

NATURE'S SCHOOLHOUSE

Editor's Note:

The judges take pleasure in awarding a prize to Miss Fay Johnsen, Grade VIII, Everton School, Archerwill, Sask. Her story plainly shows not only that she has learned her nature lessons well, but also that Everton School is in many ways a true "nature schoolhouse." Thank you, Fay, for telling us how to attract birds to the school and how to appreciate them.

In addition to the story from Fay Johnsen I have received eight other stories from students. I am very sorry that we cannot print all of them and give a prize for each. They are all good and the judges found it difficult to make a selection of one best story. Gail Bernard, age 8, Grade 3, Abbott School, wrote about Petunia. Valerie Johnson, Sturgis, tells about the nest and young of the Coot. John Evans of Vermilion, Alberta, describes Avocets and their nests. Kathleen O'Drowski, Prince George, B.C., tells of a Black Bear that prowled in the night. Joyanne Polson watches the development of a family of Barn Swallows. Sheila Mess studies tadpoles. Audrey Roberts and George Mess describe the nesting of a Robin and a House Wren.

The last four young people all go to Cut Arm School, Bredenbury. Their teacher writes that all of her pupils are interested in nature and in the **Blue Jay** and that she is extremely grateful to the Yorkton School Unit which provides each school in the unit with a subscription to the **Blue Jay**.

The student writing the best story each issue wins one of the valuable Field Guides (birds, butterflies, mammals, or flowers). The story should not contain more than 500 words. Sketches in black ink on separate pieces of paper may be sent in to illustrate your story. If you do not have a story ready for the next issue, write and tell us what you would like to see in our Nature's Schoolhouse or send us a pen and ink sketch of your favorite bird or animal. Stories for the next issue should be sent in to the Editor of the **Blue Jay**, 2335 Athol St., Regina, not later than October 15, 1956.

Prize Winning Story:

THE EVERTON SCHOOL BIRD SANCTUARY

By Fay Johnsen, Archerwill, Sask.

Quite a few years ago, the pupils and teacher of Everton School started improving the school grounds. They planted small spruce trees all around the edge of the school grounds. In front of the school we now have a nice spruce hedge with a trellis in the center. We are planning on planting vines over the trellis this summer. In each side of the hedge we have a bird bath.

All along the front fence we have bird-houses. A pair of bluebirds come and nest in one of the houses every year. Many other kinds come, too; for example, we have wrens, different kinds of sparrows, and Barn Swallows. Last summer we had a pair of Tree Swallows nest in one bird house. They were so tame that we could get up to within two and a half feet from them.

We are very proud of the little phoebes that come every year and make their nest inside the school porch. They have two sets of eggs each year and when the little birds hatch out, all the pupils like to sit in the school and watch them.

Honourable Mention:

PETUNIA

By Gail Bernard, Trossachs, Sask.

My brothers and I were driving past a granary. We saw a lot of little skunks. Then one of my brothers went and got a pail. He put the pail over a little skunk. Another one of my brothers picked up a skunk and got sprayed. Then I ran and got Mom. She got the skunk that was under the pail and took it to the house. It didn't smell a bit.

We put our skunk in a box and called him Petunia. We fed him bread soaked in milk. He drank like a cat. He was soon tame and we played with him like a kitten. He followed us all around and was glad to see us when we got home, he made a squeaky noise. At night he slept with the kittens. One night Dad put him in the cellar. In the morning he was gone.