

BOYS' AND GIRLS' SECTION

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



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 the next issue is July 15, 1960.

PRIZE WINNERS

The prizes this issue go to Keith Winstone for his well written account of hedgehog observations and to May Ronaghan for the precise way in which she describes a bat. Congratulations, Keith and May.

PET BEAR

by **Gladys M. Beveridge**, age 13,
Porcupine Plains

One day a man brought a bear cub to my friend's house. They were to keep it till the next day. The cub's mother had been shot and the man had had it for about three months. It was no bigger than a small pup. It had black coarse hair and a yellowish strip behind each ear. The pads on the hind legs looked like human feet. When you tickled him behind his two front legs he got mad and squealed something like a pig. When feeding time came my friend's mother got a clean pop bottle and a long nipple and warmed some milk for him. To feed, the bottle was held upside down, with the cub holding on to it with his mouth and on to your arm with his two front feet. He held on pretty tight because when you lifted up your arm he went with it. When he was playing he would get on to your leg and bite with sharp little jabs. The top of his mouth had a lot of ridges on it. When he got mad he would bite you and then run away. If he saw the cat he would corner it and then sit down and scratch his fleas. The cat was scared of him. The cub walks by putting one front paw down and then the opposite back paw. His run is kind of rolling and half waddling. His eyes are real small and he can't see very far.

NEWS FROM JR. MEMBERS

We received several newsy letters, most of them reporting birds seen during migration. Murray Rowan, Grand Coulee, Saskatchewan, saw a meadowlark on March 8 "come from the south and land on a telephone pole by our lane, and start to sing." He continues, "They always landed on that telephone pole since we got the telephone which was 20 years ago." Ed Shepherd, Invermay, Saskatchewan, tells about his brother and neighbors seeing crows on March 28 but he admits, "As for myself I guess I am not getting around much for I haven't seen any crows." However a week later we had another letter from Ed and it appears that he has been "getting around" after all. He reports having seen both a male and female bluebird on April 4. He also saw some crows—"There are quite a few crows around for I have seen 20 in three days but you can never tell I may have kept seeing the same old crow over and over again!" Brian Irving reports having seen a robin in January but decided it must have been one which was wintering over. Anyway it made him feel that spring had come. Charles Feathers, Broadview, Saskatchewan, enjoyed winter bird watching. He attracted Black-capped Chickadees by feeding them.

From Prelate, Saskatchewan, we have a drawing and a poem about a salamander. Ronald Gizin sent in the drawing and our poets were Dale Materi and the pupils of grades 3 and 4 at Prelate School. The salamander was found in a dugout in the larval form complete with external gills and kept under observation in the school room. The children are looking forward to its growing up—"He can grow up to be different and breathe through lungs we know, He'll then be a tiger salamander But for now he's our Jo-Jo."

One boy mentioned that he took a hawk from a nest and attempted to keep it alive. Unfortunately it sickened and died. We would like to remind boys and girls that for several reasons the Saskatchewan Falconry Association deplores the practice of keeping large hawks and owls as **pets** because the people who take

them seldom understand their needs (see **Blue Jay**, December, '59, p. 153).

Lorne Graupe, Hagen, Saskatchewan, sent in a boldly drawn Canada Goose. Marleen Christensen, Young, Saskatchewan, was more fanciful and sketched some birds and insects out "enjoying nature."

We are pleased to get your letters, poems, drawings and photos. Do let us hear from you again!



GREAT HORNED OWL

by Nelson Cherry, grade 8, Tonkin

AN OWL GOES TO SCHOOL

by Sharon Pearce, age 14, Tonkin

Today was my first encounter with a Great Horned Owl. As we were going to school we noticed two large owls flying around in circles. We went on a little ways and never thought any more about it. Suddenly we noticed something flapping in the snow. We stopped and my cousin went over to see what it was. Then I heard a yell and he said it was one of the owls. The other owl had pulled it down in the deep snow and it couldn't get out.

My cousin hung on to him while I threw a blanket over him. He didn't put up much of a fight because he was dazed. We brought him to the cutter and took him to school. When we got to school we phoned Dr. Stuart Houston and he came out and banded it. He told us that it was a Great Horned Owl. We asked him why it had pulled the other down and he said it was in the other owl's territory.



SOME EXPERIENCES WITH WILD HEDGEHOGS

by Keith Winstone, London, England

Early last spring, I saw a dark shape moving slowly across our lawn which on inspection proved to be a hedgehog. He seemed to be in a hurry, so I put down a saucer of bread and milk, lifted him, curled almost in a ball, and put him down next to it. Slowly he uncurled himself, but just sniffed at his "dinner" and shuffled off. In the morning, however, Clarence, as we nicknamed the hedgehog, had returned, and the saucer was devoid of bread and milk but complete with his dirty feet marks. To make sure of his visits, I put out some more bread and milk the following evening and, sure enough, when it was dark, he was there, eating from the saucer.

After a month of feeding him, mostly under observation from my porch, I discovered we were having a further visitor, a smaller hedgehog but coming just as regular. During this time, I took a flashlight photograph of Clarence eating his supper, a copy of which I attach.

We had no idea where our visitors came from until one day I observed one shuffling down our neighbor's garden wall and through a hole in the fence. This in itself is unusual, as hedgehogs are nocturnal. He disappeared into a pile of leaves, and carefully lifting the top of the leaves, I saw huddled together, two adult hedgehogs and their three babies.

Later that same week, we again saw one of the hedgehogs walking along with a mouthful of dry leaves.

This time, he stopped in our neighbour's garden, and entered a pile of old plants and leaves. This apparently was his winter nest.

The staple diet of the hedgehogs consists of slugs, beetles, worms, eggs, and occasionally carrion.

Just before they hibernate, they show they are very well fed, being very fat, but they do not hibernate completely. Any warm evening they will come out of their nest and grope round for food. When they start their hibernation, they are as fat as a pudding, but at the end, they are as lean as a February wolf.

The baby hedgehogs are born blind, and their retractable quills, although looking quite stiff, are really soft and rubber-like. They are usually born in June, there being only one brood of between 4-8 babies each year.

We are now waiting for the spring when we will probably have the whole family to feed.

Note: Although the Hedgehog is similar to a Porcupine in that they both have quills they are in no way related. The Hedgehog is an insectivore and eats insects, the Porcupine is a rodent and eats bark.

JUNIOR MEMBERSHIPS

We would like to remind boys and girls that for \$1.00 they can join the Saskatchewan Natural History Society. This membership includes a year's subscription to the *Blue Jay*. Your membership will help the society in the work it is doing. The Saskatchewan Natural History Society works hard to see that there are natural areas set aside where birds, mammals and other animals can live undisturbed and where people interested in them can go to observe and enjoy these animals in their natural surroundings. For a membership in the society send \$1.00 to Miss Constance Pratt, 3136 Rae Street, Regina, Saskatchewan.

LITTLE BROWN BAT

by John Rhodes, age 13



I'm enclosing this drawing I made from the observation of a Little Brown Bat which I had as a pet.

I got the bat from the school janitors who extricated it from the cloak room in our school. Unfortunately the bat was awakened from his passive hibernation by the janitors—one of them still showing the scar of a bat bite suffered long ago. To my great sorrow the bat refused to hibernate and died in four days.

A SURPRISE MOTH

by Nick Stebanuk, age 9, Prelate

One hot summer afternoon while playing with my brothers, I noticed a funny looking caterpillar crawling around. I picked it up and put it in a jar. Then I set it on the window sill in the sun. When I came in to look at it, it was gone. This winter when mother was cleaning up she found the moth lying on the front room rug. I then remembered my caterpillar that had disappeared from the window sill last fall. I next put it in a jar where it laid some eggs. Then I took it to school and we all looked at it and watched it spread its wings. It is still with us and we are watching it grow.

A MYSTERY

by Bryan Lyster, age 11, Abernethy

This winter I started a window feeding station. The chickadees were my first visitors. They soon became very tame. I could sit by the window and watch them eating. The bread crumbs seemed to be their favourite food. After they were finished the bread they would eat the grain, berries, and cornflakes. I took a picture of one through the window. It was very interesting to watch the fluffy little chickadees eating. They are certainly great acrobats. Their cunning tricks and cute ways provided hours of fun for me as well as the rest of the family. I noticed that there was never more than one chickadee feeding at a time.

On towards spring the sparrows began visiting the station. One morning a Downy Woodpecker came in.

All went well until one morning I noticed a mysterious visitor had stolen all the food I had placed there the night before. It was not until two or three days later that I discovered a Red Squirrel had been the culprit.

AN OWL'S BREAKFAST

by Theodore Chytk, age 10,
Tarnopol

On March 3 we were going to school in a caboose. Suddenly Dad said, "Look, an owl." Dad stopped the horses and opened the door. We shouted at it. Suddenly it flew up. It was an owl and in its claws was a dead rabbit. It flew about 25 feet then it landed again. Then we started off. That was the first time I saw an owl carrying a rabbit.

A BAT

by May Ronaghan, age 8, Irma,
Alberta

One night when we were ready for bed Daddy said, "I'll show you a bat." It was hanging on a garage door that Daddy was going to fix. It was the size of a mouse when it was sleeping. It was hanging with its head down. It was hanging on with its claws. When it woke up we could see its sharp teeth. Daddy took a flash picture of it and it moved its head and flew away.

“Name the Bird” Contest Results



Pintail



American Coot



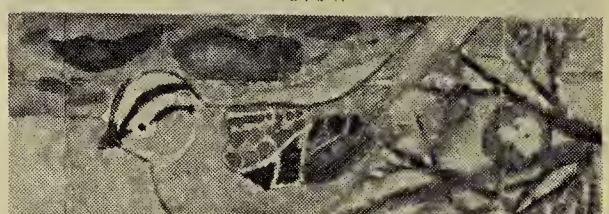
Brewer's Blackbird



Crow



Whooping Crane



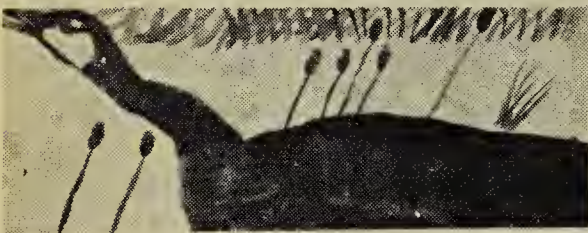
White-crowned Sparrow



American Avocet



Ruffed Grouse



Canada Goose



Mallard Duck



Snowy Owl



Cormorant

by **John Rezansaff**, age 13, Thunderbird S.D., Benito, Man.

Your enthusiastic response to this contest made the mailman's visits especially enjoyable the past few weeks. We enjoyed your comments, suggestions and various chatty notes which accompanied some of your contest entries.. Comments ranged all the way from "I didn't know I knew so much about birds" to "Let's have more such contests!" Several of you pointed out the typesetter's error of putting two d's instead of two b's in the scrambled name for black-

bird. One young lady noticed that although we said the names were according to those on the latest A.O.U. check-list we had left the word "common" off crow, and "double-crested" off cormorant. Perhaps we shouldn't mention this but she forgot to give her age and she left "n" off "American" in her answer to number 4. By far the most exciting entries came from Thunderbird School at Benito, Manitoba. The children illustrated each bird in color and wrote

its name underneath it. These children certainly know how to learn their birds and their teacher is to be congratulated for encouraging them.

We received over 300 entries so the problem of deciding a winner was finally solved by putting all the correct entries in a box and making a draw. The first correct entries drawn won the prize. Prize winners are as follows:

Merle Remus, age 11, Gerald, Saskatchewan.

Joyce Klingman, age 14, Stornoway, Saskatchewan.

In addition to the two prize winners all contestants are being sent a photograph of a bird for their nature scrapbooks and some hints on birdwatching. We have given you a "Fact Finding" contest for this issue but promise you another "Name the Bird" contest soon. We hope you will find this contest as enjoyable as the last one and look forward to hearing from you again.

The correct answers are: 1. Pintail; 2. Brewer's Blackbird; 3. Whooping Crane; 4. American Avocet; 5. Canada Goose; 6. Snowy Owl; 7. American Coot; 8. Crow; 9. White-crowned Sparrow; 10. Ruffed Grouse; 11. Mallard; 12. Cormorant.

FACT-FINDING CONTEST

This contest is divided into two sections. Children 12 years old and under should answer questions 1-12, those 13-16 years should answer questions 1-20.

Prize winners will be awarded books on Natural Science.

Rules:

Write your name, age, and address on a paper, the number of the question and the answer. Send to Joyce Dew, Museum of Natural History, Regina, to arrive not later than July 15.

All answers may be found in the March, 1960, issue of the **Blue Jay**.

Questions

1. Which two owls have their picture in the March issue?
2. Where are the bird houses being made in the photograph of the boys making them?
3. How many mammals (apart from people) have their photograph in the last issue?
4. Which extremely rare bird (39 in existence—33 in the wild)

has its picture in two places in the last issue?

5. Which chick is so well camouflaged that you can scarcely see it in the photograph?
6. Name the pairs of birds (male and female) which are found in the last issue?
7. What is the total number of immature birds (count individuals and not species) pictured in the last issue?
8. What bird book written by a member of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society is pictured in the last issue?
9. According to Stephanie Stewart what is our most basic natural resource?
10. What does Dick Lumsden advise that anyone climbing up to Great Horned Owl, Goshawk, Pigeon Hawk, or even a crow's nest should wear?
11. In David Hatch's opinion what species of bird was hardest hit by the October blizzards in Manitoba?
12. What does W. J. D. Stephen recommend for frightening Sandhill Cranes out of grain fields?
13. Name the species of birds which the Estevan bird watchers reported having seen on their Christmas Bird Count.
14. According to Kathleen Hodges, how many hours before sun-up did the Greater Prairie Chicken start to assemble on its dancing ground?
15. What is the scientific name for the Greater Sandhill Crane?
16. Who is the conservation officer at Moose Jaw?
17. What three mammals did Dr. Nero write about in the last issue?
18. Are the same restrictions put on land use which are put on use of our other natural resources such as fish, minerals, and wild game?
19. Name three countries which were once rich producers of food stuffs but whose soil is now much less fertile.
20. What indication is there that the same fate could happen to our land?