

# Some Hard Facts

## About Conservation

W. Yanchinski, Naicam, Director S.N.H.S.

When I was a young lad it was part of my daily chores, during the summer, to bring the cows in from the open range for the evening milking. Often it involved tedious wandering through miles of wilderness, but what made a most lasting impression on my mind were the seemingly endless chains of sloughs and streams that stretched from horizon to horizon, and the variety and multitude of wild life in their vicinity.

Today, hardly more than a quarter of a century later, the landscape is barely recognizable; the sloughs which constituted such formidable barriers to a school boy, intent on getting the cows home, have all but disappeared and with them the wild things which flourished there.

Recently on a motor trip to Lac La Ronge I had hoped that in this northern hinterland, hundreds of miles inside a supposedly untouched wilderness, I knew so well as a boy. To my dismay, I found it next to impossible to get a camera shot of scenery from the road without including in the picture that common farm weed, the Perennial Sow Thistle. Yet this pest was quite unknown to most of the farmers less than a generation ago.

To the pioneer settler, the wilderness appeared boundless and inexhaustible but after a brief orgy of cutting, burning and plowing, we have already reached the last frontier. With the help of modern mechanical contrivances we have set off a chain reaction of forces which have all but overwhelmed any efforts on the part of Nature to maintain some semblance of balance in the plant and animal life. It is a stark but inescapable fact that many species, which have suffered most from this disturbance, are now so near the brink of extinction that they are certain to pass into oblivion no matter what we did to prevent it.

And yet, here in our province, there is a group of "sportsmen" that is even now clamoring to have shooting on Sundays made legal. Perhaps some wild creature, which at this very moment is fighting a last ditch



stand for its life may owe its eventual survival to that one day in the week when the slaughter of all wild things is forbidden. The Lord decreed that the Sabbath be observed as a day of peace and rest, and I am sure He never intended to withhold His grace even from the lowliest of His creatures.

This matter should be of deep concern to every citizen, but especially so to such groups as the Natural History Societies -- for the vast majority of people are not now and probably never will be active in any conservation group. An average citizen of this country may not know the difference between a Wood Pewee and a Hairy Woodpecker, and cares even less, but he has accepted, though unconsciously perhaps, the wonders of bird migration, nesting and other majestic phenomena of nature, as indispensable to his environment as the rain and the sun.

He wants to go to church on a Sunday morning or to a picnic at the lake, without having bullets whistling about his ears.

It is an organized group, like our Society, that can most effectively speak up for him and help preserve for his family and for posterity some samples of primeval wilderness - the wilderness which nurtured this country and made it the land of golden opportunities.