

Letters and Notes

THE TIMBER WOLF

This past summer I had the opportunity of working as one of six assistant Park Naturalists in the Algonquin Provincial Park, the centre of the Timber Wolf controversy in Ontario. I was fortunate enough to glimpse and to hear these valuable and fascinating creatures while I was in the Park. I was interested and very pleased to see in the September *Blue Jay* (25: 134) that others are anxious to preserve the Timber Wolf.

It is believed that there are about 300 wolves in Algonquin Park, an average of one for every 10 square miles. Since there are about 30,000 deer in the park the deer-wolf ratio is about 100:1. The "wolf haters" claim that the wolves are wiping out the deer of Algonquin Park. True, the wolf is an important factor in the control of deer populations but it is not as important as territory, suitable habitat, food supply and other factors. Wolf haters claim that wolves kill for the sake of killing alone, but Wildlife research people in the park find very efficient use of wolf kills. What little is left by the wolves is soon cleaned up by ravens, martins, fishers, and other animals. As a matter of fact many deer starved in the winter of 1959-60, hardly a condition that would be expected with an animal that is supposed to be in danger of being wiped out.

The Timber Wolf is a valuable asset to the natural history of this country and I hope that we can save it.—*Dan Brunton*, Carleton University, Ottawa.

RE: ARTICLE ON PRAIRIE FALCONS

Wayne Smith, of Calgary, Alberta, writes to correct some errors he has noted in the article on prairie falcons by Kevin van Tighem in the *Blue Jay*, 25:108. He points out, for example, that the term for the male should have been *tiercel*, not *tercel*, and that the author is wrong in saying that Prairie Falcons arrived in March for

1967, since one or more Prairies are present at Bearpaw all through the year. "When I first visited the eyrie this year it was in early February and one pair was there." In regard to a reference to the "falcons" remaining on the eyrie, Smith states that "as far as is known by anyone, only the hen incubates." Finally he notes that six eyries along the Bow reported by Van Tighem as being destroyed by egg collectors were in fact destroyed by the weather (rain and mud).

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS NESTING AT INDIAN HEAD SASKATCHEWAN, 1967

In the spring of 1967 I had 350 nest boxes in the vicinity of Indian Head, Saskatchewan. Although my nest boxes are used each year by several species of birds, I am especially interested in attracting bluebirds, for last year (1966) we had both the Mountain Bluebird and the Eastern Bluebird nesting at Indian Head. As the table shows, the Eastern species that nested here in 1966 (two pairs) did not return to nest in 1967, but with a larger number of nest boxes, 24 were occupied by Mountain Bluebirds, as compared with 10 last year.

On March 23, 1967 the first Mountain Bluebirds of the season arrived at Indian Head. Flocks of bluebirds continued to arrive until April 20, and from then until early May they were observed to be pairing off. Quite often bluebirds would be seen inspecting their future dwellings. Nest building was begun by May 12 and by May 16 one or two eggs had already been laid in several nests. By the end of the month there were five to seven eggs in several of the nests. On June 2 the first young hatched, and by June 25 the first-hatched young were fully fledged and had left the nest. By July 7 some of the nests held a second clutch of eggs and by August 13 the last of these young had left the nest.

NESTING SUCCESS AT INDIAN HEAD, 1965-67

Species	1965			1966			1967		
	No. nests	Nest failures	Young fledged	No. nests	Nest failures	Young fledged	No. nests	Nest failures	Young fledged
Mountain Bluebird	3	2	5	10	2	40	24	2	114
Eastern Bluebird	..	..	..	2	..	8	..	..	..
Tree Swallow	1	..	5	17	..	94	70	4	354
House Wren	14	2	58	24	3	118	46	4	247
Yellow-shafted Flicker	..	..	..	1	..	6	1	..	6

Some bluebirds remained near Indian Head in flocks of 6-50 until mid-October.

The accompanying table shows the species that have nested in my bird houses during the past three years. It should be pointed out that the number of boxes has increased from 76 in 1965 to 150 in 1966 to 350 in 1967. All birds had a good nesting season this year owing to the fairly warm and dry weather of May and June.

I now have 400 bird houses set out, forming a circular pattern in the Indian Head district. I plan to make another 100 houses this winter and set them out in an easterly direction. I hope these houses will eventually meet those of the Brandon Junior Bird Club.—*Lorne Scott*, Indian Head.

NESTING ACTIVITY IN BIRDHOUSES

This past summer I set out 35 birdhouses at various points on the farm. Twenty-four of these structures were occupied by six species of birds. Mountain Bluebird (1), Tree Swallow (3), Purple Martin (1), House Wren (17), Yellow-shafted Flicker (1), and Black-capped Chickadee (1). The last two species were of most interest since this is the first time I have had them nesting in a birdhouse.

The Yellow-shafted Flicker occupied a birdhouse made from an excavated log about 18 inches in length with an opening three inches in diameter, a roof and a floor. It was attached to a young white poplar in a small clump of white poplars surrounded by a grassy field, and it was first occupied by a pair of Mountain Bluebirds who abandoned their nest, perhaps because the place was too

large. On June 7, about two weeks later, I checked the birdhouse again. To my surprise, I found a white egg about an inch long. The nest built of grass by the bluebirds had been shaped to accommodate a larger bird, which I later observed to be a Yellow-shafted Flicker. When I checked the nest on June 24, there were four newly-hatched young and one egg, but on July 1 the four naked young were dead, probably from exposure to the cold, wet weather and strong winds.

The Black-capped Chickadee also occupied a house made from an excavated log, but this one was about a foot long with an opening one and one-quarter inches in diameter. The birdhouse was attached five feet above the ground (as was the flicker birdhouse) to a black poplar at the edge of a grassy field and a wooded area. The building of the nest was well under way in the early part of June. Fine material like cow hair and wool picked off barb wire fences, and strands of moss made a compact, warm nest. By the tenth of June, there were six eggs, and when the nest was checked on June 27, there were five young but no traces of the sixth egg. The young grew rapidly and soon acquired their black and white plumage. On July 10 they flew out of the nest.

Both these species are common here in the summer, but the Yellow-shafted Flicker generally prefers to make its nest in decaying tree trunks, while the Black-capped Chickadee usually occupies abandoned woodpecker holes. Perhaps someone who has had the experience of having either of these species nesting in birdhouses could add something to this subject.—*Bohdan Pylypec*, Yellow Creek.