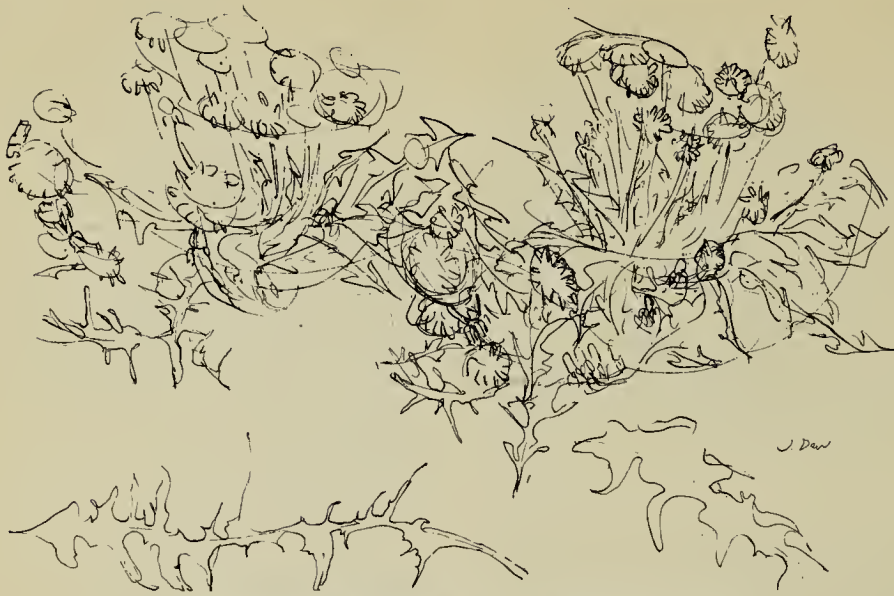


Junior Naturalists

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



Practice sketches of a dandelion plant

SUMMER TIME IS SKETCH TIME

Now is the time to take a sketch book (a writing pad with fairly heavy paper will do), a pen, pencil or crayon, depending upon your tastes, and sketch some of the plants and flowers you see around you. You needn't go far away—dandelions grow everywhere and provide a suitable challenge for any would-be artist. You needn't spend all afternoon wondering what to draw. Sit down on your own back door step and chances are you will have a plant within easy view so why not practise on it? The main thing is to get started and not to worry about results—artists throw away many more sketches than they keep. In one drawing class I attended we drew 10 sketches a morning, three mornings a week for eight months and all I saved from that entire class was 20 drawings. The rest were good experience but certainly not worth keeping. So please don't be discouraged if you don't like your first results, and don't let other people's opinions discourage you. You are the only one who knows if you get the results you are trying for.

By now I hope you are anxious to get started. Why not do a number of quick (2 minute) sketches first. In two minutes you can't worry about the details—those come later. You can, however, get the general feeling of the plant—its shape, the flow of lines and its general characteristics.

Observe the plant carefully and ask yourself questions such as: It is tall and slender or short and dumpy? Do the leaves grow close together or is the plant loosely put together? What shape are the leaves?

By observing details such as these you can get a feeling for the general characteristics of the plant which will help you make it look "life like". If you are having trouble drawing a certain part of the plant, the leaves for example, then practise drawing the leaves alone for awhile. The dandelion plant in the illustration was arrived at after a number of quick sketches. Note the detail of a leaf drawn at the bottom. You are now ready to try drawing the plant in detail. As you do this, refer to the plant and to your previous sketches.

One last suggestion. If you find you can sketch better some other way than the one I've outlined, forget what I've been saying. The main thing is to go ahead and sketch. You will learn more by doing than you can from any number of "how to do it" suggestions.

SKETCHING CONTEST

Rules:

1. Any boy or girl 16 or under may enter—all entries must be original (drawn by yourself from nature) and accompanied by your name, age and address.
2. Send in several of your best sketches. You can send in both completed drawings and quick sketches. Sometimes the quick sketches are better than the drawings you have worked hours over. Send in drawings of the whole plant, or a part of the plant such as flowers, by July 15, to Miss Joyce Dew, Museum of Nat. Hist., Regina.

KOKO THE PREDACIOUS DIVING BEETLE

by June Martinsen, Regina



I caught my pet, a predacious diving beetle, on January 15, 1961, at Rowan's Ravine. We were ice fishing there, and it swam up through our hole. Dad noticed it. I grabbed a cocoa cup and ran to the hole. As soon as I saw it, I knew it was a predacious diving beetle. I called it "Koko". I tried feeding it with my four goldfish when I got home. My favorite goldfish brushed his face with her tail and Koko attacked her. I separated them as quickly as I possibly could.

The next night I tried turtle food, goldfish food, a small dead crayfish I had found in the mouth of a yellow perch we had caught, and a goldfish. Koko ignored all but the crayfish. He lay on top of it, biting it. Whether he ate any of it, I don't know.

Every so often, he came to the surface of the water for air. Instead of poking his head up, he poked his tail above the surface.

One time he really frightened me. It was the first night I had him. Somehow he crawled out of his 5 inch high pen. I checked in on him the next morning and noticed him to be gone. I searched for 15 minutes and finally found him, asleep between a tin can and the wall. I promptly put him back in his half-land, half-water cage and put a screen over it. Several days later, I noticed a buzzing sound coming from Koko's pen. I investigated and saw that Koko was exercising his large, fly-like wings that he kept enclosed

under his shell. Seven seconds later, he darted upwards. Did I jump! He landed on the screen, upside down, and crawling about on it. All this he had done in a split-second. Don't think that just because diving beetles live in the water that they can't fly or walk on land. They can do this as well as a bird.

Koko, a full-grown diving beetle, is 1¼ inches long and I'm warning you, when you pick up a diving beetle, keep away from its jaws. They're sharp and can hurt very much. Pick him up by his sides, your thumb on one side, forefinger on the other. Make sure your fingers are even with the base of his powerful hind legs. If he begins shoving with his legs, better put him down and get a fresh grip

P.S.—Just now I tried feeding him a piece of garlic sausage on a tooth pick. He **loved** it. Please disregard that statement about eating only in the summer. It is not true as I have just found out.

EARLY SPRING ARRIVALS

by Kenneth Dickson, age 13,
Tregarva

I guess you are right about me hibernating with the bears. Well this fall we had a mallard, 2 meadowlarks and 1 crow stay. I guess it was the mild winter. They stayed all winter, at least the crow and mallard did, but the meadowlarks were gone around the end of January. It was about the 15th of January when a neighbour shot the crow, but the mallard stayed in our open creek and I kept feeding him grains. It is nice to see the birds during the winter. This spring I saw one Killdeer on March 20th and one bluebird and one white-crowned sparrow. It is very early for the Killdeer to arrive. He was here last spring about the same time and I wrote Doug Gilroy* about it and he said it was early.

NOTE:*Doug Gilroy through his column "Prairie Wildlife" in the "Western Producer" frequently gives the "Blue Jay" a mention so we think it only fitting that Kenneth Dickson has mentioned him in his letter. Incidentally his column is worth subscribing to the "Western Producer" for.

NAME THE BIRD CONTEST RESULTS

The following Junior Naturalists had correct answers and received prizes for the Name The Bird Contest: Barbara Beatty, Sturgis; Vivian Hall, Whitewood; David Grout, Star City; Shirley Anderson, Rocanville; Donald Hrytzak, Yellow Creek; Bohdan Pylypec, Yellow Creek; Brenda Medlang, Sturgis; Louisa Mountain, Lloydminster, Sask.; Evert Anderson, Rocanville; Susan Anderson, Rocanville; Pat Earnshaw, Hudson Bay. We would like to congratulate these boys and girls on their excellent work and hope we hear from them again. The correct answers were: 1. Western Grebe. 2. Mallard. 3. Western Grebe. 4. Gray Jay. 5. Bald Eagle. 6. Mallard. 7. White-crowned Sparrow. 8. House Sparrow.

LETTER WRITING CONTEST

Any boy or girl 16 years old and under may enter. Entries must be first-hand observations and not something copied from a book or other source. All entries must be accompanied by the name, age, and address of the sender. Send entries to Miss Joyce Dew, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina, to arrive not later than July 15. Prizes which are awarded according to age include Audubon bird calls and magazine subscriptions.

PRIZE LETTER

To June Martinsen goes the prize for her excellent letter and observations on a diving beetle. We had some very good contributions this issue and all boys and girls are to be congratulated. Keep up the good work.

AN ALBINO SPARROW

by **Bryon Lyster**, age 12, Abernethy

In early April when my family and I were coming home from a vacation with our relatives we stopped at Whitewood. While we were sitting in the car I noticed a white bird perched on the roof of a building about twenty feet away.

From where I was it looked about the size of a common House Sparrow. It was pure white with what looked like black feet and a black bill.

I had my camera in the car and just as I opened the window to photo-

graph it—it flew away.

It was very very exciting for me as this was the first albino bird I had ever observed.

NOTE: Brian also mentioned in a letter that Ralph Stueck had been teaching him taxidermy and that he is also taking part in the Co-operative Spring Migration Study. Once again the inspiration of a local naturalist is helping to develop interest and enthusiasm in the young.

HORNED OWL'S NEST

by **Maureen Cyr**, age 13, Muscow

The other day my two brothers, Monty and Randy, found a nest which contained three Horned Owls. They brought one home which we fed some canned meat. The next day we brought it to school to show the children. The owl has very light gray feathers. It is about one week old. It is just beginning to walk.

WE SAW A BEAVER

by **Wanda Tennant**, age 10,
Neutral Hills, Alta.

One time Mom, Dad and I were going to town when we saw a beaver. The beaver was dark brown with webbed feet and a flat tail.

The beaver was by the fence when we came. Dad said it must be looking for a new home. For when a beaver is a year old it is sent away from the home where it was born. Then some horses came and sniffed at the beaver. The beaver hissed and slapped its tail on the ground and scared the horses away. They only ran a little ways away. We had to leave them then so we did.

WHOOPING CRANES SIGHTED

by **Lawrence Herperger**, age 13,
Muscow

This morning, April 12, 1961, I got up and was walking by a window at 8 o'clock. I glanced out and saw 5 huge birds heading northward over the Pasqua Indian Day School yard, about 300 yards away. They were all white with black tips on their wings. I called the rest of the family and they saw these beautiful birds also. My mother and father said that they were Whooping Cranes and that there were only 36 of them in North America. They started heading northeast, in the direction of Asham's Beach on Pasqua Lake. These were the first Whooping Cranes I have ever seen.

OBSERVATION OF PINE SISKINS

by Dale Robinson, age 11, Brandon,
Manitoba

On March 15, 1961, a flock of Pine Siskins were around, singing in the spruce trees on the south side of our house. About April 1 we noticed a pair of Siskins still around. Even on April 4, which was a cold and cloudy day, they still sat in the crabapple tree and sang and sang. Then on April 4 we observed the female carrying grass and other materials to a branch in one of the spruce trees. On April 5 my friend and I watched them both make repeated trips to a nearby maple to get material from an old nest. On April 6, Mr. Lane* and I watched them both make the nest. On April 8 they seemed to have finished their nest. We heard the male singing on April 9 and then neither heard nor saw them for the next two days which were very cold. Today, April 12, was much warmer and when I came home from school at noon I saw the male singing in the maple at the front of the house. We didn't see his mate so we hope she is sitting on the eggs. Mr. Lane said it was very rare that they should nest this far south. We hope to get some pictures of them.

NOTE: Mr. Lane is an ardent Naturalist who is doing much to promote interest in nature among young people in the Brandon area.

OUR SQUIRREL

by Joey Purdy, age 11, Regina

My Grandmother and I live at Sandy Beach all summer. There's a wild red squirrel there that we have half tamed and, if she knows you, she will take a peanut from your hand and when she's hungry she climbs up to our screen door. Once we left the doors open and the squirrel took a notion to drop in. She came in while we were eating supper, sat down beside my sister's chair like a begging dog. My mother was sitting on the couch so she went to visit her, but someone moved and she scampered out. Her nest is in a tree beside the kitchen window, a branch from that tree reaches over to the roof, so every now and then we hear a scampering on the roof and it takes no guessing to figure out what it is. She stores some of her food in our shed. There's an attachment from the shed to grandma's room and if

you wake up early in the morning you can hear her scampering back and forth from her nest to the shed. Once there was a big rat who stole all her food that was in the shed, so I got my BB gun ready and sensing danger the rat left. But there's one chief menace to our squirrel and that is a male red squirrel who always chases her as if he were jealous because she gets all the goodies. She sometimes goes out to the back of the cottage to the suncot where grandma sits. She will sit on her lap and eat peanuts from her hand and from her pocket, but always keeps an eye out for the male squirrel. And as if she had super hearing, even before the male appears she's off like a flash.

SNAKE ATTACKED BY SHREW

by Donald Buckle, age 14, Lady Lake

Last September 13 my friend Dean Panaliuk and I saw what appeared to be a garter snake catching a mouse. However, on closer examination we found that it was the snake who was being attacked by a shrew. The poor snake was trying to escape by climbing up into some small rose bushes. The shrew was not to be cheated out of dinner so easily. It hung on to the snake with its teeth and was hoisted about six inches into the air before it relinquished its grip. It then ran about under the rose bushes and in the surrounding grass for about five minutes before moving off. During this time the snake remained motionless about one foot up in the bushes. We caught the snake and found that it had received several small bites and was bleeding slightly through the mouth. I measured it and found it to be 23½ inches long. It was kept overnight in a cage and released the following morning.

THE FLIGHT

by Pat Seifert, age 10, Sudbury,
Ontario

On a ridge, a caribou,
A silhouette, on a sky of blue.
Proudly he stands his head held high,
As the sinking sun colours the sky.
He perks his ear, "What's that he heard?"
Off he flees like a frightened bird.
Over a hill, over a dale
Over a river, over a rail.
Never stopping till he reaches the trees
There he stops to pant and wheeze,
Then he drops into a sleep
As, longer and longer, the shadows creep.
The deer is no longer on the run.
Up from the hills peeps the sun,
Off he goes to find some grass,
And drink from a pool as clear as glass.