

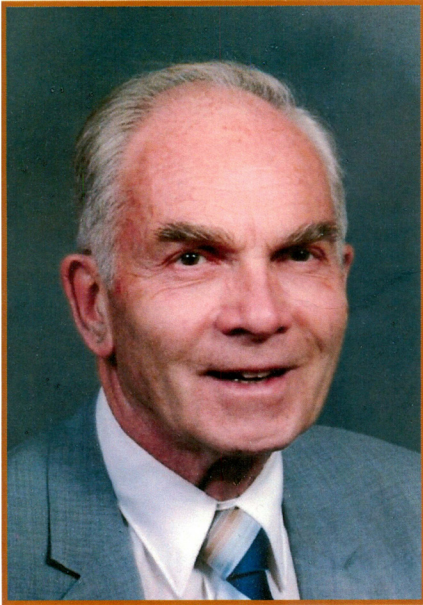
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# NOTES AND LETTERS

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## *Obituary*

Dr. Ronald M. Bremner (1923-2011)



Past president of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, co-founder of the Saskatoon Natural History Society, and a lifetime birder and conservationist, Ron died in Saskatoon on October 21, 2011. He is survived by his wife Muriel, son Murray, daughter Margaret and husband Bruce Filson, and their children Chloe, Lydia and Veronica.

Born and educated in Toronto, Ron graduated with an MD from the University of Toronto in 1945. He served in general medical practice for four years in rural Ontario, during which time he published in the *Canadian Field Naturalist* (1949) his observations on the birds of the Casummit Lake region of NW Ontario. After further studies, he became a specialist in dermatology, and moved to Saskatoon in 1954 to establish the city's first private practice in that field.

He soon met a number of the local natural history enthusiasts, including Professor D.S. Rawson, head of the University of Saskatchewan Biology Department, Stuart Houston, Bernie Gollop, Bill Richards and Frank Roy. In 1955 the group decided there likely was sufficient interest to organize a Natural History society in the city. Ron became the first president in 1955-56. During his long life he watched the Society grow in membership and influence. He served as director five times in the succeeding 25 years: 1960, 1971, 1972, 1979 and 1980. Ron was president of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society in 1961-62. He had earlier gained recognition after writing a brief urging the provincial government to protect all hawks and owls. Protection of raptors was not an easy sell in those days. He faced opposition even within the Society executive, but after a resolution of differences, the brief was first presented to the government in 1959. Partial victory followed in 1960 when all birds of prey became protected with the exception of "snowy owls, great horned owls and goshawks which a person may hunt, take, shoot at, wound or kill from the first day of November in any year to the last day of March in the following year." It wasn't until several years later that protection was extended to all birds of prey. Ron's initial work had borne fruit. The legislation stands and is widely respected.

Ron led an active and varied life. He was a Rotarian for 30 years, a staunch member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church which he served for 53 years, an avid reader, philatelist, and world traveler. In 1984 he joined "The Golden Eagles," a group for retired persons within the Saskatoon Nature Society. He attended weekly excursions, supported their varied activities ranging from garbage clean-up,

restoration of Peturrson's Ravine, spring and fall bird counts, submission of bird observations for *The Birds of Saskatoon* (published 1996) to studies of lakes and marshes for the Canadian Wildlife Service.

Rev. Annabelle Wallace, who knew Ron for many years, says of him: "He lived simply so he could be generous. He gave of himself constantly, yet he served quietly. Happy, learned, humorous, proud of his heritage, he was a joy to be with."

-Written By Frank Roy



## BAND-TAILED PIGEON IN SASKATOON, SK

On June 29, 2011 my husband was in his living room chair when he looked up to the back yard bird feeders and said "There's a hawk sitting on the feeder hanger". I quickly went to the window and said "Not a hawk, but a pigeon". Because it looked different I quickly got the camera and took pictures. When we compared the pictures to our bird books we identified the bird as a Band-tailed Pigeon and realized this bird was not supposed to be in our area.

The Pigeon sat on the arms of the feeders and then flew to a tree in the yard West of us and appeared to be eating. I quietly went into the back yard to see if I could get any other pictures. It flew back to the Shurbert Chokeycherry in the SE corner of our yard and when I moved and walked toward it it flew away. We did not see it again.



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## ROCK PTARMIGAN - A NEW BIRD FOR ALBERTA

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On December 18 2011, we participated in the first Garden River Christmas Bird Count (CBC). After being in the province for only three and a half months, and having yet to experience a winter in the 'North', our familiarity with winter Alberta species was mostly limited to our printed resources. Nonetheless we had a very good idea of what we may run into due to range maps. Furthermore, due to the remoteness of Garden River, there was

a sense of potential discovery. If a rare winter resident had yet to be identified in the province, surely this was the location it was hiding.

For the CBC, the temperature was -24°C and sunny, with some bird activity in the Jack Pine stands. While driving eastbound 15 km west of Garden River, we encountered a Ptarmigan on the road. Peter was quick to note he almost