

JUNIOR NATURALISTS

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



Bohemian Waxwing by Ernest Skaar.

COMMENTS AND PRIZE WINNERS

We have an interesting variety of entries for this issue ranging from some rather strong opinions about poisoning expressed by Bob Turner to some close factual observations of a flower by Bohdan Pylypec.

The prize, a year's subscription to the Blue Jay, is awarded to Kenneth Dickson of Tregarva for his original observations of frogs and fish in a spring at Flying Creek. We like Ken's enthusiasm and the fact that cold winter weather did not keep him from making some very interesting observations.

With the coming of summer weather, Junior Naturalists will be

getting out more and we hope making many observations of what goes on in the world of nature. Do send in your drawings, letters and comments about the plants, birds, mammals, insects and other animals, that you have been observing.

CONTEST RULES

Any boy or girl 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 Mrs. Joyce Deutscher, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina, to arrive not later than July 15.



Pizhmo, A Flower Immigrant to Canada.

PIZHMO, A FLOWER IMMIGRANT TO CANADA

Bohdan Pylypec, age 12,
Yellow Creek

The name of this plant in Ukrainian is Pihzmo. This plant grows about one foot high. It has fern-like leaves. These leaves are quite dense around the stem. The flowers are in sort of cases which are spherically shaped. These cases and the flowers look like the central part of a sunflower, but are smaller. The flowers are dark yellow. The seeds are long, dark brown and are in these cases. The roots are quite dense. This plant has a bad odour so cows and sheep don't eat it. The plant blooms for a long time.

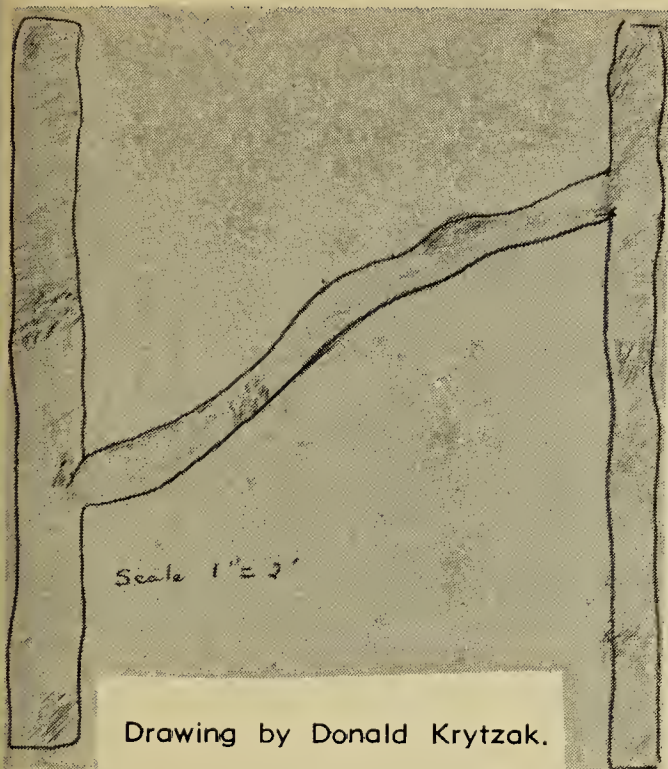
This plant originated in the

Ukraine. There it is grown to border houses. The plant was brought to Canada by Ukrainian emigrants. It was planted on what is now our property. It grew in a yard which is now deserted. It reproduced and grew by itself for awhile. Some of the plants were transplanted to our house by my father.

The plant grows in a border by our house. After producing firm roots it needs little care. It needs water only during extremely dry weather.

Some of these plants are still growing by themselves. They reproduce and grow very readily. Some of the plants spread among deserted rhubarb patches. This plant in the wild state grows in poor clay and rocky soil.

Can anyone give me the common or scientific name for this plant?



OUR FREAK

by **Donald Krytzak**, age 12,
Yellow Creek

One day our teacher, Mr. Isinger, showed us a section of two trees connected by one branch. The larger tree trunk was about thirty years old; the younger about twenty years old. We counted the annual rings. A possible solution for this freak is that the branch of the older tree rubbed up against the younger tree. As the younger tree grew the branch slowly fused. But the real problem is which way does the sap flow? From the older tree to the younger or the younger to the older? If anyone has a solution please send it in to the **Blue Jay**.

Mr. Isinger found this freak a few miles south of Yellow Creek near Basin Lake. It was found in the fall of 1962.

A MEADOWLARK VISITOR

by **Diana Hartley**, age 13,
Glasgow, Montana

The first week in September a young meadowlark flew past our window and spent a great deal of time hopping about in our backyard. My mother noticed the peculiar way it was moving and said it might be injured. It would hop from place to place and sometimes fly short distances.

We realized it was too young to survive the winter so we decided to try to catch it and nurse it back to

health so it would be freed in the spring. After several attempts in vain we were finally successful in capturing it in an old bird cage we kept in the cellar.

We covered it up for the night. The next morning we found it dead on the bottom of the cage. From this we came to these conclusions:

1. It would have been almost impossible for us to catch a wild bird if it had been healthy.
2. That it died either from some disease unfamiliar to us or from starvation.

COMMENTS ON THE POISONING OF PREDATORS

by **Bob Turner**, Box 31, Ogema

Have you ever seen an animal that was poisoned? Have you ever wondered what a poisoned animal feels like, what he goes through before he finally dies? Usually the poison takes at least $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour before the victim is unable to walk because of paralysis, and a little while yet before it finally dies. Poison consists of many forms, such as; poisoned meat, poison bombs, and in general, anything that the predator eats. The poisoning of coyotes and foxes is in my opinion the most cruel way of killing an animal there is.

In my opinion a well organized hunt, when the predators get too plentiful, would be the best and the most humane way of controlling them. Although this takes more time and a lot more energy on the people's part, I am sure it would be more effective. Another thing, I think that the predators should only be gotten rid of when they become a threat to the safety of our poultry, etc. Foxes and coyotes do a great deal of good, along with a little bad, so they should not be constantly controlled.

Foxes and coyotes are mentioned here in particular because they are the ones that are most often misinterpreted and end up paying for it with their lives. These two animals eat countless mice, gophers, and help to keep other predators at a minimum. But often they stray too close to the farmer's henhouse, and as a result they end up on the wanted list. Should they be constantly slaughtered because of these few and far

between instances? People are forever doing things they shouldn't and they aren't poisoned for doing it, so why should the coyotes and foxes be killed for things they don't understand? If people are so lazy that they have to poison them instead of going out and hunting them, then in my opinion they should just let them live, because in my opinion poisoning any animal is just cruel, pure inhumane murder.

WINTER ADVENTURES AT FLYING CREEK

by **Kenneth Dickson**, Tregarva

Our creek, called Flying Creek, never freezes over in spots. One day in February I decided to get down on my hands and knees and look into the hole at the spring. So I did. Well, guess what I saw. I was really surprised to see frogs lying in the dead grass, 5 to 10 of them all sleeping at the very bottom of the spring in a hole about as big as a quart jar. You can see the water coming out of the hole with lots of bugs swimming around in there too.

The next day I went to a different spring and I couldn't see the bottom for fish. Boy, was I surprised! Fish from two inches to one foot long or bigger. There were just hundreds of them. Doug Gilroy and I are going on a hike one of these days. I told him about this so he would like to see it. It is very surprising what you see in a hole in the ice in the middle of winter.

THE LYNX

by **Morley Bullock**, age 12, Maryfield

This happened on a Saturday morning. Two of my brothers went out hunting in the early hours of the morning. It was cold and quiet out and they had come upon some prey which they were trying to corner. One of my brothers was going to circle around. As he rounded a bend he came upon a startling sight. Down below him about twenty-five yards away there was an animal crouched up beside its dead prey. It looked as if it had a good meal from the young deer which was lying on its side with its neck ripped open. My brother figured it was a bobcat but later found it was a lynx.

It had decidedly long fur and very

springy, long hind legs. It had large feet and a short tail. Its tail had a black ring around the tip of it. This proved it to be a lynx. It had tufts on its ears and tufts around its cheek. Its weight was about twenty-five pounds. It was very exciting to have seen a lynx so closely. I studied it a great deal because I am interested in wild animals, and lynx are scarce in our area.

SOME SPRING NOTES

by **Brian Irving**, age 12, Kelvington

There have been many Common Redpolls, Evening and Pine Grosbeaks, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers and Horned Larks around and near my home this spring.

On February 16 both Evening and Pine Grosbeaks, about ten of each species, were seen for the first time.

There have also been many coyotes around. I saw single coyotes on both February 26 and 27 in a field. On February 27 I saw my first Horned Larks for this year.

On March 5 a number of Common Redpolls were seen eating crumbs on our doorstep. They have been around up to this time.

On March 21 some Gray Partridges were seen in pairs. Later in the day I was down at Bob Fraser's store in Kelvington. He was feeding sunflower seeds to about twenty Evening Grosbeaks on the edge of the sidewalk. I was able to watch them for several minutes and make out their markings. Bob has fed approximately five hundred pounds of sunflower seeds this winter and spring.

On March 22 a pair of Starlings were noticed in the top of some poplar trees. I was able to view them for several minutes through 7x50 field glasses. I could make out their markings, their spots, yellow bill and short tail. These birds have been in and near our home ever since.

On March 23 I saw my first crow for this year. The first Slate-colored Juncos were seen March 26.

On March 28 a large flock of Canada Geese flew over the yard. The same day a Brewer's Blackbird was seen sitting on a spruce tree.

On April 5 four Mallards were seen sitting on the edge of a slough. A Robin was also seen sitting in a spruce tree. The Horned Larks have been around all the time.