

## *A Day With Nature At Fishing Lake*

WALTER MATTHEWS,  
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Dawn finds the lake and surrounding woods curtained with fog; not a breath of wind is stirring; the trees stand like dim sentinels, guarding the unseen lake.

As the sun rises over the trees the fog melts away and the lake is like a mirror, surrounded by a brilliant green frame. Every leaf, blade of grass and flower has a drop of silver dew hanging from it. The spider webs are like silver lace, knitted overnight by the fairies, and hung on a branch to dry.

The robins sing their welcome to the morning from the tips of the highest pines. Ruffed Grouse are drumming on a log down by the creek, and the Spruce Grouse are so tame that they can almost be touched by the hand. The squirrels are busy gathering breakfast, and the busy little chipmunks are scampering everywhere.

A sombre Raven flies overhead with his dismal croaking, and the gulls and terns are wheeling and screaming over the lake. The White Pelicans came back after spending the night on a larger lake! The Loons with their yodeling laughter are fishing for breakfast; across the lake come the weird noisy voices of the grebes.

The woodland caribou, who have been feeding on lily roots, wade to shore, and fade like grey ghosts into the timber. Perhaps a moose or an elk may be seen as they come for a drink, and the White-tailed Deer, standing like statues, suddenly bound away — stopping for a last look before disappearing.

Bears are hunting around the cabins for something to eat — dashing off with their peculiar rocking-horse gait at the sight of a human. The Canada Jays are everywhere waiting for a handout, and the Blue Jay screams "thief" at them.

From the marshy parts of the lake comes the booming song of the Bitterns as they guard their nests and hunt for frogs in the reeds, and the "o-kee-ree" of the Red-winged Black-

birds as they sit on reeds over their nests which are woven in the reeds, a few inches above the water.

A Groundhog whistles from a pile of brush; a Porcupine wanders around grumbling to himself, and a Skunk comes down the path, not looking for trouble, but ready at a moment's notice.

The Kingfishers fly back and forth along the shallow water with their rattling song, suddenly pausing, then diving straight down into the water—coming up with minnows in their bills and flying away to their nests built in holes in the hillside.

As the sun warms the air, the mosquitoes settle into the grass, and the bulldog flies start buzzing around—big blood-thirsty fellows, about an inch long. The Sandpipers run up and down the sandy beaches—busy with their chores, while the warblers inspect every leaf and twig for insects. The Vireos sing from the top of a birch tree.

A breeze comes up, and the sun sends a golden beam from each ripple. Dragonflies of all colors buzz around and the ducks sun themselves as they paddle around at the mouth of the creek. The Water Lilies float their flowers of white, pink and yellow on the surface of the water. Along the cracks the Marsh Marigold makes a golden carpet on the green moss.

A pair of American Eagles sail across the lake, going to their nest in a tall tree in the swamp, and an Osprey soars over the water on bent wings, watching for a fish.

As evening comes on, the lake is calm. The Black Terns swarm around and dip down to pick a bug off the water, without making a ripple. The setting sun makes a golden path across the water — the Robins sing their evening song — the Whitefish start jumping for flies, and a beaver swims across the bay.

At dusk comes the beautiful bell-like song of the Hermit Thrush, back in the poplars. The bats fly over the water, looking for insects, and the

gurgle of the creek can be heard in the still air.

As the moon rises, a Horned Owl hoots in the distance, and the laughter of the Loons drifts across the water. A fox's sharp bark comes from the brush: a coyote yaps — and from far back in the hills comes the long mournful howl of a timber wolf — then silence.

So ends a day at Fishing Lake, a nature lover's paradise.

## Trumpeter Swans

Mrs. Percy Drury, Swift Current



I was very interested that the beautiful birds on Adams Lake had been definitely identified by Mr. Bard as Trumpeter Swans. They have been nesting on Bottley's Lake for five years, always moving the young ones up to Adams Lake before they could fly. Later they often took them up another three miles to Harris' Lake. The accompanying photograph was taken in October, 1948. There was ice on the lake and they were quite a distance out. Later they came up to within 25 yards of me, apparently curious. Unfortunately my film was all used up.

One cold spring they raised no young ones but the next had three as if in a measure to compensate for the year before. Usually they seem to have only two. I wished many times I could have taken a color picture of these beautiful white birds on the blue water of Harris' Lake with the green and pale yellow poplar and the red and orange of Saskatoon and rose for a background. It made a lovely picture.

## A Conservation League Needed

Ed Robinson, Wawanesa, Man.

Last year we had a failure of acorns in Manitoba and not one Blue Jay was seen here, whereas some winters I have counted as many as 18 at one time. I would be interested to know if they moved to other places, and where.

Birds are becoming very scarce in the thickly settled portions of Manitoba, to an alarming degree. I would like to know what others think of my idea of a Conservation League of Canada — from coast to coast — with the sole idea of helping our wild life.

We now have many conservation organizations, but each has some specific aim. Ducks Unlimited is for sport — this is no reflection on the good they are doing. Provincial governments manage wildlife for revenue and political gain. I think it is high time we had an organization solely for the protection and increase of our wild life, so we may see it unspoiled in its natural setting.

## Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker

JOYCE GUNN, Spirit Lake, Sask.

The beginning of April this year brought to our window-ledge feeding tray the first Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker (Black-backed woodpecker) that we have seen. It landed below the tray and started feeding on the crumbs the regular boarders, the chickadees and downy woodpeckers, had dropped. It seemed very tame and we were able to peer through the window at it and compare it to the illustrations in the bird book at our leisure as it did not fly until it had cleaned up all the crumbs and that took it a good five minutes. And it then only flew as far as the nearest tree where it sat for another ten or fifteen minutes allowing us to get another look at it through the binoculars.