

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 magazine 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 next issue is June 15, 1959.

Pussy Willows in January

by Karon Brooks, age 13, Rhein, Sask.

Pussy Willows in January! It's hard to believe especially if you live in the parklands of Saskatchewan where January is still the middle of the winter. On January 21 while I was going for a walk on the crusts of snowbanks I noticed to my surprise some pussy willows. They were on the very top branches of a willow clump practically covered with snow.

In curiosity I broke a twig off and noticed that it did not bend nor twist but broke off cleanly so I knew the branch must be frozen.

Then I investigated further and observed the buds of a small poplar tree. They were large and sticky. When squeezed a sap oozed out of them. Breaking one open I noticed that tiny green leaves were already formed inside. I also noticed that these leaves have a protective covering of several layers of thin skin. The bud and leaves were both covered with plenty of sticky sap which I decided must keep them from freezing.

Later I brought some Pussy Willows and a poplar branch into the house, then I noticed that as soon as the branches became warm they would bend easily without breaking.

I learned from former observations that in the autumn after the leaves fall there are many tiny buds on the twigs and small branches. In spring they have grown much larger.

I have never noticed Pussy Willows in January and I wonder if their growth in this season is uncommon.



Evening Grosbeaks

by Judy Dubasov, age 13, Kamsack, Sask.

This sketch is one I made after observing the antics of one perched high in a poplar tree near our house. Although there were four altogether, this was the only one that seemed to be bold enough to sit still as I stood watching him.

The Hungarian Partridges*

by Mildred Boon, age 11, Maryfield, Sask.

One day the teacher suddenly called us to the windows. "Shh, be quiet, see those Hungarian Partridges," she said.

Sure enough there were twelve fat Hungarian Partridges. They were only six yards from the school and we could see them very well. Some were just a slate colour on the breast, others had black horse-shoe marks. We decided the ones with the horseshoe marks were the males. The face had a reddish-coloured marking. The partridges' broad tails were reddish-brown on the ends. The rest of the body was

* The Hungarian Partridge is now called the Gray Partridge in the new check-list.

blue-gray with a bright red-brown on the back.

We watched for a quarter of an hour then all the Hungarian Partridges went between two evergreen trees and huddled together, like chickens, for warmth. One kept walking around hunting for danger. Suddenly they all flew away. What startled them, we don't know.

"The Coyote"

by Alice Bawron, Anglia, Sask.

Faintly the rising moon,
Etches against the sky
A tawny statue on a hill
His silvery coat
Catching the starlight
As he stands, alone and still.

Kitzman School Nature Hike, March 17

sent in by Mrs. Alice J. Wardlaw, Rhein, Sask., as told to her by the pupils.

(Ed. note: only part of the report is given here. The entire report was too long to publish.)

The Grades 1, 2, 3 and teacher went south from the school. We followed the fence walking on the snow drifts. We saw tracks of rabbits, prairie chickens and dogs. They looked like this



Above the snow we picked up a milkweed or maybe a golden rod stock with a round white ball with a hole in it, where the worm had come out. We carried home a heavy pink and grey rough stone for our museum. The snow banks were three to four feet high, bigger than we were. We went sliding down them and got all wet because the day was warm and the snow was melting. Sometimes our feet broke through and we had fun getting out.

The boys went southeast across a field. Around the bushes were grouse or prairie chicken tracks and in the bushes were rabbit runs, little paths made by the rabbits through the bush. In the field were

holes where the wild grouse had been sleeping. We saw two bush rabbits. Their ears were brown. Also in the bush we saw a crow's nest and picked rabbit fluff off the trees.

By the side of a slough in the bullrushes were three blackbirds' nests. We took one to take to school but the boy that was carrying it let it fall and left it.

We brought back three stones. One seems to be pink gneiss and one grey gneiss, the larger stone was evidently fire formed because it is smooth hard flinty substance with holes and folds in it.

The girls went north. First we heard a chickadee singing beautifully. Then we saw some big fat pussy willows fully out. In the clumps of shrubs and willows were some branches with brown cones on top. Many branches had a brittle suety black growth on them. One willow branch had a fresh growth under the bark. We took it to school. There was also a round gall on it with several tiny holes in the ball.

Patsy saw two grouse. The first rose off the ground with its tail spread out, the other's tail was not spread. We didn't notice the pattern of the feathers.

A tree with a slit in it had sap running from it. In the undergrowth were many willows upon which the rabbits had been feeding. Under a clump of willows was a rabbit shelter and many rabbit runs through the bush.

In the middle of a big bush we found a decayed tree stump. We broke off a piece and took it with us. It was full of holes. In one hole was a black beetle or bug. It was all numb but when we worried it it moved its legs. Among the things we took back to school were some moss, a hard smooth growth from a tree, a rough grey crinkly substance growing on the bark and a twig with stringy gray-green stuff growing in a bunch on it. The twig was dried and dead.

Under another tree was a pile of small oval shaped balls with feathers in them, grey in colour and about an inch long. Maybe they were owl pellets.

We brought three nests back to school with us for our museum. One was built of fine grass in an up-