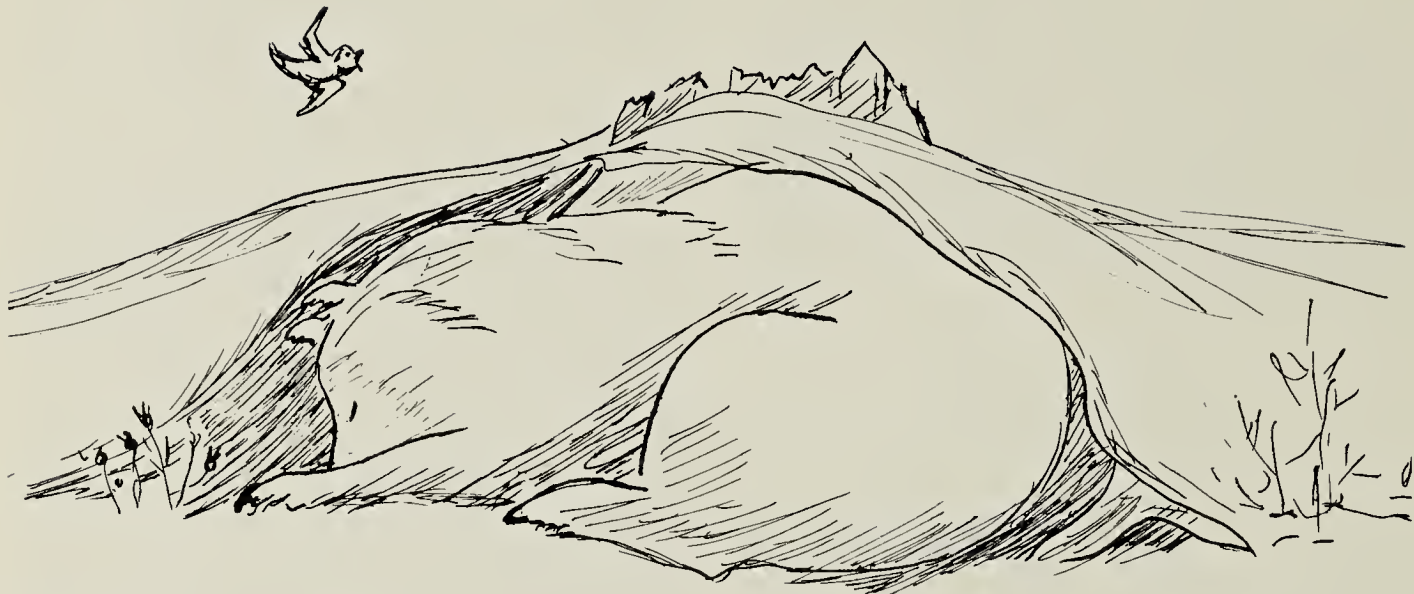


Junior Naturalists



RED FOX OBSERVATIONS

by **Derwent Mazur**, age 14, Yellow Creek

During the last summer I had quite a few opportunities for seeing a male Red Fox and his mate. While dad and I were picking stones we saw one of the pair. This one wasn't scared of us and we watched it for quite a while as it was catching mice. Incidentally, these two foxes had a den somewhere nearby which I could not locate. Another time while I was working summerfallow the female came out of the brush and was walking 20 feet in front of the tractor. I could tell it was the female for I could see her ribs and her fur was ruffled indicating that she had young. Later that day the male fox came out of the bush and crossed in front of the tractor and went about his own business. These two weren't scared at all.

After this I saw one of them at a distance and noticed it was carrying a crow. Even now I get a chance to see them almost every week.

AT THE MARSH ON BOXING DAY

by **Elizabeth Lane**, Regina

I was standing on the ice beside the open water at Regina marsh. The atmosphere was placid, but cold. A thick vapour was rising from the water and it took a while before my

eyes became accustomed to it. Suddenly, I made out three long, slender, white necks. They were swaying back and forth as though a snake charmer was casting his spell over them. Graceful swans — I felt jubilant!

A splashing broke the peace and I turned my head quickly to see ducks a few feet away. I must have startled them for they rose from the stream forming a pattern in the sky. Their bodies were a rich, shining green mingled with blue, white and black — beautiful. They circled, then descended a little further on.

I will cherish the memory of this bird-watching experience for many Christmas Bird Counts to come.

DUCK BEHAVIOR

by **Harry Harder**, age 15, Dundurn

I read with interest Brian Irving's letter in the September 1965 issue of the *Blue Jay* concerning the peculiar behaviour of a pair of Shoveller drakes and it at once reminded me of our own flock of 25 giant white Peking ducks we raised last year. Brian noted that the ducks he sighted swam about pumping their heads up and down. Often one or two of our ducks would walk around the yard bobbing their heads up and down and making funny croaking noises. The

reason for this I never found out but I believe it was probably just for amusement since they often behaved this way.

We made our ducks a small pond last year and at times a few would get into the water, start ducking under it and slapping it with their wings and in general making a big commotion. However, I never did see them trying to do each other harm or make any body contact at times like these as Brian noted in his observations.

From my observations the bobbing heads of our tame ducks was not part of a mating ceremony as Brian suggested was the case in his observations of wild ducks.

OBSERVATIONS TO MAKE IN MARCH

Brian Irving's sketch of a Sparrow Hawk is a reminder that it is one of the first birds to arrive back in the spring. Another colorful early spring arrival is the Mountain Bluebird so if you are planning to put out nest boxes for bluebirds you had better do so now. Other early arrivals include the crow, Marsh Hawk, Mallard and Pintail. Now is also the time to dust off your bird book and check up on your bird identifications for soon there will be so many birds using the flyways that it will be difficult to keep track of them all.

March is a good time to see how many trees you can identify by observing buds and bark. Soon you will be able to check your identification by studying the flowers and leaves. Flowers come out on wind pollinated trees before the leaves do. In poplar trees these flowers are known as catkins and appear late in March. See if you can tell the male poplars from the female poplars. Their catkins are different and by the time the seeds are produced you will know them apart for it is the female tree which



by Brian Irving, Kelvington
Sparrow Hawk

produces the "cottony fluff" which contains tiny seeds.

In wooded areas the first green leaves of wild strawberries appear beneath the melting snows, while on the south facing slopes of open hill-sides you can find the first grey-green leaves of sage, the dark green spikes of wild onion and the prickly leaves of the moss phlox. Yes, if we look hard we can see signs of spring even in March, a pleasant thought indeed on a bitterly cold January night.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Send contributions for the Junior Naturalist to Mrs. Joyce Deutscher, 7200 6th Ave., Regina, to arrive not later than April 15 to be included in the next *Blue Jay*.

FREE CONSERVATION AID

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