

BLUE JAY CHATTER

Individuals and societies interested in preserving wildlife so that wild plants and animals will always be here for all to enjoy often have reason to feel deeply discouraged. We learn of song birds being sold in Canada at \$1.50 a dozen to grace an epicure's table; we are warned by biologist Dr. V. E. F. Solman of the Canadian Wildlife Service that the day may come when we hesitate to eat wild game because of the danger of being poisoned by pesticides; we learn of the proposal to add to the hunter's list of game birds the magnificent sandhill crane whose rolling call in spring and fall migration flights brings us something of the spirit of the wild.

Why must man be forever bent on indiscriminate killing and destruction? Why can we not accept the wise philosophy of "live and let live"? Many areas must be developed for intensive use by human beings, but why is there no effort made to save whatever we can wherever we can, to set aside for wildlife many and extensive areas which are in fact more suitable for this than for any other purpose? I am alarmed because in all our huge prairie grassland, where it sometimes takes far more than 40 acres to feed one cow, we cannot find one section to set aside as a grassland preserve, as a wildlife refuge, as a place where plants and animals may go unmolested by the activities of man. We are apparently obsessed by the idea that land must be "used", even if the land is so poor that taxes must be waived to encourage its "use". I am alarmed because in all our vast northland wilderness no place can be found which we can agree to preserve as inviolate, completely free of the money-making activities of man. Though interested people may suggest such an area with wise forethought for coming generations, it seems impossible to protect it against the interest of a single individual who claims his private right to choose that undeveloped area to develop for his own money-making scheme.

In the **Blue Jay** we have continued to urge protection for wildlife. Our Society on many occasions has expressed official protests or made constructive suggestions re: threatened natural areas and native species. For example, when cranes were under fire for damaging farmers' crops we urged the creation of refuges to protect and contain the birds. Some thought has indeed been given to buying land on Last Mountain Lake, but there is talk now of allowing the birds to collect there so that they can be the more effectively dispersed! Finally, after all the efforts to gain further protection for cranes, there comes a proposal to put them on the hunter's list!

This turn of events is not without its bitter irony. If the sandhill becomes a game species, thousands of dollars can be legitimately spent by government agencies and sportsmen's organizations in estimating breeding potential and expected harvest. Like ducks (which insurance adjusters claim do far more damage in the grain fields) sandhill cranes will now merit serious concern for their welfare.

No wonder conservationists feel like throwing up their hands and accepting defeat! The Saskatchewan Natural History Society, however, does not seem prepared to leave the field of battle. The article in the **Toronto Star Weekly** protesting "the slaughter of the singing snowbirds" has been supported by our Society's request that the snow bunting be added to the list of species protected under the Migratory Birds Act. The newspaper announcement of "last days of freedom waning for sandhill cranes" was answered by a telegram to the wildlife conference in Ottawa protesting the proposal to add the sandhill to the hunting list. Now, in this issue of the **Blue Jay**, we publish an article from Yorkton proposing the preservation and development of the wetlands of the area, an example of the wise, multi-purpose use of resources which our Society encourages. The Society will give this proposal any support it can. Good luck, Yorkton, with this splendid project!