dark green sedges. In the slanting rays of the afternoon sun, these are reflected on the calm surface as "a straight stick bent in a pool." The ash tree is faithfully reproduced in the water, also, and various bushes along the sides appear in a fringe of shadow along the sunward side.

The white and purple sheen on the wing of a mallard drake calls the

eye to the farther end of the lake. Upon noting the invader of his solitude he swims swiftly shoreward, leaving a slender V of white in his wake, on the shadowed water.

His mate walks warily along the edge, no doubt with fears for her unhatched brood, somewhere in the surrounding bushes.

In the middle reaches of the little lake, where the water lies free of shadows, the snowy shapes of fleecy clouds momentarily lighten the dark blue of the water. So close seem the sky and clouds to their reflections that the eye can gather both in, in one glance.

A Broen Thrasher alights in the ash tree in plain sight, pouring forth a stream of melody, in clear articulation. Just below him, unable to hide his orange waistcoat and black tuxedo, a Baltimore Oriole vigorously scolds the intruder. Among the maples a tiny Yellow Warbler trills ecstatically, repeating over and over his "Kee - lee - wee-chee-chee-chee-wee."

Here, if anywhere in this world, where men have created only turmoil and unrest, is Peace.

ROSES ARE RED (Continued)

One bearded and another,
Two unbearded;
Semibearded am I."

The allusion is quite surprising. The five brothers are the five sepals; two have curious appendages — "beards" — on both their edges; two have no such appendages, their edges being quite simple; and one has an appendage on one side only. These peculiarities though pointed out long ago by the monks, you will have to wait until next June to see. I am sure you will be as surprised as I was when I picked up a rose on our next field trip, turned over the flower and examined the exposed edges of the sepals. So until,

"Wenn du eine Rose schaust,
Sag ich lasz sie grüßen."

Translated:

"When you see a rose,
Say I send my greetings."

Nature's Schoolhouse -

Boys and girls will still have one more opportunity to win a valuable nature field guide, by submitting an essay for the next issue. All entries which have been or will be printed in THE BLUE JAY, are also eligible for the grand prize, the \$50 camera, donated by Bird Films. This prize will be awarded in June or July.

Here are the rules of the contest. Write an original story of one of your nature observations. Confine it to less than 500 words. Send your name, address, age, grade and school to the editor, L. T.

Carmichael, 1077 Garne
for the reception of m
will be April 15, 1955.

A choice of Peterson's
mals or butterflies) or
plus a subscription to
given as a prize for t
the next issue. At their
award several additiona
your story please indica

PRIZE WINNERS:

The Flight Song of the Prairie Horned Lark

By LAVERNE WENDELL, MacNutt, Sask.

Age 14, Grade 9

Drawing by Robert Seibert (Audubon Magazine)



*Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.*

One afternoon, late in June, while driving along a country road, Dad suddenly stopped the truck and told me to watch a Horned Lark which was rising by the side of the road. It rapidly gained elevation through consecutive spurts and glides till it had reached a height of what seemed to be about two hundred feet. I thought it would fly away, but Dad

who had witnessed this performance before, assured me that it would circle and told me to listen closely when it spread its wings.

At first I couldn't hear anything but after a while I distinctly heard the song of the Horned Lark that one so commonly hears with its return in the spring of the year. This performance continued for about five or ten minutes after which it unexpectedly folded its wings and, in dive bomber fashion, dropped straight down giving the impression that it must crash headfirst into the ground. With less than ten feet from the ground, and while I was holding my breath for the crash, its wings suddenly opened and gliding a few short feet away it sat down as though it hadn't performed at all. This performance is rarely seen. It was the first time I had ever witnessed the strange flight and common song of the Horned Lark way up in the sky. Dad told me he had the pleasure of seeing and hearing it on two or three other occasions many years ago.

As we drove home I felt considerably thrilled that I had witnessed this rare flight song of the Horned Lark. I hoped that in the not too distant future I might again have the opportunity of being audience to the Horned Lark's performance.

Boys' and Girls' Section

Regina. The deadline
for the next issue

Field Guides (birds, mammals, etc.)
and Guides (birds, mammals, etc.)
Berry's Flower Guide,
THE BLUE JAY will be
the best story received for
the contest. The judges may
choose any prize.
When submitting
your choice of prize.
Contact Dr. Stuart Houston and Cliff

Shaw, of Yorkton, have judged the essays submitted for this issue. The first prize, "The Flight Song of the Prairie Horned Lark" goes to Laverne Wendell; the second prize, "The Two Bluebirds" to Evelyn Mess; the third prize, "Wild Geese" to Bill Greschuk. Field Guides will be mailed to each of these winners.

Note for Society Members: Will those willing to donate three dollars as a prize for this or the next contest, please contact Dr. Stuart Houston, Box 278, Yorkton.

The Two Bluebirds

By EVELYN MESS, Box 189, Saltcoats, Sask.
Age 13, Grade 7, Chatsworth School

Two bluebirds built their nest in our binder twine box on the binder. They had four blue eggs.

Soon it came time when the men had to cut the grain, and while they were fixing the binder the bluebirds wanted in their nest. So not wanting to destroy the nest, Grandad got another old binder twine box, put the nest in it and hung it up in a tree near the binder.

At first the bluebirds just flew

around it, but soon the male bird got brave and went in the nest for a few minutes. Then the female had a look in. As soon as the men moved the binder, she went in and stayed on the nest. In two days time four little bluebirds had hatched. Soon they learned to fly. They stayed around till it was time to go south. They were so interesting I hope they come back next year.

Wild Geese

By BILL GRESCHUK, Box 235, Two Hills, Alberta
Age 13, Grade 7, Two Hills School

My story will deal with wild geese. One incident is very unusual. The other is very interesting.

About three years ago wild geese nested by our lake. This in itself was not unusual except for the fact that one goose made her nest on a tree. We all watched with interest. The eggs were laid and the "setting" had begun. In due time the eggs hatched and the nest was full of hungry goslings. We waited with keen anticipation for the time that the goslings would be ready to leave the nest. We wanted to see how they would get down the tree. The very thought of missing that sight was a veritable nightmare. Well most everybody thought that the goslings

would remain in the nest till they were ready to fly. I thought so too. But I was wrong and I was very, very lucky, for I was, so to speak, on the ground floor when it was time for the goslings to leave the nest. I was awakened one morning very early, because the calves got out. One was by the tree where the goslings were. When I got to the calf, I saw how the goslings got down from the nest. They were pushed off by the mother and fell to the ground unhurt.

Last fall I noticed a very beautiful wild goose panorama. The geese were migrating. A first wave came along and flew over our house. Then they
(Continued on Page 25)

Robins and Rainbows

Lloyd T. Carmichael, Regina

The week before Christmas was exceptionally mild in the Queen City. Robins were seen during the week by Bert Johnson, Eric Hammerstrom, Horace Croome, George Ledingham and many others. They seemed contented and in no hurry to continue their trip to the south. But the warm spell was crowned also with a real weather phenomenon on Wednesday afternoon, December 22, when a rainbow appeared over northeast Regina. At 3:40 p.m. the sun broke through rain clouds and caused the rainbow which lasted until sunset, nearly twenty minutes later. Many stood on the streets and watched the unusual sight and no doubt the robins also hailed it as a good omen and decided to tarry for a few more days.

It turned cold on the night of December 28, touching ten degrees below zero. As I walked to work the next morning I found one robin who had procrastinated too long. He lay dead and frozen near the sidewalk, under a spreading elm tree where he had sought shelter for the night.

Robins, apparently, have a rugged constitution, for some did survive many nights of subzero temperatures although not extreme ones — never below ten below. On Sunday, January 23rd a Robin accompanied by a Downy Woodpecker and a Chickadee visited again the back yard of Mr. and Mrs. Croome, at 2310 Smith Street, Regina. The temperature was about ten degrees and a quiet snow was falling, adding its quota to the foot or more already on the ground. The bones of a turkey carcass frozen into the bird bath, fat-filled holes in a short length of a poplar pole, bread crumbs and scraps in suitable receptacles distributed around the yard proved a drawing card, not only to these birds but to the ever present English Sparrows.

Then the remarkable occurrence happened. This feeding yard proved such an attraction that the Robin, fluffed out against the wintery blasts, returned on January 26. When observed, the temperature was 25 degrees below zero.

Mother Love and Intelligence

K. E. Baines, Tisdale, Sask.

In pursuing our vocation of bee-keeping it is common practise to locate an apiary on the site of an abandoned home. One such location was about two miles east of Tisdale. On the sunny side of a few acres of poplar are some caving in holes, charred wood, a row of lilac and another of carragana, and a few stray evening-scented stocks. The road goes by half a mile away and the nearest occupied habitation is a little further off.

Such was the picture when Doug and I called to check over the bees one bright June morning. As soon as we got out of the truck, a thin collie dog came running out of the bush, whining and acting very peculiarly. It occurred to me she might be mad but she did not come too close to us as we worked on the bees. There was a freshly worn path leading back of the hives and into the bush. We spent about an hour on the bees and the dog was still around and seemingly agitated.

We walked over to the truck to go and, just as I placed one foot on the running board to get in, the dog came up behind me and nipped my coat. I whirled, thinking she was getting vicious, and as I faced her she turned and started down the path, indicating to me as plainly as if she had spoken, that I was to follow her. Down the path she went with me after. Just inside the bush was an old well hole about ten feet deep and quite dry. There at the bottom was a fat, sleek pup. It took only a few minutes to lower Doug on a rope and he passed the pup up to me. I set him down and mother and pup headed off across the field, without looking back.

We checked over all the signs and decided the pup had been trapped in the hole for at least a week. There were feathers and remains of gophers and mice in the bottom. The mother had not allowed her offspring to go hungry even if she could not get him out.

How did she know that a strange man could help her?

Brown Thrasher Nest on Corn Binder

By Dr. STUART HOUSTON



The Brown Thrasher usually builds its nest in low bushes, most often at some distance from the farm buildings. Therefore it was quite a surprise to J. B. Belcher on June 27th to find a thrasher nesting on an unused corn binder in a farmyard south of Dilke. It was about three feet above the ground and sheltered beneath an overhanging metal plate. When I went to photograph the nest, the anxious parent struck me on the head.

— 2 photos from Kodachromes by Dr. Stuart Houston.

Interesting Acquaintances

By HUGH McLAUGHLIN, Lewvan, Sask.

There are birds which nest in colonies but they do not predominate on the prairies. I am farming a quarter section with a creek running through it, and in the summer of 1952 I took particular note of nesting birds. Those actually found were two Killdeer, one Willit, one Marbled Godwit, one Bobolink, three ducks,

one Ground Owl, several Red-winged Blackbirds and one Crow. It would be safe to presume two or three Meadowlarks nest there also, as they are a very prominent bird. I would like to be able to add the White-winged Blackbird or the Lark Bunting, but cannot. Although we usually see a few of these birds every sum-

mer, I have only found one nesting in my lifetime.

The noisy Kildeer seems to hatch her eggs quite successfully, and her relations, the Godwit and Willit likewise. It was quite a satisfaction to see the Willet chase Mr. Crow, the long pointed bill of the Willet apparently commanding respect, and, when the crow had been safely driven away — the triumphant return to the still nesting female. These birds are not much disturbed by tractors and faithfully return to nests or just sit still, unless pressed too closely.

But the duck nests in the open field, and once I noticed that one egg had an experimental nick in it five minutes after the mother was flushed. I hoped she would return and cover the eggs. Futile clods were hurled at the crows and it was quite a coincidence, a few minutes later, to see one of the crows battling with a mouse. I have only noticed that effort this once. The crow had some difficulty in dispatching the mouse — but eventually its pinching beak weakened its prey and the mouse was carried away. However, the next day every single duck egg had been broken. A hundred yards from the crow's nest — close to the water — another Mallard hatched her eggs to a safe finish.

The crows would chase a hawk, with vocal indignation, that approached their nest, while Red-winged Blackbirds or common blackbirds would gang up on both crow and hawk, and lead them a miserable life until they retreated. I could not quite forgive the crow and I played a dastardly trick. I waited until the young crows were hatched and then, taking advantage of a mother crow's bravery, sent a bullet into the nest from below. Mother crow died instantly, and the young — all in different stages of growth — were hauled down and dispatched. Whether it is the right thing to do, I do not know. Still the idea persists that crows were not originally prairie birds, owing to the lack of trees for nesting sites, and that ducks were unmolested before — so if sides have to be taken, it's the ducks for me.

On the same farm land, I saw a peaceful threesome in a two-foot

triangle; a Godwit and a Teal on the bank of the creek and a Coot, close by in the water. There they sat in the sun as though conversing. On another occasion, while fixing a fence, son David and I heard a loud roaring sound — something quite startling. Two hundred feet away a Teal was in a frantic power dive, and in hot pursuit, straight down, a hawk. The duck dove straight into the water with a splash at a terrific speed, while the hawk veered away from the surface, inches behind.

Two deer presented quite a sight one early morning as they were startled from the creek — to bound away over the fence and out of sight. On another occasion a lone deer came bounding into the quarter as I worked. It seemed to lurch over two fences with a last bit of energy and was obviously tired. It disappeared over the creek bank and I ran the tractor close for a peek. There it stood in midstream drinking, and the picture is indelibly sketched on my mind — I do not have the opportunity to see a deer drinking there every day — and I could not help trying to piece some forgotten words together: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God."

The deer lay down under some buck brush, some distance away. Some time in the afternoon I could not resist another look. In some tension I walked into the brush, expecting to see a bounding deer. Soon a slight commotion, four feet away, swung my attention, and there "on guard position" was a skunk, whose nap I had interrupted. I went back to work.

Some times it is a muskrat pushing its way up or down stream, occasionally a mink who sends the muskrat scurrying, or a family of tiny shrews under an upturned board, or a bold and curious weasel who seems to want to see you as much as you to see him, or a pudgy badger, caught away from home who can't be forced into the water, can't run away very fast, and who turns and faces you on the stream's edge and snorts defiance — but would much prefer to go about his business of excavating.

They all become interesting — the acquaintance is satisfying, and it all adds to the harvest of the season.

Battle to Death

CLIFF SHAW, Yorkton



Poem by Dr. H. S. Swallow, Yorkton.

Evidence of one of nature's struggles for existence are these two deer heads, locked in battle and entwined with over 50 feet of barbed wire and two fence posts. The animals were found by Norman Allan on the farm of Alex Phelps in the Crescent Lake district, south of Yorkton. The two bucks, one a four-pointer and the other a five, had apparently started their argument on either side of a farm fence. In their battle to death they tore up almost 100 feet of fence line and in their struggle wrapped half of it around their horns.

They fought for mastery and the right —
To lead the herd and propagate their kind.
But, blind, mad, passion posed as fate,
Locked horns and cruel wire both did bind.

Dumb animals, we lightly say, and go
our way,
And leave their forms within that
quiet glen —
Forgetting, just how often, blind,
mad passion wrecks
The lives of some who pose, as wiser
men.

Nature Notes (from Page 7)

Bohemian Waxwings, generally seen in small flocks, are with us by the hundreds. Pine Grosbeaks and Evening Grosbeaks are also quite numerous. The latter are especially welcome as they prevent our being overwhelmed by the Manitoba Maples, many of which are loaded with winged seeds which these beautiful birds eat greedily.

Chickadees and Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers are constant visitors to a maple tree, just outside the kitchen window.

HORNED LARK

By DOUG GILROY



Photo by Doug Gilroy

Each February the Horned-Lark returns to the Southern Prairies and even though the countryside is still locked in the grip of winter their coming seems to bring a spring glow to the atmosphere.

We know that the return migration of our summer birds is beginning to take form and only in a matter of a few short weeks we will thrill to the song of the robin, the liquid call of the Meadowlark and even the harsh Caw! Caw! of the old black crow.

There are several forms of the Horned-Lark and the one in the picture incubating her eggs is the Desert Horned-Lark which is the species that inhabits the Southern Prairies.

Prairie Perfumes

By Mrs. W. KEYTE, Pollockville, Alta.

Over twenty years ago I was told that there is little perfume on the Prairie; actually there appear to be many scented flowers. Surely nothing is sweeter than the fragrance of the thorny pink June rose and its not-so-prickly shell-pink companion, unless it is that of the crimson-flecked creamy-pink rose of the grain fields and roadsides, which blooms late in July or early August.

In spring the sweetness of the golden Buffalo Bean rivals that of

a flowering bean field. The Northern Bedstraw has a sleepy fragrance in the warm sun which contrasts pleasantly with the sharp aromatic freshness of the ever-present sages.

A clean, tangy odour is released from the peppermints, as man or beast move on the edge of a slough or along the coulee banks. The delicate lily-like fragrance of the Prairie Onion flower is there, although it is easily masked by the pungent smell of its crushed leaves.

Flowers such as the Early Loco-weed are admittedly more pleasant than a "beau-pot" indoors. The Linear-leaves Puccoon gives generously of its rather heady perfume. Canadian and wavy-leaved thistles have a light honey-like sweetness, which, while similar, is accentuated in the rich, spicy aroma broadcast by the tiny yellow flowers of the Wolf-willow. Many of the vetches have a gentle sweet-pea-like perfume, and all the clovers hang out richly scented banners to attract the bees.

The gay little Butterfly Weed has an unusual but not unpleasant odour, while about three o'clock on a morning in late June, a drifting sweetness arises from the tangled masses of the White Evening Primrose, but after dusk is the best time to catch the faint fragrance of its stiffly erect yellow cousin.

The less said about the stale, unpleasant odours of the Blue Burr, Indian Pink and Stinkweed the better, but the delicate "echo" of the attar of roses which one finds in the long-headed Coneflower, is perhaps the most surprising of perfumes on the prairie.

Most of the wild fruit trees are sweet-scented and well loved by the bees. These are, of course, not all of the perfumed flowers, but for good measure perhaps one should add other delightful smells; the unforgettable indescribable scent of the first spring day, of melting snow, bursting buds, rain after drought, freshly turned earth, cattle drifting across green pastures, new-mown hay — and if fall comes kindly, a bonfire in a garden or a burning straw stump.

Next to no perfume on the prairie! How wrong one can be!

Adventures with a Porcupine

By DOROTHY DURR, Bromhead, Sask.

It was several days past Christmas, as I wrote this, and the Dirt Hills to our south-west are whitely outlined with the bit of snow that fell on Christmas evening. The day here, eight miles from the U.S. Boundary, was a "Black Christmas," if there ever was one. Too, it is cold, and I wonder how our little spiny "friends" are faring.

In November, while the cattle were still ranging over the combined fields, one morning, as they were being watered before being turned out, it was noticed that several of them had a "frosty" appearance on their faces. On closer examination, the "frost" turned to porcupine quills! We knew there was a plague of porkers — but hardly expected this. The affected animals turned out to be a spring calf, his mother, a mildly interested yearling and the old herd leader, from whose face over 100 quills were finally removed. And that was not all — each front leg was speared with at least as many!

The dequilling process was ac-

complished by snubbing up each animal tightly, and using the ever handy tool of the farmer, mechanic pliers. As nearly as we could reconstruct the story, the calf must have met the porcupine first, and got slapped, out of curiosity. His mother and the other old cow must have come in haste to the rescue. The mother wasn't in too bad a state, but the lead cow is a belligerent old gal and must have charged the cause of the trouble and struck repeatedly with her fore-feet, until she, too, was driven off. A neighbor, afterwards, told us of hearing a cow bawl as if in pain, throughout the night.

We are still wondering if it could be the same porcupine, or merely a vengeful relative, which was run over and shaved by the swather, early in combining time. That is a story in itself, but no electric razor ever did a better job, than that swather sickle did on that luckless porcupine. I wonder how fast quills grow, anyway! The ones the calves tangled with couldn't have had too many left either!

THE BLUE JAY BOOKSHELF

WATCHING BIRDS

By James Fisher, Penguin Books Ltd.
rev. ed. 1951. pp. 188, illus. Review
by Margaret Belcher, Regina

This is not a new book; in fact, it was first published in 1941. But, as its author is a well-known English ornithologist, it is well worth bringing to the attention of any bird watcher who does not already know it. Though Fisher warns that his attitude toward bird watching is primarily scientific and that there are no purple passages on the aesthetics of bird watching, his style is straight-forward and not too technical for the amateur.

The first chapters explain the adaptations and anatomy of the bird, and the principles and some of the difficulties of scientific classification. To the amateur, however, classification is less important than identification. Fisher describes the tools of bird watching that facilitate accurate observation, and insists on the importance of practice. Then he discusses field notes and permanent records. He suggests that, although keeping a tally-list can stimulate a beginning ornithologist, it has the disadvantage of focusing people's attention on the variety of birds instead of on a thorough knowledge of the distribution and habits of common birds.

The rest of the book deals with aspects of bird study suitable for research: migration, habitat, numbers, courtship and display, territory, breeding cycles, etc. Interesting findings of these studies are given to encourage further research. In his final chapter on "what you can do", Fisher sends his reader off to join the local natural history society, and perhaps to reform it. "Fight shy of a natural history society," he says, "which is a talking shop and which meets practically only to hear lectures." This little book does a great deal for the cause of bird watching, partly because Fisher himself is so frankly enthusiastic. At fifty cents, **Watching Birds** is a really good buy.

A BOTANICAL SURVEY OF THE CYPRESS HILLS

Review by L. T. Carmichael

The most ambitious work yet published by August J. Breitung, Saskatchewan botanist, is his survey of the flora of the Cypress Hills area which has recently appeared in a 92 page booklet, reprinted from *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*, Volume 68. The catalogue records 74 families 264 genera, and 664 species or subspecies. These vascular plants represent one-third of the 1,536 species listed for Saskatchewan by Fraser and Russell.

The area in which the plants were collected is one of the most interesting botanical areas in western Canada, much of it untouched by any traces of glaciation. "The dominant physical features of the Cypress Hills is the nearly level plateau which slopes gently to the east and south, covering an area 100 miles long in an east-to-west direction and from 15 to 25 miles from north to south. At its western extremity the plateau reaches a maximum elevation of 4,810 feet."

The Cypress Hills, owing to their greater elevation and coolness receive considerably more rainfall than the surrounding plains. It is chiefly by virtue of this greater precipitation that the Hills form an oasis in a relatively dry region — a forested island in a sea of grassland.

Mr. Breitung made a botanical survey of this area in July and August, 1947 and again in 1949 and 1950. During that time over 1,700 collections of plants were made there. I had the pleasure of being with him on one occasion in the summer of 1950, and had the thrill of finding a plant for him, which he had not seen before in the Hills. It was Pearly Everlasting, *Anaphalis margaritacea*. It was growing by a trail in the pine woods.

The introduction to this work is most informative and interesting. It deals with the physiography and geology of the area, with its soils and climate, with the changes caused

by fire and other factors, with the varied and beautiful vegetation of the grasslands, and the forests of Lodgepole Pine, Aspen and Alberta Spruce. Of particular interest also is a description of and list of the 85 species regarded as comprising the Cordilleran elements in the flora of the Cypress Hills.

The Society extends to Mr. Breitung its congratulations for this excellent and extensive survey.

Copies of this review from Vol. 68, April-June, 1954, may be obtained from "The Canadian Field-Naturalist," Ottawa, Canada.

THE CARLTON TRAIL

Dr. R. C. Russell of the Dominion Plant Pathology Laboratory, Saskatoon, has written this hundred-page history of the Carlton Trail as a hobby and incidentally as a worthwhile contribution to the historical research going on in celebration of Saskatchewan's Jubilee.

The Carlton Trail, also known as The Saskatchewan Trail, "led across plain and marsh, hill and dale, coulee, creek and river, from Fort Garry at the junction of the Red and the Assiniboine Rivers to Fort Carlton, more than five hundred miles to the north-west, on the bank of the North Saskatchewan River. Fort Carlton stood on the east side of that river at a point just fifteen miles west of the present town of Duck Lake." *A clear map of the trail is given in the text.

The author traces the history of

WILD GEESE

stopped and started flying round and round. They appeared to be like whirling leaves. They soon assumed their usual V-shape and resumed their flight northward. Soon another wave flew by. They were migrating north. But when they were over our house they began to fly exactly like the first flock, in a circle. They flew round and round, each individual goose became quite like a leaf or snowflake. Then they resumed their V formation and continued their migration. A third wave appeared in due time and it likewise flew over our house. When it was over the buildings the circular flying that was done by it was exactly like that of the first two "waves."

the trail from its probable beginnings as a path used by Metis hunting buffalo, and/or by Hudson Bay employees, through the time of its use by such travellers as Sir George Simpson, Paul Kane, Captain Pallister, Sir Sandford Fleming, James Macoun and others. Later travellers' journals are also quoted from to make the story complete until the time that construction of various railway lines and municipal roads made its use unnecessary and . . . "traffic no longer wound in leisurely curves around bluff and slough, but plunged doggedly ahead in a straight line even though in some of the rougher districts 'heaven and earth' had to be moved to make this possible."**

Dr. Russell has selected interesting material from the various journals, and the sketches and photos add to the reader's pleasure. There are pictures of Red River carts, buffalo, old schools and camps as well as clear photos of present day prairie terrain. The author's knowledge of Botany is revealed in these illustrations of typical plant communities as well as in the text and quoted excerpts from journals.

Anyone interested in the old trails will enjoy this well-told tale; anyone not especially interested in trails will learn a lot of Saskatchewan history. Dr. Russell has caught the drama of the early days of our country so much of which was settled, as King George VI remarked, "within the memory of living man."

*The Carlton Trail — Page 7.

**Ibid — Page 102.

The Carlton Trail by R. C. Russell may be obtained from the University Bookstore, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, or from Dr. R. C. Russell, 834 University Drive, Saskatoon. Price \$1.50.

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Wild Flower Protection

Professor C. W. LOWE

Formerly of the Dept. of Botany, University of Manitoba

The question of Wild Flower Protection is part of a much greater problem — the conservation of all our natural resources. Some of our resources are exhaustable; these are oil, coal, gas and minerals. Others, such as our plant and animal life are not so liable to disappear from the earth if they are wisely controlled and protected. The present great increase in the world's population and the rapid expansion of towns and cities are reducing considerably the area of the earth's surface which is capable of supporting our indigenous plant and animal life. There are many people who do not realize that every green leaf takes its quota of the poisonous carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and gives back the life-giving oxygen in its place. Plant life also is either the direct or indirect source of food for all animal life including man. With growing cities and diminishing fields and forests, it behoves us to protect all our forests, keep our fields green, and make the wisest possible use of all natural resources if future generations are to have the joy of outdoor life that we now have.

It has long been recognized that if our game birds, mammals, and fish are to continue to live and multiply so that future generations can enjoy them as we do now, then these creatures must be protected for months or even years at a time. If these forms of life, which have the power within themselves to flee from man, need protection, how much more is the need for our trees and small flowering plants to be protected? Just as some of our birds have become extinct in recent years and others threatened with extinction, so are some of our prettiest and most attractive flowers fast disappearing from our midst.

Since the end of World War One, the red prairie lily, the yellow lady's slipper, the orchid, the puccoon and other flowers have almost entirely disappeared from around Sturgeon Creek and St. Charles. The pink, showy lady's-slipper, once plentiful

between the Red River and Gonor, is now quite rare. Birds Hill, twenty-five years ago, had a varied and interesting flora, but now only weeds flourish there. The beautiful fringed gentian and other lovely blue gentians are now difficult to find in many of the more settled parts of Manitoba. In many country areas, the farmers have plowed up every bit of land possible, until, in many townships, it is impossible to find even a few square yards of virgin prairie or woodland.

A few years before the second World War it was not an uncommon sight in spring to see near the post office on Portage Ave. pails and baskets full of the showy pink lady's-slipper flowers offered for sale. As the leaves were always plucked with the flowers, the rootstocks of these plants were doomed to die. The Manitoba Natural History Society protested to the provincial government officials against this wholesale destruction of a non-too-common beautiful flower. Unfortunately, it was not expedient for the government to do anything to protect this flower.

Many States in the U.S.A. and some provinces in Canada have laws which protect many of their native flowers. Here, in British Columbia, it is illegal to pick the blossoms of the flowering dogwoods and the so-called Easter lilies without the permission of the owner of the land on which they grow.

The people should learn that some perennial flowers can be gathered if enough leaves are left to nourish the roots for the next season. This is easy to do in the case of the prairie anemone (prairie Crocus) where the flowers appear before the leaves. Plants with only a few leaves, as in many orchids, usually do not survive as the leaves are nearly always taken with the flowers. When flowers of the annuals are gathered, enough of the earliest blooms should be left in order to ensure a good supply of seeds for the next year. If all the flowers are taken that

(Continued on Inside Back Cover)

THE THISTLE BIRD

By W. WARD SIMPSON

(From "The Cardinal," London, Ont.)

Gaily he swings on the thistle, lightly he swings through the air. Here he comes to take his accustomed song-perch on the highest twig of this little elm. The nest is in the apple tree close by.

Sweet and low he sings, then more loudly and more rapidly. There is happiness, there is form and rhythm in the song, but as the speed increases, gradually all form and rhythm disappear. Only mad joy remains. No longer is the song a fast-flowing stream of sweet notes. It has become a bubbling fountain and a spray. The notes crowd one another. They come tumbling out with incredible rapidity, spilling over in all directions. He has sung himself into a frenzy; the spirit holds him in its power. Never a moment has he paused to rest, and long after we had begun to marvel at such amazing expenditure of energy, the song went on and on.

There is however, a limit to his strength. The spirit releases him — calmness returns. A moment's silence, then, lightly he springs into the air; in rhythmic undulations, he circles the small adjacent field. Now it is his flight song we hear, "perchicoree-perchicoree," one musical phrase to each undulation of his flight.

The Goldfinch is of the essence of joy. Only the Ruby-crowned Kinglet is his rival as the exponent of the spirit of eternal gladness. It is well that the finch nests over almost the whole of the continent. All may know him and enjoy his golden presence. I have long ceased to correct those who would call him the Wild Canary. They outnumber us. The matter of a name is not important with a bird so eminently equipped to win his way into every human heart.

Emerson said, "The worth of a bird is not in his ounces or inches, but in his relation to Nature." He doubtless had in mind the economic aspect. Here the Goldfinch rates very high indeed. Seeds of weeds, thistles, and burs are his main diet, though he also co-operates importantly in



the work of his insectivorous friends.

Here is an example of his exploits. A flock of sixty, wintering in a woodland in which were many pine trees, found an abundant food supply in a great patch of pitchfork burs nearby. A careful calculation forced us to the conclusion that there were more than two million individual bur seeds over that acre of ground.

During that winter these birds opened every bur with a clever twist of their bills, extracted and ate the seeds, and dropped the empty husks upon the snow. What a boon to the farmer who likes a clean farm and clean livestock, is the work of these eaters of weed seeds!

Birds have character and personality. There lies close to the south bank of the great Dundas Valley a wildly beautiful natural park. Along the farther bank of a small stream, a wooded hill rises steeply. A great pine tree grows from the water's edge. Attempting to pass between the tree and the steep bank we grasp a bough. A female Goldfinch flies out and perches on the tip of a small tree twenty feet away. She is immediately joined by her mate. They face us, uttering, not scolding notes, but sweet beseeching cries, "sweet, sweet,

(Continued on Page 31)

Summary of 13th Annual Saskato

By Dr. STUART

A record 108 observers participated in this year's count, including the 29 who divided up the Saltcoats district into ten segments. For the first time, Yorkton leads the number of species seen in one day — 20.

Six species were recorded for the first time, making a total of 73 species that have been seen in Saskatchewan during the Christmas season (Dec. 20 to Jan. 3). Regina had open water and no snow, and saw a Pied-billed Grebe and a Coot. An American Merganser and Myrtle Warbler were noted at Saskatoon, a White-throated Sparrow at Nipawin, and Harris Sparrows at Bladworth and at Doug Gilroy's farm near Regina.

44 species were recorded during the one day count, and seven others on other days between Dec. 20 and Jan. 3, for an all-time record of 51 species recorded during this Christmas season.

Note that the beneficial American Roughleg Hawks and Short-eared

BIG RIVER, Dec. 23, 1 mi. foot. 10 species, 69 indiv. Short-eared Owl, 1; Pileated Woodpecker, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 3; Canada Jay, 2; Blue Jay, 6; Raven, 1; Black-capped Chickadee, 30; White-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Common Redpoll, 21. (Additional: Magpie, 1; Evening Grosbeak, 7; Pine Grosbeak, 6; Snow Bunting, 12). **Mrs. S. Olson.**

BLADWORTH, Dec. 27, 5 mi. car, 5 mi. foot. 7 species, 63 indiv. Hungarian Partridge, 12; Horned Owl, 2; Snowy Owl, 1; Short-eared Owl, 1; Magpie, 4; English Sparrow, 30; Common Redpoll, 13; (Additional: American Rough-leg Hawk, 1; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 9; Black-capped Chickadee, 1; Bohemian Waxwing, 17; Harris Sparrow, 1 juvenile on Dec. 20; Snow Buntings). **Lawrence, Sam and Gerald Beckie.**

BROADVIEW TO MOOSE MOUNTAINS, Dec. 27, 132 mi. by car in 6 hours. 8 species, 128 indiv. Am. Rough-legged Hawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 4; Horned Owl, 1; Magpie, 3; Black-capped Chickadee, 12; English Sparrow, 100; Common Redpoll, 6; Snow Bunting, 1. (Add: Hungarian Partridge, 10; Ring-necked Pheasant, 1; Snowy Owl, 1; Horned Lark, 1.) — **Charles I. and Audrey Thacker.**

DILKE, Dec. 26, 34 mi car, 1/2 mi. foot. 7 species, 106 indiv. Golden Eagle, 1; Hungarian Partridge, 18; Magpie, 13; Black-capped Chickadee, 2; English Sparrow, 20; Common Redpoll, 51; Snow Bunting, 1. (Add: Falcon, likely Peregrine, on Dec. 25;

Horned Lark, 1.) — **Mr. and Mrs. S. R. Belcher, J. B. and Margaret Belcher.**

GRAVELBOURG, Dec. 31, 22 mi. car, 1/2 mi. foot. 5 species, 88 indiv. Sharp-tailed Grouse, 8; Hungarian Partridge, 9; Ring-necked Pheasant 1; English Sparrow, 50; Snow Bunting, 20 — **Dorothy W. Baker.**

HAWARDEN, Dec. 26, 30 mi. car. 5 species, 159 indiv. Mallard, 3; Snowy Owl, 4; Short-eared Owl, 1; Magpie, 1; English Sparrow, 150. (Add: Golden Eagle, 1 on Dec. 28) Hungarian Partridge, 15; Bohemian Waxwing, 1; European Starling, 1; Snow Bunting, 300.) — **Harold and Gerhard Kvinge.**

McLEAN, Jan. 1, 1955, 22 mi. car, 1 mi. foot. 5 species, 61 indiv. Sharp-tailed Grouse, 7; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Black-capped Chickadee, 10; English Sparrow, 12; Snow Bunting, 30. (Add: Magpie.) — **Mr. and Mrs. Harold Bray, Mrs. Newton.**

MULLINGAR, Jan. 1, 1955, 8 mi. foot. 10 species, 58 indiv. Sharp-tailed Grouse, 7; Horned Owl, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Canada Jay, 2; Magpie, 5; Raven, 1; Black-capped Chickadee, 8; English Sparrow, 25; Common Redpoll, 7. (Add: Goshawk, 1; Am. Rough-legged Hawk, 1; Pine Grosbeak and Snow Bunting.) — **Ralph T. Cowell.**

NIPAWIN to WHITE GULL CREEK, Jan. 2, 1955, 120 mi. car in 6 hours. 17 species, 294 indiv. Sharp-tailed Grouse, 9; Horned Owl, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 5; Downy Woodpecker, 4; Canada Jay, 2; Raven, 13; Black-capped Chickadee, 7; White-

Saskatchewan Christmas Bird Count, 1954

FOUNTAIN, Yorkton

Owls, were each still present in four widely scattered localities. This shows the fallacy of winter "Hawk and Owl Predator" campaigns — the Fish and Game League wrongly claim that beneficial hawks and owls are not present in Saskatchewan in winter. Goshawks were present in six localities, it must be admitted.

The most frequently reported species this year, in order of occurrence, were English Sparrow, Magpie, Black-capped Chickadee, Snow Bunting, Redpoll, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Snowy Owl, Bohemian Waxwing, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Hungarian Partridge, Pine Grosbeak and Horned Owl. The Snowy Owl was reported more frequently than usual, whereas the Sharp-tailed Grouse and Ruffed Grouse appear to have declined.

It is to be hoped that the Saskatoon observers can combine their efforts next year — they might even form the nucleus of a new Saskatoon Natural History Society.

Red-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 1; English Sparrow, 60; Evening Grosbeak, 29; Pine Grosbeak, 9; Hoary Redpoll, 1; Common Redpoll, 147; White-winged Crossbill, 3; White-throated Sparrow (present since Nov. 7th at Street's banding station), 1; Snow Bunting, 1. (Add: Goshawk, Ruffed Grouse, Hungarian Partridge, Snowy Owl, Hawk Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, Arctic 3-toed Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Magpie, Hudsonian Chickadee, Brown Creeper, Bohemian Waxwing, Red Crossbill). Total for Dec. 20 to Jan. 3 is 30 species. — **Anne, Walter and Billy Matthews, Maurice G. Street, Roy Lanz.**

PATHLOW, Jan. 3, 1955, 15 mi. car, 8 mi. foot. 9 species, 93 indiv. Sharp-tailed Grouse, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Magpie, 5; Black-capped Chickadee, 2; Bohemian Waxwing, 10; English Sparrow, 25; Evening Grosbeak, 8; Common Redpoll, 30. (Add: Ruffed Grouse, Hungarian Partridge, Horned Owl, Snowy Owl, Short-eared Owl, Raven, Snow Bunting). — **T. M. and Dan Beveridge.**

PUNNICHY, Dec. 25, 16 mi. car. 6 species, 47 indiv. Sharp-tailed Grouse 4; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Black-capped Chickadee, 4; English Sparrow, 12; Snow Bunting, 25. (Add: Ruffed Grouse, 1; Horned Owl, 1; Magpie, 3; Pine Grosbeak, 5). — **Carl, Madeline and Michael Runyan.**

R.R. No. 2, REGINA (BREDIN SIDING), Dec. 28, along Boggy Creek. No. snow. 5 species, 60 indiv. Downy

Woodpecker, 3; Magpie, 5; Black-capped Chickadee, 6; English Sparrow, 40; Common Redpoll, 6. (Add: European Starling on Dec. 20, Harris Sparrow on Dec. 23). — **Doug Gilroy.**

REGINA (KING'S PARK), Dec. 24, 23 mi. car, 2 mi. foot. 5 species, 60 indiv. Downy Woodpecker, 1; Magpie, 9; Black-capped Chickadee, 2; English Sparrow, 20; Common Redpoll, 28. — **Mr. and Mrs. T. K. Shoyama.**

REGINA (WASCANA LAKE), Dec. 21, 15½ mi. car, 3 mi. foot. No snow. 12 species, 240 indiv. Pied-billed Grebe, 1; Mallard, 93; Lesser Scaup, 15; Coat, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Black-capped Chickadee, 3; Robin, 2; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 11; Bohemian Waxwing, 3; Northern Shrike, 1; English Sparrow, 20; Snow Bunting, 90. (Add: Snowy Owl, 1; Magpie, 1; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Redpoll, 20). — **Dr. R. Bauermeister, Margaret Belcher, Frank, Brazier, Dr. G. F. Ledingham, Lucy Murray, J. H. Taylor, Mrs. Ruth Temple.**

SALTCOATS, Dec. 27 to Dec. 31. Each group reported on one day only. 29 observers in 10 groups. 7 party miles on foot (7 hours). 240 party miles by car (21½ hours). 15 species, 3179 individuals. Goshawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 11; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 96; Hungarian Partridge, 14; Horned Owl, 9; Snowy Owl, 4; Hairy Woodpecker, 5; Downy Woodpecker, 3; Magpie, 37; Black-capped Chickadee, 37; Bohemian Waxwing, 7; English Sparrow, 267; Pine Grosbeak, 62; Common Redpoll, 198; Snow Bunt-

ing, 2428. School districts as follows: Crescent: **D. C. F. Baines**; Chatsworth: **Jim, Louise and Chrissy Rooke**; Llewellyn: **Evelyn, Gweneth and Mrs. Arthur Thompson, Verna Dawes**; Aston: **W. A. and Stuart Baines, Les and Gordon Turberfield**; Cutarm: **Jim Murray, Bob Barnhart, Hans Erickson**; Pennock: **Carl Almquist, Sidney Anderson, Arni Johnson**; Perley and Boakeview: **Mr. and Mrs. Glen Laycock**; Peachview: **Ben Maddaford**; Meadowvale: **Ed and Velma Wiley**; Tupper, Rothbury, Castleton: **Wilfred Anderson, Tommy Smith, Arthur, John and Gordon Shanks, Frank Baines**. (Saltcoats and District Conservation Society).

SASKATOON TO FRENCH FLATS, Dec. 27, 50 mi. car, 1 mi. foot. 9 species, 765 indiv. Am. Rough-legged Hawk, 2; Ring-necked Pheasant, 1; Snowy Owl, 1; Magpie, 10; Black-capped Chickadee, 10; Bohemian Waxwing, 600; English Sparrow, 50; Common Redpoll, 65; Snow Bunting, 25. (Add: Red-breasted Nuthatch, 2 on Dec. 23). — **J. Hegg and J. Shadick**.

SASKATOON, Dec. 28, 22 mi. car, 3 mi. foot. 14 species, 433 indiv. Mallard, 2; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 1; Snowy Owl, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Magpie, 13; Black-capped Chickadee, 7; Bohemian Waxwing, 300; Myrtle Warbler, 1 (seen daily from Dec. 19th — yellow rump seen at close range); English Sparrow, 40; Hoary Redpoll, 3; Common Redpoll, 50; White-winged Crossbill, 10; Tree Sparrow, 2. (Add: Lesser Scaup, Dec. 21; Cedar Waxwing, Dec. 21; Pine Grosbeak, Snow Bunting). — **Susan S., Peter S., and M. Smith**.

SASKATOON, Jan. 1, 1955. 87 mi. car. 15 species, 1918 indiv. Mallard, 7; Am. Goldeneye, 5; Am. Merganser, 1; Hungarian Partridge, 3; Horned Owl, 1; Snowy Owl, 3; Short-eared Owl, 9; Magpie, 23; Chickadee, 2; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Bohemian Waxwing, 65; English Sparrow, 855; Redpoll, 175; White-winged Crossbill, 8; Snow Bunting, 760. (Add: Ring-necked Pheasant, 9; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Blue Jay, 2; Northern Shrike, 1). — **Mr. and Mrs. F. J. H. Fredeen, Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Gollop**.

SHEHO, Jan. 3, 1955, 5 mi. car, 3 mi. foot. 12 species, 130 indiv. Sharp-tailed Grouse, 12; Hungarian Part-

ridge, 6; Horned Owl, 2; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Magpie, 5; Black-capped Chickadee, 4; Bohemian Waxwing, 7; Evening Grosbeak, 6; Pine Grosbeak, 30; Common Redpoll, 5; Snow Bunting, 50. — **William Niven**.

SOMME, Dec. 24, 16 mi. tractor, 2 mi. foot. 13 species, 64 indiv. Sharp-tailed Grouse, 2; Snowy Owl, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Magpie, 1; Raven, 2; Canada Jay, 1; Blue Jay, 2; White-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Black-capped Chickadee, 7; Brown-headed Chickadee, 6; English Sparrow, 15; White-winged Crossbill, 23; Snow Bunting, 1. (Add: Hungarian Partridge, 5; Ruffed Grouse, 2; Pileated Woodpecker, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Arctic three-toed Woodpecker, 1; American three-toed Woodpecker, 1; Pine Grosbeak, 5; Hoary Redpoll, 2). — **Ronald and Donald Hooper**.

SPIRIT LAKE, Dec. 26, observers separately, 12½ mi. on foot in 10 hours. 13 species, 207 indiv. Ruffed Grouse, 4; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 7; Horned Owl, 2; Snowy Owl, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 3; Downy Woodpecker, 9; Magpie, 3; Black-capped Chickadee, 26; Bohemian Waxwing, 2; English Sparrow, 35; Pine Grosbeak, 10; Common Redpoll, 5; Snow Bunting, 100. (Add: Goshawk, Hungarian Partridge, Blue Jay, Evening Grosbeak). — **William Anaka and Joyce Gunn**.

SWAN RIVER, MAN., Jan. 2, 1955, 20 mi. car, 2 mi. foot. 12 species, 463 indiv. Snowy Owl, 5; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Magpie, 1; Raven, 2; Bohemian Waxwing, 4; European Starling, 2; English Sparrow, 27; Evening Grosbeak, 1; Pine Grosbeak, 8; Hoary Redpoll, 6; Common Redpoll, 57; Snow Bunting, 349. (Add: Pileated Woodpecker, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Canada Jay, 6; Blue Jay, 1; Black-capped Chickadee, 6). — **Mr. and Mrs. J. H. McDonald**.

SWIFT CURRENT, Dec. 27, 4 species, 34 indiv. Ring-necked Pheasant, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 1; European Starling, 12; English Sparrow, 20. — **Arthur Ward**.

TORCH RIVER, (Species seen Dec. 20 to Jan. 2: Goshawk, 1; Pigeon Hawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 4; Pileated Woodpecker, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 2; American three-toed Woodpecker, 1; Canada Jay, 2; Blue Jay, 2; Magpie 3; Raven, 3; Black-capped Chickadee, 4; Brown

capped Chickadee, 1; Bohemian Waxwing, 20; Northern Shrike, 1; English Sparrow, 15; Evening Grosbeak, 12; Pine Grosbeak, 5; Common Redpoll, 2; White-winged Crossbill, 15; Snow Bunting, 250). — **C. Stuart Francis.**

WYNYARD, Jan. 3, 1955. 1½ mi. foot. 4 species, 48 indiv. Downy Woodpecker, 4; Magpie, 6; Black-capped Chickadee, 8; English Sparrow, 30. (Add: Canada Jay, 4 on Dec. 25). — **Dora Bardal.**

YORKTON, Dec. 26, 23 observers in 6 parties. 112 mi. by car in 15 hours, 14½ mi. on foot in 8 hours. 20 species 1910 indiv. Goshawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 5; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 43; Hungarian Partridge, 30; Horned Owl, 3; Snowy Owl, 9; Hairy Woodpecker, 3; Downy Woodpecker, 3; Blue Jay, 2; Magpie, 47; Black-capped Chickadee, 65; Bohemian Waxwing, 287; Common Starling, 4; English Sparrow, 814; Red-winged Blackbird, 1; Brewer's Blackbird, 7; Pine Grosbeak, 51; Common Redpoll, 57; Slate-colored Junco, 4; Snow Bunting, 474. — **Tyrone Balacko, Paul Barski, Wayne Bjorgan, Jim Bridgewater, Brother Clarence, Lionel and Ronald Coleman, Brother Halward, Dr. and Mrs. Stuart Houston, John Hutchinson, Preston McDonald, Dave McVey, Allan Nurse, Jack Park, Irving Pearce, Jack Shaver, Cliff Shaw, Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Smith, Frank and Gillean Switzer, Brother Vincent.**

Bird Census

Miss Margaret Cope, Calgary

Birds seen Dec. 25, 1954 — Jan. 2, 1955, inclusive.

Inglewood and adjoining wooded area and river flat. Open country just north and west of city limits.

3 Killdeer; 5 Snowy Owls; 42 Hungarian Partridge; 2 Horned Owls; 2 Short-eared Owls; 3 Marsh Hawks; 2 American Roughlegs; 1 Pigeon Hawk; 50 Evening Grosbeaks; 3 Starlings; 2 Baldpates; 3 Pintails; 1 Ross' Goose; 17 American Mergansers; 60 Magpies; 1 Red Breasted Merganser; 12 Ringneck Pheasants; 9 Black capped Chickadees; 4 Downy Woodpeckers; 2 Hairy Woodpeckers; 20 American Golden-eyes; 2 Sparrow Hawks; 4 Snow Buntings; 12 Redpolls; 125 Mallards; 20 Canada Geese. 26 species and 607 individuals.

The Thistle Bird (from Page 27)

sweeeeet." Parting the needle masses, we look into the nest, built in early September. All but a thin outer casing of yellow grass is milkweed down. Within this immaculate cup lie four pearls, symmetrically arranged with points meeting at the centre. Nothing more exquisite ever graced Tiffany's show window.

Hastily but cautiously, we readjust the needle groups and tiptoe silently away. We are now on our way to the car, parked on the road perhaps one hundred and fifty yards from the nest. We have not advanced ten steps when both birds dive swiftly into the pine. The female remains there, but the male bird, after half-a-minute's inspection, shoots like an arrow from a bow straight up high into the air, then dives as steeply down. Up and down, up and down, the ordinary undulation of his flight is now exaggerated unbelievably. At each deep undulation he loudly sings, "perchicoree."

He flies in circles, a continuous succession of ever-enlarging circles. Each circle has as its most southerly point, the pine tree and as its most northerly point, the new position at which we had just arrived in walking toward the car. On each return he dives to within two or three feet of our heads — joy is in every note and movement.

At his last visit we have reached the road, and in a matter of seconds will be on our way. This time he dives to within inches of our faces, and loud and clear he shouts, "perchicoree." Then he breaks his circle and flies straight to the pine tree.

Conferring as we drive away, we find agreement in this: if the notes and manoeuvres of this bird could be translated into English phraseology, it would read very much as follows: "You people will surely think that I am crazy. I suppose I am. I'm just mad with joy. When we saw that you had accidentally found our nest, we were deeply concerned; but when we found that it had been discovered, not by enemies but by friends, our joy knew no bounds. I am trying to say thank-you, thank-you friends. Now you are leaving, so on behalf of my mate and myself, a final thank-you and farewell."

Saskatchewan Sharp-Tailed Grouse Survey

by Dr. STUART HOUSTON, Yorkton.

A province-wide survey of the Sharp-tailed Grouse, commonly called "prairie chicken" is being undertaken as a Jubilee Year project of the Yorkton Natural History Society. The Yorkton branch of the Saskatchewan Fish & Game League has pledged its support.

The Sharp-tailed Grouse is our provincial bird emblem, and its decreasing numbers in some districts is a cause of grave concern.

Knowledge of our upland game lags far behind that of other species of game and fish. Management of our waterfowl is on a scientific basis, with aerial population surveys made yearly by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and co-operating provincial and federal agencies and Ducks Unlimited. Our chief fishing areas are studied in detail as to depth of water, food and oxygen content, etc. and the available harvest from these lakes can be estimated quite accurately. Similarly our antelope population is counted yearly, and with careful management we have had a tenfold increase in beaver production.

However, I doubt whether anyone can make even a rough estimate of our Sharp-tailed Grouse population;

we don't even have a yardstick to compare yearly to see whether they are increasing or decreasing. In some districts they have decreased greatly, in others they seem plentiful. It is suspected that as land is cleared, roadsides scrubbed out, crops sprayed, and different harvesting methods used, that the province can no longer support as many Sharptails. Yet we do not know how many Sharptails a good section of land should be able to support, for any given type of habitat. And if we do not know the size of the Sharptail population, it is difficult to say whether the number killed in a year's hunting is a serious factor or not.

For these reasons, a trial survey is being undertaken. It is felt that any farmer interested in wildlife should be able, at least better than anyone else, to give a reasonable estimate of the number of sharptails residing on his own farm. This survey depends entirely on the co-operation of the farmers. Results will be made available to the provincial game department.

Please fill out the following form and have your neighbors send similar information.

TO:
Sharp-tail Count,
c/o Cliff Shaw,
Yorkton, Sask.

Name of Farmer

Address

Sec. Twp. Range West of meridian.

Size of farm

Acres broken Acres wooded

How many sharptails wintered on your farm?

How many pairs appear likely to nest on your farm?

Is there a sharptail dancing ground on your farm?

Help us learn more about our provincial bird emblem during Jubilee Year. Please mail this form to Cliff Shaw, Yorkton, during April 1955.

THE SECRETARY'S CORNER

By Dr. GEORGE F. LEDINGHAM

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 reception of material to be printed will be February 1, May 1, August 1 and November 1. All matters intended for publication in the BLUE JAY should be written as it is to appear in the magazine.

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One of the aims of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society is the printing of **The Blue Jay**. This has occupied so much of our time that new members must think that this is our only aim.

Our constitution includes plans to help local groups to organize Nature Clubs. Participation with a group of enthusiasts can be a most rewarding experience. If you think there is a chance of forming a local group, do not hesitate to write to us.

The officers of our society are scattered widely throughout the province and so far have only met once a year at the annual meeting. Now we plan to hold regular executive meetings frequently. Officers who can come at their own expense are urged to do so, and others who wish to share in the guidance and responsibility of the society are welcome. Those interested in this work may send their ideas in to me and they will receive summaries of our discussions.

We have had many favorable comments about the value of The Blue Jay in the school room. Over 500 schools take The Blue Jay. The children can gain an interest in wild life and this is the foundation for good conservation practices. I hope both teachers and pupils are expressing their appreciation for The Blue Jay. I hope, too, that more of you will mention The Blue Jay to school boards so that other children may benefit from the stories in our little magazine. To show how teachers appreciate The Blue Jay, I would like to mention that two teachers have given The Blue Jay to every family with children in their school.

Many of our members also belong

to the Fish and Game League. This is hard to believe when you read The Blue Jay. We would like to see more active participation from these people. I'm sure many of them could give us very lively stories. If your main interests are at present mainly with the Fish and Game people, please help us enlarge and broaden the interest and appeal of The Blue Jay. On the other hand we would like to participate in the conservation projects of the Fish and Game League. Let's work together; who knows, we may even be able to save the Whooping Crane.

Have you talked anyone into joining our society? With the special effort we are making this year, it is a very good time to join. It's not too late. Join now and get all the issues of the Jubilee year. **One Dollar Only.**

Wild Flower Protection

(Continued from Page 26)

species is doomed. This has happened to the Gentians in many districts.

If we wish to save our lovely native plants, now is the time to act. Every farmer and land owner should be encouraged to leave a small strip or corner of their land to develop its natural vegetation in its own way. This will not only save many species but when shrubs and trees begin to grow they will give shelter and nesting sites for many birds which are beneficial to the farmer.

Let us save our heritage of plants and animal life by teaching the people its great value now, otherwise it will have to be protected by legislation and this may be too late for some of our most beautiful flowers.

William Anakka

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Crocus Anemone — "The Ears of Spring"

—Photo by L. T. Carmichael

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