

Society News

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

by **Herbert C. Moulding**, Regina

The northern lights displayed brilliantly as Jack entered his suburban home. Settled cozily by the fireplace, he thought of the many times he and the children had sought shelter by the path through the wolf-willow in order to view secretly the wildlife living nearby. The rose bushes, with their fragrant flowers in June, had developed scarlet hips, winter food for the Sharp-tailed Grouse. The snowberry had sheltered a Blue-winged Teal's nest, and the children had kept an anxious watch for the first sign of a chipped egg; the nest had been destroyed by a skunk, but the duck had re-nested successfully. Though the adjacent marsh had been drained in the previous year, pockets of water had remained which were sufficient for housekeeping by the teal family. But now the prairie and marsh had been completely drained and were part of a larger field. A change in land use had taken place. This improved the returns to the landowner but resulted in one less place for Jack and his children to visit, and a decrease in the fauna and flora on this section of land.

Jack decided to join the Natural History Society, which had taken an active part in preserving a wildlife park. He thought that such an organization could assist in having other remnants of natural habitat adjacent to the city retained for wildlife. One of the major industries had also established a small wildlife park, and the city itself had reclaimed a marsh, setting aside the deeper portion for active boating and the balance for waterfowl and shorebirds. The schools used the marsh as an outdoor laboratory for their nature science courses.

Jack thought of the opportunities some of the smaller towns had for establishing small nature parks. One

town adjacent to the main highway had been recognized as a railroad divisional centre, now it was the "town with a pond." Previously used for dumping rubbish, the pond, about a block in size, had been planted with trees on the northwest side to catch snow from spring runoff. Fruit trees attracted birds and evergreens provided shelter for both wildlife and people. The east shore was planted to grass and willow to protect the shoreline from eroding and to provide nesting cover, and a pair of Canada Geese was introduced. Many a passing motorist wondered why his town didn't have a living park, and some took it upon themselves to start such a program. Others encouraged the development of a Regional Park with a portion of land set aside for wildlife. They also asked the government to lay out nature trails. Sportsmen, farmers and town folk assisted in developing the park since all had an interest in the multi-purpose development.

Bill, Jack's brother, lived on a farm. The district had been settled for a couple of generations, and Bill's father had developed the land and built a farmstead. Bill had the responsibility of improving the land for himself and future generations. Some of the neighbors in the upper portion of the watershed had been draining sloughs and clearing the steeper slopes of aspen bluffs. Small flash floods and sediment-laden water passed through Bill's farm. Fortunately, the water passed through a coulee that provided a suitable dam-site and here a pair of beaver built a dam. Although some of his crop land was thus flooded, Bill knew that within a decade his neighbors would supply him with enough top soil to fill the 50-acre beaver pond.

The new beaver dam flooded an old bog. A small swamp of trees and



Sask. Govt. Photo

water developed at the site. Upstream and near the main channel bulrush grew and in the shallow water a cat-tail marsh developed. Muskrats took advantage of the emergent growth to build their homes, and used the roots for food. Bill's son harvested a yearly crop of muskrats, assisted by a friend who had lost his own pond via a roadside ditch. He also found that a Goldeneye duck had nested in the hollow tree standing in the deep water. Bill's son set up nail kegs to attract others.

As the prairies reach economic maturity, land and water will be recognized as basic resources. Programs in urban and rural areas that will make the best use of these resources to provide for human and wildlife needs, recognizing an ecological environment compatible with human development and happiness, have to be and will be put into action. Jack and Bill could be any one of us living on the prairies. Some of you have the opportunity to improve wildlife habitat on your own land; others can share in community development of wildlife needs; all of you and your friends, by belonging to the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, are assisting in the safeguarding and intelligent use of our prairies' natural resources. Should you have had any success in developing or protecting

the flora or fauna on the prairies your comments would be appreciated so that others might profit from your experiences.

Editor's Note: Herbert C. Moulding newly-elected President of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, has long been known as an active conservationist. In 1961, the Society's Conservation Award was given to him for his wetlands restoration work as Saskatchewan Provincial Manager for Ducks Unlimited, Canada. He has been president of the Regina Natural History Society, and is still Chairman of the Regina Waterfowl Park Committee, a group which has long struggled to preserve a natural marsh environment within the city limits of Regina. Herb Moulding was born in 1922 in a prairie home in southwestern Manitoba, but he was raised in Saskatchewan. In 1942 he received his Diploma of Agriculture, and in 1947 a degree in Civil Engineering, from the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon. His formal training was completed with a special course in Wildlife Administration and Watershed Management at Fort Collins, Colorado in 1949. During the period from 1943 to 1950 he was associated with Ducks Unlimited in Alberta, and from 1950 to the present has worked for D.U. in Saskatchewan.