

Boys' and Girls' Section

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



Comments and Prize Winners

The material which is sent in to this section continues to improve in quality and the observations are good. The prize winner this issue is Gordon Skuce. His teacher gets a prize as well for having sent in a prize winning entry from his school.

Gordon describes appearances and behavior well. Note his description of the young hawks, "four young hawks stared at me with their wings raised and their mouths open." Also, Gordon has shown his interest in the diet of the hawks and has mentioned his findings in that respect. Details like these add interest and make the report more than a list of events.

The story about Cheeper the sparrow is beautifully told, and we would like to thank Mary's mother for sending it in to us.

Reprints of the Boys' and Girls' Section from a back issue of a **Blue Jay**, Vol. XVI, No. 1, are available from the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina. Teachers and others who wish to interest children in writing to the **Blue Jay** will find these of value as information to give to interested children who do not have access to the **Blue Jay**.

Contest Rules

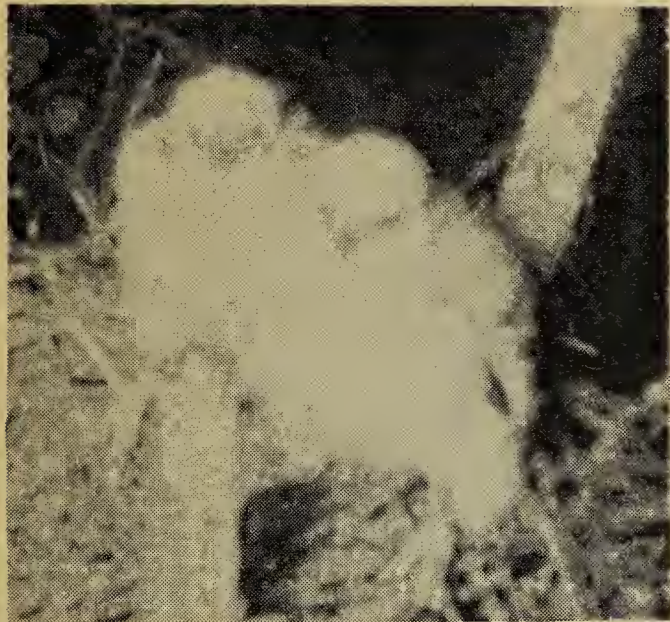
Any young person may submit material for printing in this section of the **Blue Jay**. The entries must be first-hand observations in the form of letters, stories, poems, black-and-white sketches or photographs. Letters and stories should not exceed 500 words. All entries must be accompanied by the name, age and address of the sender, and the name of his or her school.

Two or more book prizes will be awarded with each issue of the **Blue Jay**. Teachers who send in entries from their pupils may also qualify for a prize. Winners will be sent a list of books from which to select their prize. Instead of selecting a book prize the winner may select a three-year membership in the society and receive twelve issues of the **Blue Jay** free.

Share your experiences with others. Send in your nature observations. Entries should be addressed to Boys' and Girls' Section, **Blue Jay**, Miss Joyce Dew, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina. The closing date for the next issue is January 15, 1959.

A NEST OF RED-TAILED HAWKS

By Gordon Richard Skuce, 13,
Usherville, Sask.



Young Hawks, July 14, 1958

One day in the early part of July while wandering through the woods I heard a noise that sounded like a flicker. I looked around and saw a hawk circling above me. Later I saw it sitting in a nearby tree. As I walked toward it, the hawk flew off but I noticed a nest high in the tree. The nest was very hard to get at since it was about thirty-five feet off the ground. After much struggling I managed to reach the nest. As I looked over the edge four young hawks stared at me with their wings raised and their mouths open. They had only a few reddish-brown feathers on the tips of their wings and their tails. When I put my hand near the largest bird it pecked at it and scratched at it with its feet. Day by day they attained their plumage. I took a gopher to the nest one day. When I returned the following day it was not there. Another day I found a red squirrel in the nest, a number of bird feathers and the lower mandible of a small woodpecker in one of the pellets. One day after visiting them for about two weeks, one was missing. In a matter of a few days they had all disappeared. The mother continued to stay near the nest, and would occasionally scold at me. I went up to the nest later and found only a half eaten black bird. I hope the young hawks are all living.

CHEEPER

As told to her mother, by Mary Patterson Whyte, age 7, Swift Current, Sask.

Cheeper is a sparrow. We found her with two other sparrows under a nest, blown out of a tree. She had very few feathers and could not fly or hop. We took her in and put her in a box. She did not seem to know how to feed. We mixed bread and milk and tried to open her mouth. At last she opened it, and we dropped some food in. From then on, every time she saw us with a dish and a spoon, she opened her mouth and "cheeped."

After a few days we put her in a cage, and gradually she learned to use her wings and hop from perch to perch. When she was stronger, we let her fly around the back porch.

When we had kept her for four or five weeks, we opened the door to let her fly away. She seemed so happy to be in the trees and fresh air.

Every time she was hungry she came to be fed. She perched on the edge of the dish while we fed her with a spoon. After another week, she learned to peck up her own food, but she still came back four times a day for her meals.

At first she stayed in the trees some nights, and other nights she came home and hopped into her cage. The first really cold night we covered her cage with an old coat. Now every night at dusk she comes in, jumps to the top perch of the cage and cheeps as if to say "It's bed-time, will you cover me up?" When she is covered up she looks around and gives a contented little twitter, and goes to sleep.

A HAWK AND A DUCK

By John Evans, age 11,
Vermilion, Alta.

On the first day of the shooting season, Dad and some of his friends and I went shooting. We were shooting for a while and Dad winged a duck. The duck glided over a small hill. A few seconds later, a gopher hawk* flew after the duck. We heard the duck squawking obviously fighting. The noise gradually faded as if the duck were dying. The hawk probably ate the duck.

* Probably a Swainson's Hawk.

AN EXCITING HIKE

By Elizabeth McManus, age 10, and Vicki Knight, age 6, Madison, Sask.

On May 21 our school went on a hike to a cattle ranch.

When we got there we went up to the hills. We saw a lot of Buffalo Beans and other wild flowers, also a place in a dip with trees all around, which was a snake pit. We saw more than one snake pit. After we walked a while we saw a little baby meadowlark. Our teacher had a bird call and she blew it. The bird heard it. We walked till we could just about reach it but it flew away. We saw some very pretty stones. One stone was just like sheets of glass. You could peel it in sheets*. We saw a moth that looked like a bee on our teacher's shoulder. Then we saw a mouse's nest with fuzz inside it. All of a sudden somebody yelled, "I stepped on a snake." The teacher and pupils ran to see it, but it was just a snake skin. Then somebody stepped on a cactus. After that we went and saw horses, colts, calves and cows in the coulees and one spring where they get their water. Then we went for supper at the house. After that we went home.

* The mineral described here is mica. It can be split into thin flat layers, is flexible, transparent, can be scratched with your fingernail and is shiny.

LOST MUSKRAT

By Jacob H. Jmaeff, Age 13, Kamsack, Sask.

On November the nineteenth, 1957, my father was repairing our truck when he noticed a muskrat coming from the direction of a neighbouring slough. He thought this unusual and started up to examine the little animal. It fled under an old truck tire, and my father thought it would perish so he transported it to our chicken house.

All went fine. The muskrat made itself a little home of straw and every night he took straw and dirt and patched up the door. The chickens did not seem to mind him at all. Then he began to chase the chickens and pull out their tail feathers. After my father discovered that this was doing harm, he took the muskrat to the slough he appeared to come from and put him in a muskrat home there.

A WANDERING FAMILY

By Karen Knight, age 9, Madison, Sask.

On May 27, our school was very excited because we were going on a hike to my Grandma's cattle ranch.

The part I liked best was seeing some little ducklings. We all wanted to see them and of course we made so much noise that our teacher thought we had better go away quite soon. The mother duck must have thought so, too, for she flew away pretending she was hurt so we would follow her and leave her babies alone.

We started away and did not pay any more attention to them until one of us said, "Oh, look, the ducklings are following us," and sure enough some of the little darlings were following. We tried to get them back to their nest or into the pond nearby, but could not very well as we didn't want to touch them. Then we started to kind of chase them back. Most of them went down to the pond and one little duckling hid in a very small clump of wild roses. I think that if we hadn't met the little family of ducks our hike wouldn't have been so interesting.



COOT

By Doreen Kovalk, Springside, Sask.

THE WRENS

by Ruth Faith Herman, Grade 5,
Regina, Sask.

Campion College, Regina, Saskatchewan, is a very nice place. It has trees all around it, two big fields, and hedges all around the fields.

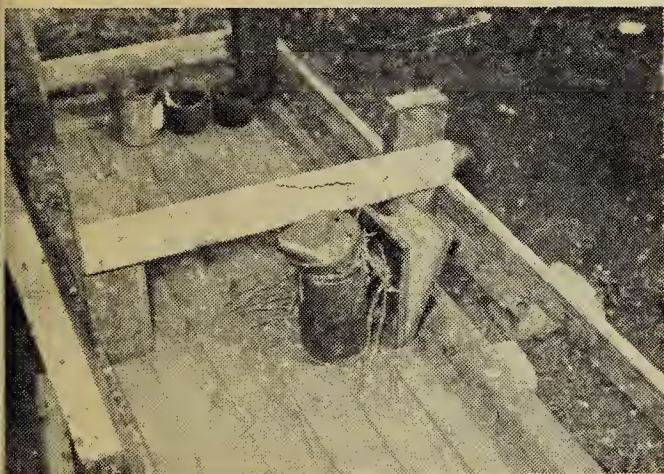
Father Peters, S.J., who teaches biology here, has some bees by the college. Once when he smoked some bees, he left the smoker in the trees. It wasn't long before two wrens spied the smoker. After having built four or five dummy-nests all around, the wrens finally built their nest in the smoker.

The mother wren laid six eggs in the nest, and sat on them for two weeks, keeping them warm.

Father Peters took pictures of the nest and the eggs, when the wrens were away.

The eggs hatched and the mother and father wren were kept very busy feeding the little wrens, with a lot of scolding and fussing.

The little wrens grew, and grew, and grew. Unfortunately the happy home was broken up by a marauding cat. The only thing left is Father Peters' pictures.



The smoker and the wren's nest.



Smoker opened to show the wren's eggs.

GROUSE DANCING

by Lawrence Lamber, age 11, Okla, Sask.

One morning in spring my younger sister Louise and I left early for school hoping we could do some bird watching. That morning we saw two ducks. When we got nearer to school we saw about twenty prairie chickens¹. They were doing the prairie chicken dance. They chased each other. They would have their wings spread and stick out their necks, spread their tails and make themselves look fierce. Then they would back into a depression and stamp their feet. As they stamped their feet, they would beat the ground with their wings. They made a cooing sound like a pigeon.

I saw them six times altogether. They gather in the same place every spring.

That morning in school my teacher asked me to tell everyone in school what I had seen.

¹ Probably Sharp-tailed Grouse. A booklet "Sharp-tailed Grouse in Saskatchewan" is available from the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina. The different species of grouse found in the province are described in this booklet.

THE SQUIRREL AND THE PIKE

by Jan de Grcot, age 11, Regina, Sask.

Two or three years ago, our family went to Lac La Ronge for the holidays. One day we went cruising in Iskwatikan Lake and we noticed a furious commotion in the water nearby. We turned around and saw pink water splashing into white foam against the shore. Out of this tussle emerged a small brown and bleeding squirrel who was being chased by an enormous pike or northern jackfish. The water was red with blood and the squirrel seemed extremely cold. We picked him up with the paddle and put him on the shore but we never tried to catch the pike. We couldn't though, because we didn't have our fishing rods with us.

NOTE: The pike is a carnivorous animal. He is known to prey upon ducklings and sometimes even full grown ducks. As Jan's story indicates, the pike will attack a squirrel too if it should happen to be in the water.