

The President's Corner

By **Frank Roy**, President of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society

How soon will the editor of the **Blue Jay** be able to announce the publication of a new work entitled "The Birds of Saskatchewan"? It is 34 years since H. H. Mitchell published his "Catalogue of the Birds of Saskatchewan" in the *Canadian Field-Naturalist*. Since then we have learned much about the distribution of Saskatchewan birds and have added new species to the provincial list. Since 1924, regional lists have been published for Nipawin by Maurice Street (1942), for Emma Lake by Farley Mowat (1947), for Davidson-Last Mountain Lake by W. E. Clyde Todd (1947), for Yorkton by C. Stuart Houston (1949), for the Cypress Hills and Flotten Lake by W. Earl Godfrey (1950), for Prince Albert National Park by J. Dewey Soper (1952), and for Somme by Ronald and Donald Hooper (1953).

Bird study in Saskatchewan was given a great impetus when Isabel M. Priestly edited the first issue of the **Blue Jay** in the fall of 1942. Mrs. Priestly founded better than she knew. Since that time the **Blue Jay** has become a journal widely respected in ornithological circles. One has but to scan any issue at random to find new sight or specimen records, in addition to articles on distribution and bird behaviour. A check of recent issues of the **Blue Jay** reveals for example, an account of the distribution of the Blue Goose in Saskatchewan; a list of records for the Surf Scoter; an account of the Lazuli Bunting nesting at Moose Jaw; a description of the dry-land nesting of the Western Grebe at Old Wives Lake; a study of the distribution of the European Starling in Western Canada; the first nesting record of the Caspian Tern for Saskatchewan; new provincial records for the Golden-crowned Sparrow, the Black Brant, and the Parula Warbler. What a wealth of information is being accumulated, awaiting sifting and organization for the new "Birds of Saskatchewan."

Public interest in birds has been fostered by the building of the Provincial Museum. Also, in recent years, the staff at the Museum has been augmented, and Mr. Fred Bard and his assistants cover the province, fol-

lowing up reports of new species, collecting, photographing, recording bird songs, studying bird behaviour and contributing articles to **Blue Jay**.

As Stuart Houston pointed out in reviewing the revised edition of the A.O.U. Check-list, the data for Saskatchewan contained therein is neither useful nor reliable, and the fault is largely ours. To help correct this, the Society hopes to publish regional lists from the Qu'Appelle Valley, Carlton, Cumberland, the Coteau region in the elbow of the South Saskatchewan River, Saskatoon, and Regina. But what is needed, above and beyond these regional lists, is a work combining these observations, the Museum records and the observations published in the **Blue Jay** since 1942. The visitor to Saskatchewan has no single volume to which he can turn for information; the Saskatchewan ornithologist would welcome a book that described breeding ranges, migratory movements, and nesting habits. In the new publication, we should attempt to give a complete bibliography of ornithological literature pertaining to this province. There might also be a listing of provincial organizations interested in wildlife and its conservation. Finally, there might well be a place for an ornithological history of the province, written by someone like Stuart Houston who has taken such a great interest in our birds and birdmen, past and present.

In the meantime, all members should continue to send observations to the **Blue Jay**. Official records of new, rare, or difficult-to-identify birds should preferably be supported by a specimen or photograph, but observations by several competent observers will also be given credence. Neither must we neglect day-to-day observations of common birds—spring arrival dates, nesting date changes in numbers, fall movements, unusual behaviour—which require hundreds of observers from all over the province, who are able to watch the birds in a given area over a period of years. The making of the "Birds of Saskatchewan" will be an enterprise in which every member of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society can play his part.