

BLUE JAY CHATTER

During our annual meeting, October 14, 1961, there was a brief review by your editor of the activities of the society which had led up to his proposal in the June, 1961, **Blue Jay** that we start a refuge fund. This was thought of as a fund to be used for the purchase of lands which would be valuable as a sanctuary for animals and as a resting and feeding place for migrant birds. We would also hope that native marshes and grasslands could remain undisturbed in the area. At the annual meeting, it was unanimously agreed to support a refuge fund, and we now have \$415.40 in this fund.

When it comes to protecting wildlife, there has always been some feeling in Saskatchewan that we should let the Americans do it. Recently there was a move in the United States to borrow 150 million dollars for the purchase of wetlands, and it was rumoured that much of this would be spent in Saskatchewan's "duck factory." The bill passed the House of Representatives, but the Senate on August 28 after heated debate modified the bill to allow only 10 million per year for five years.

Like the duck hunter, we in the Natural History Society deplore the loss of wetlands and the alarming decrease in ducks. We regret that Departments of Agriculture in both Saskatchewan and the United States are spending taxpayers' money to help farmers drain wetlands, and we cannot urge too strongly that there be an honest assessing of all possible uses of land before it is modified to add to the agricultural surpluses. We must work to save our marshes, and we will continue to appreciate help from the United States, but we must realize that they almost have their hands full saving wintering grounds for migratory birds. We ourselves must do something in Saskatchewan.

In the Natural History Society we are interested in more than ducks and wetlands; we think in broader terms of wildlife and its need for protection. We congratulate the Hamilton Naturalists' Club on its recent purchase of 95 acres near Normandale, Ontario, about 47 miles from Hamilton. In this sanctuary, called "Spooky Hollow," a great variety of plants and animals may be looked at and enjoyed, but not destroyed or damaged. The property cost \$4,500—so it will be some time before the Hamilton Naturalists' Club has anything in its sanctuary fund! Contributions to the club at Box 384, Main Post Office Building, Hamilton, would be welcome.

We were pleased to learn at the annual meeting that the Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources is considering buying a piece of land at the north end of Last Mountain Lake. This area will serve as a feeding place for cranes and ducks, and it will improve considerably the bird sanctuary there. No spot has yet been selected for a refuge by the S.N.H.S., but ever since the A.O.U. trip to the north end of Last Mountain Lake in August, 1959, we have been fascinated with the idea of saving this famous resting place of migratory birds. The area is attractive because it is used by so many shorebirds, cranes, ducks and geese. If land were purchased here provision could be made for feeding migratory birds, and if refuge land were available for this purpose, neighbouring land would suffer less crop damage.

One contributor sent this note with his donation: "I hope a refuge can be established where shorebirds can escape some of the shooting that indiscriminate 'sportsmen' subject them to. Several times this fall I have seen such hunters kill up to a dozen shorebirds in one reckless shotgun blast." The need for sanctuaries and refuges is great. I hope you will write in with your ideas and contributions to our refuge fund.

GEORGE F. LEDINGHAM.