

Junior Naturalists

Edited by **Joyce Deutscher**,* Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History.



Tiger Salamander

S.M.N.H. Photo

CONTEST — SUMMER OBSERVATIONS

- Rules:** (1) Any boy or girl 16 or under may enter. Entries will be judged according to age.
- (2) Send contest entries to Joyce Deutscher, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina, Sask., to arrive not later than July 15. Sign your entry with your name, age and address.
- (3) Make a chart similar to the following by Brian Irving or do as Donald Buckle did and send us in a copy of some of your field notes.

This is not a contest to see who can get the longest list or the most "first seen" records. We are interested in what you note down or observe about plants and animals, their habits and habitat. Use your own ideas. You do not need to use the same kind of chart we have shown on page 94.

CONTEST WINNERS AND COMMENTS

We are very pleased with the results of the Spring Observations contest and wish to commend especially **Donald J. Buckle** for the excellent observations he sent. First prize goes to Donald and honorable mention to **Brian Irving** and to **Christopher Ernest Mickleborough** who sent in an entry similar to Brian's. We do hope that you keep up the good work and that more of you will begin keeping field note books and will begin to send in your observations to us. Any kind of notebook will do for this purpose from the kind you use in school to a diary or daily journal with each date printed in for you at the top of

the page. Regardless of the kind of note book you use it is important to mark down the date and the place of your observations. Make sketches as well for additional records if you wish. Sketches of plants you have seen and cannot identify at once are particularly useful.

Space does not permit us to publish all of Donald J. Buckle's notes. The excerpts in the following article will show you that he is interested in a variety of wild life forms ranging from the insects he has hatching in pond water in his room to the birds he sees outside the window.

* Our Junior Naturalists editor Joyce Dew is now Mrs. Joyce Deutscher.

NOTES FROM THE JOURNAL OF DONALD BUCKLE

Editor's Note: Donald Buckle of Lady Lake sent us in a copy of some of the notes he's been taking over the past year as his entry to the "Spring Observation" contest. We are printing some of these to give you an idea of the variety of observations which Donald made. We hope this will inspire others to keep similar note books.

Sat., Feb. 3, 1962

This morning (10:00 a.m.) two Blue Jays visited the feeder along with a Gray Jay. The Blue Jays reminded me of "city slickers" coming for a visit to their poorer but more resourceful country cousins the Grays. The Blue Jays, when eating, raise their heads a good distance above the suet and drive their long beaks straight down like a pile driver into it. Besides the jays several Chickadees, in two family groups, a pair of Hairy Woodpeckers, and at least one pair of Downys came to the feeder.

Tues., Feb. 13, 1962

Until an animal has been lived with for a length of time its personality remains hidden, either because of its fear or shyness, or because of the limited time spent observing it. Losing its fear it displays its personality as well as the general habits of its species.

The Chickadee is a prime example of this. At least once a day he performs a simulated bathing. He will perch on the edge of his water cup and flick his beak rapidly, splashing water all over the room, hop to his perch where he vibrates his wings rapidly, holding them extended $\frac{1}{4}$ away from his body and wipe his beak and/or the sides of his perch one or two times to remove water from his eyes or to keep down his wet face feathers. This is repeated for approximately five minutes. Preening takes place after the "bath". The bird fluffs its feathers and vibrates its wings, and after rubbing its beak on its oil gland runs it along the primary feathers of its partially extended wings.

Another interesting thing is the number and diversity of his calls. There is at least one call-note to other Chickadees, a note of happiness (?) when he is let out of his cage, an alarm note, etc., etc.

He is very inquisitive. In the evenings if he is let out of the cage he will search the floor and my desk for

bits of food scratched out of his cage during the day. His favourite hunting grounds are my shelves where he knocks over test tubes and eats dry "bugs" I saved to study, and the window ledge when the window is open. He has a knack for doing things he shouldn't. One day he jimmied open the match box of hibernating Angle-wings with his bill and ate several before I could stop him. The other day he tried to make off with a Meadow Vole's skull complete with label. Despite the fact that he could hardly lift it he reached the curtain rod and began to peck it before I could stop him.

Wed., Mar. 28, 1962

Saw a flock of about 20 Horned Larks on the way to school this morning.

Since early fall a small ($\frac{1}{4}$ ") beetle, brown in color, spotted with darker brown, lived in a pint jar of water in my room. It remains clinging to vegetation at the bottom of the jar most of the time, coming to the surface occasionally to replenish the air bubble under its abdomen. Lately it is spending more time just below the surface and today, as it remained stationary in this position for some time, I thought it might be dead. I picked it up and to my surprise it made a buzzing sound, probably with its wing covers. This sound is audible for a distance of two feet. The beetle will only buzz when severely disturbed, and then only a few times. After this no amount of poking will make it buzz.

Mon., April 2, 1962

The beetle mentioned on March 28, 1962, died on the 29th. I pinned it as No. 62. Heard several crows flying over the river; earlier today Mom saw two crows.

Tues., April 3, 1962

The weather is fairly nice today, the temp. was up to 40 degrees. I saw the first pussy willows about two

weeks ago, now catkins on the poplars are just showing. The Chickadee is livelier than ever now. I will have to let him go soon.

worse today. It snowed about 4 inches last night and today it is only 25 above with a north wind blowing. Not even the slate-colored juncos,

Sat., April 7, 1962

The weather took a turn for the better during the day. His favourite hunting grounds are my shelves where he knocks over test tubes and eats dry "bugs". I saved to study, and the

SPRING OBSERVATIONS
by **Brian Irving**, age 11, Kelvington

Area N.E. 22-36-12

Date	Name	Where Seen	Other Observations
Mar. 7	Skunk	along roadside	first time seen since fall
Mar. 17	Horned Lark	along roadside	picking up grain
Mar. 21	Pussy Willows	in house yard	just beginning to show
Mar. 25	House Fly	on sunny side of building	
Mar. 25	House Sparrow	in house yard	carry straw to nest in spruce
Mar. 29	Gray Partridge	along roadside	in pairs
Mar. 29	Common Crow	over road	flying
Apr. 3	Canada Geese	over buildings	flying V formation
Apr. 6	Slate-colored Junco	on doorstep	eating bread crumbs
Apr. 2	Brewer's Blackbird	in house yard	flock of 10
Apr. 9	Northern Shrike	in house yard	8 days later than last year

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER REPORT

By **Billie Pugh**, 139 Lorne Ave. E., Brandon, Man.

On Sunday afternoon, January 21, 1962, Mr. Richardson, Mr. Lane, David Plews and myself went to Spence's home near the Industrial School at Brandon. There we saw a Red-bellied Woodpecker feeding at Spence's feeding station. It was the first Red-bellied Woodpecker seen by all except Mr. Richardson who had seen one years before. Other birds feeding there were chickadees, Blue Jays, nuthatches and Downy Woodpeckers.

WINTER SURVIVAL

By **Bohdam Pylypec**, Yellow Creek

Many mammals and birds have been starving this winter because food was scarce. Squirrels have had a

hard time finding mushrooms and nuts.

One cold winter day two squirrels came to our place to see if they could find any food. After a search they found our storage shed (where we kept meat and bread). They found open holes in the shed and started gnawing meat. My father blocked up these holes, but that didn't do any good. The squirrels gnawed another hole which we found next morning. After blocking up some holes and finding more of them, my father gave up for the squirrel gnawed about ten holes.

Then my father put the meat and bread in metal containers. Still the squirrels stayed by the shed.

After some time a weasel came and chased the squirrels out, but finding no food, it left. The squirrels came back again. He is very inquisitive. In the evening I think the squirrels will leave when the snow is finally gone.

FEMALE GROSBEEK

By Rachel Ninowski, age 9, Kamsack

On January 15, 1962, I found a frozen female Grosbeak. It was -30° outside.

The back and breast are slate grey color. The rump and the head are golden yellow. The tail and wing feathers are black. There are two white wing bars. The tail has 12 feathers.

From the tip of the beak to the tip of the tail, the bird is 7½ inches long. The beak is ½ an inch wide, ½ an inch long, and one inch and a half in circumference at its base. Its black legs are 2 inches long. There are 4 claws on each foot and each claw is ⅜ of an inch long.

We see many of these birds feeding with the rose-colored Pine Grosbeaks on the Maple trees. So we think it's a female Pine Grosbeak.

PUSSY WILLOWS

By Gloria Tommila, age 10, Elma, Man.

You are such a pretty thing,
How you hug and how you cling,
To the branch so cold and bare,
Out among the frosty air.
We're all happy when you appear
For then we know spring is here,
As we walk in the crispy air.
We see these pussies everywhere.
Sunny days and singing heart,
Good-bye winter we must part
Spring is here and here it stays,
It's Easter time and holidays.

GROWING LEAVES IN WINTER

By Irene Pylpec, Yellow Creek

In February a pupil brought a popular branch to school. We put it into some water. In about a week the leaves sprouted. Some time later another pupil brought soil for the branch. Then we planted it. For some time the branch stayed in the soil and water with little sunshine. After that we put the branch on the window sill where it got more sunshine. Then it started growing better.

(After a while I thought I should plant different kinds of branches. My

birch is growing about the best now. Another branch is growing quite well. I put the branch upside down in the water because when it stayed the right side up it didn't want to grow.

Of course it didn't want to grow in the water either, so I put it the right side up again. Now I'm going to keep my plants growing that way. I also will put it in some soil.

OUR EXPERIENCE AT WASKESIU

By Denis Simair, age 14, Springside

Waskesiu is a Provincial Park set aside for people to enjoy. There are thousands of cabins, away from the beach.

When we arrived at Waskesiu, we were exhausted from the four hundred mile journey so we went directly to our cabins. During the night, when my parents and I were asleep in our beds, I was dreaming that I was in a rainstorm. Terrified, I jumped from my bed, I was soaked to the skin from head to foot. It was raining and our roof had been leaking right where I was sleeping. My parents woke up from all the excitement and laughed at the sight of me. After the rain had stopped, we went and rented a modern cabin. It had electricity and running water.

At Waskesiu there are many sports such as bowling, tennis, and roller skating. The beach is tremendous in size with thousands of people on it enjoying the warm sunshine. We enjoyed our stay at Waskesiu and one of these summers we will be going there again.

OUR DEER

By Doreen Maksymchuk, age 11, Arran.

In my locality
There are many deer
They are not too frightened
And you can come quite near.

They are reddish brown
The fawns are spotted white
And you could see their green eyes
Gleaming in the night.

I think deer are friends
And should not be shot
But if they are
Not a whole lot