

# The Blue Jay Bookshelf

SASKATOON WETLANDS SEMINAR. 1969. Canadian Wildlife Service report series No. 6. Queen's Printer, Ottawa. \$5.25.

This publication is a collection of scientific papers presented in February 1967 at a seminar on small water areas in the prairie pothole region, held to mark the opening of the Prairie Migratory Bird Research Centre in Saskatoon. It contains a fund of information on the values of the wetlands and the problems associated with their preservation, the characteristics of these areas and of waterfowl populations, and the methods of obtaining data on waterfowl. The need for further research, from a standpoint of the total environment, with the aim of seeking a balance for waterfowl, grain production, and recreation, is outlined.

The ten million natural depressions in the Canadian prairies are essential for the maintenance of a North American population of 60-100 million breeding ducks—the goal of the International Migratory Bird Committee. But because of a conflict of interests, the policies of various government agencies may support or act in opposition to this aim. For example, farmers striving for greater economic returns from their land have been draining potholes for agricultural use, with government financial assistance. On the other hand, government funds for building water storage areas are available to farmers who agree to refrain from draining wetlands, and for long-term lease of large marshes for wildlife and recreation. In spite of the recognition of the need for economic efficiency, the consensus of the participants at the seminar was that as much as possible of the wetlands should be preserved. The reasons included prevention of unstable ecological conditions, maintenance of a diversified, pleasing environment, and provision for an expected increase in recreational pursuits (natural history

observing, camping, photography, etc.) Studies of small water areas have been mainly for the purpose of providing a marketable surplus of waterfowl, but the hunter is not the only one to benefit.

The book illustrates the work being done by government agencies, universities, and organizations such as Ducks Unlimited to understand the dynamics of waterfowl populations. Factors affecting water levels in sloughs, types of vegetation characteristic of sloughs of different degrees of permanency, and the characteristics of those potholes which are most attractive to ducks, have been investigated. In order to predict a fall flight size, measures of breeding success are more valuable than spring census figures, and emphasis is being placed on the study of specific aspects of waterfowl ecology such as the effect of crowding on productivity, and what size and quality of water area a particular species of duck requires to produce the maximum number of young.

Unfortunately, this interesting information is presented in terms which are perhaps too scientific for the general public, and there is considerable repetition throughout the book which makes it unsuitable as a reference. Also, because so much similar research data are given, the reading becomes, in places, rather tedious. The book should prove useful, however, for biologists and hydrologists working in the field of waterfowl conservation, and interesting to anyone concerned about the future fate of our duck population. It would seem even more valuable if the information, gleaned from the knowledge and experience of the seminar participants, could be published in the form of a manual on small water areas. It might serve to encourage the study and enjoyment of the wetland habitat by the general public, and enlist their support now in preserving our natural water areas.—*Nora Stewart, Regina.*

## SUGGESTIONS FROM THE BLUE JAY BOOKSHOP

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## SNHS ANNUAL AWARDS

### CLIFF SHAW AWARD 1969

By decision of the Board of Directors The Cliff Shaw Award is being continued beyond the minimal 10 years of the original term. This award is given to the contributor judged by the Editor to have made the most significant contribution to the *Blue Jay* during the preceding year.

The 1969 award was made to **John Lane** of Brandon, Manitoba, by Dr. George Ledingham, Editor of the *Blue Jay*, for the article on hybridism in the Mountain and Eastern bluebirds that was printed in the March, 1969 *Blue Jay*. This article was a valuable original contribution, recording the first example of hybridism in the thrush family in North America. In addition, it was recognized that a number of other recent contributions to the *Blue Jay* were indirectly inspired by John Lane, the originator of the bluebird trail at Brandon, for his idea has been taken up at Indian Head by Lorne Scott, and more recently at Saskatoon by the junior naturalists of the local society there.

### SNHS CONSERVATION AWARD 1969

The Conservation Award given annually by the Saskatchewan Natural History Society recognizes an outstanding contribution to conservation in Saskatchewan. This year the award was made to **Lorne Scott**, a young staff member of the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History. Lorne was recognized for his conservation education activities in the Museum, for his dedicated interest in young people and their projects, and for his work on the Indian Head Bluebird Trail. In making the presentation, retiring President, Mr. W. A. Brownlee, said that natural history was both Lorne's long-time hobby and his current occupation.

The bluebird nest box project started by Lorne at Indian Head in 1963 now has 750 nest boxes. Lorne's project was inspired by John Lane and his group of junior naturalists at Brandon, and Lorne in turn is now giving encouragement to another group of juniors in Saskatoon, who hope to extend their nest box trail to meet Lorne's.