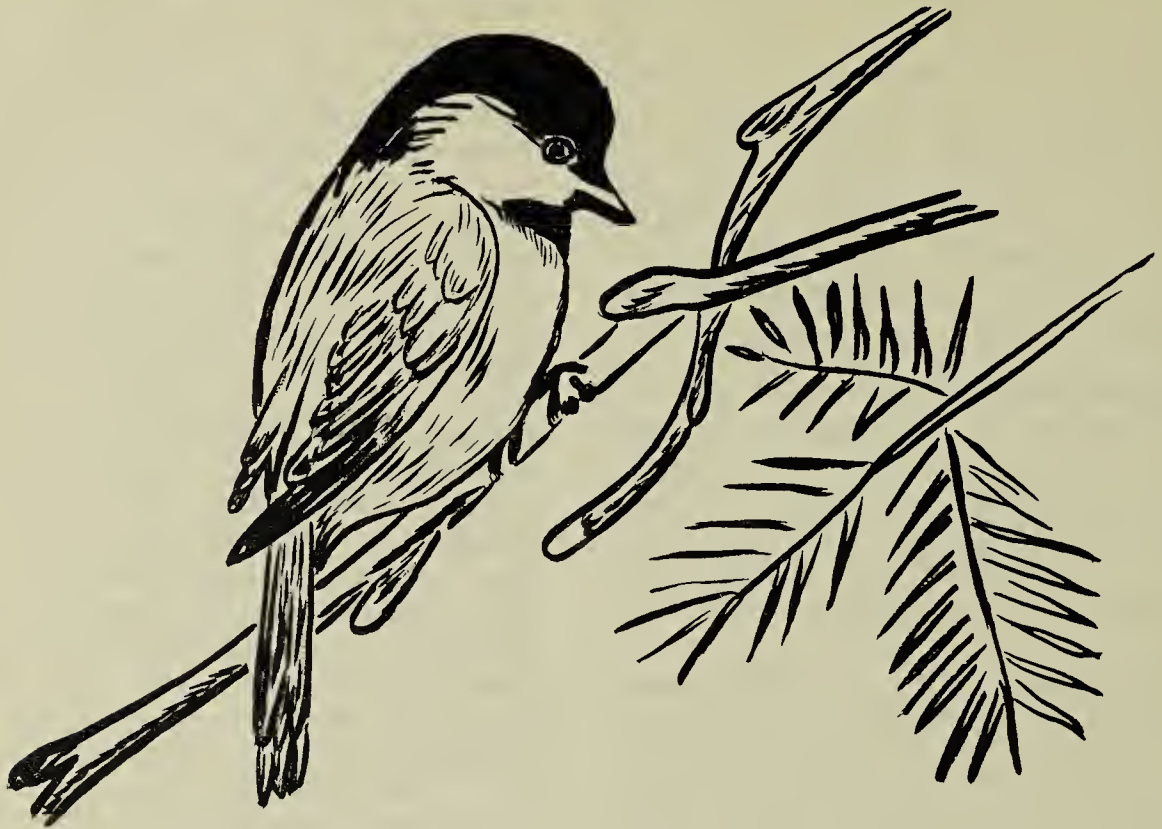


Boys' and Girls' Section



CHICKADEE by Billy Horseman, age 15, of Saltcoats, Sask.

Comments and Prize Winners

There was a scarcity of new material for this issue; however, by looking through the files we found some good observations which were crowded out of earlier Blue Jays. Some of these stories had to be edited, mostly by cutting out sentences which had nothing to do with the animal being described. For example, if you are talking about a skunk you saw while bringing in the cows it is not necessary to add that you milked the cows when you got them home and "bossy" kicked the pail over. Milking cows really has nothing to do with describing the actions of a skunk.

Kathleen Gunnarsson tells about a skunk eating bees, something which is certainly of interest. It would have added to her story had she told how the skunk caught the bees and what it did to them before eating them. Details like that are always of interest, especially if you are describing something not often seen. Scientists spend hours watching an animal in order to describe in detail and accurately everything it does. Such observations are called "behavior studies" and are important in helping us to a better understanding of living things, including ourselves.

Billy Horseman sent in a drawing of a chickadee seen at his feeding station. Those of you who have feeding stations for birds or mammals could tell how you made them, where you put them, and what animals they attract. Just recently we heard of someone who had a feeding station for snakes. She put bread and milk out for them and they are reported to have enjoyed it very much.

We have a coyote story in this issue. This mammal is often clever enough to outwit both man and dogs. Observations about how it does this are of interest. Some of you might have an opportunity to observe coyote behavior and report it to us.

If you have sent in letters and they were not printed the suggestions made in this column should be helpful. The main thing is to have something worth writing about and to keep trying. Sometimes a little practice is all that is needed, and sometimes good material gets crowded out of the issue.

The prizes are awarded to Robbi and Bette Cannings for their observations of a Hawk Owl and to Beverly Esplen for her report on fox behavior.

Contest Rules

Any young person may submit material for printing in this section of the **Blue Jay**. The entries may 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. Send in your nature observations and perhaps you will win a prize. Entries should be addressed to Boys' and Girls' Section, **Blue Jay**, 2335 Athol Street, Regina. The closing date for the next issue is April 15, 1958.

My Experience With a Mother Fox and Her Three Cubs

by **Beverly Esplen**, 12, Pense, Sask.

One day when I was playing hide and seek I hid behind a clump of bushes out in the field. I saw a mother fox and her three cubs playing around the entrance to their den. Then, while I was watching, one of the cubs decided to do a bit of exploring. He started to trot off across the field. I thought he was too small a fox to go out into the world alone so I watched to see what the mother would do. She might run after him and head him back, she didn't. She just got to her feet and "pointed" with her sharp muzzle in the direction in which the cub was going and stood very still and silent. She didn't make a sound, at least none that I could hear. Then by some strange means of communication the little cub began to waver in his steps and he slowed down, then stopped. All of a sudden he turned quickly around and looked straight at his mother. But his mother didn't move, howl or do anything, she just stood there and gazed at him, as if she was a statue or had something on her mind. It seemed as if the mother were holding on to a piece of invisible string which was tied to her cub. He started to run home. Was he glad to see his mother!

Skunk Eating Bees

by **Kathleen Gunnarsson**, 10, Bredenbury, Sask.

A few weeks ago, a friend of my father sent us a copy of the "**Blue Jay**." As my sister and I were looking through it we came to the Boys' and Girls' Section. So we thought we would send you the story of the skunk that came to visit our beehives last fall.

One evening, just before dusk, a skunk came and started scratching at the entrance of a beehive. This must have annoyed the bees because they came streaming out of the hive; as they came out, he would gobble them up. We wondered how he could eat them without being stung. We didn't want him to eat all of our bees, so my sister hurried out to the barn, where my father was working, and told him to come to the house.

My father saw the skunk right away so he got his rifle and shot him.

We were sorry to see him die but we didn't want him to eat all of our bees. Then the perfume came. We didn't go near that place for quite awhile.

A Smart Coyote

David Farrell, age 13, of Saltcoats, tells us of a raid a coyote made on his neighbor's hen house, and his attempt to catch the animal.

"Knowing that the coyote would try to run to the nearest bush, I rode along the top of the bank so I could cut him off. Ahead of me was a shrub pile and there were chicken feathers around it. When I got within fifty yards of it, up jumped the coyote. He did just what I expected, he ran up the bank and started for the bush, the hounds after him. The dogs overtook him before he went fifty yards. The coyote, seeing no other way out, turned back towards the lake. The hounds not expecting this lost some ground. The coyote, his tail straight out behind him, dashed over the bank and into the water. The hounds plunged in after him and tried hard to swim close enough to grab him but they were no match for the fleeing coyote. When the coyote reached the other side he raced across a field and into a bush. The hounds gave up the chase.



HAWK OWL, by Robbie Cannings, age 9, West Bench, Penticton, B.C.

A Rare Visitor

Bette Cannings, 11, Box 31, West Bench, Penticton, B.C.

During the Christmas Holidays last year we visited the Experimental Farm in Summerland. We were having our annual family bird count, so we decided to drive around the orchards where there was one or two inches of snow. There we saw a Hawk Owl sitting on the top branch of an apple tree.

We could tell it was a Hawk Owl by its long tail and the black markings on each side of its face. As the sun shone brightly on it we could see the brown bar markings on its breast and the white "bib" around its throat. It was quite tame so we could get within fifteen feet of the tree in which it was perched. The bird almost scared us the way it stared, and blinked its big round eyes. When it flew away we noticed it flew more like a hawk than an owl.

The men working in the orchard said they saw the owl diving to the ground once in a while for a mouse he had spotted, but it always flew up again to one of the highest branches of a tree.

My father saw it several times

during the late winter and early spring. It was last seen on the fifth of April at the top of a large walnut tree. This must have been its favourite perch for it was seen there several times. Perhaps "our" Hawk Owl stayed at the Experimental Farm because it knew "the farm" was Game Reserve.

Our Winter Visitor

by **Evelyn Lohr, 9, Erskine, Alta.**

On December 7 my daddy was surprised to see a Mallard Duck when the milk cows eat green feed. He gave her some wheat and made her a puddle for water. Each night she flies away and comes back in the morning. She is so tame that mum and we children can come within three feet of her. My granny took some movies of her.

One day when it thawed she had a great time dabbling in the puddle. If she gets lonesome she waddles over to see the Bantams. We hope she stays all winter so she can raise some baby ducks next summer. I like to read the stories in the **Blue Jay** so I thought that other children might like to hear about our winter visitor.

A Wild Goose

Marvin Morvik, 12, Dollard, Sask.

One spring day when I was down at the slough where our four tame geese usually swim, I saw only two geese. On the way home I saw three geese walking towards our buildings. I knew that there were two geese at the slough, so I thought the other one was a duck. I drove closer to them and noticed that it was a wild goose. I drove past him and he just walked faster.

When I told everyone about the goose we sat in the window and watched as the geese came home. The tame geese just waddled past, but the wild goose walked gracefully beside the others.

We watched him and he went into the grain pile and started eating the grain. Just as he was eating, Dad came and picked up a pitch fork and walked to the barn. The wild goose got scared and flew down to the other geese at the slough.

The wild goose's body is a brown and white colour. Its neck and head are all black except for a white line by his eyes and he has a little white under his tail. He is about half the size of the tame geese. That is the closest I've ever been to a wild goose.

Chickadee Observations

Linden Hubbard, 11, Grenfell, Sask.

Craig, my brother, made a bird-feeding station which was set on a pole covered with tin.

Two chickadees come to eat when it is light enough to turn the kitchen light off in the morning. One chickadee eats while the other sits on a sunflower plant and eats the seeds. Then the one flies away and the other goes into the feeding station. One chickadee is a bit scared and sits on the edge of the bird-feeding station and keeps on the lookout while it eats. We think they are the same two who nested in our crab-apple tree in the orchard. Then, one would sit in a tree near by while the other got food. They had one baby.

Our dog sleeps on the straw beneath the bird-feeding station, but the chickadees are not scared because she doesn't bark at them or chase them.

Albino Sparrow

Jim Breadner, 15, Armley, Sask.

One day last summer, about the first of August, I was surprised to see a white bird flying across the yard with a group of sparrows. Later I found a mother sparrow feeding it weed seeds.

This bird was all white except for its beady little red eyes. It also had the same voice and habits as an ordinary sparrow. All this added up to only one thing, an albino sparrow a very rare and freak happening.

NOTE: A recently opened display at the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History features abnormal coloring in animals. Among the albinos is a pure white Gray Partridge (Hungarian Partridge) with pink legs and bill, and reddish eyes. The crow displayed is a partial albino, mostly black with white feathers on its breast. Two partially albino sparrows are shown; one of them is brown flecked with white, the other a light greyish white with black eyes. The sparrow described by Jim appears to be a complete albino, the red eyes being explained by color due to blood vessels rather than pigment coloring in the iris. The other extreme in coloring is an animal which is much darker than normal. This condition is known as melanism. Several melanistic Ground Squirrels are on display. They are dark grey to black in color.

A Wild Animal Story

Edwin Kuchn, 12, Clouston, Sask.

One morning when the sun was coming up I went for the cows, and I thought I saw the cows but no—it was a pack of coyotes. They were surrounding another animal so I sent my dog after them and climbed up a tree. Then the results came when my dog chased the coyotes over the field.

Just then I saw something move where the coyotes were. Then I saw a mother porcupine and six little ones. Then the dog started after the mother porcupine. She gave a signal and all of them rolled into little balls of sharp quills. Then the dog and I went for the cows, and left the porcupines alone.

The next night I took the little porcupines down some crusts of bread which they enjoyed very much. I did that every day for a week.

One day I fed them and they started to follow me home. When I got home the small porcupines started for the neighbor's place and the dog took after them. But the dog was so full of quills that he died.