

INFORMATION PLEASE

We should like to have any information about the distribution and nesting habits of the Great Blue Heron in Saskatchewan. This picturesque and stately bird is not often seen in the Yorkton area and, so far, we know of no local breeding colony. This past summer Leroy Simmons discovered a "hercnry" on the North Saskatchewan River, about ten miles from Maymont. "There were thirteen nests," he states, "all in one large tree, a black poplar some eighty feet high and over three feet thick at the butt." After skinning his shins severely in several unsuccessful attempts to climb the tree, Mr. Simmons finally managed it and was rewarded by a good view of nests containing eggs, newly hatched young or half-grown birds. "The eggs," he says, "are the most beautiful shade of blue, and the young birds look like pin-feathered gargoyles."

In districts where there are no trees the Blue Heron will nest on the ground. In Mitchell's 1924 Catalogue of Saskatchewan Birds the Blue Heron is recorded as "nesting in low willows at Quill Lake and on the ground at Lake Johnston." Are these colonies still in existence?

In the nature column of an English newspaper, received recently, there was an account of the Great Spotted Woodpecker (close relative of the American Hairy) making a new hole to serve as a winter shelter. Has anyone seen either our own Hairy or Downy excavating a new hole in the fall of the year? Very little, in fact, is known of where birds pass the long cold nights of winter. Chickadees will all pile into one small cavity, but where does "Sammy" Blue Jay spend the hours of darkness? Has anyone ever come across a roost of Bohemian Waxwings?

Has a heavy migration of Snowy Owls been noticed in the southern part of the province? These birds were unusually numerous in the Yorkton district during November and early December but the Christmas Bird Census failed to discover a single Snowy Owl within seven miles of town.

We were frankly disappointed not to receive an answer to our query in the first issue of the "Blue Jay" re the different kinds of bats to be found in Saskatchewan. Meanwhile we read with interest an account in "Time", Dec. 7, of some research work carried out by scientists in the eastern United States, who banded several hundreds of bats hibernating in caves for the winter. As a result of these experiments it was discovered that bats always return to the same cave for their winter's sleep, and to the very same spot in that cave. Even bats which were carried off and released many hundred miles away, were found back in the same cave the following winter. This led us to wonder if a hibernating bat had ever been found in a barn or similar building on the prairies where caves are certainly at a premium. Or are all the bats of Western Canada migratory?

In answer to our question in the last issue of the "Blue Jay" regarding nesting colonies of Purple Martins "in the wild," W. Niven, of Sheho, writes that a few pairs nest in old flicker holes in a bluff behind his farmyard and he has also noticed them in other places in the surrounding country. J. R. Foreman reports that he has come across Purple Martins nesting in old flicker holes in telephone poles along the highways.