

hear the lonely cry of the loon; birds beyond number live in the willows that grow along the tiny stream; poplar and birch border the creek bank and beaver pond, jackpine and spruce flourish in the muskeg. And they will always be there, for it is now a sanctuary, a gift to our wild friends, in appreciation of all they have taught us.

Another year has passed us by and it is time once again to wish you one and all a very Merry Christmas. This year I would like to send extra special greetings to the Saskatoon Junior Natural History Society for their aid to our feathered friends, and to the wonderful, friendly people of Rochester, Alberta.

A STRANGE BIRD

by **Dwight Hayes**, age 10, Torch River

On September 18 while I was digging potatoes, I heard a strange bird call in the sunflowers. When I went over to look, I saw a large grey bird with black wings and a long black tail. I looked in my bird manual and wondered whether it might be a Clark's Nutcracker, although this friendly bird is not often found in Saskatchewan. The bird was also seen eating beside a pair of Blue Jays.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In general appearance, the Clark's Nutcracker and the Gray Jay are very similar, and of course the Gray Jay would be a common species in the woods at Torch River. Could Dwight's bird have been a Gray Jay?

BIRD HOUSE PROJECT STARTED

by **Brian Scott**, age 14, Indian Head

This year I started building bird houses. In March I built eleven and put them up within a mile of our farm in early April. I set out the House Wren boxes in trees and the Tree Swallow houses on fence posts. House Sparrows nested in three houses around the yard. Only two boxes were unoccupied. I had three nests of Tree Swallows with seven young in each. My brother Lorne banded the young. House Wrens occupied three nests. I plan on building more nests this winter.

LETTERS FROM JUNIORS WELCOMED

Please send your observations about nature to Mrs. Joyce Deutscher, 7200 6th Ave., Regina. Your observations, suggestions and comments are always welcome.

Letters and Notes

BARN SWALLOWS

I would like to report a pair of free-loaders that I saw riding on the Saskatchewan Department of Highways ferry at the Lancer Crossing on the South Saskatchewan River on August 21, 1969.

A pair of Barn Swallows had constructed a nest on top of a light reflector in a little shelter on the upstream side of the ferry. The ferryman told me they had brought off one brood of young and were incubating a second batch of eggs, which he was glad to see.—*Clifford A. Matthews*, Saskatoon.

AVIAN TELEGRAPH LINE

Often during the nesting season the territory of a pair of birds will be invaded by a bird watcher who causes them to express their disapproval in a vociferous manner.

On July 5, 1969, while birding on one of the many nature trails in B.C.'s Manning Park, Park Naturalist Andrew Harcombe and I came upon the territory of a pair of Wilson's Warblers. As soon as they noticed us, they began sounding their familiar monosyllabic "check" note in rapid succession. This resulted in the following birds appearing: Mountain Chickadee

(number undetermined), Golden-crowned Kinglet (number undetermined), Gray Jay (four adults), Rufous Hummingbird (one female), Song Sparrow (two adults, one juvenile), Swainson's Thrush (one adult), Townsend's Warbler (one male).

Whether these birds appeared in response to the alarm or whether they were motivated by curiosity, it would seem that birds are provided with an excellent communications network, especially when danger is imminent.—*Al Grass*, Manning Park, B.C.

WILDERNESS PRESERVED!

The photo used in the September, 1969 issue of the *Blue Jay* to illustrate the article "The Tonic of Wilderness" by Margaret Belcher was a poor choice. I cannot conceive of the Cypress Hills Provincial Park as "wilderness preserved." Ranching, cottage subdivisions, power lines, dense facility-oriented recreational activities and black-topped roads are all to be found in very close proximity to the area illustrated. Indeed cattle grazing occurs within the area and the beaver pond has been destroyed, seemingly because it threatened to flood the adjacent road. Wilderness preserved?

The editor of the *Blue Jay* has done a disservice to the wilderness concept with this questionable photograph. Canada is still rampant with sceptics who say "who needs wilderness, it's all around us?" The use of a marginal illustration such as the one shown only gives visual evidence of the confusion in the wilderness advocate's mind. If we cannot maintain a high degree of accuracy (and honesty) in photography intended to show a specific type of landscape, is it little wonder that we have formidable hurdles to surmount in protecting wild land and relatively unique landscapes, as well as educating the public at large as to the value of these areas?

A second criticism I have of the Cypress Hills area illustrated and the caption used is that it may soon

undergo fundamental landscape change. A recreational reservoir has been proposed to occupy the Belanger Creek Valley. Is a third artificial lake justified in this area? Can the planners sacrifice this scenically attractive area of the Cypress Hills Park in an area already highly concentrated with facilities-oriented recreation? What are the implications for flora and fauna? Will the public have the opportunity to put its views?

The area illustrated is less than "wilderness preserved" now but what claim will it have to being even a "wild" or protected landscape should the proposed development be undertaken?—*Robert C. Scace*, Department of Geography, University of Calgary.

BIG ROBIN MIGRATION IN FALL OF 1969

I am writing to you about the large number of robins that have appeared in Prince Albert this fall. Local robins seemed to leave Prince Albert at the end of August, and until late September there seemed to be no birds left. Then, on September 28, I noticed several robins again, and on the 29th and 30th there were robins everywhere. Now (October 5) there are hundreds, even thousands, of them, flying everywhere as if in a hurry to hunt food. When they first arrived, they seemed starved, and hungrily cleaned off the berries of our two mountain ash trees. In the past 22 years that I have lived in P.A. I have never seen anything like this—robins in such large numbers that it reminds you of the robins migrating along the B.C. coast.

These are presumably northern robins on their way south, stopping for rest and food. At the rate that they are eating up all the mountain ash berries and crabapples, I wonder what there will be for the Bohemian Waxwings if they come in their usual numbers to Prince Albert this winter. There are no saskatoons, chokecherries or cranberries, as the blossoms froze in the spring.—*Auguste Viala*, Prince Albert.