

# JUNIOR NATURALISTS

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



Sketches by Brian Irving, age 11, Kelvington.

## DRAWING CONTEST WINNER

The prize for the drawing contest goes to Brian Irving, age 11, of Kelvington. Brian sent in six drawings—two of which are published here. We are pleased to see that Brian can draw plants as well as birds and hope he keeps up the good work.

Due to general lack of response to these special contests they are being discontinued for the time being. If you are interested in having more contests such as the drawing contest, name the bird contest, and fact finding contest, let us hear from you.

## 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 October 15. Prizes which are awarded according to age include Audubon bird calls and magazine subscriptions.

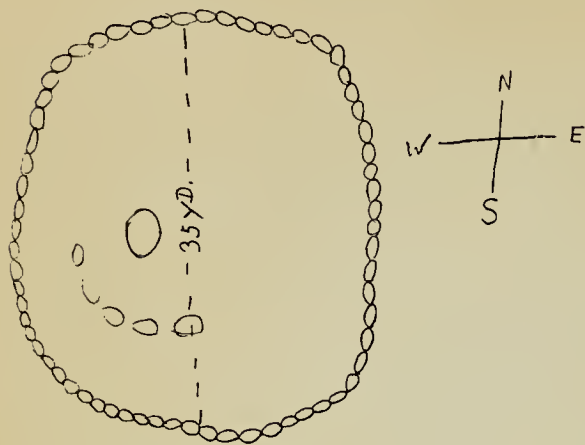
## BEST LETTER

Usually an account of nests and birds seen makes rather dull reading since it so often is just a list of what was seen. However, Gloria Tommila has written a delightful account of her nest observations and has made them come alive by noting the behaviour of the different birds at their nests. Congratulations, Gloria! We will be looking forward to hearing more from you.

## MEADOWLARK'S NEST

by **Mary Koziol**, Benito, Manitoba

On May 23 the pupils of Thunderbird School saw six eggs in a nest in their school yard. The nest was made of grass over the eggs. Mother Meadowlark fluttered out of the tunnel as if she had a broken wing every time we went there. May 31 found the first egg hatched. The other brown speckled eggs were hatched on June 2. One egg didn't hatch so the mother bird threw it away. We didn't see the Father Meadowlark but we hear him singing in the tree-tops. Mother Meadowlark had a day off on June 6 because it was so hot that the baby birds were panting. Soon the baby birds will have their first lesson from their parents and will be able to fly and hunt for their own food.



pottery. One piece has a fluted edge and it is all ridged on one side and smooth on the other. Some of it is quite black and some is grey. It is all very strong. I can't break it, nor will it dissolve in water.

We also found two black beads that look quite old. One looks as if it is cut from wood. And the other is a flat black bead with copper wire inside, likely left by the pioneers.

We find lots of buffalo bones in our garden, too. We saved the skull and were told it belonged to a wood bison.

We have fifteen stone-hammers and twenty spear and arrow heads that we've picked up around home.

I would like to know more about the pottery, especially. Who made it, and is it very old?

Finding Indian stones makes gardening so much more fun.

## STONE CIRCLE DISCOVERED

by Frederick W. Gase, Hearne

In the hills near our home is a hill with a large ring of stones around the top. It is about 35 yards in diameter and about 325 feet in circumference. The centre of the circle has been cleared except one large stone near the centre and five in a semi-circle to the southwest of the central stone.

NOTE: We asked Mr. T. Kehoe, museum archaeologist, about this and he tells us the origin of these rings is not known. The ring is too large to be a tipi ring. It is possible that it is a ring of stones from a sun dance lodge.

## GARDENING, BUFFALO BONES AND ARTIFACTS

by Corinne Goodwin, age 11,  
Trossachs

One day this summer after a heavy rain we kids went out to weed the garden and found out why grown-ups think gardening is an interesting hobby.

We found over twenty pieces of brown chalcedony and three of them were arrow heads.

And when we got to the cucumber patch we found several pieces of clay

## COLOR CHANGES IN FROGS

by Mike Rhodes, Moose Jaw

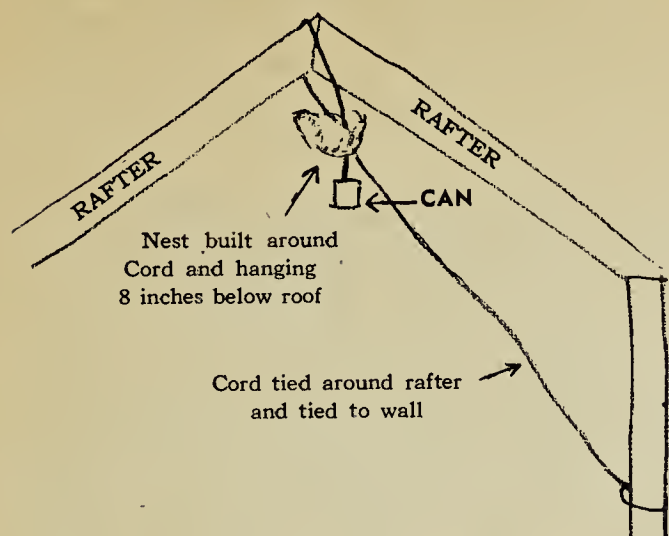
While attending the meeting of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, Allan Wade and I had already filled our jars with butterflies by the time we arrived at Sandy Lake. So we turned to collecting frogs and toads for Mr. Cook, the Curator of Herpetology at the National Museum of Canada in Ottawa, Ontario.

After about ten minutes of collecting we had about twelve specimens comprising two species, Wood Frog *Rana sylvatica* and Dakota Toad *Bufo hemiophrys*. The two Wood Frogs were all black.

Later when we were in camp showing Mr. Cook our frogs we found that we had the same number of specimens but nowhere could we find the black ones. Mr. Cook, to our surprise, told us that these Wood Frogs were capable of color changes which go from almost black to white.

This was the first time I realized that Frogs could change color.

NOTE: Francis Cook has been in the province this spring and summer doing a survey of the reptiles and amphibians in the area.



## BARN SWALLOW NEST

by Shirley Anderson, age 12,  
Rocanville

Last spring while cleaning out their playhouse, my brother and sister put up two cords one at each end of the building and attached a can to each of them for make-believe lights.

One day we discovered the barn swallows had decided to build a nest around one of the cords. They nested there and had three or four babies. One fell out so we had to tie the nest up more securely.

For their second nest the swallows started building right on top of the other can.

I hope they are successful in raising their brood in such an unusual location.

## MY BIRD STORY

by Gloria Tommila, age 10, Elma,  
Manitoba

I am a great nature lover and enjoy reading the *Blue Jay*, especially the Junior Naturalists' Section. I want to tell you about all the birds and their nests around our place. Every time I stroll around it seems as if I find a new nest, some in trees high up and others close to the ground.

The most peace-loving bird is the Cedar Waxwing, hardly ever making a sound, and I can go right up to their nest and the mother bird does not fly off.

In a wild plum tree located in our yard, my sister put up a bird house last year. It was occupied by a pair of Tree Swallows right away. This summer they came back again and raised two broods. In the same tree just a few feet away a pair of Cedar

Waxwings had a nest. They never quarrelled, so they seem to get along better than people.

In our barnyard buildings there are nests of Barn Swallows. There are six or seven nests. Graceful they are when they fly around for insects. When they sit on the wires they seem to be having a speaking contest.

There are two nests of Kingbirds in our yard. My they're cranky birds! When anyone goes by their nest they start scolding.

After much effort I discovered an oriole's nest high up in our tree. They come back every summer. Such lovely birds!

Robins are here every year and raise two broods. It's interesting to watch them pull earthworms out of the lawn.

Yellow Warblers nest in our lilac trees each year. This summer on a very windy day I saw how the baby birds had to hang on with their toe nails for dear life.

Many years ago Mom put a metal box up in a tree and each year a pair of wrens use it for a nest. The male bird sits high in a tree and sings his heart out. They are very excited when the young come.

Last September my sister brought a Red-breasted Nuthatch into the house. We gave it some crumbs and let it go. It flew away to its nest.

The Killdeers are poor nest builders. They just pick a hollow in the ground, put in a few straws and feathers and it serves the purpose. The little baby Killdeers look so cute when they run around on their two little "match sticks."

There are many other birds about our farm but I can't name them all. But I get many joyful moments watching them.

## SPARROWS PESTERING WRENS

by Audrey Carpenter, age 11,  
Broadview

At my home we have eight bird houses, most of them for wrens. On the afternoon of May 24, I saw the two House Sparrows who were always pestering the wrens in our yard. They went to one of the wren's bird houses. One sparrow would try to get in, then it would fly to a branch. The other sparrow then would try to get in. The wren was sitting on a branch helplessly. When the sparrows flew away, the wren would hurry and get in before they came back.

## WHAT WE SAW ON OUR NATURE HIKE

by **Lydia Koziol**, Benito, Manitoba

The pupils of Thunderbird School went for a nature hike on Friday afternoon, June 2, 1961. We first went to the river. We had a time going through the thorns and shrub trees at first, but afterwards found we had a little path that led to the river. In the river there are so many stones that you can walk across. There is such a big stone there, about five people can sit on it.

We went farther into the river, when suddenly the boys started shouting "Crayfish, Crayfish." I ran there quickly over the stones and all and there was a live crayfish, swimming in the river. It was quite a large-sized crayfish. After that we started collecting shells. When I picked up a shell, there was a little crayfish in it, and oh, how scared I was after that.

We wanted to learn more things about the river, so we took our socks and shoes off, rolled up our pants, and went into the water, which is shallow. While we were going into the water, we saw a little raft. We went there to see what was there and guess what, there was nothing but little crayfish there.

We decided to go back to the shore, so we started off. I stepped on a stone and looked at my foot and there was a large crayfish relaxing on my foot. When we got closer to the shore, Barbara caught a toad. She let go of it, but then Billy Hadiken stepped forward and caught the toad. We looked closely at it, but it leapt out of Billy's hand. We decided we should have a little lunch, but no sooner had we started going, then Billy caught a crayfish and put it in a can. Then we started off and Billy caught another crayfish which we put in the large empty shell.

As soon as we were getting ready to eat, Lorne Allen came up with a small fish in his hands. Mildred Popoff had a jar so we filled the jar with water, and put the fish into it. We left it on the ground, and somebody went and spilled the water out, so the fish died. Then we went back to the river and found a live clam.

Then teacher said we had to go home. When we were going home our

teacher, Mrs. Coe, picked up all kinds of leaves and shrubs. We took them to school and pressed the plants and mounted them on a chart. This is the first time I've seen so many things on a hike.

## A FOXY ADVENTURE

by the pupils of Blue Jay School,  
Carrot River

We have a fox den in our bushes behind Blue Jay School. There have been foxes there for the last year or two. They visited nearby farm yards and stole chickens. Different people tried to shoot them but the foxes were too sly. They seem to have a circuit that they follow and we often see them.

Some of the boys decided to find the den and drown the foxes out. They poured three barrels of water down the hole, but it didn't reach the foxes, so they decided to dig them out. They started at one hole and dug for a ways. The foxes weren't in there, so they started a distance from the hole. They didn't find them there either, so they started at another place and followed a tunnel. As they kept digging they heard them barking and growling. They pulled each one out by a hind leg and tail and put it in a sack so it would not bite. They pulled out six young ones. The old one was not there at the time.

Each little fox was about twelve inches long including its tail. They were little reddish-brown animals with black-pointed noses. Their dark eyes shone like a cat's eyes. They stood about six inches high on short legs. They had bushy tails somewhat like a squirrel's tail, but not as long.

After carrying them home in a sack, they were put into a wagon box covered with boards and chicken wire. We tried to feed them milk and bread. They left the milk and ate a little bread.

The third morning after their capture we went to give them some fresh warm milk, but the box was empty. There was a hole in the chicken wire about six or seven inches long. It seemed that the mother fox had come in the night and rescued her young.

That morning the school boys followed the tracks about a mile from the den and found no sight of a fox, but lots of tracks. They missed hearing the school bell that morning.