

Nature's Schoolhouse

Boys and girls, you still have an opportunity, not only of winning a valuable nature book each issue, but of being the proud winner of the Grand Prize in the **BLUE JAY STORY CONTEST**, which ends during the Jubilee Celebrations next July.

And here is the news that you have been waiting for. The Grand Prize, being donated by the celebrated Canadian naturalist, Dick Bird, of Bird Films, Regina, will be a Balda 2¼ x 3¼ eight-exposure folding camera with F - 4.5 lens. This camera is a famous German make, valued at approximately \$50.00. The winner will be the envy of amateurs and professionals alike.

Here is all you have to do to win a story of one of your nature book for less than 500 words. Write your name, address, age, grade and name of school. Send to: Carmichael, 1077 Garfield St., Regina, Sask.

A choice of Peterborough "Nature Guide," plus a subscription to the "Nature Guide" will be given as a prize for each issue. The judges may award a prize to the winner. When submitting your entry, please include a choice of prize. The drawing will be held on the material for the next issue.

A Few Wild Flowers

By ELIZABETH HUBBARD, Age 11
Grade 7, McPherson School, Grenfell

Though many wild flowers were not out until late in May, I saw the first pussy willows on March 13th.

One of the most common prairie flowers is the prairie crocus which was out in early May. We had many crocuses in the school yard, but many were killed when the grass was burned.

Prairie buttercups are one of the first flowers out. The plant with its small yellow flower and oval leaves is hard to find. It grows in pastures where the grass is short.

Early cinquefoil grows in much the same places as the prairie buttercup. It is a small yellow flower with a dash of orange in the centre. The leaves are green on top and grey underneath. It grows flat on our lawn.

The golden pea was out early this year. It can grow in many places. It grows in the clay spots behind our house. Nothing else grows there.

Early blue violets grow in woody places by sloughs. In early May I found them four times their usual size. The Western Canada violet grows in shady spots. It is a white or light blue flower with a dot of yellow

in the centre. It has a small flower and big heart-shaped leaves, getting smaller near the top. It was out on July 10th.

Dandelions are one of the most common weeds. They grow everywhere this year. Their seeds are spread by small parachutes attached to the seed.

Field chickweed grows in pastures. It is a small white flower with thin leaves. It grows in late May, June and July.

Bluebells grow from 4 to 18 inches high. They have thin stems and a bell-shaped flower.

Cowslips have orange flowers. The plant grows from seven inches to one foot high. It has hairy leaves shaped like willow leaves.

Slender fleabane is a flower about half an inch across. It has a yellow centre and a white outside. It grows a foot high.

There are not so many western red lilies this year for many have been drowned out. The lily, a bright red flower, is Saskatchewan's floral emblem.

Boys' & Girls' Section

do: Write an original observations. Confine Send your name, address to the editor, L. T. t., Regina.

Field Guides (birds, or Wherry's "Flower n to the "Blue Jay" or the best story re- their discretion the al additional prizes. y, please indicate your e for the reception of e will be October 15.

Prize Winners — The essays submitted for this issue were judged by Mrs. Mary Houston and Mr. Cliff Shaw, both of Yorkton. The results are as follows:

1st Prize — "Furry Boarders," by Wilma Aim, donated by Mr. Cliff Shaw.

2nd Prize — "A Few Wild Flowers," by Elizabeth Hubbard, Grenfell, donated by Miss Margaret Belcher, Dilke.

3rd Prize — "An Evening's Experience," by Anne Matthews, Nipawin, donated by Mrs. Stuart Houston, Yorkton.

Yellow Rails

RONALD HOOPER, Somme, Sask.

On June the first my brother and I went to a large marsh, at the confluence of the Bowman and Shand Creeks, seven miles north of Weeks. The water was up to three feet deep, and there was a heavy cover of dry sedges. Here we found an abundance of Wilson's Phalaropes, Short-billed Marsh Wrens, Soras, Bitterns, Bobolinks and Wilson's Snipe — but, most interesting of all, we heard a strange ticking noise: "Tick-tick, Tick-tick-tick, tick-tick, tick-tick-tick, tick-tick, tick-tick-tick" in syllables of twos and threes. The notes of the three syllables were uttered more rapidly than those of the two. It was of the same tone you would get by tapping two stones together. We wondered if it could be the Yellow Rail. Search as we did we could not catch sight of the strange ticker.

On June the eighth, we returned to the marsh. I heard the ticking quite near me, so I went to a thick clump of dry sedges and felt around in it, when behold! — a yellowish bird with black markings and white wing-

bars flew out from under my hand. It flew with rapid beats of its short wings, rather fast for a rail.

It is interesting that God has made creatures that man is seldom able to see, even though He is the head of created things. At least Yellow Rails will not come to the fate of the Whooping Crane by being shot by man. We must take care that we do not seriously effect the abundance of such water birds by the draining of our marshes.

Furry Boarders

(Continued from page 15)

task of packing the large door of the barn shut with straw and hay. This they would carry in their mouths and pack it firmly with their paws. As soon as the door was opened the packing would fall away, but this did not daunt them and they would begin again.

On the first warm spring day, the family left as quietly as it had come. We looked for them back this winter, but they did not appear; apparently they have forgotten us. At any rate, we haven't forgotten them.

An Evenings Experience

By ANNE MATTHEWS, Age 14, Grade 10, Nipawin Composite High School

One evening my mother, dad, brother and I packed our 35 mm. camera and equipment in the car and headed for a slough northeast of Nipawin. What were we going to do? Why, look for birds' nests, of course!

Soon we arrived at the slough. Rubber boots were on. The first problem was to get across the ditch which was almost full of water. Finally we found a narrow place and all jumped across safely.

The first few minutes were uneventful except for getting our feet wet. You see, the water was soon deep enough to go over our rubber boots. By this time we had scattered and were all looking in different places.

Red-winged Blackbirds were singing their "o-kee-ree" from all over the marsh. Quite often we would stop to look for a nest when a striped female Red-wing would fly up.

Suddenly we saw a bird fly up from among the bullrushes. At first sight it looked to be a female Red-wing. We looked for a nest nearby and soon we came upon a floating structure. In it were thirteen buff eggs speckled with brown. This was something different from any nest we had seen before. We set up the camera and tripod and soon had the picture taken. If only it should turn out well.

We were still not satisfied because we had not identified the resident of this elevated platform.

Walking on through the slough we came upon a Red-winged Blackbird's nest. In it were four blue eggs, spotted, blotched and scrawled with brown. The nest was made of grasses which were woven in among the reeds to form a basket-like nest. Soon we had a picture of it. More wading brought us upon two more Red-wing's nests containing eggs and one with four young birds. They were too young to band, however.

Farther on up the marsh another bird flew up. It was soon identified

as a Sora Rail. Was it of the same species as the other had been? It was! There was its nest which was the same as the other. This nest contained eleven eggs. Well, that mystery was solved.

Dusk was coming on, so we decided that it was time to go home. Back at the car, off came rubber boots and on went shoes. What if we did have wet feet? It was worth it!

Saskatchewan Forests

Kathleen O'Drowski, Age 13
Moose Run School, Torch River, Sask

Saskatchewan's forests are rich and green,

*As green as green can be.
Forest fires make them black—
A dreadful sight to see.*

I love to walk through spruce and pine

*And tamarac straight and tall.
They are so nice alive and green
But fire destroys them all.*

Saskatchewan's timber makes our homes,

*Our homes so snug and warm
Fire leaves animals no homes at all
No shelter in a storm.*

Saskatchewan's forests are nice and green

*Let's keep them all that way!
Be careful of a match and fires
Safety will always pay!*

How pleasant the life of a bird must be,

Skimming about on the breezy sea,
Cresting the billows like silvery foam,
Then wheeling away to its cliff-built home!

What joy it must be to sail, upborne
By a strong, free wing, through the rosy morn!

To meet the young sun, face to face,
And pierce, like a shaft, the boundless space!

—Mary Howitt.