

## GEOLOGY AND NATURAL HISTORY

Reflections on the late J. B. Mawdsley and F. H. Edmunds

Saskatchewan lost two notable geologists with the death of Dean James B. Mawdsley on December 3, 1964, and Professor F. Harry Edmunds on February 28, 1965. Both served the University of Saskatchewan well in several capacities, particularly in the Department of Geology, and both men contributed to the advancement of science and the economic development of the province. Not only through their scientific publications, but especially through their contacts with students, they fostered an enthusiastic interest in their science.

Those who have been privileged to work in the field with Dr. Mawdsley may recall his indifference to the usual discomforts of life; black-flies in the boreal forest drew only an occasional impatient brush of a hand, and mosquitoes failed to keep him from shaving each morning. He was especially fond of the north, being much interested in the mineralized hard-rocks of the Precambrian Shield. His activities, as Director of the Institute for Northern Studies, included interesting others in the research potential of the north, be it in physics, astronomy, or biology. He greatly encouraged floristic and faunistic studies in the north, and through the Institute provided a grant for the publication of a report on the birds of the Lake Athabasca region. His broad interests should be no surprise, for field geologists seem to be naturally inclined to take an interest in plants and animals.

The feature article of this issue of the *Blue Jay* (see opposite page) is a revised version of a report by Professor Edmunds which describes the origin of some prominent features of the landscape of southern Saskatchewan. This has been in our files for some time and, although it has since been published in an expanded form, it seemed fitting to print it here at this time. We are indebted to Dr. W. O. Kupsch, Department of Geological Sciences, who kindly made changes in the manuscript in order to bring it up to date with Professor Edmund's official report. Naturalists in Saskatchewan should be interested in the geological history of the region, particularly the changes wrought by the Pleistocene epoch, or ice age, for much of the area was formed by events that took place at that time.

During recent dry years in southern Saskatchewan, with farmers deepening dug-outs in an attempt to maintain a supply of water, the remains of several buried spruce forests have been discovered. In October, 1958, beside an excavation of one of these sites, on the Scrimbit farm near Kayville, Professor Edmunds quietly, but dramatically rolling his r's, mused: "It shall be known as the Scrimbit Forest!" And so it has been known, this buried post-glacial forest which was later radiocarbon-dated at 9500 years. In this issue of the *Blue Jay* there is a report of the excavation, only last year, of one of the great mammals of that distant period, the Woolly Mammoth. In this case, radiocarbon-dating of the bones of the mammoth has helped to establish the date of the geological events to which its life was related. And what is the significance of the boreal bog plants which Dr. Ledingham and his students recently found 50 miles east of Regina, beside a sandy, dry slough bed, if not as a relic of those last days of subarctic summers, spruce forests and cold bogs, and elephants? Ancient pollen grains, parts of the reproductive mechanisms of orchids and trees, buried deep in Dr. Ledingham's unique bog, may reveal much about the changes that took place in those last thousands of years.—  
**The Editors.**