

Notes from Letters

PORCUPINE USURPS ACTIVE CROW NEST

Upon checking a Common Crow nest in the evening of June 2, 1966, I was amazed to find a Porcupine sitting inside the nest. There had been four young in the nest at the time. The porcupine was sleeping when I first saw him but soon he woke up when the adult crows started making a commotion at my approach. The porcupine disregarded my intrusion as well as the commotion of the crows and it appeared that the animal was planning to spend a night in the nest. I moved away from the nest site, but about an hour later I came back to see if the porcupine was still in the nest. It was sleeping in the nest. I visited the nest the next day and found that the four young crows were dead. The porcupine had apparently spent the night on the young crows, thus smothering them.—*Bohdan Pylypec*, Box 134, Yellow Creek, Saskatchewan.

CANADA GOOSE NESTS ON ROOF OF HEN HOUSE

We have a wild Canada Goose that has stayed with us for five years, summer and winter, and every year she lays and sets on top of our chicken house which has a sod roof. Last year in early spring the tame gander was killed by a coyote, so the goose didn't



hatch any young. However, this year a wild gander came and mated with her and she has now [June 8, 1966] hatched four young. We have one of her half-wild young that is two years old; this year she laid and hatched young. We are very pleased to have these birds so tame and staying with our own tame geese. Enclosed is a snap of them on top of the hen house, where she laid and set in the old tire put there for her. The half-wild goose set in a box hung on the side of the granary (previously hung for a turkey nest) with a plank to walk over on from the hen house.—*Mrs. Pansy White*, Box 896, Maple Creek, Sask.

TWO-HEADED DEER MOUSE



Photo copyright by H. H. Pittman

This is the picture of a two-headed Deer Mouse which was killed near Wauchope by a cat.—*H. H. Pittman*, Wauchope, Sask.

EVENING GROSBEAKS

In the town of Kelvington there is a flock of Evening Grosbeaks (*Hesperiphona vespertina*) numbering nearly three hundred individuals in the winter of 1965-66. The flock is the

result of a feeding and protection project begun 15 years ago by Mr. and Mrs. Bob Fraser. It started when Mr. Fraser set out sunflower seeds for two or three grosbeaks which visited his yard, and mushroomed until during the winter of 1964-65 nearly four hundred birds were fed 3000 pounds of sunflower seeds. The birds feed best during cold, clear, crisp days rather than on dull, cloudy, warm days.

Evening Grosbeaks are aggressive birds, perhaps best described in Mrs. Fraser's words: "They are scrappy and greedy. For every two of the little devils at least one is a bully!"

The flock seems to follow a regular daily schedule in its winter visits to the Fraser's home. At one time the flock arrived from the roosting ground, which is thought to be in a spruce swamp a short distance north of town, at about 10:00 a.m. and left before 4:00 p.m. Now, however, they arrive at 8:00 a.m. and remain until nearly 5:30 p.m. Before returning to the roosting ground the birds cease feeding, there is a noticeable lull in their noisy cries, and they move to the tops of the trees.

The grosbeaks leave for the summer to nest, it is assumed, along the Pipestone Creek a few miles northwest of Kelvington. The first individuals depart after the last severe spring snow storm. The latest recorded departure date was June 19, 1964. This year one pair remained and nested in a Scotch pine at the Fraser home. The birds return by mid or late October.—*David N. Ashdown, Box 31, Okla, Sask.*



UNUSUAL MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD NESTING BEHAVIOUR

In the spring of 1966 I attached a bluebird nest-box to a fence surrounding our garden in an open locality. A pair of Mountain Bluebirds soon claimed the birdhouse and on April 21 began carrying pieces of grass for their nest. At first the grass was piled in a disorderly fashion but later two holes were made in the pile of grass. It appeared that the bluebirds were planning to build two nests, one on either side of the birdhouse. The bluebirds kept bringing in grass, shaping both nests until a lining was all that was needed in the nests. The nests were then lined with feathers, shreds of dry bark and some horsehair. By May 18 both nests were completed.

On that day an egg was laid in one of the nests. Five more eggs were laid later. The eggs were incubated and by June 6, six young emerged from the eggs. On June 14 only two young were in the nest. There were no traces of the other four young. They had probably died due to a long spell of cold, wet weather and were then removed from the nest by the parents. The two young survived and on June 27, they moved to the second nest. The next day they left the nest-box.

The adult bluebirds then prepared for a second brood. They removed the old linings and brought in new linings. On July 4 an egg was laid in the same nest as previously. Three more eggs were laid later. However, the only time I saw the other nest being used was when the two young had sat in it for a while. Why then did the bluebirds build two nests? —*Bohdan Pylypec, Box 134, Yellow Creek, Saskatchewan.*

IMPALED BAT

In the last issue of the *Blue Jay* (Vol. 24:2) there are four instances of birds getting entangled on objects—accidents of flight which are not really too unusual. What is unusual is to find a bat so entangled. However, I did once find a silver-haired bat impaled through the wing on a branch of a scrub. I wondered if the sonar and radar abilities of the bat are always able to prevent collisions.



Photo by Robert R. Taylor

Wapiti at Richardson, 4 miles southeast of Regina, July 1, 1966

TAX FREE

A letter from the Department of National Revenue, Taxation Division, Ottawa, to the secretary of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society tells us that the Society is recognized as a charitable organization within the meaning of Section 62 (1) (e) of the Income Tax Act for the 1966 taxation year. Accordingly donations made during the current year (evidenced by receipt) will be deductible by donors in computing their taxable income. Application for this privilege must be made again in 1967.



Photo by Helen Morrison

Betty MacGregor and Elisabeth Wagner at the summer meeting, June, 1966

1966 CHRISTMAS CARD

A beautiful Doug Gilroy Kodachrome, "Hawthorn Berries on Snow", approved at the Summer Meeting is our Christmas card for 1966. The cards are 4 x 5 inches, simple fold, with greeting. They are in color. Price is \$1.00 per dozen with envelopes (Sask. residents \$1.04). There are also some Christmas cards showing the Bohemian Waxwing (Cy Hampson) and Downy Woodpecker (Ruth Tempel) each at \$1.04 per dozen. The Boreal Chickadee (Ralph Carson) card is available as a hasti-note only.

Books on natural history are also available at the *Blue Jay* bookshop. Get your Christmas orders in early. Order through the *Blue Jay* bookshop, Box 1121, Regina.

ANNUAL MEETING

The Saskatchewan Natural History Society holds its annual meeting this year in the attractive Museum of Natural History in Regina. There will be registration and an informal social hour or two Friday evening and then business and entertainment sessions all day Saturday. There will be a guest speaker Saturday evening. Program details may be obtained by writing to Box 1121, Regina. Send in your suggestions for resolutions and for officers and plan to attend the annual meeting, October 15, 1966.