

HORNED LARK

By DOUG GILROY



Photo by Doug Gilroy

Each February the Horned-Lark returns to the Southern Prairies and even though the countryside is still locked in the grip of winter their coming seems to bring a spring glow to the atmosphere.

We know that the return migration of our summer birds is beginning to take form and only in a matter of a few short weeks we will thrill to the song of the robin, the liquid call of the Meadowlark and even the harsh Caw! Caw! of the old black crow.

There are several forms of the Horned-Lark and the one in the picture incubating her eggs is the Desert Horned-Lark which is the species that inhabits the Southern Prairies.

Prairie Perfumes

By Mrs. W. KEYTE, Pollockville, Alta.

Over twenty years ago I was told that there is little perfume on the Prairie; actually there appear to be many scented flowers. Surely nothing is sweeter than the fragrance of the thorny pink June rose and its not-so-prickly shell-pink companion, unless it is that of the crimson-flecked creamy-pink rose of the grain fields and roadsides, which blooms late in July or early August.

In spring the sweetness of the golden Buffalo Bean rivals that of

a flowering bean field. The Northern Bedstraw has a sleepy fragrance in the warm sun which contrasts pleasantly with the sharp aromatic freshness of the ever-present sages.

A clean, tangy odour is released from the peppermints, as man or beast move on the edge of a slough or along the coulee banks. The delicate lily-like fragrance of the Prairie Onion flower is there, although it is easily masked by the pungent smell of its crushed leaves.

Flowers such as the Early Loco-weed are admittedly more pleasant than a "beau-pot" indoors. The Linear-leaves Puccoon gives generously of its rather heady perfume. Canadian and wavy-leaved thistles have a light honey-like sweetness, which, while similar, is accentuated in the rich, spicy aroma broadcast by the tiny yellow flowers of the Wolf-willow. Many of the vetches have a gentle sweet-pea-like perfume, and all the clovers hang out richly scented banners to attract the bees.

The gay little Butterfly Weed has an unusual but not unpleasant odour, while about three o'clock on a morning in late June, a drifting sweetness arises from the tangled masses of the White Evening Primrose, but after dusk is the best time to catch the faint fragrance of its stiffly erect yellow cousin.

The less said about the stale, unpleasant odours of the Blue Burr, Indian Pink and Stinkweed the better, but the delicate "echo" of the attar of roses which one finds in the long-headed Coneflower, is perhaps the most surprising of perfumes on the prairie.

Most of the wild fruit trees are sweet-scented and well loved by the bees. These are, of course, not all of the perfumed flowers, but for good measure perhaps one should add other delightful smells; the unforgettable indescribable scent of the first spring day, of melting snow, bursting buds, rain after drought, freshly turned earth, cattle drifting across green pastures, new-mown hay — and if fall comes kindly, a bonfire in a garden or a burning straw stump.

Next to no perfume on the prairie! How wrong one can be!

Adventures with a Porcupine

By DOROTHY DURR, Bromhead, Sask.

It was several days past Christmas, as I wrote this, and the Dirt Hills to our south-west are whitely outlined with the bit of snow that fell on Christmas evening. The day here, eight miles from the U.S. Boundary, was a "Black Christmas," if there ever was one. Too, it is cold, and I wonder how our little spiny "friends" are faring.

In November, while the cattle were still ranging over the combined fields, one morning, as they were being watered before being turned out, it was noticed that several of them had a "frosty" appearance on their faces. On closer examination, the "frost" turned to porcupine quills! We knew there was a plague of porkers — but hardly expected this. The affected animals turned out to be a spring calf, his mother, a mildly interested yearling and the old herd leader, from whose face over 100 quills were finally removed. And that was not all — each front leg was speared with at least as many!

The dequilling process was ac-

complished by snubbing up each animal tightly, and using the ever handy tool of the farmer, mechanic pliers. As nearly as we could reconstruct the story, the calf must have met the porcupine first, and got slapped, out of curiosity. His mother and the other old cow must have come in haste to the rescue. The mother wasn't in too bad a state, but the lead cow is a belligerent old gal and must have charged the cause of the trouble and struck repeatedly with her fore-feet, until she, too, was driven off. A neighbor, afterwards, told us of hearing a cow bawl as if in pain, throughout the night.

We are still wondering if it could be the same porcupine, or merely a vengeful relative, which was run over and shaved by the swather, early in combining time. That is a story in itself, but no electric razor ever did a better job, than that swather sickle did on that luckless porcupine. I wonder how fast quills grow, anyway! The ones the calves tangled with couldn't have had too many left either!