

NATURE'S SCHOOLHOUSE

We have good news for the boys and girls. Dick Bird, of Bird Films, Regina, has offered a prize of a \$50.00 camera to the Grand Winner of all the stories entered in the Blue Jay Story Contest, which terminates August 1, 1955.

We were quite disappointed at the number of stories submitted for this issue. The fault may have been ours, in not reprinting the rules. Read these carefully; submit your observations, illustrated if possible, and qualify, not only for a prize of a Field Guide in the next issue, but for the Grand Jubilee prize as well.

The story must be of a current original nature observation written in not less than 350 words, and preferably not more than 500 words. Any school

Sharptails' Dancing Ground

by Darcy Wershler, Age 15
Grade 10, Yorkton Collegiate

Those who have ever witnessed the strange dance of that sly woodland forager, the Sharp-tailed Grouse can imagine the thrill that I received as I watched this unique performance one warm spring evening.

As I was walking through the willows which border a nearby slough, I was startled by a sudden whir of wings and the form of a "chicken" dodging through the trees ahead of me. This sudden, unexpected break in the stillness of the evening cautioned, and I crept slowly to a nearby clearing in the willows, but without further incident. I heard a fluttering sound to my right, and as I crept to the ridge and peered through the grass I recoiled in surprise. There, not more than fifty feet ahead of me were six Sharp-tailed Grouse; a seventh, which I took as their sentinel, was perched on a nearby knoll.

I took special interest in the pair of birds nearest me. The one which in my perception was the cock, had his head feathers ruffled up, his tail stiff, and his wings spread at the sides. His head was poised as he suddenly "rushed forward, and went through a series of the weirdest antics, high-lighted by a series of soft utterances and a grotesque leap into the air.

At this moment I sneezed, and the startled birds without hesitation took

to the air. I was disappointed that I could not have witnessed more of this strange act, yet I left the clearing with "a sweet taste in my mouth", considering how fortunate I was to see what I did see that evening.

The Thief

by Jack Dayman, Age 14
Grade 9, Botha Junior High School,
Alberta.

The magpies are quite a menace around our farm as we found out last spring. My mother had about 30 young turkeys in pens a little way from the house. They were doing fine for a few days, then Mom noticed that nearly half of them were gone. We kept pretty close watch on them from then on. Then one day while I was walking to the chicken house, I heard a loud squeaking. I looked around and saw a magpie carrying a little turkey away. I thought fast, wound up, and threw the orange I was about to eat at the intruder. Fortunately for the magpie, the orange missed and hit the chicken house, splattering all over. The magpie must have been frightened because it dropped the turkey and made a hasty retreat. I went and picked up the very frightened turkey and put it with its mother. The magpies never got any more turkeys that year.

Boys' and Girls' Section

student may enter. Send your name, address, age, grade and school to the editor, L. T. Carmichael, 1077 Garnet St., Regina.

A choice of Peterson's Field Guides (birds, mammals or butterflies) or Wherry's "Wild Flower Guide," plus a subscription to the "Blue Jay," will be given as a prize for the best story received for each issue. When submitting your story, please indicate your choice of prize.

The deadline for the reception of material for the next issue will be July 15.

The prize winner for this issue is Darcy Wershler, of Yorkton Collegiate Institute. The prize is donated by L. T. Carmichael, Regina.

The Flight of The Queen Ants

by Roxby Hughes, Age 10
Grade 4, Simpson School, Yorkton

Once in the summer of 1951 I was going to the City Dairy on Laurier Ave. in Yorkton, when I saw a flight of Royal (Queen) Ants. There were about twenty-five of them with wings. They were coming out of a crack in the sidewalk. About forty-five little black ants were watching them. These ants didn't have wings. The winged ants flew up, though a large tree hid them. It was surprising, although I did not know what they were doing until this year when we took up about ants in school. I was watching them for quite a little while and was frightened because I thought they were going to fly up and bite me.

From my own observations since, I believe that black ants cannot bite. Whenever I have picked them up they have not bitten me. Red ants will bite nearly every time when I pick them up. This year I am planning to watch the flight of the royal ants again.

Who Are They?

Mrs. John Hubbard
Grenfell, Sask.

Among the most interesting and colorful of our Canadian birds are the Sparrows. And I don't mean the English or House Sparrow who isn't related to our American Sparrows.



In the December issue of Blue Jay I described four of this family, the colorful little Redpoll, the larger Evening and Pine Grosbeaks and that wanderer of winter storms, the Snow Bunting.

Conical bills (cone shaped) are one of the best points in picking out sparrows.

A few can be easily recognized by their bright coloration as the brilliant gold, black and white Goldfinch, and the black Lark Bunting with its white wing patch. These are the colorations of the male; the female colours are modified in both cases, and the female Lark Bunting is a drab brown stripet creature.

But there are a myriad of sparrows all of the same "stripe", woody browns, striped on the back, some