

## Nature's Schoolhouse

**Editor's Note:** In each issue of the **Blue Jay** we offer a prize for the best original nature story or observation. The story should contain less than 500 words. Place your name, age, address, grade and school on your story and send it to The Editor of the **Blue Jay**, 2335 Athol Street, Regina. The winner may choose as prize one of the **Peterson's Field Guides** (birds, mammals or insects) OR a **Wherry's Flower Guide**. Entries for the next issue must be in by January 15, 1957.

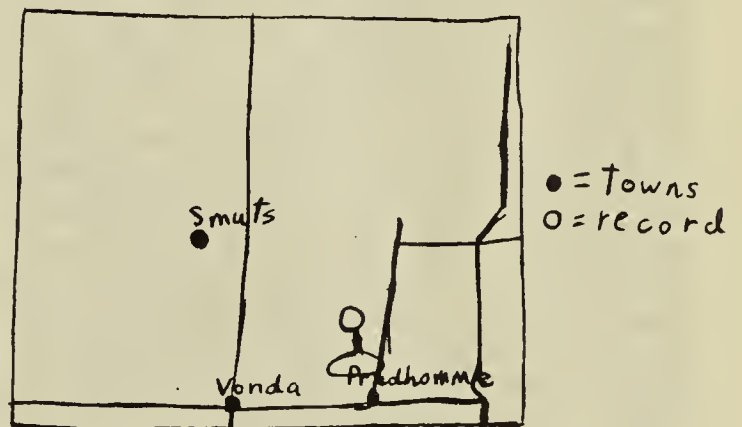
Fay Johnsen, Archerwill, Saskatchewan won a **Field Guide to the Birds** for her prize winning story, "The Everton School Bird Sanctuary" which was printed in the September issue of the **Blue Jay**. This month the prize goes to Robert Buhr of Dalmeny High School for his field observations of the Whistling Swans which stopped in his district during their 1956 spring migration.



Agnes Dobryden's Snow Goose "Hoosha," is the subject of Agnes Dobryden's story. Agnes is 15 and in Grade 10 at Sanford, Manitoba. She tells how this goose was found in the spring of 1950 with an injured wing. Since then it has lived in the farmyard. Agnes says that it is an interesting pet.

The following map was sent in by Donald Karasiuk, Prince Albert to show where he saw a pair of the rare Black-throated Blue Warbler on July 5, 1956 near Prud'homme, Sask. Donald says "the male was unmistakable." The record is, however, always more valuable if you make notes on the appearance and actions

of the bird when you see it. Donald did not apparently enter this observation with the idea of winning the prize for he did not give any of the particulars required in the contest. Donald's map and observations show originality and accuracy and we hope he will compete for our prize in 1957.



Map showing location of record

### Prize-winning Story

#### INTERESTING GUESTS

By ROBERT BUHR, Mennon, Sask.  
Age 15, Grade 10

On the sixth of May of this year, two very interesting birds were seen west of Mennon. When I was first told of two large white birds on a sizable slough west of here, I immediately went to see them. They turned out to be a pair of Whistling Swans.

They were swimming in a slough of about a half-mile or more in length and a quarter of a mile in width with the depth being about



four or five feet at the deepest. The area around the slough was quite open with only a narrow strip of low vegetation surrounding it.

It was also interesting to watch them take to the air which they did in the grand manner. They "ran" heavily on the water directly into the wind beating the air laboriously with their powerful wings; then as they slowly lifted they began flying more gracefully and in full flight flew swiftly.

The next day, May seventh, I returned. There were now two more swans making a total of four. They were rather wary but by careful stalking and imitating their call I not only got quite close but had them cautiously swimming in my direction. They were, however, soon at ease, stretching their wings, swishing water over their backs and making a lot of noise in general.

By May ninth the flock on the slough had increased to twenty birds. Also about this time individual birds and small groups of swans were appearing throughout the district. By the tenth of May, four days after the first birds were seen, the main flock west of Mennon had increased to forty-five swans and remained about that size all the time they were here. They were, by this time, fairly well spread throughout the district on various sloughs as well as the main large one west of Mennon. There was also a flock of Whistling Swans at Hepburn about six miles north of here.

About this time three swans were swimming on a slough about fifty yards from one house. They did not, however, remain more than a few hours.

One day, about three weeks later during a high wind, the entire flock left: Not only the main flock left but also all the other birds throughout the entire district because no one saw a single swan after that.

During the course of the three weeks almost every one in this district had a chance to see the swans with a few people coming from nearby Dalmeny as well. Everyone who saw these birds was impressed, and I for one certainly hope to see more of these magnificent birds in the future.

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