

vation that any interested person can make of the birds in a farm shelter-belt. Much more could be done by someone making an intensive life history or behaviour study. The unit of study is so restricted that it may seem entirely insignificant; but it is to be remembered that observations in a limited local area produced Malcolm MacDonald's *Birds of Brewery Creek* and Gilbert White's *Natural History of Selborne*.

### NEST RECORD CARDS

Please send your nest records in immediately so that a summary of this year's information may be prepared for the December issue of the **Blue Jay**. Cards should be sent to the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina.

## PROTECTIVE COLORATION OF THE WESTERN MEADOWLARK

By Ono F. Lick, Davidson, Sask.

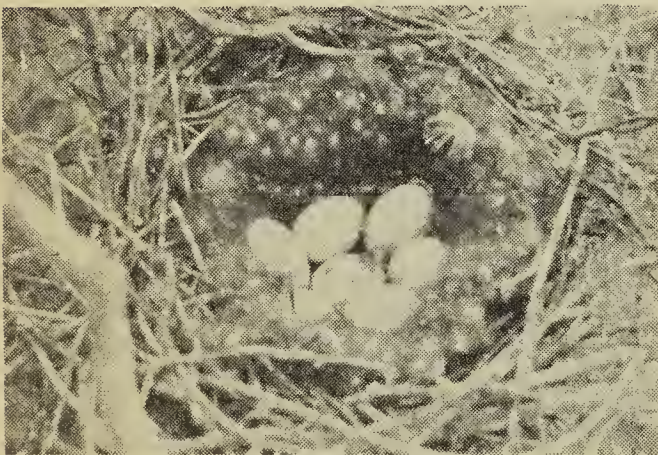
Yesterday, as I sat facing an old window overlooking a shaggy piece of sod, I saw a bird flying downward as if going to alight. By its size, its streaked brownish back and white outer tail feathers, I took it to be a meadowlark. My mind became conscious of cats, so I looked more closely, ready to alert the bird by tapping on the window pane. The sod (I cannot give it the dignified name of lawn) looked very ruffled and tousled, with clumps of old, brown crested wheat grass, fresh green grass underneath and a big patch of prairie beans. I could see no meadowlark. The breeze kept the yellow blossoms of the beans moving. The

longer I watched, the more determined I became to spot the yellow-breasted bird. After watching for five minutes, I became bolder and pulled the window curtain aside. Only then did the bird display itself by flying up. It was an example of remarkable protective coloring, the brown of the bird resembling the tufts of dead crested wheat grass and the yellow blossoms of the beans.

I have observed this protective coloring on many occasions. A few years ago I was watching a swarm of fritillary butterflies amid a patch of dandelions. Walking around among the nodding dandelion heads, scarcely noticeable, was a meadowlark, grabbing off the fritillaries.

## MALLARD NESTS IN ABANDONED CROW'S NEST IN ASPEN TREE

By Frank Roy, Saskatoon



On June 8, 1958, Mr. Bob Darcy, 1340 Colony Street, Saskatoon, reported to me that he had discovered a duck nesting in an abandoned crow's nest in an aspen tree about two miles east of the city on Eighth Street. The crow's nest, situated about 16 feet up in a 24-foot aspen,

was well preserved and amply lined with down. When I observed the nest on June 8, it contained 7 eggs. Yolks on several of the eggs indicated that there had been at least one more egg in the original clutch.

The female Mallard flew off when we approached the edge of the aspen grove. Three days later, June 11, she refused to leave the nest until we shook the tree. In each instance she disappeared through the dense foliage and flew at ground-level until she was well out of sight. We did not see her return to the nest and wondered whether she landed directly on the nest from above, or whether she landed at the base of the tree and then flew up to the nest edge. Has anyone ever watched a tree-nesting Mallard return to her nest? It would be an interesting observation.