

of Part II, then, one can then find the way to many of the points of interest in the Cypress Hills, even if one were unfamiliar with the country beforehand.

I have given a rather complete account of the contents of this work,

so that the *Blue Jay's* readers may make up their own minds about whether they would like this publication. For my own part, I shall take my copy along the next time I am visiting the Cypress Hills.—*John H. Hudson, Saskatoon.*

## Letters and Notes

### OBSERVATIONS OF WATERFOWL AND SHOREBIRDS NEAR KELVINGTON IN 1966

During the summer of 1965 about 7 inches of rain fell in our local area (Township 36-12-W2, approximately seven miles southwest of Kelvington). Because of this and a snowfall of nearly four feet the following winter 1965-66 the water level was very high. Sloughs and lakes were very full and remained so for most of the summer of 1966. Runs between bodies of water were more active than they had been since the wet 1950's. As a result, different species of birds and larger numbers stopped in the area than have done so in recent years.

One of the species which was prevalent was the Common Snipe. The first snipe were seen on May 4, when two flocks of seven and eight were sighted. They were seen off and on during the season and probably nested. Flocks of 25 were seen on September 11 and 17 and on September 24. The last bird was seen on September 30.

We always have a few flocks of Whistling Swan pass through in spring migration; in 1966 we had more flocks, though these were not very large. The first flock was noted on April 25. It contained 25 swans. Migration was further noted on April 30, May 4, 6, 7, 8, 10 and finally May 11.

We were surprised on April 25 to observe a Common Loon on one of the Meadow Bank lakes (located five miles west and three miles south of Kelvington). These lakes are about 1½ miles long and a few hundred yards wide and contain no fish and

very little other aquatic life. A loon was seen again on June 5.

Other interesting spring migrants were Pectoral Sandpiper (May 19), Northern Phalarope (May 29), Whimbrel (May 29), Black-bellied Plover (June 1) and Baird's Sandpiper (75 seen on June 2). Waterfowl observed were Canada Geese, Mallard, Gadwall, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, American Widgeon, Shoveler, Redhead, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Ruddy Duck, and American Coot.

Large numbers of ducks were present during the breeding season. The most interesting was the **Bufflehead** which was observed regularly during May. Then to our surprise on June 28 a female and seven young appeared on Meadow Bank Lake. This is the first **breeding record** that I know of in the area.

Horned Grebes were very common throughout the season and seven nests were found. Soras were common, and Wilson's Phalarope were also believed to breed.

There was not a mass movement during the fall migration; no large flocks of ducks came in from the north, and few geese and cranes. Interesting migrants were a Great Blue Heron (September 20), Spotted Sandpiper (August 10), and a Black-bellied Plover (September 3). A flock of 400-500 Mallards, Pintails and Blue-winged Teal—probably raised locally—congregated on Meadow Bank Lake from September 8 to October 19 and a local flock of 350 American Coots gathered about September 30.—*Brian Irving, Kelvington.*

## SUGGI LAKE PELICANS, 1960

In view of the interest in the Suggi Lake White Pelican colony (*Blue Jay*, 24:96-97, 121-123), it may be of some value to record a count of adults and presumably young which I made from a color slide taken from the air on September 1, 1960 by Walter Hlady. This photo, taken of the island and from some height, shows a large flock of pelicans lying offshore and a few others in flight; in all, 528 were counted. This count is probably a little low, for some birds may have been obscured by others, but it provides at least a minimal count. It also accords well with the figure of 500 adults and young observed in the same place by Elmer Fox in 1959. In 1964 there were at least 932 adults, judging by Dr. Stuart Houston's count of 466 nests. This rapid increase may have been due to an influx of pelicans from breeding sites to the south and west which showed a decline during the drought years of the early sixties (*Blue Jay*, 20:74-77, 112-114).—*Robert W. Nero*, Manitoba Museum, Winnipeg.

## PRAIRIE CHICKEN AT OLD WIVES LAKE

On September 3, 1961 my father, J. E. Pratt, and myself observed five grouse that we believed to be Greater Prairie Chicken along the cutbanks on the east side of Old Wives Lake. The short tail and bars across the breast were the basis of our identification.—*Connie Pratt*, Regina.

## PRAIRIE CHICKEN AT MARCHWELL?

On February 16, 1967, a flock of about a dozen birds, which we took to be prairie chicken, alighted in our yard. They were not sharp-tailed grouse or Hungarian partridge, with which we are familiar. These birds had short tails and appeared more sleek, plump and streamlined than the sharp-tailed grouse, but were about the same color and size, perhaps even slightly larger.

The birds stayed for a couple of minutes and then took off, but we have seen them in flight near our house two or three times since. Marchwell is about five miles west of the Assiniboine valley.—*Mrs. Gilbert Johnson*, Marchwell.

## COMMUNAL NESTING OF HOUSE SPARROWS WITH BIRDS OF PREY

On July 27, 1962, when banding a Swainson's Hawk nestling, I was only mildly surprised to flush a female House Sparrow out of her bulky nest jammed into the bottom of the hawk's nest. Many years previously I had observed a Red-tailed Hawk and a Tree Swallow raising their families in harmony in the same tree; the Swallow's nest hole was about 10 feet below the hawk's nest. Also I had been noticing that the House Sparrows had been spreading out from the farm buildings and nesting in windbreak trees. In this case, while about 50 rods from the farm yard, the nest was adjacent to the winter cattle feeding area and House Sparrows were noted there during the winter. This nest was about 28 feet up in a poplar tree in a native poplar and willow grove and on examination was found to contain four young. On several later occasions I observed through binoculars the female House Sparrow flying back and forth feeding at the same time as the dark-coloured female Swainson's Hawk stood on the edge of her flat-topped nest tearing fresh game apart for her young one.

On May 25, 1963, while banding Great Horned Owls, I discovered a House Sparrow's nest in the bottom of a second-hand nest the owls had used. The nest contained five sparrow eggs and was about 40 feet up in a large balm of gilead tree. The young owls were gone but both parent owls were nearby and one young one was soon located and banded. In this case the nearest farm buildings were at least a mile away.

In 1965 on April 16, a Red-tailed Hawk was seen working at an old

ow's nest in a poplar grove and was  
en in and around this nest several  
mes afterward until the leaves came  
t. In June while banding I checked  
e nest site and found it was made  
ady to use, even to the customary  
een leaves in it, but was never used.

the bottom was a House Sparrow's  
st with three eggs. This was about  
lf a mile from any farm buildings  
a small isolated grove in a native  
sture field. The Red-tails were later  
eated about a quarter of a mile  
way with a late hatch.

On May 15, 1966, I noticed a Red-  
iled Hawk carrying twigs to this  
st nest again, so on June 26 I  
echecked and found three hawk's eggs.  
n July 26 I came back again and the  
est was empty and tilted on a slope,  
at in the bottom was a House Spar-  
w's nest and the female flew out  
aving three eggs. Had the Red-tails  
esented the House Sparrow's intru-  
on and moved out each time or was  
just coincidental? In any case this  
ows that House Sparrows may move  
at at a considerable distance from  
arm buildings during the nesting  
ason.—*Lloyd Lohr, Stettler, Alberta.*

a few more days, seeing that the male  
Marsh Hawk was no longer flying  
around, I made by last trip to the  
nest—the young hawk, about three  
weeks old, was dead. Fortunately,  
food is more plentiful most years.—  
*C. H. Shulver, Woodrow.*

## CUMBERLAND DELTA DEVELOPMENT

*Mrs. H. Newton and Mrs. Harold  
Bray of McLean have sent us a clip-  
ping from the Western Producer of  
Mark Inch's "Prairie Wool" column  
in which he quotes protests that he  
has received against the possible  
drainage of marshlands in the Cum-  
berland Delta. Mrs. Newton and Mrs.  
Bray write: "Would it be possible for  
our Saskatchewan Natural History  
Society and Ducks Unlimited to get  
together and try to prevent the drain-  
ing of this splendid marsh, as our  
waterfowl are facing increasing  
hazards. Even around here few water  
holes and grasslands are left."*

## CANNIBALISM IN HAWKS

Several years ago while observing  
the developments of a Marsh Hawk's  
nest I began to wonder about the  
degree of cannibalism among such  
birds under certain conditions.

Four eggs had been laid by the time  
I came on the scene, and in a short  
time two eggs hatched. Shortly after  
this the female hawk disappeared and  
the feeding was carried on by the  
male. The two unhatched eggs couldn't  
be found, but this was not surprising  
as food was scarce. The parent hawk  
would sometimes be gone for several  
hours and return with only a small  
bite, or sometimes he wouldn't have  
anything to offer. The difference in  
size between the two young birds be-  
came more noticeable, and on my next  
visit the smaller one was gone, eaten,  
I believe, by his bigger brother. After

## DRAINAGE vs. WILDLIFE

I am very put out because the Gov-  
ernment is giving farmers permission  
to drain the natural lakes in our dis-  
trict. We have a small lake not bigger  
than a quarter section just north of  
us that they are planning to drain.  
This lake is a resting place for hun-  
dreds of big white geese in the spring,  
that stay around for about two weeks,  
and a wonderful place for ducks to  
raise their families in the summer.  
When it is drained there will be  
nothing but a desert with not a bird  
in sight. Since its drainage only adds  
a few more acres of farmland, of  
doubtful quality, why can't a lake like  
this be preserved for a place of  
beauty? Do we have to go to B.C. to  
see water and trees?—*Mrs. B.  
Schwartz, Melfort.*

## WILDLIFE DISASTER

The American owned tanker which crashed on the coast of Europe has released more than 100,000 tons of crude oil. The oil pollution resulting has destroyed entire bird populations and must surely affect the survival of fish species and other animals and plants as well.

Thousands of oil soaked birds have been gathered and are being hand washed. The birds must then be kept in captivity, perhaps for six months, till their natural oils are restored and they can swim and fly. Cost of this work is about \$1500 a week and it will triple in a few weeks.

*Roger Tory Peterson*

Editor's note: The executive of the SNHS was moved by the April 12, 1967, "Sea Birds Appeal", part of which is quoted above, and has made a donation on behalf of the society. Individual members of the society may also send money to help in this disaster. Money may be sent to World Wildlife Fund, Suite 728, 910 Seventeenth Street N. W., Washington D.C. 20006 or may be sent to our Box 1121, Regina, to be used as the executive sees fit in this or other conservation projects.

## GREAT AUK AND LABRADOR DUCK

Mr. A. O. Aschim, Box 1481, Prince Albert, in the March 1965 *Blue Jay*, was good enough to mention that the R.O.M. was soliciting funds with which to buy specimens of the extinct birds, the Great Auk and the Labrador Duck. The campaign was successful and we have purchased splendid specimens as reported in the University of Toronto, *Varsity Graduate*, Christmas 1965. The existence of these birds in Canada might be of interest to members of the S.N.H.S. The specimen of the Great Auk is the only one in any Canadian collection. There are two other Labrador Ducks in Canada, one in McGill and the other in Dalhousie University collections.—*Jim L. Baillie*, Department of Ornithology, Royal Ontario Museum, 1000 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario.

## A BROWN THRASHER IN ENGLAND

Last Sunday [one Sunday before Christmas, 1966] we saw a Brown Thrasher at Durlston Head and it would appear to be the first ever seen in Europe. Just outside the garden boundary here at Woodgreen we have seen a female Peregrine Falcon and a Great Grey Shrike. The latter has taken up residence in an area of hawthorn scrub and may well be around for most of the winter.

We have had one or two quite hard frosts so far but no snow yet. However, our bird table is doing great business and among our regular visitors are Great, Blue, Marsh and Coal Tits, Robins, Dunnocks, Blackbirds, Song Thrushes, Greenfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch. In our spinney we see Nuthatches, Bullfinches, Redpolls, Tree Creepers, Green Woodpeckers and in summer Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers.

Poole Harbour already has its share of winter migrants: well over 100 Red-breasted Mergansers, good numbers of Mallard, Teal, Widgeon and Pintail, at least one Eared or Horned Grebe, and usual waders—Turnstone, Bar-tailed Godwit and so on. Best wishes for good birding in 1967.—*Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Dixon*, England.

## PYGMY SHREW

About the middle of January I found a pygmy shrew in my kitchen cupboard. It had come up through a hole where the plumbing entered the floor, leaving an opening too large for the pipe. I took the shrew to school and the Principal decided to preserve it in alcohol to keep it for a study specimen.—*Mrs. Mary E. Peterson*, Shackleton.

## INFORMATION WANTED

If you have sight or breeding records of the Red-headed Woodpecker in Manitoba please write to Herbie Copeland, A317 Furby St., Winnipeg 1, Manitoba.

## BURROWING OWL CATCHES INSECTS IN FLIGHT

On a warm August afternoon (August 9, 1966) while driving along trail beside the Wood River, north McCord, I noticed two Burrowing owls on a mound about 50 yards distant. Deciding to get a better look at them, I stopped the car and reached for my binoculars. But even as I did, one of the owls made a quick, short flight from the mound and then returned, apparently to feed the other bird. About this time three other owls popped up from below ground. Judging from their actions the group consisted of four juveniles and an adult.

While I watched, the parent bird made several sorties and almost invariably returned to the youngsters with what appeared to be an insect in its beak. On one or two occasions, the adult jumped off the mound and pounced on an insect close by. I was prepared for this method of catching prey, but had not expected to see a Burrowing Owl capture insects in flight. However, according to Bent (1932) Burrowing Owls frequently obtain moths, dragonflies and grasshoppers "on the wing", though most hunting is done in the evening and at night.—*J. R. Caldwell, Saskatoon.*

## SASKATCHEWAN LAKE

It is with mixed feelings that I note the changes taking place above Garinier Dam. During late 1966 the water was held back and the reservoir was filling up at a rate of about two inches a day. This caused flooding for about 10 miles up stream. All the islands near the Herbert Ferry were submerged as were the groves along the banks. All wildlife had to seek higher ground. Eventually we will have a lake 140 miles long, up to four miles wide, and with a shoreline of about 100 miles.

I have known the river since 1912. It originates with the mountain glaciers and it has cut a deep gorge through this part of Saskatchewan. It



has dangerous currents and I once wrote of it, in part:

The bane of the early homesteader  
When it sliced his market road.  
The watery grave of many a man  
And many a horse and load.  
So swiftly its silt, its sands, and its  
waters ran  
That the Indians called it  
SASK-ATCH-E-WAN.

During March and April, 1967, water has been released to lower the water in the reservoir by 15 feet. This gives more water at this time of year to Tobin Lake and the hydro electric plant at Squaw Rapids and provides more space in Saskatchewan Lake for the heavy runoff expected during the spring thaw. As the thick ice crumbled huge blocks of ice were held up in mid-air by the trees along the banks as is shown by the accompanying snapshot.—*Dave Santy, Beechy.*

## INDIAN LEGEND

Recently I heard of an unusual strip of golden sand along the South Saskatchewan River near a spot where the Palliser expedition had made camp. This is where Sage Creek joins the river. It was said that there is an Indian legend about the golden sand. Can anyone tell me where I can learn more about this legend?—*Eva Moore, Kelfield.*

## SKIDOO HUNTING

A new menace to wildlife has appeared on the Saskatchewan scene: motor toboggans. There are three in our vicinity, and on the weekends the teenagers race over the countryside, killing all wildlife they see. True, these vehicles are a lot of fun and have recreational value, but in too many cases they are operated by irresponsible people. I have written about this to the Highway Traffic Board. They were very sympathetic but pointed out that it is a "matter of local enforcement problem" and suggested that the acts of cruelty to wildlife should properly be drawn to the attention of the Department of Natural Resources. Accordingly, I do intend to visit our conservation officer, and I also want to bring this to the attention of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society.—*Reinhard F. Klatts, Esk.*

I was particularly impressed by an article written in the March issue of the *Blue Jay*, entitled "A New Menace to Wildlife" by R. D. Symons. . . . I would very much like to see the same one reproduced in two Peace River country newspapers if this could be arranged . . . both of these papers have quite an extensive area to cover and at the moment such an article on "skidoo hunting" would have quite a good impact.—*Robert C. Guest, Edmonton.*

## BOW VALLEY NATURALISTS

With the help of Park naturalists we have organized a natural history organization here in the mountains. We have had enthusiastic response so far and I hope this will continue. Our president is Hubert Green. The vice-presidents are Bruce Gordon and myself. Ruth Wilson is the secretary and we have an active field trips committee.

I hope to go to the Saskatchewan Natural History Society summer meeting this year and meet again with the nice people I saw at Rocanville last year.—*Aileen Harmon, Box 656, Banff, Alberta.*

## THE CALL OF THE GREAT SANDHILLS

From 1958 to 1960 I served the churches at Hazlet and Verlo, Saskatchewan, as a student minister. While there, my wife and I became fascinated with the Great Sandhills, much of which was owned and ranched by people of our congregations. Because of this association with the ranchers we were free to roam around on the various car trails in the Sandhills. We really came to enjoy our trips into this fascinating area, but always wished for more time to spend exploring it. We also felt it would be wonderful to get away from the car trails to some of the more remote corners of the Sandhills.

For our 1967 Centennial project we feel that we would like to do something we have always wanted to do. So my wife and I plan to spend eight or ten days of our summer holiday in August horseback riding all through the Great Sandhills. We shall be staying at the ranch of friends and shall ride out one day, camp overnight, and come back the next day by an alternate route. We shall likely make four or five trips in this manner and should thus be able to cover most of the Sandhills. We plan to visit Crane Lake and Bigstick Lake, and to make several trips to the west and north of the ranch.

As well as a holiday camping trip we plan to make a thorough study of the plants, animals, and birds of the Sandhills. Naturally, we shall make detailed notes on every item of natural history that we can. And we shall certainly be on the lookout for any Greater Prairie Chickens, as suggested in the last *Blue Jay* editorial. We are also excited about the possibility of seeing Kangaroo Rats. We were happy to learn that one of the field trips at the summer meeting will also be taken in this area. Although we cannot attend the meeting we shall be waiting eagerly to hear what people find there in June, and hoping that this will give us further ideas on what to look for.—*The Rev. S. C. Fowke, Norway House, Manitoba.*