

The Blue Jay

Official publication of the

SASKATCHEWAN NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Editor: Lloyd T. Carmichael

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REGINA DIRECTORS AND EXECUTIVE FOR 1950

F.S. Robinson; F.G. Bard; Dick Bird; W.A. Brownlee; W.F. Whitehead
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The aim of the society is to continue and extend the work and ideas of the Founder of the BLUE JAY, the late Mrs. Isabel M. Priestly, in forming a medium of exchange of nature observations of mutual interest, and in working together for the protection and conservation of the wild life in Saskatchewan.

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

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 to this organization. All subscriptions will start and terminate on the first day of January.

All material for the BLUE JAY, as well as all subscriptions and business letters, should be sent to the Editor at 1077 Garnet Street, Regina.

Material for each of the four issues should be submitted not later than Feb. 15, May 15, Aug. 15, or Nov. 15, as the case may be.

The success or failure of the BLUE JAY depends to a great extent on the type of material submitted by the members of our Society. Each subscriber is a potential contributor, and so a share of the responsibility rests on the shoulders of all.

We have received many letters praising our bulletin, complimenting the contributors on the excellent manner in which they have presented their nature observations, lauding the Society for the splendid contribution which it is making by creating a greater interest in the wildlife of Saskatchewan and in its conservation.

But we have reason to believe that there are many who have withheld their opinions; who believe that the BLUE JAY, as a nature magazine, is not up to standard; who are convinced that more should be done to create and hold the general interest.

Of course we should be never satisfied with past accomplishments. All of us must feel that there is a great deal of room for improvement. "We have done those things which we ought not to have done and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done." Suggestions for change - for improvement will be "thankfully received and faithfully applied."

With the sincere hope that we will not offend or discourage any member who so unstintingly has given his time to record his observations, we would like to offer the following suggestions:

It is better not to submit material for publication in the form of a letter. These letters are most interesting, but they very often contain a variety of stories, all of which must be sorted out before they can be printed. Readers will have noticed that an attempt has been made to arrange the BLUE JAY articles under different sections - birds, mammals, insects, flowers, archiology, etc. Please classify the observations so that they may be easily transferred to the proper section. It would be preferable to write each on a separate sheet of paper, suitably headed.

Let us suppose that the members of the Society have met for a week's outing at a suitable lake and camping ground, and that on the last night before their departure they are gathered around a campfire, telling stories of their experiences and observations. One enthusiast is trying to hold the attention. "On Monday," he says, "I saw three robins, two crows, five meadowlarks sitting in a row on the fence, one woodpecker on the trunk of a tree, a field mouse and a big black bear. On Tuesday a flock of geese flew overhead. I saw a monarch butterfly, two porcupines, a white-tailed deer jumping over a fence and three kinds of ducks although I was unable to distinguish the species. Wednesday was, for me, the big day. From 1030 in the morning up to 12.15 I saw three tree swallows, five juncos, four pelicans wading near the shore of the lake, a lizard, a beautiful ostrich fern and at least a dozen flowers which looked like a pink species of pyrola. On Thursday" By this time the attention of the audience is directed towards the antics of an inquisitive grey squirrel, who brazenly enters the circle and accepts tid-bits from a dozen outstretched hands --- the rest of the story falls on deaf ears.

The point is, talk and write about some definite incident that will hold the interest of the audience or the reader -- a story about the

cunning coyote, the antics of the ants, the ^{ow} catbird's egg in the warbler's nest, the determined parent hawk as it protected its young, the gulls and the grasshoppers, unusual bird visitants. There are hundreds of subjects; it only remains for him to tell that story.

If they so desired, five hundred members of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society could each tell of incidents that would be of interest to all. We want no one to hold back because of timidity or of fear of improper phrase construction or unsuitable English. Such things, to us, are not always important and will easily be rectified. The main thing is to give the facts and tell the story in your own way. Do not submit your valuable daily diary of facts, but from among them select those nature gems and conservation ideas, which may remain with you and the rest of us for years to come.

Let us give this just one try and there seems no doubt that the next issue of the BLUE JAY will stand up to the ideals and expectations of even the most pessimistic.

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HOW ARE OUR FINANCES?

There are two factors which, in the publication of the BLUE JAY, make for success. The first has been discussed above, but there is another without which our best efforts will be in vain -- that is money.

Starting with a bank balance of about \$58 on November 1st last, we will, after this issue is paid for, wind up with an expected balance of between seventy-five and eighty dollars, with one more issue to go in 1950. This condition prevails in spite of the fact that we have received generous special donations from the Regina and Yorkton Natural History Societies and from nine of our members, amounting in all to \$130.

The cost for publication of our last three issues was \$350.59, an average of almost \$120 each. It is very plain to see that we are not paying our way and it is our opinion that special grants and patron donations do not make for sound business principles.

What is wrong?

In the first place we seem to be financing on a shoe-string. The potential revenue from 500 members, 20 of whom receive complimentary copies, is \$480. The cost of four issues is \$470 -- balance \$10, provided every member pays his membership and subscription dues.

But the point is, all members do not pay their subscriptions. They forget. At the present moment there are 125 members who have not paid their 1949 dues. We are convinced that in nearly all cases this is simply a case of oversight, but nevertheless it is an oversight that may mean the success or failure of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, as far as the publication of a quarterly bulletin is concerned.

When you receive this issue, please look on the outside of the

envelope, and if it is indicated there that you are paid up to Dec. 31, 1949, it would be appreciated if you would rectify that as soon as possible.

We invite discussion on this subject and will welcome any suggestions that may be made for improvement.

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THE ANNUAL MEETING

The following is a special notice to all members of the Society from our President, Dr. George Ledingham:

The Annual Meeting of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society will be held in the Provincial Museum of Natural History on Friday, October 27.

A full program of films, discussions and tours will be provided. Complete programs may be obtained from the Editor or the Business Manager.

Plan to attend these meetings. See the progress being made at the museum. Take your part in determining the future plans of our Society.

All paid-up members of the Society may vote at the annual election of officers on October 27. If you cannot attend the meeting in person, you can write in your suggestions and nominations. Each of these will be accepted as a vote.

Positions open for election are president, two vice-presidents and five directors to represent the province as a whole. The presidency should not be held by a Regina man each year, but should probably rotate between the established Natural History Societies. The directorships open for election are those which at present are shown as serving for one year. Present officers may be re-elected. The five directors will be elected for a three-year period. They should be active in support of the Society. If new names are suggested by letter, comments should be included to aid the voting of those attending the annual meeting.

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BRITISH EMPIRE NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION

The Saskatchewan Natural History Society, through the foresight and generosity of Mr. Arch C. Budd, of Swift Current, is now a member of the B.E.N.A.

This is an organization of amateur field naturalists throughout the British Commonwealth of Nations, which was founded in England by E. Kay Robinson in 1905. Its official organ, a copy of which has been sent to us, is called "Country Side."

We have received the following letter from Mr. G. A. Hebditch, Hon. Secy. of the Association:

"It is with pleasure that following a letter and remittance for 15 shillings, received from Mr. A. C. Budd, Swift Current, I have entered the name of your Society in our Records. I am glad to enclose the current number of our Journal, "Country Side" and we shall be very glad to see your "BLUE JAY" as opportunity arises. I am able to record the addition of several new Dominion names to our Membership and have had the satisfaction of being able to help some visitors to this country.

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PRESIDENT OF DUCKS UNLIMITED

Congratulations are extended to one of our Directors, Judge L. T. McKim, of Melfort, who was elected president of Ducks Unlimited at the annual meeting which was held at Calgary, June 3. He succeeds Dr. W. F. Tisdale, of Winnipeg, who was named chairman of the Board of Directors.

The enthusiasm which Judge McKim has displayed for many years in connection with bird life, conservation of wildlife and sport, singles him out as an ideal man to direct this important organization.

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APPRECIATION

John D. Ritchie,
Wallwort.

When I was quite a small lad, before I even started to school, there worked on my father's farm, five miles north of Beaverton, Ontario, at Point Mara on beautiful Lake Simcoe, a most remarkable man. At that time he seemed to me to know all about the trees, the flowers, the birds and bees, the big and little animals. The very stones in the soil became interesting with the stories he told me about them. All these natural objects he knew something about.

Now if anyone had called him a naturalist he would have scoffed at the idea. He married after working three years for my father. He and his beautiful wife bought a farm close by and had three daughters. When I was a young man he died with cancer and his wife shortly after, both in their early forties. His children I have lost track of completely but they all became talented and educated women of whom any parents could have been proud.

Many were the nature questions he answered for me and mysterious problems that I couldn't figure out for myself, he seemed to know. He showed me my first hummingbird's nest on the branch of an apple tree; a nighthawk's nest; a big moth hatched from a cocoon - a wonderful Luna with long tails; a delicate little orchid growing by the creek and pyrolas on the banks; his wife's wonderful wild flower garden; the tiny sundews growing on mounds in the swamp with flies sticking to their rounded viscid leaves on which, he said, the plants obtained their supplementary nourishment; and many, many other highly interesting things.

Some people said he was a fool to spend so much money on books. I wonder? I have never forgotten how he satisfied my thirst for nature knowledge. He let me drink at its well. A Great Naturalist with little education, but with an immense store of knowledge of the great out-doors.