

Seen by a Seer

by **J. Boswell Belcher, Dilke**

Many unusual things have been seen in the past six months. Some I have in mind might not be considered natural history, although the weather causing them was certainly not man-made, and the people doing some of the things were probably making natural history for the inhabitants 10,000 years from now to study. It will be some years before I forget seeing the combine lights penetrating the darkness of a 20-degree November snowstorm long after midnight, or the pickup rolling in long miles of snow-covered swath and clouds of snow like white dust coming out of the back of the machine on a 10-degree morning, or the baler pounding snow-covered straw swaths into bales in sub-zero weather.

While hauling wet sheaves to stack in November last I found a poor little garter snake not over 8" long curled up under a stook and frozen.

There appeared to be an unusual number of small jack rabbits in the crop at harvest time last fall and one always seemed to be scaring up another one and chasing it further into the standing grain each time one came around the field with the swather. In spite of all possible care I know some of the little rabbits were not seen and lost ears and even lives as they tried to duck under the cutter bar. While combining I noticed more than one, scared from hiding under the swath, get on top of the swath and start an unwanted ride up the pickup to the combine. I would stop the tractor immediately and although the pickup kept rolling the swath in with the rabbit on top, it was interesting to watch the little fellow racing down against the flow of the swath

and finally running off to hide in a further swath.

Last fall we fenced an abandoned shack with green freshly-cut poplar posts. When I went back toward spring I found the porcupine had made a very neat job of peeling them all. There have been porcupines around that yard for some years, and I always fear the cattle ranging stubble will get the worst of an encounter with one. I recall taking well over 100 quills from the legs and feet, chiefly front legs, of five horses—one of which had to be thrown to complete the extraction.

The "bird watchers" will not forgive me if I do not mention their friends. A Blue Jay with his noisy chatter has been a comparatively frequent visitor to our yard and shelter-belt, as well as to the neighbour's, this past winter and spring. This is unusual as I only remember seeing one on two or three occasions previously. I regret to report the great increase in starlings which arrived in a migration wave in late March. I wish I had not "seen" them.

The majority of the birds seemed at first to be arriving later than last year, but now that May has come they are beginning to get back on schedule. In any case, my favourite American Pipits have come back to our fields on the same date as they did last year. A week or so ago I thought I had heard an especially early Warbling Vireo, but since it does not usually return until late May I expect my "bird-watcher" sister is right in suggesting that the lovely warbling song was that of a Purple Finch!

Memo to the First Robin

by **Evangeline Chapman, Moose Jaw**

Show me your calendar, Robin Redbreast.
 How do you know when it's Spring?
 Do you tuck it away in your feathers so gay,
 Or carry it under your wing?
 What tells you to wing to bring us the Spring?