

Junior Naturalists

Edited by **Joyce Deutscher**, 7200 6th Ave., Regina

FROGS IN DECEMBER

by **Glen Watts**, age 13, Cartwright, Manitoba

I was walking along the ice on Badger Creek one-half mile east of Cartwright, Manitoba, today (Dec. 4, 1966). I noticed some small areas of open water where springs run into the creek. In some of these open areas where the water was only two to four inches deep I saw some frogs and water beetles. The frogs, some of which were green and some brown, were resting on the creek bottom. They seemed quite stiff but would swim away when disturbed. The air temperature was about twenty degrees today but has been as low as fifteen degrees below zero some nights. I was wondering why these frogs weren't in hibernation.

FAMOUS BIRD PAINTERS

by **Delmer Dutka**, age 11, Yellow Creek

This year we received signatures from famous bird painters. We have signatures from Fenwick Lansdowne, Frank Beebe, Angus Shortt, Glen Loates and Barry McKay.

We have received some reproductions of paintings by these men. Mr. McKay sent us an original painting of a killdeer sitting on her nest.

We read about these men in the Canadian section of the Star Weekly.

Delmer's classmate, Audrey Zip, adds how thrilled they were at receiving Mr. McKay's original painting. Mr. McKay wrote them that he started painting in his school days.

Editor's note: We wonder if Juniors are aware that we have a top ranking bird artist, Fred Lahrman, painting in Saskatchewan. Mr. Lahrman works at the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History in Regina and is responsible for many of the natural habitat background paintings there.

CLASSROOM PHOTOGRAPHY

by **Elsie Nemeth**, age 12, Yellow Creek

One afternoon one of my classmate's father brought an owl to school. We think it was a Saw-whet. My teacher put it on a trunk of a tree that we have in our classroom to take pictures of it. We measured the owl and found that the wing span was nine and a half inches.

Editor's note: Stella Holinaty, one of Elsie's classmates, adds that they plan on sending the picture to an expert to have the bird positively identified.

THE FROG'S NEST

by **Dan Wojcichowsky**, age 13, Yellow Creek

In 1966 we were digging potatoes when all of a sudden I saw a clump of moist soil. It looked unusual so I took a knife and cut the top off. Inside I saw a frog. I took the nest to school. My teacher, Mr. Isinger, was very happy. The nest was about 9 to 12 inches below the surface of the soil.

WAXWING NEST IN SHELTERBELT

by **Kenneth Orenchuk**, age 11, Yellow Creek

One day I was walking in the shelterbelt when I saw a half built Cedar Waxwing nest.

The Cedar Waxwings were making the nest of grass, twigs, and mud. The next day the nest was finished. Three days later I came and saw four eggs in the nest. The eggs were bluish with purple spots. Three weeks later the eggs were hatched.

The babies ate worms and seeds. They stretched their mouths about half an inch wide when they ate.



Leader-Post Photo

Fred W. Lahrman
in Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina

EXPLORATIONS

by Iris Simon, age 10, Yellow Creek

One Sunday my cousin and I went for a hike. We found a mouse nest but we were afraid to touch it because we thought a mouse might be in it. So we went on and found a tree that had been pecked by a woodpecker. Then we went on and found fungus which was growing on the north side of the tree. Later we came back along Rhone Lake. We saw cat-tails. As we looked back we saw a big hawk nest but we do not know if any birds were in it.

INJURED BOHEMIAN WAXWING

by Ellen Nykybouk, age 10, Saskatoon

One Thursday we found a Bohemian Waxwing on our walk. This poor bird seemed to have an injured wing. So we brought it into the house and

put it in a bird cage. We found out that the bird would eat mountain ash berries and chopped apples. We also heard him sing. He had a pretty song. Day after day we tried his flight but it was no better until one day we set him outside to see if his wing was better. Yes, it was better. Off he flew to join his friends.

SASKATCHEWAN SAND CASTLES AND FOSSIL HUNTING

by John Bayless, age 12, Lucky Lake

On a Sunday, just after the snow came, we paid our first visit to the Sand Castles south of Beechy Co-op Farm and had a really wonderful time and hope to spend a weekend there first thing in the spring. We picked up several specimens of fossils and some perfect clam shells among things we do not know. We are now wondering

hy we drove all the way to Drum-
eller to see something like this when
e have it almost in our back yard.

A GARTER SNAKE IN THE CLASSROOM

by Debra Gingara, age 11, Yellow Creek

One day my classmates, myself, and
ur teacher caught a garter snake.
Ve brought the snake into the school
nd put it into a large glass case. We
lled the case with dirt then we gave
ne snake a frog to eat. When we
ame back to school the frog was gone
o we all thought the snake ate it.
ut when we were letting the snake
o and when we were cleaning the
irt out we were surprised because
ne frog was underneath the ground
n the case all the time.

MUSKRAT PLAYS POSSUM

by Linda Simon, age 13, Yellow Creek

One day my friends and I were
kating on the dugout when we saw
muskrat. It pretended to be dead.
My brother put his hockey stick near
o the muskrat. It was so scared that
t did not move. Then we looked in
he hole in the ice and saw two little
uskrats. The first muskrat went
nto the hole which led under the ice.

A week or two ago we were skating
hen we saw a muskrat in the willow
wigs. We watched the muskrat for a
hile. It pretended to be dead. We
ent away so we do not know what
appened to it.

A SWARM OF BEES

by Linda Nemeth, age 11, Yellow Creek

One day I saw a swarm of bees on
fence. I ran to the house and told
ny mother to come. When we got
ack the bees were clustered around a
ole in the shape of a large cone.

The next day when my father came
ome from work he called me to help
im. The bees were in the air. They
ounded like aeroplanes. As I walked
ast them one bee stung me on my
eck. I ran away very fast. The next

day the bees were gone. Later I saw
that they had moved into our porch.
I ran and told my father. A few days
later the bees made a hive and put
some honey into it.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

The students from Yellow Creek
school again are major contributors to
the Junior section. We would like to
congratulate them on their interest in
nature and the enthusiasm with which
they write about their adventures. We
would also be pleased to have more
teachers sending in collections of let-
ters from their students.

In addition to the letters published
we have gleaned the following infor-
mation from other letters.

Mammals observed in the Yellow
Creek area include a coyote seen by
Colleen Shewchuk, a squirrel by Rose
Nemeth and a mother and two young
badgers by Ellen Kuz. Elizabeth Toth
thinks there is some connection be-
tween a lynx and the disappearance
of one of their sheep.

Glen Fleming has no doubt about
why some animals disappear. He
traps them. The mammals he traps
include coyotes, weasles, muskrats and
foxes. Glen was most excited however
when he saw a lynx.

One mammal which never fails to
bring forth a story or two is the
skunk. Sherry Chubak claims that her
grandfather likes the odor of skunk.
However, Gerry Oleksyn states that
his dog "did not smell very good"
after his encounter with a skunk.
Meanwhile Audrey Lesedouich con-
nects the disappearance of some
chicken eggs with the presence of a
skunk.

Dennis Mathowski didn't see any
mammals but he looked for signs of
them and found weasel and deer
tracks.

John Mukli didn't think a beaver
appeared quite proper swimming
around in a small puddle so he and
his uncle moved the beaver to a
slough.

Bird watcher Deborah Shawchuk saw a blackbird in the engine room while Evelyn Gypchuk tried unsuccessfully to nurse a blackbird with a broken wing back to health. A happier story comes from Kenneth Mazur who reports that a pair of bluebirds successfully raised a family in the bird-house in their back yard. Meanwhile Eugenia Koval was concerned about a family of Mallards which were separated by some dogs. She hopes the mother was able to find the young ones again. A happy ending was reported by Joan Popiel who nursed a chickadee with a missing toe back to health.

Idelle Swicheniuk relates how their class studied about the Sharp-tailed Grouse after their teacher, Mr.

Isinger, brought one to school. Bobby Oleksyn claims they knew it was a grouse by the feathers on its legs. Among other things the students learned that the grouse is the bird emblem of Saskatchewan.

And that just about sums up what Juniors have been doing recently except for Tom Nykyforuk of Saskatoon who drew a Bohemian Waxwing. Tom is eight years old and his drawing very clearly showed the crest on the waxwing's head. Keep up the good work Juniors. We enjoy hearing from you.

Letters for the Junior Section of the *Blue Jay* should be mailed to Mrs. Joyce Deutscher, 7200 - 6th Avenue, Regina, to arrive not later than April 15 to be in time for the June issue.

Letters and Notes

GREATER PRAIRIE CHICKEN?

Mr. C. E. Pegg of Claremont, Ontario in the *Oshawa Naturalists' Club Bulletin Supplement*, December, 1966 reported on a trip to western Canada. His family stopped at the Museum of Natural History in Regina which he said "is one of the finest in Canada". They were greeted there by Mrs. E. Cruickshank, who accompanied them to see Burrowing Owls at Richardson.

During the trip Mr. Pegg saw 200 species of birds and some of these are mentioned in the account, e.g., Clay-colored Sparrows, Chestnut-collared Longspurs, Black-billed Magpies and Lark Buntings near Estevan; Brewer's Sparrows, Lark Sparrows and Rufous-sided Towhee near Stewart Valley; Sharp-tailed Grouse and Eastern and Western Kingbirds near Swift Current; Baird's and Savannah Sparrows, Long-billed Curlew and Upland Plover north of Piapot; Red Crossbills, Audubon Warblers, Oregon Juncos, Dusky Flycatchers and Mountain Bluebirds in the Cypress Hills.

On July 14 in the Cypress Hills Provincial Park he records as follows:

"In a long grass meadow, I flushed a flock of grouse. There was one adult and eight young grouse about half grown. The tails of these birds were short, dark and rounded as they flew. The adult bird was more barred than speckled. I believe they were Prairie Chicken, now a rare species in the west."

INCREASE IN SHARP-TAILS

A few days ago [letter of January 30, 1967] I saw an encouraging sight. We were pulling on to Highway No. 15 north of our home and we noticed grouse to the northwest of us; then we looked to the northeast and there were many more. Mary and I began to count and we went past 40. These birds were on the crest of two hills beyond us and we believe there were more we couldn't see. I had never seen grouse on these hills before, although we have always seen flocks of a dozen or less along the highway in winter.

I remembered having seen unusual numbers of sharp-tails back in my school days. I looked up my records—