



Derrick Edmundsen and owl.

town garden was bothered with pocket gophers. I trapped three and in the evening we would take them far out into the country and let them go.

### NOTES FROM LETTERS

Mrs. White would like to hear from boys and girls and get their reaction

to the stories she has been writing for them. She would also like to get suggestions for future articles. Her address is Mrs. Helene R. White, 7732 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton 2, Alberta. Mrs. White tells us that she has discovered that Bohemian Waxwings are very fond of Sunny Boy Cereal. She buys it in 20-pound bags for them. She also keeps brandy and water on hand (50-50 solution) and gives a few drops of it to birds who have knocked themselves out against her window. She tells us this prevents clots from forming on the brain surface and keeps them from going into shock.

Garry, from Brownfield, Alberta (sorry Garry, you forgot to give your address) has been counting magpies and chickadees this last winter. He also tells us that he finds the *Blue Jay* very interesting. Thomas Shurvin who doesn't tell us where he lives, writes that one night he and his dad saw about 100 deer in one field.

### CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME

Please send letters, photos, and drawings for use in the next Junior Naturalists Section to Mrs. Joyce Deutscher, 7200 6th Avenue, Regina, Saskatchewan, to arrive not later than July 15.

## Letters and Notes

### ATTRACTING BIRDS

When we came to our present farm there were no trees and no birds. By planting caragana hedges, Manitoba maples, elm, ash and poplars, and later willows and a few spruce trees, by growing a garden of beautiful flowers, by establishing a bird bath, and finally, by hanging up attractive bird nests like gourds, we have encouraged more varieties of birds to come to our farm and to stay and nest here. By this fall we hope to build a large dugout, and to plant willows

around it to attract other kinds of birds, especially waterfowl. On our place, we only need to look around us to see antelope, deer, or nesting wild geese.

One of the species that has taken up residence since our arrival is the Baltimore Oriole. About six years ago several orioles arrived but stayed only a day. The next year, orioles returned in spring and stayed three days; the following year they were here for a week, and so on. Two years ago they stayed until the end of June, and last

ear (1968) we know they nested. We have certainly enjoyed having these beautiful birds.

We recognize, of course, that birds are the farmer's friends. A good example of this is the Horned Lark that I watched feeding its young in our yard when the yard was invaded with grasshoppers. I noticed that she fed her two young and also a young Starling. Although she tried to see that all three young birds got equal shares of food, the young Starling was so big and greedy, that he always walked ahead of the rest and ate double. It was unbelievable the amount of grasshoppers that they devoured. By fall my yard was clear of grasshoppers, and I had learned to respect birds as very valuable friends.

—Mrs. Jean Heine, Box 725, Maple Creek.

### **WILD TRUMPETER SWANS ON A B.C. REFUGE**

On a quiet, sunny morning recently we stood by the Warden's house on the George C. Reifel Waterfowl Refuge watching the courtship behaviour of a pair of Trumpeter

Swans. They walked toward each other with their wings outstretched and their heads bobbing up and down. The male would take the lead with a loud trumpeting, followed by his mate's and then their blended voices would echo across the marsh. Suddenly their voices took on a frantic note as they lost interest in each other and craned their necks upward to look into the sky. We looked up too and saw the graceful flight of a pair of wild Trumpeter Swans which seemed about to land. Then the wild swans saw us and flared away, only to land a few minutes later in the back marsh with some Whistling Swans and begin feeding.

For three days the wild Trumpeters stayed, spending the daytime in the far corners of the refuge away from people, and at night flying closer to the Warden's house to eat grain with the tame Trumpeters. Then they disappeared and we thought their visit had ended, but two days later they came back to take up residence in a slough only a few hundred feet from the display pens, where they have remained now for almost four weeks (since their arrival February 28).



Trumpeter Swans at George C. Reifel Waterfowl Refuge, 1969.

Except for an afternoon sortie out over the tidal flats at low tide, presumably in search for grit which is lacking in their slough, the pair of wild Trumpeters have shown no signs of wanting to leave the refuge. There is even the possibility that they may decide to nest here.

At one time the Trumpeter Swan nested over most of North America, but by the turn of the last century only a few isolated pairs remained in the western U.S.A., with a very limited population in Alberta and on the west coast. However, their numbers have gradually increased, thanks to the protection given them by the Migratory Birds Convention Act (1918), the formation of refuges, the closure of hunting in areas where breeding Trumpeters were known to occur, and a far-reaching publicity campaign. Recent figures indicate a population of perhaps 3,000, with a number in excess of 1,500 wintering in B.C. The main hazard facing these birds is still shooting by irresponsible hunters.

Those who are not familiar with the George C. Reifel Waterfowl Refuge should know that it is located on Westham Island about 20 miles south of Vancouver at the mouth of the Fraser River. It includes about 800 acres of marsh and tidal flats on Roberts Banks, which is the most important waterfowl wintering ground in Canada. The refuge has been in operation for a number of years, and recently grants from the Federal Government and Ducks Unlimited (Canada) have made it possible to open it to the public. Visitors are (therefore) most welcome. — *Keith Hodson*, 5191 Robertson Road, R.R. No. 1, Ladner, B.C.

### **DOWNY WOODPECKER ATTACKS HAIRY WOODPECKER**

On March 30, 1969, near Ladner, B.C., Mr. Glen R. Ryder and I observed an interesting interaction between a male Downy Woodpecker and a female Hairy Woodpecker.

We were observing the Hairy when out of nowhere came a male Downy. He proceeded to harass the Hairy and finally drove her off to a horizontally lying tree some 60 feet away. Seconds later the Downy landed on the same tree, but at the other end, wherein he fanned his tail, held his wings slightly downward, and displayed a brilliant red nuchal patch. He strutted towards the Hairy, then launched a vicious attack, driving her off to a grove of trees some distance away.

The Downy paused for some minutes, giving off short piercing notes, and then flew to a neighbouring willow bush, joining a female Downy.

The Downy Woodpecker's aggressive behaviour was apparently due to an invasion of territory, there being every reason to believe that the two Downies were paired.—*Al Grass*, 5666 Rumble St., Burnaby 1, B.C.

### **A PRAIRIE IS FOREVER**

In 1966 The Missouri Prairie Foundation was established to enable all interested persons to work together to protect the wild prairie lands of that state. The Foundation does not have governmental support, but depends entirely on contributions and membership dues from persons throughout Missouri and elsewhere who are fighting to save precious remnants of Missouri's native prairie.

Although our Saskatchewan prairie does not have the same tall bluestem grasses or the same wild flowers, we are concerned in exactly the same way with the necessity of protecting the



## FREEZOUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA



One of the best locations for bird watching in Montana is the Fish and Game Department's Freezout Wildlife Management Area located in Teton County, along Highway 89, between Fairfield and Choteau. During four days of June 1968, I recorded 96 species of birds in the vicinity of the lakes, marshes, and uplands of this area.

Bird watching activities begin the last week of March when spring migrants arrive at the lake. One of the greatest attractions occurs the last weekend of March when large congregations of snow geese and whistling swans stop to rest on their northward migrations. An estimated 350,000 snow geese and 11,000 whistling swans have been on the area at one time, plus hundreds of thousands of migrating ducks. Most of the migrations are over by mid-May.

Nesting activity is high from mid-April to the end of May. The young make their appearance the latter part of May or early June.

### A show of young birds

The last week of June and first two weeks of July are a good time to observe the broods of young ducks and shorebirds. You can also see young grebes riding on the backs of the adults—a characteristic mode of transportation for the very young of this species.

During October and November, ducks, geese, and swans again congregate here in large numbers on their southward migration.

The area originally was a glacial lake bed which dried up each summer. In 1955, the Soil Conservation Service provided technical assistance to develop a complete conservation plan for the area. A soil survey helped select the best areas for crops to be grown for food for waterfowl and pheasants. Less productive soils were flooded to make additional marshlands. Some uplands were seeded to grass,

natural ecosystem of native prairie  
fauna and flora.

For example, the stated objectives  
of the Missouri Prairie Foundation  
are objectives with which we are in  
complete sympathy in our own  
attempts to preserve our Canadian  
prairie heritage. These are:

To ensure the preservation of  
native prairie along with associated  
plant and animal life.

To advance for public benefit the  
acquisition, management, protec-  
tion, control and perpetuation of  
native prairie.

To carry on educational programs  
designed to create interest in the  
preservation and perpetuation of  
native prairie.

To provide scientific research with  
respect to native prairie and its  
flora and fauna.

The sketches that we are printing  
from the little bulletin that describes  
the Missouri Prairie Foundation's  
project show that prairie dwellers  
here and there share many common  
forms of wildlife that will disappear  
forever if a public consciousness is  
not aroused to ensure their protection.  
You can help save the Missouri prair-  
ies by sending a donation to The  
Missouri Prairie Foundation, P.O.  
Box 200, Columbia, Missouri 65201;  
you can help save our own prairies  
also by donations, but most of all by  
helping others understand why prai-  
rie must be saved. A prairie is forever.

some planted to trees and shrubs, and others left undisturbed to provide food and cover for wildlife.

A large drainage ditch and dikes were constructed with control structures so water could be maintained at proper depths. Six separate shallow water ponds were created. The dikes serve as roads, and it is possible to drive around much of the marsh area and observe, at close hand, courting waterfowl, nesting ducks and shorebirds, and the broods and young of many water-loving species of small birds.

#### A varied habitat

The management area now consists of 12,000 acres with many miles of mudflat shorelines; 6,000 acres of water; 800 acres in cropland; 3,000 acres in grassland. Some 20,000 trees and shrubs have been planted. A large island in the largest lake, and numerous man-made islands, provide important nesting sites for thousands of California gulls. The lake supports an abundant growth of submerged vegetation, mostly sago pondweed and widgeongrass, which are important waterfowl foods. Saltmarsh bulrush, formerly called alkali bulrush, grows abundantly in shallow water and is a choice food of snow geese. The seeds are a good food for ducks.—*Louis M. Moos*, Biologist, Soil Conservation service, Bozeman, Montana. Reprinted from *Soil Conservation*, March, 1969.

#### ANOTHER BUFFALO SKULL

After seeing several buffalo skull pictures and reading some interesting articles about them in the *Blue Jay*, I decided to send this photograph.

On November 2, 1968, I pulled this buffalo skull from a gravel seam in the riverbed of the South Saskatchewan River north of Leader. The river was extremely low, this gravel seam normally being covered with water.

The buffalo skull is in very good condition and appears to be quite aged. It measures 23 inches from tip to tip of the horn cores.—*Daisy D. Meyers*, Leader.



#### POSTAGE RATES

With this issue the *Blue Jay* will pay higher postage rates. You will notice that we have been granted second class mail privileges and that our registration number is 1046.

The new rate will mean that we pay four cents per pound on bulk mailing to bona fide subscribers in Canada. Effective October 1, 1969 this rate will be raised to four and one-half cents per pound and effective April 1, 1970 it will be raised again to five cents per pound.

The change in mailing rates is an attempt to make postal services less of a public expense. The change will probably mean a three-fold increase in our postage expenses. Since we barely balance our books each year this extra cost is bound to have some effect on our fees and we may lose our one dollar membership at the next annual meeting. The only way to prevent this would be a big increase in membership now. If we could double our membership we could more than save on printing costs what we are going to lose on postage. This is just a reminder that we need your help in building up our membership, we especially need your help now if we are going to prevent a general increase in all membership fees.

## VARIATION IN THE PRAIRIE CROCUS

Mr. F. R. Vance of Regina, who has hundreds of excellent kodachromes of Saskatchewan flowers, tells us of finding a crocus (Pasque-flower) with pure white flowers. There was only one such plant in the whole population. **Boswell Belcher**, Dilke, found one plant on which the flowers were definitely pink in colour. **Carol Beaulieu** of Indian Head sent us two flowers, each with seven petals. She promises to watch the plant to see if all its flowers show this same character and she promises to mark the plant for future observation.

Botany manuals mention both of these variations in our Pasque-flower. For example, Gleason and Cronquist in *Manual of vascular plants of north-eastern United States and adjacent Canada* say of the flowers of this plant, "sepals 5-7, blue or purple to white". Pure white and pure pink flowers must be very rare and I don't know of any study which tells us what the usual numbers of petals (botanists identify them as sepals) is or how this character is inherited. You could study variability in the plants in your pasture. You could collect some mature seed from special marked plants and grow plants to see if they show the same character. If you grow the Pasque-flower from seed how long will it be before you have flowers?

## BLUEBIRD INFORMATION WANTED

Anyone who has information on the status of Eastern and Mountain bluebirds in southwestern Manitoba is invited to correspond with **Wayne Miller** who is preparing a report on these two species. Breeding records and sightings anywhere in Manitoba would be useful. Information is needed on population changes, reproductive success, and interactions between the two species. Wayne can be reached at: 2 Almond Crescent, Brandon, Manitoba.

## DECEMBER RECORD OF MOURNING DOVE AT OXBOW

My reason for writing this is to report the Mourning Doves that stayed with us until December last year. On November 26, 1968 we saw two Mourning Doves near our house, and both birds were seen again on December 9, when they seemed lively and strong. This was the last day that we saw the two doves, but a single bird was seen on December 19, 22 and 23 — when it was  $-15^{\circ}$  here. It was seen again on December 24 at the cattle shed, and for the last time on December 26, when it was carrying some small object in its beak while a magpie gave chase. — *Mrs. Keith Paton, Oxbow.*

[EDITOR'S NOTE: It will be noted that a Mourning Dove was reported for the Christmas Count at Piapot last December (December 26, 1968). Mrs. Houston also tells us that her Christmas Bird Count files show records of single Mourning Doves seen on December 26, 1953 at Saltcoats, on December 26, 1962 at Fort Qu'Appelle, and on December 15, 1965 at Nipawin.]

## PRAIRIE NEST RECORDS SCHEME

Contributors are reminded to send 1969 nest record cards in. Write for information and nest record cards to Dr. R. W. Nero, Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, 147 James Avenue, Winnipeg 2.

## SNHS SUMMER MEET

June 13-15

Val Marie, Saskatchewan

This is a reminder that the annual field meet will be held this year at the Society's Prairie Dog Sanctuary, with the Chandlers as our hosts. Registration begins Friday evening at the High School Auditorium in Val Marie. Official opening of the sanctuary will be at 5:00 p.m. Saturday.