

# The Pasquia Hills Expedition, May, 1964

by Tom White, Regina

Eighteen members of the Regina Natural History Society spent the long weekend in May visiting the Pasquia Hills, about 200 miles north of Regina. These low rolling hills covered with trees and dense bush are one of the least known parts of the province and few people have been in the wilder parts of the area. The Indians refuse to go into some parts of the hills. Earlier in the century much of the area was trapped out which led to the formation of the Pasquia Game Preserve. The cougar in the Museum of Natural History, Regina, was trapped there in 1948, and there have been many reports of a large species of bear. The main object of the expedition was to find out what we could about these two species.

Due to the varied interests of the group we made flexible arrangements by making a base camp at a D.N.R. hut and groups then followed their special interests. The main party walked to the Mann River which is the principal river on the north of the hills. Since other food was scarce we thought that the bears would be fishing in the shallows but it took

four hours of travelling through very rough country to reach the river bank. It was a fine sight with the water roaring between high banks in a series of rapids. It was not a suitable place for bears to fish so we followed other interests and soon began our exhausting return journey.

On the following day, we walked down the main trail and shortly after leaving the truck we came upon cougar tracks in the soft mud. We took plaster casts, photos, and measurements which were subsequently authenticated in Regina and by Bruce Wright of New Brunswick who has specialized in cougar identification. There were four different sizes of track, one was that of a cub, and as some had been rained upon and others were fresh we concluded that we had found a cougar runway. We were able to follow the tracks a number of miles.

On Sunday we visited the picturesque Red Earth Indian Reserve. We collected a number of stories of large bears and it seems to me that there is a distinct possibility that there are a few plains grizzly bears remaining in the hills.

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## Weasel Attacks Full-Grown Young Mallard

by John B. Millar, Canadian Wildlife Service, Saskatoon

On August 27, 1963, as I attempted to flush a brood of newly fledged Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) from a small pothole southeast of Saskatoon, there was suddenly a violent commotion and loud quacking in the vegetation ahead of me. Investigating the uproar I discovered that a Long-tailed Weasel (*Mustela longicauda*) had attacked a young male of the brood hidden on shore and succeeded in firmly gripping with its jaws the flesh of the tibial portion of the bird's right leg. As I watched, the duck gradually thrashed its way through the grasses toward open water, dragging the weasel some 15 to 20 feet from shore. At that point I intervened and the duck was released. After examining the bird to determine its age and sex, and that its

injury was not serious, I banded and released it.

Considering the nature of the grip the weasel had on the Mallard and the fact that the duck had been able to drag the weasel out into deep water where the predator was at a decided disadvantage, it might be speculated that this particular case of attempted predation would have failed even without human intervention.

I was not surprised to see the weasel attack a bird three times its own weight, for its behaviour in poultry yards is well known, but it was interesting that it would attack in spite of the presence of a human being. At the time the attack began I was no more than 30 to 40 feet away and I made a good deal of noise as I approached the animals.