

## BOYS' AND GIRLS' SECTION



Goldfinch on saskatoon branch

by Agnes Dobryden 16,  
Sanford, Man.



Barn Swallow

by Gregory Schulte, 14,  
Marysburg, Sask.



Blue Jay

by Dan Pawliviak  
10, Square Hill, S.

### Comments and Prize Winners

The prize-winning letter this issue is by Sam Beckie who writes about spider eggs. Sam arouses our interest with his opening sentence and then goes on to tell us what can be found under first base. His own interest and curiosity led to his investigations; having a magnifying glass and reference books available helped him in making his observations. The result was a good story. Sam's teacher, Mrs. Doshen, receives a prize as well for sending in a prize winning entry from her school.

The drawing of a Pigeon Hawk by Herbert Hlady is the prize-winning drawing. Herbert has done a drawing which isn't labored or tight and yet he has captured the likeness of the bird and made it look alive. This is good observation plus good drawing.

We like having comments like Kathy Skinner's which are not intended for the contest but are good

observations worth publishing. "Saskatchewan Mice" is another contribution which wasn't entered in the contest but does make good reading.

Parts of Linda's "Woodland Symphony" are quite good, particularly where she tells about a "mystic woodland pool". Perhaps this poem could have been shortened to advantage and Linda can keep this in mind when writing again. Put everything down, then go through it and see if parts of it are not quite as good as the rest. This is a good suggestion for story writers as well. Sometime the best writers are those who have cut the most of their stories.

Several of the stories sent in were much too long for publication. Remember the 500 word limit and remember to keep to the topic. Most important of all, keep sending in contributions and be sure to tell us about first-hand observations which you yourself have made.

### CONTEST RULES

1. Entries must be first-hand observations in the form of letters, stories, poems, black-and-white sketches, or photographs. Letters and stories should not exceed 500 words.

2. All entries must be accompanied by the name, age, and address of the sender, and the name of his or her school.

3. Entries should be addressed Boys' and Girls' Section, *Blue Jay*, 2335 Athol St., Regina. The closing date for the next issue of the *Blue Jay* is October 15.

4. This contest is open to any young person.

5. Entries from students may be sent in by the teacher or by the students themselves.

6. Teachers who send in entries from their pupils also qualify for a prize. One teacher will be chosen

each time from among those who have sent in prize-winning entries from their pupils.

**PRIZES:** Prizes will be donated by the Saskatchewan Natural History Society. Three prizes will be awarded to student entries each issue, provided they are of prize-winning standard. The prize-winners are to select their prize from the following list of books: The Peterson Field Guide series (birds, butterflies, mammals, rocks and minerals, trees and shrubs, amphibians and reptiles, ferns, animal tracks), Budd's *Wild Plants of the Canadian Prairies*, *Photography for Teenagers*, or a year's subscription to *Canadian Nature*.

## Observations at a Beaver Dam

By MARGARET SCHICK, age 13, Lorie, Sask.

One warm June afternoon our class went out on a nature hike to the nearby Pheasant Creek. We were to look for examples of mammals, reptiles, insects and other wildlife subjects. On a roadside slough we saw such ducks as the Blue-winged Teal, Pintail and Scaups all in neighbourly company. Gulls darted nervously over a weedy slough. A Mourning Dove cooed plaintively as we neared its home.

We finally arrived at the beaver dam. The beavers use mud and sticks to build it so strong that a person can walk over it. A good reservoir of water is held back to provide excellent habitat for many birds and animals. Large trees have been cut down, some quite recently to provide their food. Unlike the rabbit who chews the bark off in a ring and leaves the tree to die, the beaver uses the whole tree, cutting it into shorter lengths to store away for later use. There was a small shallow over-flow pool where the little fish were sunning themselves on the rocks. We caught snails, bloodsuckers, a baby fish and other things. The Blue Heron rose slowly into the air with

long legs stretched out behind him. We heard a Red-winged Blackbird whistling from the top of a high tree. There was a catbird, canary and kingbird singing. In the distance we could hear a noise like a far away tractor starting up. We came to the conclusion that it was a prairie chicken drumming on his hollow log.

Further up the creek we saw another dam. Along the water's edge we found many strange water plants. Two snakes slid away in the grass.

About three o'clock we climbed a hill with our crayons and paper under our arms. In the next half hour we made an outline sketch of the scenery. It was hard to put the wonders of nature on paper. We were all sorry to leave for the school but we had enjoyed a full afternoon of nature.

**NOTE:** The "Canary" which Margaret refers to is more properly called a Goldfinch. Canaries are not native to this province. The "Prairie Chicken" drumming on a hollow log is more than likely a Ruffed Grouse so called because of the black feathers on either side of its breast which it spreads out when performing its mating dance. The true "Prairie Chicken" is extremely rare if not completely non-existent in this province.

## More Squirrel Comments

By Kathy Skinner, age 14 Indian Head, Sask.

(see Kathy's story in the *Blue Jay*, March, 1957)

My family and I were very interested in your note, after my story. An interesting fact is that there were no squirrels in this valley in 1882. When my grandfather settled here, there were so many that they were considered pests, for they chewed the grain-sacks and binder canvases to line their nests.

In the coulees during the winter, we often see mushrooms up in tree crotches, where the squirrels have stored them! Our squirrel is seen eating maple and ash seeds quite often. This time of year they eat buds and lick the sap off the bark.

Our little friend Squikker, whom I wrote about, is a female. We thought she was a he! Lately she has lost the bright red color of her coat, and it has become rather dull and shabby. The other day we noticed that there were six little buttons on her vest! Six little babies! We really hope that she brings them down to visit us later on!