

The Blue Jay Bookshelf

HINTERLAND WHO'S WHO. 1969.
By the Canadian Wildlife Service.
Queen's Printer, Ottawa. Free.

The television commercials advise that for further information on animals featured on *Hinterland Who's Who* you should write to the Canadian Wildlife Service, Ottawa. And if you do, you will receive a two-leaf pamphlet containing a variety of information such as where and when to find the species, how to recognize it, and its life history. Each pamphlet has a good cover picture (black and white), a North American distribution map, and a list of other references. In addition to detailed description of the animals, facts about habitat requirements, relationships with other species, and origin of races are presented.

The need for proper land use management is stressed. For example, the decline of the mountain sheep can be reversed with reintroduction of grazing areas to prevent serious competition with cattle, sheep, and horses, for winter food. Also, more attention paid to tree harvesting practices could provide more forest areas in the early development stages so necessary for ruffed grouse. In order to maintain adequate prairie habitat for mallards, the Canadian Wildlife Service is now leasing wetlands from farmers. These undertakings are of value not only so that individuals may enjoy the experience of seeing plentiful wildlife in its natural surroundings, but also because most species provide some tangible benefit to the environment—the chipmunk aiding in seed dispersal, and the mallard assisting in the control of mosquitoes. Of course, if a species became too numerous, controls may have to be used to prevent damage such as the chipmunk's consumption of enough seeds to prevent reforestation, or the mallards' depredation of western farmers' crops. It is pointed out that using poison as a control is dangerous.

The pamphlets provide all sorts of interesting bits of information such as: the generic name for grouse, *Bonassa*, means "good when roasted"; a pair of Dall sheep horns may weigh more than thirty pounds; and a chipmunk is sightless until about thirty-two days old. A lot more can be learned through research. For example, it is not yet known whether a chipmunk eats its stored food periodically throughout its hibernating period, or whether it only hibernates as an emergency measure, after the food supply has been used up.

In general, the *Hinterland Who's Who* series seems to do a worthwhile and effective job of promoting both increased awareness and enjoyment of our wildlife and realistic management of all of our natural resources.
—Nora Stewart, Lumsden.

GLACIERS AND THE ICE AGE. By Gwen Schultz. 1963. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., New York. 128 pp., illustrated. Soft cover \$1.94

Glaciers and the Ice Age is especially pertinent reading to those living on the Great Plains where the environment has been so strongly altered by the Ice Age. Miss Schultz, in this lucid account, tells how the present landscape with its geomorphic forms results from the effect of continental glaciation upon the pre-Pleistocene terrain, most of which can be applied to Canada. While her emphasis is upon North America, she relies on European evidence to show how man adapted to this overwhelming act of nature.

The numerous illustrations, probably the best attribute of the book, provide an adequate field guide to the recognition of diverse glacial forms. Especially valuable to those with only a passing acquaintance with geology are the diagrams which relate the chronology of the Ice Age to the rest of geologic time.

The book as a whole is in serious need of editing to bring it up to date

and to correct a few glaring errors, e.g., p. 44: "He cracked baboon skulls to obtain the 'sweetbreads' inside." And again, p. 87: "Because for some time they [early modern men] had had good cutting tools and had cooked their food, the jaws and teeth, less needed for cutting and chewing, had shrunk." A few other statements and passages are misleading, although they are generally rectified several paragraphs or pages later. With correction of this type of error and a general updating the text would be more acceptable to the critical reader.

The 13 chapters present a logical sequence from the geological story of glaciation to the final intriguing chapter entitled "Will the Ice Return?" Along with a rather complete bibliography (up to 1963, the publication year) *Glaciers and the Ice Age* can lead the reader into an interesting aspect of natural history.

Despite errors this is the best available short study of the subject. Considering its low cost, it is an attractive addition to one's natural history library.—*George E. Lammers*, Manitoba Museum of Man & Nature, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

SASKATCHEWAN AND THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS. 1969. By the Earl of Southesk. Republished by Hertig, Edmonton, B-and-W illustrated, 448 pp. \$5.95.

In 1859 a young Scotsman, the Earl of Southesk, who was in poor health at the time, decided for medical reasons to leave his work and take a hunting trip on the Western Prairies. Fifteen years later he wrote his diary, which has just now been republished, a century later. The Earl was a hunter, and his diary is of particular interest to natural historians, for he describes the animals which he came across as well as giving information of more general interest.

Travelling across the United States as far as the railroad would take him, he then moved north to Lower Fort Garry. Subsequently he rode along the trade trails of the Hudson's Bay

Company, describing the prairie scenes, and we get glimpses of the fur-trading era as the company employees greeted his approach by gathering outside the stockade and firing their muskets into the air. He entered Saskatchewan near Fort Ellis, where he described the antelope and buffalo wolf, whose presence he recorded at various locations as he moved along the Qu'Appelle Valley to the Elbow. Finding that the Crees and Blackfeet were on the warpath, he thought it wise to move toward Fort Carlton. He describes the Indians hunting the buffalo on horseback when huge herds covered the prairie, and also a grizzly bear hunt 60 miles from Saskatoon. As the expedition proceeds, he tells of his roasting a skunk for supper and of his sitting in his tent every evening reading the works of Shakespeare as a diversion. Visiting the forts along his route, he listened to the anecdotes and stories of the traders and Indians; he retells these for us, describing the beliefs and customs of the Indians and of various native animals such as "that savage and treacherous wild beast, the puma."

From Saskatchewan the Earl travelled to Edmonton, Jasper, the Kootenays and then back to Edmonton. By the time he was ready to return, the winter had become unusually severe. Often he travelled in sub-zero temperatures setting out at 4:00 a.m. with dog sleds, and at night the party sheltered under buffalo robes around roaring fires, freezing on one side and roasting on the other.

The Earl had a perceptive mind and his prediction that the buffalo herds would not survive the use of modern weapons and increased hunting has been proved correct. It is regrettable that there was no picture of the author and that his own sketches are not of the same standard as his prose. For those who are interested in Western Canada before the railroad came, this is an indispensable record. For this reason, the reprinted edition of the Earl of Southesk's diary is especially welcome.—*Tom White*, Regina.

THE BROKEN SNARE

THE STORY OF A FRONTIER FAMILY

R. D. SYMONS



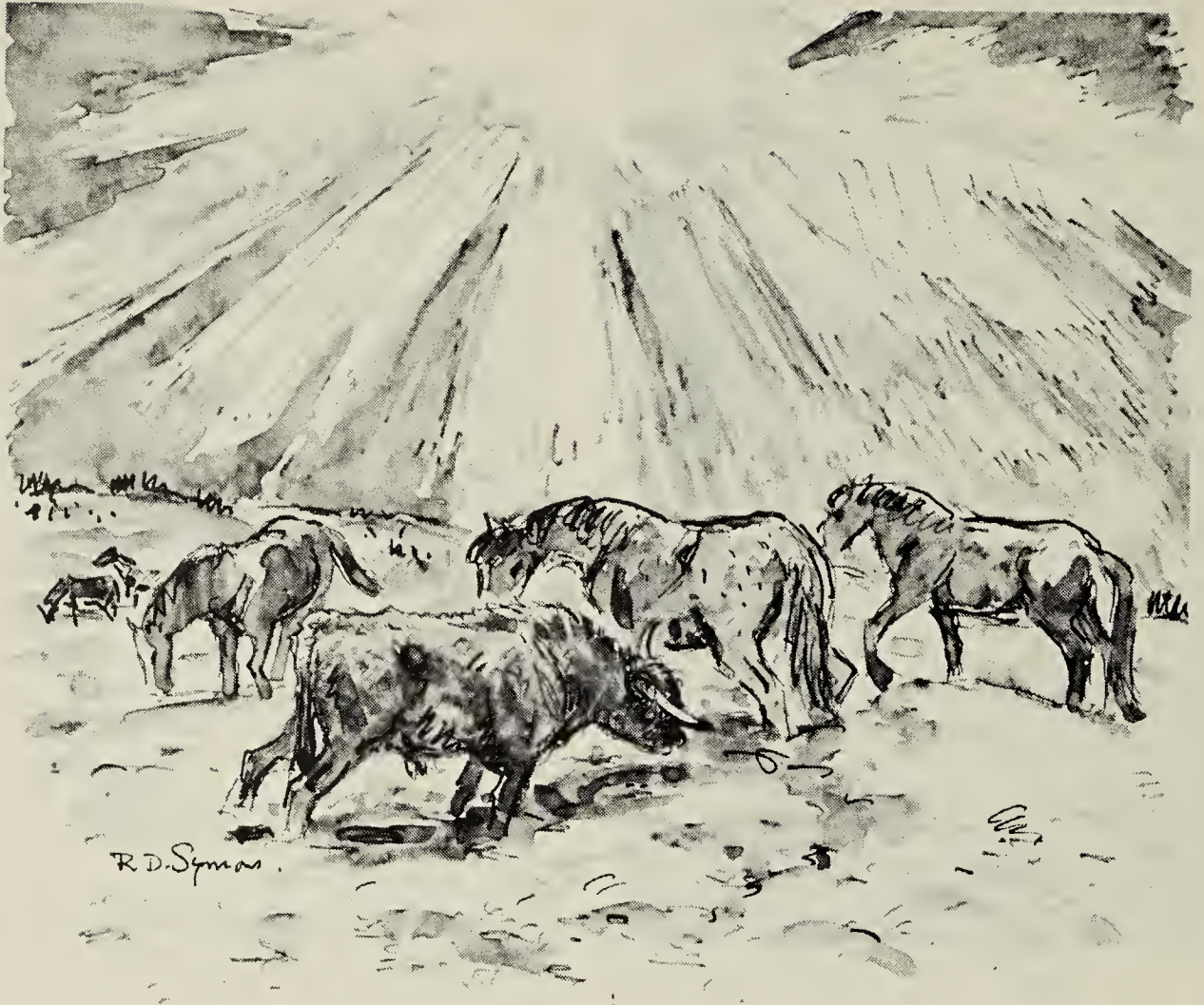
THE BROKEN SNARE. By R. D. Symons. 1970. Doubleday and Company, New York and Toronto. 224 pp. Illustrated with sketches by the author. \$6.95. Available from the Blue Jay Bookshop, Box 1121, Regina, Saskatchewan.

In a recent article in *The Manchester Guardian Weekly* on the work of a team of ecologists at Monks Wood, the main experimental research station of Britain's Nature Conservancy, one of the scientists is quoted as saying, "The trouble is that man is only really interested in what is going to affect man." In essence, this basic problem is what R. D. Symons' new book, *The Broken Snare*, is all about. The story of a man and his family who, in an attempt to escape the mechanization of modern society, establish themselves in the wilderness of northern British Columbia and almost succeed in their venture, this book describes the problem of ecological balance with honesty and vigor. And though the major portion of the narrative relates the struggle

of the Man and the Woman to exist in the land they have chosen, the author skilfully shifts his focus in order to clarify the viewpoint of the wild creatures who are also a part of that land; in effect, the story of the Black Wolf is as important as the story of the Man. The emphasis on the essential equality of all creatures is pointed by the inclusion on the title page of that most celebrated of all "levellers": All flesh is grass.

This is not to suggest that the book is primarily a propaganda piece. It is far from that. The Man and the Woman, nameless in order to suggest their conscious identification with "unaccommodated man," think, love, suffer and laugh as flesh and blood people do. It is true that, in this connection, the dialogue is occasionally stilted and unconvincing (I wish, for instance, that the author had seen fit to omit the final paragraphs of conversation in order to conclude with the reference to the wolf), and a sprinkling of commonplace expressions reduces the effectiveness of otherwise graphic passages. But there is no lack of sureness in the way in which Mr. Symons expresses the *unspoken* thoughts of his characters, eloquent, poetic thoughts which vividly bring to life the scene which prompted them at the same time as they reveal the personality of the thinker. In fact, it is the sensitive perception of the musing character which directs and even controls the response of the reader to the material presented—the kind of power which characterizes introspective essayists, a group to which I suggest Mr. Symons primarily belongs. Notice, for example, the surge of excitement which moves from thinker to reader in the following passage:

"And surely green grass could not be far away, the Man thought as he turned the corner of Moose Point, which was already bare of snow and smelling of good frost-free earth at last. It was the third of April. Looking west to the mountains he saw no sign of a change of weather. The great arch hung high above them. The chinook, redolent of the Pacific, was playing its usual fine-weather



tricks, and he saw the jumbled peaks in a mirage, their sharp crests sliced off and moved away from their bases by the meeting of warm and cold air currents. It made him think of the Carmelhan at anchor, and

*Valdemar Victorious,
Who looketh in disdain
To see his image in the tide,
Dismembered, float from side to
side
And reunite again.*

Those wonderful mountains! Smoking like Sinai in summer, skipping like rams these early spring mornings."

The book is filled with fascinating details of ranching life — precise descriptions of the wolf traps and of the habits of the wolves themselves in relation to the traps ("The traps would be carefully stepped around, or sometimes even flipped over and sprung by a quick jab of a paw from underneath, and in final derision, urinated on.");

the death of a wild colt slaughtered by wolves; the killing of a bear by an indomitable Highland bull; the technique of turning a "neat, square corner" with a mower. Each description is vivified by the sense of urgency inherent in each specific situation, augmented, of course, by the fact that this author looks at the world with a clear eye. "Pack-rats—now they were something different. Nasty, smelly things, all furry and soft. They crept around like Kipling's Chuchundra, afraid to get out in the centre of a shed or room. If you hit one with a club it went all flat — as if it had no proper bones. And their big, black, sad-looking eyes . . ."

I have already mentioned the technique which makes use of the shifting point of view. When Symons writes from the standpoint of the wilderness animals, his style is at its best — spare, yet coupled with a strongly sensuous appeal:

"But this morning it was a big red fox who watched the shuffling, noisy birds. The fox took two, three steps, belly to the ground. He knew how to make that final rush. He knew that from among the startled, fluttering grouse he was sure to be able to seize one in his narrow, toothed jaws. At the moment he tensed for the onslaught, he heard a strange, high, drawn-out crow—something he had never heard before. He backed up, turned, and loped away like a wind-blown leaf."

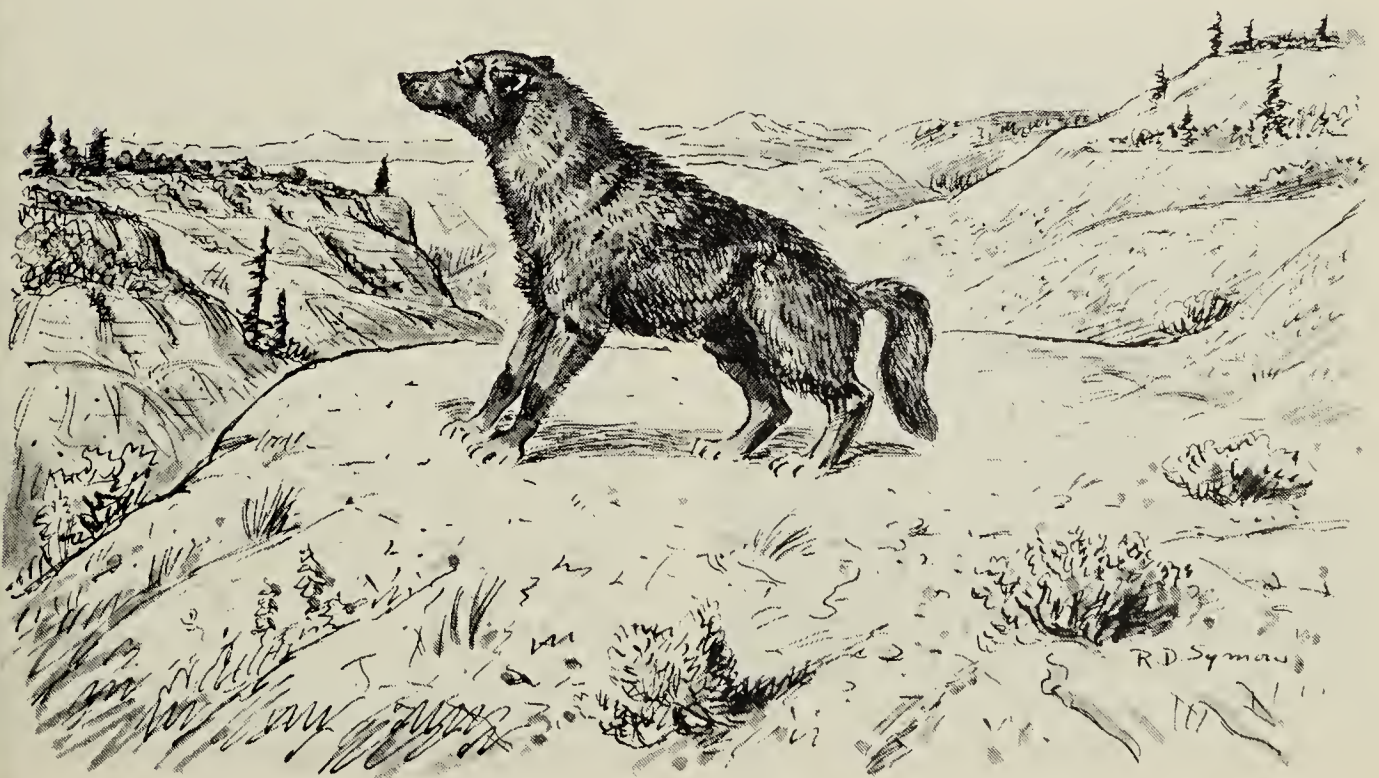
There is no doubt that the world of *The Broken Snare* is a brutal world. Yet the brutality demanded by the urge to survive has a quality different from the brutality prompted by the urge to dominate. In the wilderness the Man kills for food and the animals kill to maintain their species but "civilized" man kills for money or fun. The horsetraders, cunning and unscrupulous, are a greater threat to the Man and the Woman than the wild creatures whose actions are instinctive. In the end, it is mechanized society, symbolized by the bulldozer of the oil company, which drives the Man from his home. From the beginning the Man had attempted to maintain the ecological balance of the area; he had regretted the unavoidable battle with the wolves. He had insisted that the Lad be moderate in his trapping; he

himself had no desire to cultivate every square inch of his land.

"From near the buildings, almost to the creek, there was a break in the hayfield formed by a low, rolling ridge of prairie which the Man had considered too rough to cultivate. Also, the prairie chickens danced each spring on its smooth, short-grassed knolls among the wild crocuses, and later the wild flax nodded in blue ecstasy with lacy bedstraw. He could not bring himself to tear up with cold steel such a little garden of beauty, such a flowery prairie, for the sake of a load or two of fodder."

There is a striking contrast between this paragraph and the account of the oil company bulldozer which roars "right through the raspberry patch which had given them fruit for so many years, throwing the dirt to right and left, tossing the canes on high—pitiful vines clinging, revolving with the inexorable Caterpillar tracks—soiled, bleeding fruit staining their shining steel." One is reminded of a similar scene in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* where Sir Clifford, in a fit of furious frustration, drives his motorized chair through a field of spring flowers leaving them "mashed" and "wretched" under the wheels.

When the last wolf escapes from "the broken snare" and turns to seek a



new life "where the mountain sheep [keep] their courts," the Man, the Woman and the little girl, Small, are relieved, for they recognize their own instinct in that of the wolf. In the passage which concludes this climactic incident the poetic quality of the prose makes the identification of the author with the wolf movingly clear:

"The wolf turned to a spruce stump, left his sign for the last time, and started for the west without looking back. By the time the sun was up he had made fourteen miles, had crossed the Elk-Run. He climbed the far bank, up and up to the desolate scrubby heights beyond. The mountains looked closer now, the sun touching their cold peaks with rose, their bases lost in the frost-fog.

The traveller crawled into a snow-free crevice among the rim-rocks and slept. He rose at mid-afternoon, hungry again. He killed and ate a snowshoe hare, gobbling fast, and then broke once more into the mile-eating wolf lope.

Just before dawn he stopped, looked to the sky, and howled several times in succession. Some of the lonesomeness had gone from his voice, which now had a more challenging, a more enquiring note. After each outburst he paused to listen, ears cocked and nose to the west.

At last, as he listened intently, he heard, far away and faint, an answering call."

At the end of the story when the Man, like the displaced animal, turns his face towards a new life, a sense of bitter sadness prevails. But it is the sadness which is an inevitable component of wisdom and which in no way resembles a state of desolation. For him it will never be "too late to seek a newer world."

A part of that "newer world," a world of writing and painting, is made evident by the existence of the book itself (along with the earlier *Many Trails and Hours and the Birds*) and by the inclusion in *The Broken Snare* of a series of sketches which sensitively suggest the moods of the book. In these we see the Man absorbed in his work, the gentle cow moose tenderly feeding her young, the awesome

starkness of the Northern sky with the cattle and horses foraging under it, the courageous isolation of the Wolf and, in the sketch on the jacket, a pictorially comprehensive statement of the story's larger themes. The artistically sure composition of this picture forces the eye from the tense, questioning wolf to the laboring intruder and from there to the mountain spaces beyond. (It would be a pleasure to prepare a review on these excellent sketches alone.)

Henry David Thoreau once wrote, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived." The author of *The Broken Snare* understands what Thoreau was talking about.—*Jeanie M. Wagner*, University of Saskatchewan, Regina.

THE WORLD OF THE FROG AND THE TOAD. By George Porter. 1967. J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia and New York. 153 pp. Illustrated. \$5.95.

George Porter is one of the better examples of a competent amateur who has successfully applied his pen and camera to produce a book on some of his favorite animals. He points out in his introduction that this is not meant to be either a textbook or handbook on frogs and toads but rather a sharing of personal observations and experiences. Within this context it may be highly recommended to those previously uninitiated in the arts and pleasures of observing these creatures in their natural surroundings.

The arrangement of topics is mainly seasonal. An author's introduction and general section titled "Meet the Frogs and Toads" is followed by sections entitled, "Spring", "Summer", "Autumn" and "Winter." The importance of spring in amphibian life history—as well as the relative ease of observation at this time, provided one is willing to don a headlamp and search after darkness—is indicated by the fact that 74 of the 153 pages of the

book are devoted to this season. A brief but useful chapter entitled "Photographing Frogs and Toads" is followed by a sensibly written ("wild animals are not toys") and practical chapter "Keeping Frogs and Toads in Captivity." Another chapter devoted to "Species and Subspecies" gives scientific names and describes the distribution of each species mentioned in the text. The book concludes with a short bibliography and an index.

The western naturalist will be disappointed to find that the emphasis of the book is eastern. It is primarily based on observations made in Westchester County within an hour's drive of the writer's home in New York City, but includes comments on species seen in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey and south to Florida, the Adirondack Mountains of New York, Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming, and Los Padres National Park near Los Angeles as well as on a few additional forms from other areas. Actually only three species that occur in the Canadian prairies are included. However, within the major groups covered, toads or frogs with habits similar to those of prairie forms are often mentioned. The book is well illustrated with excellent black and white photographs of frogs, toads, and treefrogs, and a variety of other creatures that share their environment.

This book is to a large extent pleasantly free of the errors of generalization based on incomplete knowledge that plague many books for amateurs by amateurs. Some relatively unimportant mistakes do occur, however. For example, on page 68 a comment is made that the different sounding Gray Treefrogs, *Hyla versicolor*, in the south are probably a case of variation "simply due to geography, temperature and other conditions." It is more likely that this observation refers to the distinct form considered a sibling species, *Hyla chrysoscelis*, by recent workers.

For anyone who has not discovered the fascination of frogs and toads, or for the already enlightened student with a dull winter evening to pass, this volume is heartily recommended as in-

formative and enjoyable.—*Francis R. Cook*, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa, Ontario.

RUFFED GROUSE. 1969. By John Madson, Conservation Dept., Olin Mathieson Chemical Corp., East Alton, Ill. 104 pp. Illustrated. \$1.00.

"There is a world of difference between the willow slap of central Alaska and the laurel thickets of north-west Georgia. Different trees, different people, different land to say nothing of a slight difference of climate and 3,600 miles."

"But the two landscapes have one thing in common: Ruffed Grouse."

"No other game bird can match this grouse for getting around. He's at home in forests from north of the Yukon almost to Florida, and from Maine to Washington state. He lives in the deepest wilderness in North America, but may wander into Manhattan."

This quotation opens an informative book on the Ruffed Grouse which contains chapters on life history, management and hunting, and includes tips on how to increase grouse numbers. The book is well-written in simple, down-to-earth language and is illustrated with photographs. Unusual aspects of grouse life history such as drastic population cycles and crazy flight patterns are explained.—*Anthony J. Hruska*, Gerald, Sask.



Photo by R. A. Mitchell
Ruffed Grouse at The Pas, Manitoba

BROCHURES

The following three booklets have been received by the editor of the *Blue Jay* during the last few months. They have been prepared by three institutions in Manitoba and Alberta. Apparently distributed free to friends and supporters, they artistically illustrate and describe some of the work being done in this part of Canada.

Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, Annual Report 1968-69.

This attractive booklet outlines work done by various departments of the museum for the most part before the material was moved to the permanent location at 190 Rupert Avenue, Winnipeg 2. Exhibits will be open for inspection by mid-July 1970, so anyone planning a trip would be wise to include an inspection of this fascinating museum.

Several names mentioned are familiar to readers of the *Blue Jay*; for example, W. J. Mayer-Oakes, Jack Herbert, Bob Nero, Dick Sutton, Harvey Beck (now in Calgary). Anyone interested in museums or in natural history will appreciate the artistic layout of the booklet, including photos (some, no doubt, taken by another *Blue Jay* contributor, Bob Taylor). It is obvious that we would all feel at home in the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature.

Glenbow

This booklet tempts one to visit the Glenbow — Alberta Institute, for it appears to be an excellent source for scholars and students interested in Canadiana, particularly of the early west. But one wonders how all the items mentioned — German porcelain, Maori art among others — could be displayed to advantage.

It would be helpful if the booklet included the price of admission and visiting hours of the museum. However, inquiries are invited; and for a

small annual fee, Members of the Museum will receive a free pass to the museums in Calgary and Banff. There is also a Newsletter. Enquiries should be sent to the Executive Director, Glenbow - Alberta Institute, 902 - 11th Ave., S.W., Calgary 3.—*J. Sheppard*.

An artist's View of Nature Carl Rungius

This booklet provides an outline of the life and artistic works of Carl Rungius. It can stand on its own or as an accompaniment to an exhibit of the artist's work. Several examples of the many techniques used by the artist—oil, dry point and pencil drawings—are illustrated in a very tasteful layout.

My one criticism of the booklet is that no works are dated. Although the exact date may not be known, surely an approximation could be made. Without the dates it is difficult to see the development and change in the artist's style.

The booklet by L. E. Render and D. A. E. Spalding is publication No. 1, 1969, Provincial Museum and Archives of Alberta, 12845 - 102 Avenue, Edmonton.—*J. Sheppard*, Regina.

Publication Note

Watch for the publication in June of this year of *Birds of the Churchill region, Manitoba* by Joseph R. Jehl, Jr., and Blanche A. Smith. Special Publication No. 1, Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, 190 Rupert Ave., Winnipeg 2. About 100 pages, illustrated.

Persons going to Churchill in June or July will certainly want a copy of this report.