

Wild Life Sanctuaries

By A. C. BUDD, SWIFT CURRENT

How regrettable it is to learn that an animal, a bird, a plant or other form of life has become extinct, especially when its extinction is the direct result of man. A form of life, created for a purpose by the Almighty, has been destroyed, irretrievably, never to be found again alive. Man is a great destroyer; he has little foresight beyond the immediate future; his vision is greatly handicapped by the immensity of his love of money, chattels and comforts. A very small percentage of mankind is genuinely interested in the preservation and conservation of our natural heritage for other than economic and financial reasons.

One of our most valuable heritages is our natural vegetation, the result of soil, climate, altitude, exposure and other factors. Once destroyed it cannot be replaced, and with its destruction follows the certain destruction of many forms of life entirely dependent upon the natural vegetation for existence. Little is being done to conserve this valuable asset. A somewhat feeble, but well intentioned attempt has been made to set up "Research Areas" in our province, but the project, laudable as its original intentions were, has been allowed to depend upon the exertions of a few, very few, interested individuals. The original intention, that of conserving for posterity relict areas of native grasslands, is being replaced by studies on methods of increasing the carrying capacity of these grasslands. This is, of course, a very commendable thing from a purely economic viewpoint, but it does not conserve the original vegetation. Re-seeding, introduction of new species,

furrowing for moisture conservation may be valuable in making "two blades of grass grow where one grew before," but it is not conservation of the Great Creator's handiwork, it is not true conservation, it still results in upsetting the balance of nature and the destruction of many forms of life. It is not suggested that these worthy studies should not be carried out, but surely, in a country as vast and as rich as ours, a few blocks of a hundred acres each could be set aside as sanctuaries where vegetation, animals, birds, fish and insect life would be allowed to live, increase and multiply freely and without undue molestation.

There are a few small sanctuaries, but they are very small, they are not adequately guarded, they are favourite places for picnics and holiday makers, and the protection and conservation of wild life is definitely a secondary consideration. At Swift Current, for instance, a parcel of land along the creek, the basin for the City's water supply has been set aside as a wild life preserve and park. Large signs were erected stating that the destruction and molestation of wild life was prohibited, but these signs were riddled with bullet holes and eventually destroyed, and no protection is really given to wild life. Many such cases could probably be found.

Posterity will justly blame this generation for failure to pass on unspoiled, some of the natural benefits we inherited. The great naturalist John Macoun, has recorded many plant species from locations on the prairies, substantiated by herbarium specimens, but it is vain to expect to

find a great many of them in those areas now. Museum specimens are a poor substitute for the living specimens in their native surroundings.

It is suggested that the Federal Government take the lead and, with the assistance of Provincial and local governments, set up definite, properly protected areas of virgin, unspoilt land representing the major and more important wild life zones. These areas should be large enough to be unaffected seriously by the bordering areas and their development, and should be adequately fenced and patrolled. Hunting, picnics and vandalism of any kind should be strictly prevented and the preservation of natural wild life and vegetation the only object. They should be available to conservation minded scientists and nature students for study purposes, by proper permit, always with the proviso that the fundamental principles be adhered to, i.e. that of preserving the natural fauna and flora undisturbed by outside influences. The native predators should be unmolested but artificial predators should be kept out, man, dogs, cats, etc. The natural predators keep a balance of nature and generally result in healthier wild life. For instance, if grazing animals become too numerous for the food supply, the weaker and less fit ones are further weakened and become the prey of their natural enemies. The healthier ones and more active individuals are left to perpetuate the species. Studies should be made and recorded for the future, of the species, the density and ecology of the vegetational cover, a census of faunal life, and such facts as will prove of value to students of wild life later on. Some of these areas could quite reasonably be located in the National and Provincial parks.

The present "Research Areas" set

up in Saskatchewan are generally located in Community Pastures and, from the standpoint of grazing and pasture studies, are very satisfactory. They are not ideal though as nature sanctuaries, as the economics of the Community Pasture system is to make the best possible use, from a financial angle, of the vegetation. Then again, these pastures are open to all and sundry, and while the carrying of firearms is officially forbidden, the bullet holes in vanes of windmills and other evidence show that the regulations are not always enforced. True conservation areas should be independent of economic considerations.

Editor's Note:— The foregoing article was sent by Mr. Budd to the committee who have prepared the brief to be presented to the Royal Commission of Agriculture and Rural Life. So splendid were the suggestions that we decided to publish them in their entirety.

July 26th, 1775 saw the beginning of the first United States Postal Service. The first telephone call from a moving train was made near Toronto in 1929.

* * *

Before August 15th, 1914, the distance by water from Boston to Seattle was very great — all the way down the eastern coast of United States, South America and then along the western coast of South America and United States, but the opening of the Panama Canal on this date shortened the distance many thousands of miles and transportation was given a tremendous impetus.

* * *

Siam, or Thailand as it is now called, is the land of the white elephant, a sacred creature whose upkeep is very expensive. When the King wished to ruin someone all he had to do was to make him a gift of a white elephant, and so we have the meaning of the term "white elephant."