

DO YOU KNOW?

No. 5. The Tiger Salamander. The Tiger Salamander, although widely distributed in Saskatchewan, is not often noted and when it is seen, is usually erroneously referred to as a "lizard" - more often than not, as "that horrible lizard creature." Actually salamanders are quite harmless and are in many ways most interesting creatures.

Unlike lizards, which are scaled, salamanders have a smooth moist skin and belong to the same class as frogs (Amphibia) going through an aquatic larval (or tadpole) stage when they breathe by means of gills. As adults they develop lungs and take to the land, returning to the water to lay their eggs in spring. The larval form of the salamander closely resembles the adult but is distinguished by having external plumelike gills and a wide finned tail - the limbs appear before the larvae are ready to leave the water.

Adult salamanders have no means of self defence so their only hope of safety lies in concealment, which explains why they are usually found in cellars, under logs, in well pits, ice houses or any place where there is dampness and concealment. During the winter they hibernate, sometimes in very large numbers. Evelyn Binnie reported that at Tullis she had seen the wall of an earth cellar cave in, the weight of a mass of salamanders behind it. Adult salamanders are usually from six to eight inches long and vary in colour from rusty black, with irregular blotches of yellow, to a plain olive-green or black.

Salamanders form an important item in the diet of pelicans, herons and bitterns; sandhill cranes and horned owls are also said to eat them. They are also said to be cannibals, the larger larvae eating the smaller ones!

There is one form of salamander, the Mud Puppy, which never leaves the water, keeping its gills all through its life. The Mud Puppy has never definitely been recorded for Saskatchewan but since it is often elsewhere confused with the larval form of the Tiger Salamander it is worth noting that a sure way to distinguish between the two is the fact that the Tiger Salamander has five toes on the hind feet and the Mud Puppy only four.

BOOKS

Wild Flowers of the Prairie Provinces, by Elizabeth B. Flock. In a second edition of Mrs. Flock's useful little book, the average height of each flower has been included. This will prove most helpful. School Aid and Text Book Publishing Co. Regina. Price 75 cents.

Food Habits of the Coyote. United States Wildlife Research Bulletin No. 4. An extremely interesting report of scientific finding regarding the food habits of the coyote. Price 20 cents (U.S.A. currency). Write Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

Elementary Geology for Canada, by E.S. Moore, Professor of Geology, University of Toronto. Written "especially to serve the readers in Canada where geology is so important in the life of the people" and exactly the book many naturalists have been needing for their library. The maps and illustrations are excellent - the only thing we regret is that Yorkton figures in it by supplying a picture of "an approaching dust storm or 'duster'." Price \$4.00. J.M. Dent and Sons, Canada.

Reptiles and Amphibia of Minnesota, by W.J. Breckenridge. A new book which also covers the majority of species found in Saskatchewan. We think that many of our members will want to possess a copy since a moderately priced book which includes both reptiles and amphibia is something unusual. The distribution maps for North America will prove most useful. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis. Price \$2.50 (U.S. currency)