

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!