

Boys' and Girls' Section

The following two essays have been selected as the winners for the final stage of the Jubilee Essay Contest. The donors of the prizes selected by the competitors will be Mr. Frank Roy, Saskatoon and Mr. Jack Shaver, Regina.

The judges have not yet been able to determine the grand winner of the \$50 camera. After consultation with Mr. Dick Bird, of Bird Films, Regina, the winner will be selected and the announcement made in the fall issue of the Blue Jay.

Feathered Neighbors

By ANNE MATTHEWS, Age 15,
Nipawin

Have you ever watched a Sparrow Hawk, high in the air, watching with its sharp eyes for the slightest movement of a mouse in the grass? It is wonderful that they can hover so motionless with only the tips of their wings moving:

Last year a pair of Sparrow Hawks found a nest box we had beside the house. Every day an egg was laid until there were five and the parents then sat on them for weeks. Finally, five scrawny youngsters replaced the eggs and the old birds could be seen all over the farm, hunting so their babies could survive. Within a few days an almost indescribable smell from the remains of mice and gophers filled the box.

When the young hawks were feathered we brought them down from the nest to band them and to take a picture. Oh, what a time we had! As soon as one was put on the ground it fluttered away and it was some time before the five were close enough together for a good picture.

Soon after they began to fly my brother caught one in the field and brought it home. It stayed all day and we fed it pieces of meat. Towards evening it flew away.

This year another pair of Sparrow Hawks have a family in a box, forty-five feet up in our tower. There are only three young birds this time. The parent hawks work in shifts of about two hours. One will be seen flying to the nest and it will alight on the perch on the box. It will enter the box as soon as the other comes out.

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The Sapsucker

By VALERIE JOHNSON, Age 13,
Sturgis, Sask.

One day during the late cold spring last year, I came home from school and was told that there was a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker around in the trees. I was very glad because I had never seen a living sapsucker.

It was interesting to watch the sapsucker pecking on the trees. After he had left a tree you could see all the little holes on the trunk.

Toward evening the sapsucker came and perched on the side of the porch. From a distance he looked like a clump of mud which had been thrown against the wall. We could get a very good look at the sapsucker for you could get near enough to touch him. The bird tucked his head under his wing and went to sleep on the wall.

After a while he flew away and pecked at a few more trees.

In the evening the sapsucker came, and much to our surprise, flew into the porch, and perched himself high on the rafters of the roof, where he spent the night.

During the following day the sapsucker flew around and pecked on trees. Maple trees seemed his favorites. In the evening, my mother, my sister and I were standing by the doorway on the porch watching the sapsucker. He was flying around trying to get into the porch, but we were there. Suddenly, he alighted on my pant leg. He stayed there a minute and then flew into the porch.

The next morning the sapsucker didn't do much, he just sat huddled against the house wall. After a

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The Colored Hills

By RAY PETERSON, R.R. 2, Tofield, Alberta

In time to a steady drumming of thunder a grey host of rain clouds marched steadily across the sky. A light breeze sprang up, fanning a delightful coolness into the air.

"Let's go for a short walk, anyway," Kathryn said, glancing at the restless sky. "A bit of rain won't hurt us."

Full of enthusiasm, we left the yard. We crossed a piece of shortly-cropped pasture and entered a meadow of shoulder-high slough grass. Bright green, and topped with heavy seed plumes, the grass throbbed to the gentle crooning of the wind. On a nearby pond a pair of coots bobbed erratically over the water. Their dark forms blending with the cloud-shadowed water, they seemed to be living symbols of the approaching storm.

Our path climbed from the meadowland to a low ridge. We turned for a moment. The hayfield we had just left looked like a huge carpet subtly tinted and patterned with the varying greens of different varieties of grasses. In the background rose the rolling contours of a field cloaked in the purple of countless alfalfa blossoms.

We walked on, stopping to pick a sample of fleabane daisies and a few early asters. In a small pothole was found a large clump of Arrowhead. A cluster of their graceful leaves and a spray of their pretty white flowers joined our growing bouquet of wild flowers.

We topped another rise and another meadow spread below us, green with the lush growth of timothy and redtop and ornamented at the far end with a golden wealth of sweet clover. From the south, sweeping down to the grassland, tumbled the dark green slopes of bush-covered hills. Marking the boundaries of woods and meadow, a glowing red ribbon of fireweed painted its bright message that from the ashes of an old life, a new life can be created. On the north side, a series of open sidehills blushed prettily with Indian paint brush in full bloom.

From a distance the Indian paint brush offered a general rose coloring, but on closer inspection a vast range of soft colors could be picked out. We revelled in the many shades of pink and rose. Occasionally, there were clumps of beautiful cerise and clusters of salmon. Much rarer were white flowers and one plant was found with green heads tipped with flecks of maroon.

The muttering of the thunder had grown into a great bass voice pouring out an ample warning of the coming rain. Birds and other wildlife had apparently taken its heeding early for our glimpses of Nature's folk were very scarce. Reluctantly we arced gradually for home.

Our short Sunday walk was at an end. As we entered the house and the first drops of rain began their liquid tattoo on the roof, we shared a thought in common. Nature is of God's creation and in respecting and admiring her — His handicraft, surely we gain knowledge of the Artist, himself.

FEATHERED NEIGHBORS

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Often the hawks will seem to fly for the sheer delight of flying. The pair climb high into the air together and glide down, wings motionless.

As I write this I can see a Barn Swallow flying near the male hawk. The swallow is just daring him to come near its nest. They circle, climbing higher and higher, until they are almost out of sight. Suddenly, the hawk darts toward the earth, the swallow close behind. Soon they separate and each flies its own way. The hawk zooms low over the windbreak and a Kingbird, uttering its alarm note, darts frantically at the Sparrow Hawk. The hawk flies higher and the Kingbird goes back to its nest.

Soon the three young birds will be big enough to band and then it won't be long until we see them flying with their parents.

We hope the Sparrow Hawks will return again next year and raise another family in one of our nest boxes.