

Boys' and Girls' Section

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



SHARP-TAILED GROUSE
Michael Rhodes, 11, Moose Jaw

Michael writes this about his drawing: "This morning I was down at the Library at 6:00 a.m. to go on a trip with the Natural History Society. I saw the Grouse near Mortlach (5 or 6 of them) just as they were finishing their drumming. When we went home I did this picture."

PRIZES WINNERS AND COMMENTS

Some excellent work was sent in for this issue of the **Blue Jay**. Don Karasiuk not only shows careful observation of and interest in his surroundings but has also shown good writing style in his "Rendezvous at Emma Lake." Jacob Jmaeff sent in several items, two of which we have printed. Among other things, he has made some interesting observations on fox behaviour. More animal behaviour, this time among birds, is described in "The Snowy Owl in Trouble" by Grant Mehling. Some of you will have noticed that not only do crows gang up on other birds, but that other birds also gang up on crows (e.g. kingbirds and redwings and blackbirds).

The prizes, this issue, are awarded to Don Karasiuk, Jacob Jmaeff, and Grant Mehling. A prize is also awarded to Keith Schwartz, Grant's teacher, who sent Grant's entry in. Teachers are reminded that if they send in prize-winning work from their pupils, they, too, are entitled to a prize. The prize winner chooses one from a list of 12 books of interest to both children and adults.

Teachers and others wishing material to help them plan nature hikes and follow-up activities can write to Extension Services, Saskat-

chewan Museum of Natural History, Regina, for a booklet, "How to Conduct a Nature Study Group". This includes suggestions for sketching from nature and making observations, photographing birds and mammals, collecting equipment, what to collect and how, keeping live animals for pets, setting up an aquarium and terrarium, and reference sources.

CONTEST RULES

Any young person may submit material for printing in this section of the **Blue Jay**. The entries must 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. Winners will be sent a list of books from which to select their prize. Send in your nature observations and share your experiences with others. Entries should be addressed to Boys' and Girls' Section, **Blue Jay**, 2335 Athol St., Regina. The closing date for the next issue is October 15, 1958.

THE FOX'S SIGNAL

by Jacob H. Jmaeff, age 13,
Kamsack, Sask.

On May 8, when my father was preparing a seed bed, a Red Fox trotted to within twenty feet of his tractor and waited for him to pass. On May 20 father again saw the fox in the vicinity of an old granary. Then on May 27, while loading a truck, he saw the fox dash from under the granary. Suspecting the fox lived there, he investigated and found her den under the granary with three entrances, one on the west, one on the south and one on the north.

This building is located beside a hay meadow with willow thickets to the south, a poplar hedge to the north and the meadow to the west. The east has a large field of summer fallow.

After school on Wednesday, June 4, I went to the aspen hedge, up wind to the granary, and waited. The swaying of grass announced the mother fox's coming. In her mouth was a wing of a chicken. Suddenly out stormed three pups. They rushed at their mother and began tugging at the meat and growling.

They looked just like their mother, all red and had such beautiful tails.

Suddenly the mother fox's tail swatted down at the ground. Like lightning the pups shot for the den. When the last was safe the mother hurried to shelter. I suspected she had scented me.

RENDEZVOUS AT EMMA LAKE

by Don Karasiuk, age 11,
Prince Albert, Sask.

Saturday, the day of field trips, held something of interest to everyone who attended the summer meet of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society.

At 8:45 a.m., we were assigned to our cars and rode down the dusty road. Our destination: north end Christopher Lake, 10 miles.

We quite flew out of our cars and sorted ourselves into various groups ready for adventure. I tagged along with the botanists although I wasn't one. We started from the shore and continued up the slope. First were seaweeds, then cattails rushes,

horsetails, grasses, and a bit of second growth. The real thrill, however, came when we stepped past the wall of high shrubs into the forest.

The three dominating trees were balsam, poplar, white spruce and white birch each often attaining the height of 100 feet. Little green cushions of moss were strewn about the forest floor. Shell-white poly-pores and little banners of moss hung from the boles. Starflowers, bunchberries, fireweeds, bluebells and an occasional rose graced the scene.

When we were satisfied we moved on, discussing plants as we went.

On the way back we followed our guide off the trail to a black spruce bog. Alders circled the little clearing where we stopped. The moss was deeper here, and it circled little brown pools where marsh marigolds grew. Here, using a hollow metal "cane," our guide dug to permafrost.

Upon returning to the parking site we found the D.N.R. boys had prepared sandwiches, coffee and tea for lunch.

During the free time afterward I watched birds, notably the osprey, a "lifer".

Soon afterwards we had to turn our backs on the little bit of paradise that was Christopher Lake.

After days like these I wish that Saskatchewan was smaller, so I could attend every summer meeting of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society.

MY UNCLE'S BUFFALO

by Lyn Lamers, age 6,
Blaine Lake, Sask.

My uncle has a little group of buffalo. We went to the pasture and saw a baby buffalo. It was born that day. It could hardly walk. It wobbled to its mother and lay down.

A SPARROW

by June Lamers, age 6,
Blaine Lake, Sask.

Once our black cat caught a sparrow. We ran to the cat. I went and took the sparrow. Then I got a kleenex. We put it on the wound. We gave the bird some water and it got better and it flew away.



LONG-BILLED CURLEW

Robbie Cannings, 10, Penticton, B. C.

THE CURLEW'S NEST

by Robbie Cannings,
Penticton, B.C.

On May 10 this year I went with my family to look for curlews near White Lake which is about fifteen miles south-west of Penticton, B.C. The curlews are usually found on a flat benchland above the lake. We were driving across this flat when suddenly a curlew flew and fluttered as if it had a broken wing. We stopped the car as quickly as we could and got out. There behind the car was the nest with four eggs in it. The eggs were brown with darker brown spots. They were about the size of hen's eggs. The next week we went back again and took pictures of the bird on the nest. On May 24 we went back and there was one egg left. The little bird was pecking its way out of the egg. We looked around for the other chicks and found one. We took quite a few pictures of it. When we were about to go home I was walking back to the car and I just about stepped on another chick. I guess the other chick was around somewhere where we couldn't find it. We think the mother takes the young to a wetter place down by the lake because when we went back on the first of July there weren't any curlews on the bench.



Curlew's eggs in the nest found on May 10, at White Lake.

THE TREE SWALLOWS

by Marlene D. Hills, age 10,
Omand School, Kinistino, Sask

One day while my friend and I were swinging, we noticed two tree swallows. They were flying around the swings scolding us. We wondered what all the noise was about, so we got off the swings. We sat on the steps of the school and watched them. They went into the bar of the swings. We thought they had a nest in it but they didn't. We did not see them for a while. Now they have their nest in the bluebird house.

THE SNOWY OWL IN TROUBLE

by Grant Mehling, age 14,
Stornoway, Sask.

One evening while out crow hunting I heard an owl hooting, but I paid no attention because he was in the valley.

Afterwards, as I began to walk towards home I heard a crow in the direction the owl hooting had come from. Much to my surprise, crows, one after another, seemed to come out of nowhere from our neighbour's pasture, and flew past our yard into the creek where the crow was still cawing and being joined by more as they came. I thought, "If only I could get near enough to them I would have a good chance of getting one."

I hurried down the creek and up through the brush on the other side. When I reached the other side the noise of the crows was enough to scare a person. The trees did not look green, instead they looked black with crows. When I stood up to aim a big white bird flew from a tree and all the crows after it. I ran down the next creek and up the other side on to the field. From there I saw a Snowy Owl with approximately thirty crows cawing and attacking it from every side. Meanwhile the Snowy Owl was flying to a nearby bush of high trees. Here he landed in the trees only to be followed by the crows. I sneaked up behind the next bush and from there saw a perfect target. A crow was sitting out on a limb seeming to be unconcerned about the owl but it seemed to think it was with the others and therefore it had to do what the others were doing.

When I shot I didn't expect to hit him, and I didn't, but much to the relief of the owl the crows began to fly out of the trees and in the direction they came from. The owl then flew back to where he was found by the crow, but now only two were following him. He was now relieved of some of his trouble.

PEACEFUL NEIGHBORS

by Jacob H. Jmaeff, age 13,
Kamsack, Sask.

On May 9 while walking through the bush, I came to a place where there was a thick undergrowth. Just as I stepped forward a Mallard Duck

burst forward and lured me away presumably from her nest. I decided to follow. Suddenly I heard a rustle and a Ruffed Grouse went creeping along the ground.

I studied the area. I saw the nest then another. There were the Mallard and grouse nests within two feet of each other! They were at the base of an old dead willow tree. The Mallard's nest was lined with soft greyish down, while the grouse's was just a pit in the ground lined with last year's aspen leaves.

Wondering how the wildlife neighbours got along I strolled near a week later. The grouse was looking her own separate way and not minding at all. The Mallard kept looking at the grouse but showed no hostile attempts.

SWALLOWS

by Linden Hubbard, age 11,
Grenfell, Sask.

This has been a good year for swallows at our place. There are around 90 Cliff Swallows, 2 Tree Swallows and 8 Barn Swallows here now.

The Barn Swallow has a dark blue back, buffy breast and a deeply forked tail. The Cliff Swallow has a white patch on his forehead, white breast, pale rump and a square tail which can easily be told from the Barn Swallow. The Tree Swallow has a blue-black back and a clear white breast.

The Tree Swallows rested in the combine. They raised four young but one was found dead later.

There are four pairs of Barn Swallows. One pair nested in the new barn rafters and raised four young. Another pair nested in the garage; the third built a nest in the old barn's rafters and raised three young. The other nest was not found. Two young learned to fly and left but the other one seemed to be injured and hopped around in the yard for two days while the parents fed it. Now it has disappeared. The nests are made of mud.

The Cliff Swallows arrived June 25 and have built 45 nests already. Three nests fell down but they have them partly built up again. They get wet clay from the dugout nearby and put it on in gobs. One brings the clay while the other puts it on. They

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made a collection of mounted pictures, and scrapbooks of city, prairie and seaside. One project was a white elephant sale to raise money to buy the Audubon portfolios of birds and flowers and the 1956 Volume of Nature Study.

The thirteen members of the club at **Blackrock School**, Lloydminster, hold meetings every second Friday, according to their leader, Miss Jackie Thomas. Miss Thomas shows the children as many nature films as possible, and at every meeting there is a nature science contest. Several students each choose a bird or animal that they can depict by pictures and by imitating its call, and the rest of the group guess what the bird or animal is. Birds are their special interest. "I'm afraid they know their birds better than I do," writes Miss Thomas. "On a science radio programme the other day where the announcer was giving sounds of birds they knew the sounds of more birds than I did." Last fall, Miss Thomas asked the members of the club to bring some birds' nests to school, noting particularly where they had got, each nest so that they could name the bird. Before they were through, the children had a small tree in the school with a nest on nearly every branch and some around the bottom, each placed according to where they found the nest, and with the bird's name clipped on or set inside the nest.

Evelyn Domoney, fifteen-year-old corresponding secretary of the **Horn Hill Audubon Junior Club**, Penhold, Alberta, submitted this interesting report:

"We organized six years ago with Mrs. R. A. Scoular as our leader. Mrs. Scoular is a life member of the Alberta Natural History Society of Red Deer. We have ten meetings a year. We study nature subjects, go on hikes, and have a picnic to end our year early in July.

"Last May we put on a programme in the evening for the Red Deer Natural History Society. Our chief item was a flannelgraph. Earlier, the members had cut out and coloured the animals, birds, fruit, and scenery depicted in the one hundred and fourth psalm. Another member read the psalm as I placed the story on the flannelgraph. Other items on the programme were solos, duets, recita-

tions, and instrumentals, each on nature subject. We enjoyed doing it.

"Every summer we go to the Red Deer river canyon for our annual picnic. Our parents help with the transportation and bring along sumptuous lunch. As soon as we arrive, we gather wood for our wiener roast. When our appetites are satisfied we go down the steep wooded river banks, enjoying the cool shade and the chance to explore. As we pause by the creek on its way to the river, we find ferns and wild columbine growing on the banks. Everybody climbs back by way of the canyon in which are several upright rocks. The climbing is quite difficult but since the flora here is different from that of the shady wooded river banks we are rewarded for our hard climb. All of us spend the day having a good time enjoying Nature's wonders.

"Last year the Horn Hill F.W.U.A. sponsored a pressed wild flower collection contest. Some of our members entered but since it was a dry summer we found it hard to get good specimens. We collected, pressed, mounted, named and classified as to families, 190 different kinds of flowers. There were a dozen that we could not name, some that we could not find in any flower book. Miss Mina Cole, a retired school teacher, and naturalist of Red Deer, judged the collection. I won the first prize, Francis Harris the second, and Janet Fowler and Judy Neuman tied for third. We are going to continue collecting this coming summer.

"The Red Deer Natural History Society awarded our club the Ernie Wells Memorial Trophy given for the best work in nature interests. We are trying our best to win it again this year. Each member has adopted a tree and is going to learn all he can about it. We are also studying winter birds."

SWALLOWS—(Contd. from p 128)
started building their nest on the wall of the house and built it up to meet the edge of the roof. The nest is shaped like a bottle with a wide neck. It has a small hole facing down for an entrance. They brace their tail out behind them to hold them on while working.