

AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES IN SASKATCHEWAN

by Alan Wade, age 14, Regina

Editor's Note: The following is an extract from a 15 minute talk given by Alan Wade to the Regina Natural History Society. Alan described and showed slides of Saskatchewan's reptiles and amphibians.

"On May 21, 1961, while canoeing in the vicinity of Craven on the out-flow stream from Last Mountain Lake, I witnessed a Plains Garter Snake swallowing an adult Tiger Salamander. The snake, with a part of its tail missing, would probably have exceeded 30 inches in length. I captured the snake and it is now in the collection of the National Museum.

"The Wood Frog, a medium sized frog, is found in the Boreal Forest and the Parkland zones, but is largely absent from the Grasslands. Here is a frog which can change colors from almost a black to a very light color. Two Wood Frogs I captured north of La Ronge and now have alive in a terrarium, show this ability to change color very nicely.

"The Western Painted Turtle is a strong swimmer. It suns itself on logs, projecting objects, or open sloping banks next to water. It is very wary, as I discovered this spring in trying to capture some on the Qu'Appelle River, and will dive or slide off long before you can get close.

"Several years ago a large Bull Snake was captured alive in the Big Muddy by Dr. Nero and Joyce Dew. I now want to show you Caesar Augustus the Second who resided for a few years at the Museum and was viewed by many thousands of people. This famous snake, which is almost six feet in length, now lives at the Wade household and is visited frequently by neighborhood and other children and adults.

The Bull Snake, because it consumes many rodents, especially "gophers", rats and mice, is a great friend of the farmer. Bull Snakes should be given full benefit of protection wherever found.

"Mr. J. J. Deck, who has written on snakes for the **Blue Jay**, in a recent letter to me described some of his adventures with rattlesnakes. I quote one paragraph from his letter:

'I myself did not dislike the snakes, in fact I liked them. They,

like every other living creature here in our part of the world do not look for trouble, and if trouble (like me for instance) came their way, they tried their level best to get out of the way and only took a stand to fight when they got cornered . . . I even know of some farmers that would not let any be killed on their farms because they kept down the gopher, mouse and rat population.'

"Perhaps some of you may wonder why I am interested in amphibians and reptiles and how I got started. Perhaps my curiosity was aroused early by a huge Loggerhead Turtle I discovered on a South Carolina beach. Or, maybe my interest increased when I held a large eight-foot Indigo Snake at the famous Ross Allen reptile exhibit in Florida."

REPORT FROM BRANDON JR. BIRD WATCHING CLUB

by John Nicol, Brandon

This spring the Brandon Junior Bird Watching Club set up a number of nests as a club project. The results were as follows: Tree Swallows (64), House Wrens (18), House Sparrows (7), Flickers (1), Starling (1), Vacant (28), Stolen (2), Total 121.

One duck nest was put out but it was inhabited by a wren family.

A GOLDEN EAGLE

by Douglas Young, age 12,
Shaunavon

On my bird count I saw a Golden Eagle. In the spring my friend and I went to see if we could locate it again. We drove to the White Mud River. Scanning the cliffs through the binoculars we spotted it sitting on a crag. We drove closer and the eagle flew away. We approached cautiously and discovered the nest which was about twenty-five feet up the cliff.

The nest was constructed of branches and was about eight feet long, three feet wide and nine feet deep. On it was one eaglet. I didn't make any sound as we approached. It was covered with blackish feathers with white spots. Its wing span was about three feet.

All the while we were there we kept an anxious eye on the Western sky for the return of the mother bird.