

Boys' and Girls' Section

EDITOR'S NOTE: We welcome to the editorial staff of the *Blue Jay*, Miss Joyce Dew of the Museum Extension Services who has consented to take charge of the Boys' and Girls' Section in 1957. Our grown-up readers, as well as the officers and directors of our society, have felt for some time that we should expand this department of the magazine in order to give more space and more encouragement to contributions from our younger readers. With the co-operation of all these young people and the helpful direction of Miss Dew, we look forward to many more pages of stories and sketches telling us what most interests you in the world of nature.

New Contest for All Young Readers!!!

A new contest has been especially planned for all young readers of the **Blue Jay**. Read the rules and the long list of books offered as prizes, and then keep your eyes open for interesting things that you can record with your camera or in your sketch book, or that you can tell others about in a poem or story.

HERE ARE THE 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 to Boys' and Girls' Section, **Blue Jay**, 2335 Athol St., Regina. The closing date for the next issue of the **Blue Jay** is April 15.

4. This contest is open to any young person. If you send in something good that we feel is of adult level we will print it elsewhere in the **Blue Jay**.

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) **Wherry's Flower Guide** **Photography for Teenagers**, or year's subscription to **Canadian Nature**.

Note: The prize last issue was donated by Mrs. H. Newton, Indian Head, Sask.

PRIZE-WINNING STORY:

Our Friend the Red Squirrel

By KATHY SKINNER, 14, Indian Head, Sask.

Late last February, when we had lots of snow, a little squirrel was seen quite often in the pine trees next to our home. As squirrel food was scarce about then, we put out a few nuts for the little fellow. Before long, he would sit on the back fence and eat nuts, right in front of us!

After he got quite used to seeing us in his daily visits we would kneel outside motionless, with a few nuts in our hand. Squikker, as we called him, would stretch himself out flat on his stomach, and hop right up to

us, grab a nut and bound away.

He gradually got used to this type of feeding, and every day he would show up to be fed. You could place a nut on your shoulder, and he would climb up your arm, sniffing all the time, get the nut and run. After about three months Squikker would come into the house, sit on the table to eat nuts, getting up by means of a chair. He would even run through all the rooms, ending up running from one end to the other of the piano playing a tune.

But suddenly, in the middle of

July, he stopped coming to see us. We were quite worried for fear that a cat had gotten him. There was an abundance of berries and wild hazel nuts in the bushes at that time. No doubt he had a sufficient amount of food. Would he return with a family or would he return at all?

Little Squikker didn't show up till after harvest in October. Mom had just stepped out the back door one morning when she felt something scurry across her feet. She looked down and there was Squikker the squirrel. He was fatter and a more brilliant red color than ever. With his bushy little tail curled up over his back there he sat waiting for some nuts. After giving the house a tour of inspection and running

along the keys of the piano he came back into the kitchen for lunch. He wasn't at all scared as we expected him to be after his long absence. Since then Squikker has continued to visit us at least four times a week.

Our little squirrel is one of the most interesting pets you can find. It is most amusing to watch him haul chunks of suet much larger than himself up into a tree to park them until needed. His favorite nuts are filberts, though he refused to eat peanuts.

Yes, we enjoy our little friend, especially when he sits up in front of the window with his little fore paws folded over his fat little tummy, chattering to let us know he is visiting.

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NOTE: Kathy's letter has raised several interesting points. She mentioned that there was an abundance of hazel nuts for the squirrel to eat when he disappeared during the summer. Ernest Thompson Seton in writing about this mammal makes the following statement, "The Red-squirrel is above all things a cone eater. He is specialized to live on resinous cones; and where there are no cones, there we shall find no Red-squirrels." Seton was certainly an excellent naturalist and one whose books are well worth reading, but the above quotation points out the necessity on our part for critical reading and making careful observations of our own. Speaking in general terms Seton was right, for the majority of our Red Squirrels do feed principally on cones, but there are a few rather noticeable exceptions to the rule since some of these mammals live in parts of the Qu'Appelle Valley where there are no coniferous trees.

Another good observation of Kathy's is the seasonal change in color of the pelage which the Red Squirrel undergoes.

For general information we might add that the squirrel is of considerable economic importance to some of our northern inhabitants. Squirrel pelts sold in this province bring a total of \$800,000 a year with over 6,000 trappers harvesting them. This harvest takes place principally in the mixed wood areas of our province.

The Pine Grosbeak

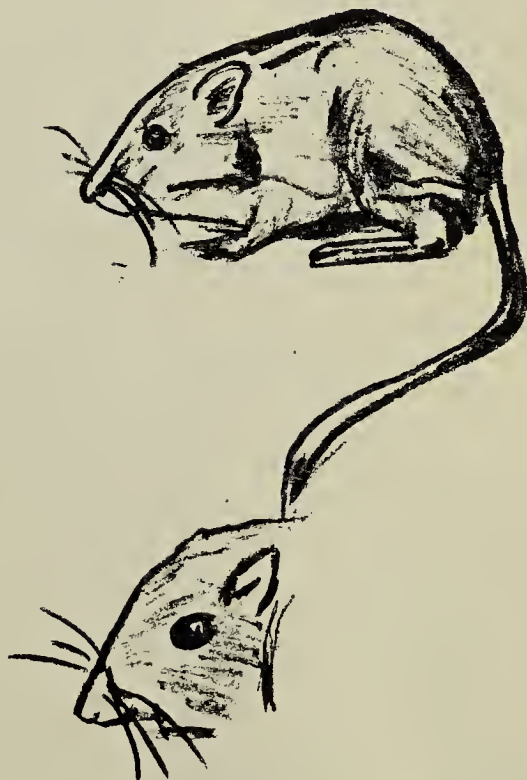
By Margaret McLaughlin, 10,
Indian Head, Sask.

When I looked out the window
I saw a pretty bird,
I'm sure it was a Grosbeak,
With the first winter song I heard.

Suddenly he turned and looked
Through the window at me.
He said, "My life is very interesting
I'm sure you'd like to see.

'I eat fruit in the winter
When it is very cold,
Though most birds fly south
I stay because I'm bold.

'I like to make my nests
In the coniferous trees,
These little nests
Help me not to freeze."



Sketch of Kangaroo Rat by Doreen Jasper, 13, Regina, Sask. The live Rat, taken near Sceptre, Sask. (see *Blue Jay*, Dec., 1956) is at present on display at the Museum.