

# BOYS' AND GIRLS' SECTION

Edited by **Joyce Dew**, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History



## PRIZE WINNERS

Prize winners in this issue are Garnet Ward with his description of a grouse and Jean Gould with "A Comical Pet." Garnet describes grouse well with "They waddled off into a ditch." Jean's story is an entertaining one about an interesting pet. We get a number of stories about pet crows but every once in a while one is too good to keep.

The pupils of Lake Marguerite School carried out a commendable project with the study of trees in their district. We do hope more schools undertake projects of this type.

## CONTEST RULES

Any young person may submit material for this section of the **Blue Jay**. The entries must be first hand observations in the form of letters, stories, poems, black - and - white sketches or photographs. Letters should not exceed 500 words. All entries must be accompanied by the name, age, and address of the sender.

Book prizes or magazines subscriptions will be awarded with each issue of the **Blue Jay**. Special prizes will be given from time to time to teachers who encourage their pupils to write or who sponsor nature activities about which the children write.

Send in your nature observations to Boys' and Girls' Section, **Blue Jay**, Miss Joyce Dew, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina. The closing date for the next issue is January 15, 1960.

## GROUSE

by **Garnet Ward**, 8, Elrose, Saskatchewan

Once when we were on our way to Saskatoon, and were just entering Rosetown, Dad said, "What are those birds?" Mom said, "I think they are grouse." I said, "I think so too."

They were brown with what looked like bars on their wings and back. They waddled off into the ditch.

I was quite surprised and happy to see grouse.

## A MOURNING DOVE

by **Sharon Evans**, 12, Nipawin, Sask.

Snow lay everywhere although it was only October 10th. We were driving to our farm when a bird flew up from in front of the car. At first we thought it was a Gray Partridge (Hungarian Partridge). Imagine our surprise when we discovered it was a Mourning Dove. It had been pecking at the gravel on the side of the highway. It was the first time I ever saw one that close.

**Mr. B. de Vries, Box 342, Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan,** would like to correspond and to exchange plants with others who are interested in plants. Perhaps Mr. de Vries can help you with some of those difficult species.

sketch) in a field in the same spot that a slough, now long dried-out, once occupied.

## THE GREAT BLUE HERON

by **Lawrence Scraba**, 15, Calder,  
Saskatchewan.

My brother Lenard and I were going for the cows, we spread apart to find them sooner. I went on a cow path to one slough and Lenard went to the other. As I was coming to the slough I saw a great big bird lying on the ground. I went close to it and found that it was dead. I didn't know what kind of bird it was, I picked it up by its feet and took it home.

Lenard didn't know what it was either. We took it to school to show the bird to our teacher, Mrs. Dere-nowski. We told our teacher where we found it. She thought it was a Blue Heron and verified it by looking it up in the encyclopedia.

The bird measured from the beak to the tips of the toes four feet, seven inches, and the wing spread was six feet. It had twelve tail feathers. It was a huge bird. Grandfather told us he saw it all summer long but why it died we do not know.

## A LAKESIDE OBSERVATION

by **Ralph Underwood**, 12,  
Strasbourg, Sask.

One calm sunny September evening I was observing the lake from the top of the bank. While doing so I noticed a large black bird with white spots on its back swimming around in the water about twenty feet from shore. Suddenly it dived under water and so I ran down the bank to the water's edge and lay down in the sand. Shortly the bird surfaced and I realized it was a Common Loon. Again it dived but presently it came to the top and in its bill was a minnow. After the loon got the minnow going in the right direction he swallowed it.

My younger brother and sister seeing me on the shore, came running down the bank. This scared the loon away.

I saw the loon quite often after that.



**COMMON LOON**



**SANDHILL CRANE**

## BIRD OBSERVATIONS

by **Judy Dubasov**, 14, Kamsask,  
Sask.

I have enclosed two sketches. The one of the Loon was made after I saw one swimming happily on our dugout in our pasture. I might add I HEARD it too!

The Sandhill Crane is one which comes to our farm every so often. My father saw it and heard its trumpeting call, but did not know its name. He told me that they were quite common many years ago, but now seem to have disappeared. When I finally saw it, I consulted a bird book, and found it was a Sandhill Crane. It is standing (in the





## TREES OF LAKE MARGUERITE SCHOOL DISTRICT

A group composition by  
**Claire Francaise, Marcel Francaise,  
Annette Francaise and  
Lynne Simpson.**

Our school is situated on the edge of the beautiful Red Fox Valley about eleven miles south-east of Indian Head, and just a mile east of Lake Marguerite. On a recent hike to a nearby ravine we observed 12 varieties of trees and shrubs.

The three tallest trees are the aspen, poplar, birch and elm. The poplar and birch look alike, but on second glance we see that the birch has silvery white bark, while the poplar bark is a greenish white; also the poplar has a single trunk, the birch grows in clumps of two or three. The elm has rough gray bark, and upcurving branches.

All three trees have now yellow leaves; the poplar leaves are almost round, the birch leaves are notched and pointed, and the leaves of the elm are large and oval.

Saskatoon, chokecherry, and pincherry bushes of all sizes grow in thickets. The shapely pincherry can be easily recognized by its slender, drooping, russet leaves. Saskatoon leaves are crimson, chokecherry almost the same colour, but it can be distinguished by the white specks on its bark. We can also tell them apart by the dried up berries; the Saskatoons are purplish, the chokecherries bright red.

Hawthorns and rosebushes both have thorns and crimson berries, but the rose has brilliant red leaves. The dogwood leaves are the darkest red of all, and it has white berries. The hazel bush has waxy green leaves with a silvery underside, and furry nuts. There are several varieties of willow, some now yellow, some russet, and some brown. Only the tough old wolf willow keeps its silvery coat until winter.

## A FRIGHTENING EXPERIENCE

by **Mildred Boon**, age 11, Maryfield,  
Sask.

One morning when I was going to school I saw two coyotes on a small knoll. They just sat and looked at me, then one started towards me. The other was more timid and lagged behind. I wasn't afraid because it was broad daylight, but then, both began loping after me. I shouted! They kept coming. I screamed! They stopped. Then I saw Allan on his pony up by the creek. I began to call to him, to stop, come back. As I began running towards him, he turned his pony around and urged it back. I had a syrup pail of water and a lunch kit to carry, which slowed me down. Finally I caught up with Allan. I was all out of breath and couldn't run any more. After I had got my breath again, we walked rapidly to school. The coyotes stopped following us when we got to the clearing near the school.

I hope I never meet those coyotes again.



### WHISTLING SWAN

by Ron Klimack, 15, Russell, Man.

### A COMICAL PET

by Jean Gould, age 13, R.R. 3,  
Lloydminster, Sask.

Last spring we found a young crow who had a broken leg. We brought him home and fixed up a cage to keep him in. We named our crow Dave.

At first we fed our crow eggs. Later on we fed him Saskatoons, peas, cauliflower, cabbage, fish, bread and raw meats of all kinds. I think he liked liver and hamburger the best of anything.

In the late summer when the crows were flocking to go south we put a band on Dave and let him go. Dave didn't go. He decided to stay with us.

He became so tame that when we took out a bit of food for him, he would come and sit on our arm or shoulder. Then we would give him the food and he would fly up on our heads and eat it. If the bread we gave him was too dry he would fly to the water tank and dip it in the water tank before eating it! If Davie didn't want all the food we gave him he hid some of it. Sometimes when he got it out to eat a cat would try to steal his food from him. He had a good way of getting around that. After the cat took his food he would hop around behind it and tweak the end of its tail. The cat would jump and run away and there was Dave with his food again.

After awhile Davie got pretty good at imitating. One day when Mom was out gathering the eggs she heard a hen cackle by the barn. She walked over to the barn and started to hunt for the nest. Then the hen cackled again. It seemed to be coming from up high. Mom looked up and there

on the barn roof was the culprit. Davie! Whenever Mom went out she always said, "Hello" to him.

One day Mom went out and there was no signs of Davie so she did not speak. Then across the yard came, "Hell-O-O-O." Davie had spoken his first word. After that he was always saying "Hello" to us.

In harvest time Dave always went up the field with Dad. He would stay up there all day and fly home at night with Dad.

Dave stayed with us for a long time, then one morning he was gone. In a couple of days the weather turned cold. I guess Dave knew the cold weather was coming.

Davie was a very comical pet. He was always doing something funny. I hope he comes back in the spring, but if he doesn't I am going to get another crow for a pet.

### GREAT BLUE HERON

by Paul Vernon Fowler, 12,  
Carrot River, Sask.

On the morning of September 8, I was going out to help with the chores on our farm east of Carrot River when I sighted an unusual bird on our pond. Getting closer I recognized it as a Great Blue Heron. I later checked its identification with Roger Tory Peterson's **Guide to Western Birds**, and discovered that I was correct. The Great Blue Heron stayed at the pond until the 22nd of September. It fed on the 2-3 inch "Sticklebacks" that are numerous in our pond. Before it left I was able to approach to within 15 feet of it. When standing its height was at least 3 feet. Its plumage was blue-grey. Its flight was slow and very graceful. The only other bird on the pond at that time was a Greater Yellowlegs.

### HAWK OBSERVATIONS

by Marvin Hrynowsky, age 11,  
Rhein, Sask.

While I was walking on the road after I did my chores I saw a hawk carrying something in his beak. I wanted to see what he had so I followed him for a while. Then he sat on a tree and swallowed it. He stayed on the tree for a while and flew away north. I didn't quite have any time to follow him through the snow because he was flying too fast. He was gray in color. His wings were real wide. He flapped all the way through the brush.