

# Junior Naturalists

Edited by **Joyce Deutscher**, Regina

## NOTES AND COMMENTS FROM JUNIORS

From Yellow Grass come a number of letters which tell about events ranging all the way from Bobby Oleksyn's encounter with a mother skunk and seven young to Sherry Chubak's seeing a rock which had been scraped by a glacier. Kenneth Mazur had bad luck with his pet crows when a hawk killed them both. More skunk stories come from Allen Simon who managed to get himself sprayed by a skunk before his brother shot it and Audrey Lebedowick who can still smell a certain skunk every time she goes near a granary. Adelle Swichenuck decided it was safer to look at skunks in a museum. At any rate she visited the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History and enjoyed it very much. She was quite impressed by the stone carvings on the outside.

Linda Nemeth enjoyed seeing seven deer on her way to school. The bus driver even slowed down so the children could have a better look.

Several birds came in for observation by Juniors. Cedar Waxwings were seen feeding on apple trees by Eugenia Kowal. Evelyn Typchuck rescued an injured Yellow-headed Blackbird and fed it bread and water until it was able to fly. Meanwhile Colleen Shwechuk watched over a Barn Swallow nest until the young were able to fly. A "Bush Chicken" (Ruffed Grouse) startled Rosemary Nemeth when it suddenly flew up. It had been sitting very still and Rosemary hadn't seen it until she and her dog were right upon it.

Audrey Zip decided to see if she could raise some Cliff Swallows when she found a nest with three young in it. She was kept busy feeding them every two hours. Audrey didn't say, but we can't help wondering what happened to the mother bird when she came back and found her nest empty.

Kenneth Orenchuk found a robin's

nest made from mud, straw, and small pieces of plastic bag. He enjoyed watching the mother robin feed worms to her young. Another nest, this time a bluebird's, was watched by Bryon Lune. He noted that the father bluebird guarded the nest.

Insects come in for some mention too. These include bees and a tomato hornworm. A loud noise attracted Ellen Kuz outside when she saw a sky black with bees. She continues, "There is a little hole in our porch wall. The bees moved into it. The wall was black with bees. They all went in slowly. At the end of the day they were all in the hole. In about three weeks time my dad and my uncle extracted the honey." Ellen adds, "The bees stung my dad two times and my uncle once."

A little safer insect looks like a large green worm, the tomato hornworm. Garry Oleksyn found one while out picking hazlenuts. He looked up some information on it in *Insects* by Zim and reports that when it is adult it becomes a sphinx moth.

From hazlenut picking and tomato hornworms the topic shifts to toadflax. The name might leave you confused but this time the story is about a plant and Delmer Dutka tells us, "Many people think toadflax is a garden flower. They think it is a snapdragon. But really it is a weed called toadflax."

We are pleased to see that two of our members, Brian Irving and Richard Patterson, are sending in contributions typed in quite a professional manner. Juniors who are able to send in typed material should send it in typed double spaced. This is the way all editors prefer it but don't let the lack of a typewriter keep you from sending in entries. The important thing is to get those entries down on paper and let us share your experiences. One comment about seeing some Sandhill Cranes was sent in to us by Lynn Sunner written on a

page from a small note book. We hope Lynn doesn't use up all of her pages on letter writing but saves some of them for her own personal use and sketches about nature.

Ronald Jensen from Naicam comments on the story about the "Fish Tragedy" in a past issue of the *Blue Jay* and tells his experiences about keeping minnows. His minnow grew from one and a half to two inches long. Ronald also tells about a Short-eared Owl which he watched laying eggs. He adds, "Then one day there was a young owl hatched. After a week or so all eggs were hatched. In two weeks the baby owls were leaving the nest. I took one owl and raised it. When I got it it was a mere ball of fluff. When school was let out for the summer holidays the baby owl had his wing feathers and was trying to fly. By the middle of July he was fully feathered. In the last week of July I was taking swimming lessons at a lake. One day after coming home from lessons I was told that the owl had flown behind the trees and a hawk had swooped down from nowhere and grabbed the owl in full flight and killed him with his talons."

### **THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BRANDON JUNIOR BIRD CLUB'S NEST PROJECT**

by **Richard Patterson**, age 13, Brandon

This year our club had a total of 1200 nest boxes set out by late spring. As this was our objective we shall now direct our efforts towards maintenance of these nest boxes.

Although a large snowstorm in May destroyed many first broods a new record number of Bluebirds in our boxes was attained. The Eastern Bluebird nest which was farthest west was again found just east of Virden, Manitoba. This year two clutches of white eggs were laid by Eastern Bluebirds.

This summer both Eastern and Mountain bluebirds were found to be nesting in new localities and in Manitoba both species seem to be on the increase.

Only a very few boxes in Saskatch-

ewan were checked this year and as a result, of the bluebird total, only nine Mountain Bluebirds were credited to Saskatchewan. As there have been sightings of Eastern Bluebirds in Saskatchewan we had hoped to find some of our boxes there inhabited by that species but such was not the case.

As well as setting out 80 new nest boxes to complete our nestlines, our club replaced 50 boxes which were either missing or uninhabitable.

The totals for 1965 are as follows: Eastern Bluebird 40, Mountain Bluebird 66, Tree Swallow 621, House Wren 21, House Sparrow 23, White-footed Mouse 3, unchecked, unused, or uncertain 426.

### **KELVINGTON NEST PROJECT**

by **Brian Irving**, age 15, Kelvington

This summer (1965) I had the pleasure of locating 38 bird nests. Of these nests I found 22 to successfully raise a family of young. Before the eggs hatched 10 nests were destroyed, with much destruction caused by heavy rainfall. One such occasion was on a weekend when it rained almost five inches and several swallow nests fell because the mud was softened. I was not able to get the results of the remaining nests.

Two of the highlights were the finding of a Mourning Dove nest located on the ground in a wooded area and the finding of a Least Flycatcher's nest about six feet above the ground. The parent bird on the Flycatcher's nest let me get within six feet of the nest before taking flight.

On July 13 the latter nest contained three white eggs. By July 24 two young had hatched but the other egg was not in sight. Presumably the parent had removed this one from the nest. On August five the two young were well feathered and almost ready to fly. On the next visit the nest was vacant.

Send letters and other contributions to: Mrs. Joyce Deutscher, 7200 - 6th Avenue, Regina. The deadline for the next issue is January 15.