

SASKATCHEWAN NEEDS NATURAL AREAS

Today we hear and read much about the threat of pollution to human health and survival, and of what must be done to clean up our deteriorating air, water, soil and food. Mostly the proposed solutions are remedial not preventive. Just as the doctor is usually called after the illness sets in, so as the environment sickens the public turns to the engineer with the expectation that he will provide a ready cure. But both in the case of medication and of sanitation some forethought, such as the prescription of a health-sustaining regime, will go a long way toward preventing infection and subsequent crises. Should not more attention be given now to preserving and maintaining a health-promoting proportion of our unspoiled outdoor areas—our lakes and streams, grasslands and forests?

Within towns and cities the values of parks and open spaces, gardens and treed boulevards are recognized. These bits of tamed nature introduced into the urban milieu help to make it tolerable. But still on holidays we flee the city in search of the real thing, driving perhaps to a favorite quiet spot in the country or to a lakeside cottage, escaping to the ancestral environment. What we seek is an uncluttered natural landscape, with fresh air, clean water and scenic variety, all the things that are scarce commodities in the city.

Even in the country, however, such natural areas are disappearing as industrialization, once confined to centres of population, extends to the agricultural and forestry economies. Heavy machinery is changing the earth's surface features. Now it is feasible to level the topography, to fill in or drain the potholes and marshes frequented by waterfowl, to completely remove the vegetation cover that shelters upland birds and deer. The depressing results are all around us; the landscape is simplified and loses much of its charm. Variety, the spice of life, diminishes.

When we consider our needs for re-creation and contemplate the unattractive prospect of a world in which every area will be manipulated and humanized, then the preservation of at least some parts of the native landscapes with their fascinating assemblages of wild animals, plants and land forms seems to be something quite other than a waste of resources. A varied landscape, aesthetically pleasing, contributes in many ways to physical and mental health. We ought to ponder, too, an ethical question little explored by philosophers and religious leaders: man has the power to remodel the entire world for his own narrow ends, exterminating if he wishes all other forms of life that evolved over millions of years with him, *but does he have the right?*

The more the world is rearranged the more environmental problems appear. It is an unfortunate fact that the pathological condition called "pollution" is caused by the organism "man". "We have identified the enemy and he is us". From outer space man's densely settled and industrialized areas have the appearance of a spreading fungal growth consuming the earth's green cover. Pollution is the byproducts and poisons of man's metabolism, not only that of his body functions but, more seriously, those enormous externally-produced wastes that accumulate through the harnessing and application of enormous energy in modern industry. Pollution, in other words, is the normal result of massive populations and their massive, wasteful technologies. Since neither population nor technology is controlled, the sickness is epidemic and gaining ground. *The Financial Post* recently recommended that investors put their money in pollution control equipment firms, a piece of advice that accurately reflects the burgeoning future of pollution!

People are asking: How can we fight pollution? There are two comple-

mentary answers: change social directions so that follies of the past are not repeated and clean up the present mess. The first is long-term; it looks to the future and perhaps requires a cultural revolution whereby we begin to *care* for the earth, placing husbandry of it before purely economic goals (some of which are superfluous anyway). The second is short-term and immediate, relying on improved engineering such as better chemical water treatment, taller smoke stacks, control of particulate emissions, and so forth. On examination many apparent solutions turn out to be only transformations; the problem is shifted, to reappear somewhere else in a different form. For example, replacement of traditional fuels such as coal and oil by nuclear reactors will improve air quality, but the trade-off is heat pollution of water. Similarly, the incineration of garbage protects land and water by transferring the problem to the air. Engineering solutions are useful but by themselves they are not enough. It seems likely that the long-term answer lies in the limiting of human numbers, in the fashioning of a controlled technology that mimics the earth's normal cyclic processes, and in a greater solicitude for the natural environment that up to this time has sustained us.

Earth Day was recently marked in the United States and Canada with activities designed not just to protest pollution but to begin a "Care" program for this planet. One obvious and creative goal is protection of the "wild" landscape. Why not then a program in Saskatchewan to preserve Natural Areas, tracts of the native prairies, forests and wetlands that are representative of the province's remarkable geography? For example, around Saskatoon and even within the city limit there are still many interesting undisturbed river bank and popular bluff sites that should be marked for preservation now. The local Natural History Society is promoting just such a program and it should be supported.

The idea of Natural Areas is not new; it has been in the minds of

naturalists and teachers, outdoorsmen and resource managers for a long time. To some extent the parks people and recreationists have recognized that preservation of nature is an important aspect of first-class parks, but unfortunately there are too few of these. Where, for example, is Saskatchewan's grassland park, its sandhill park, or its aspen groveland park?

What has been lacking is widespread public concern for the world's outdoor treasures, but now there are hopeful signs of change. Deterioration of environment is sparking national and international action. Recently the International Biological Program endorsed a world-wide effort to set aside Natural Areas for future use as outdoor museums, for teaching and research. Canada is participating, the National Research Council is providing support, and in Saskatchewan a preliminary program of inventory is underway. Candidate areas suggested by the public as worth saving are being examined by teams of ecologists and if such areas meet the required international standards, their preservation will be recommended to the government.

The assistance of interested persons and organizations in selecting areas and in making a case for their preservation is solicited. Here is an opportunity to save some attractive fragments of the fast-disappearing "old world", thereby taking a small but significant step toward the nonpolluted planetary society!—*J. S. Rowe, Saskatoon. Reprinted from Star Phoenix, May, 1970.*

CHANGES IN ABUNDANCE OF BIRDS

I have been farming in this district for 50 years, and deplore how scarce or non-existent birds have become. To mention a few, Greater Prairie Chicken were common in the 1920's, and every spring for an hour after sunrise the air would be full of their loud booming sounds; quite different from the Ruffed Grouse, the Prairie Chicken has vanished completely. The Upland Plover

is rare and I only saw one pair on a prairie quarter in each of the last two years. The Marbled Godwit is much less common and the Long-billed Curlew has vanished from my district. The Burrowing Owl, which used to be common, I have not seen for several years.

The Sharp-tailed Grouse is still here but not common. Last spring a fair number came through the winter, but few young birds seemed to mature. It is my opinion that the hunting season should be closed for them and for the Ruffed Grouse. The Gray (Hungarian) Partridge, on the other hand, is plentiful. Two other species of birds that have become evident in the last 20 years are the Black-crowned Night Heron and the Starling.

In November, 1969, we had 18 blackbirds stay until late December, when only eight remained. I have since heard that my neighbour one and one-half miles away had some blackbirds come about January 1. After the cold week in January only two of the blackbirds were around; during the -30 to -40 degree temperatures I found one male Rusty Blackbird frozen.

In the 1930's I obtained "Birds of Canada" by Taverner (priced 75¢, paper back!) with excellent color prints. This book gradually wore out by the time my seven children were through high school and for the past few years I have been without a bird reference book except for one borrowed from the local library in Whitewood. Recently my youngest daughters gave me "Birds of Canada" by Godfrey, which is excellent for identification purposes.—*G. M. Hewson, Langbank, Saskatchewan.*

BIRD NOTES FROM SOVEREIGN

As the years pass by I cannot but take notice of the pleasures of bird watching from the farm housewife's point of view. Each year now I see one or two species of birds that are new to my locality. In 1969 my late husband and I were very surprised to see a Great Blue Heron on April 3 standing close to a corner of the caragana hedge surrounding the farm

yard. Eighteen inches of snow still covered the ground where the heron was standing and there was no water anywhere around. It flew to another area of the yard when it saw us, and was there the rest of the day until 4:30 p.m. when it took off and flew southeast.

Then in late summer another new sighting. On September 12, 1969, I saw a Varied Thrush hopping on the lawn. It continued feeding and drinking from the bird waterer on the lawn and surrounding flower beds until September 19 when it apparently continued its migration.

In 1953 we planted many trees and shrubs that provide seeds and berries around the house, yard and garden area, and also a small orchard. This planting is mature now, and really draws the birds.

In winter there are always one or two coveys of Gray (Hungarian) Partridge and sometimes a few Sharp-tailed Grouse. The redpolls seem to like roosting in the evergreens at night and are always close by.

I hope you young farm families take time to plant a few shrubs and trees each spring. For when your family is grown and away, you will have more time to enjoy nature.

We found cotoneasters, flowering crabs, honeysuckle and lilacs best for our locality. Ash, maple and spruce in the windbreak also help the birds. Crabapples, currants, raspberries, sandcherry and chokecherry, help out the jam and jelly larder as well as the birds.—*Dorothy Winny, Box 25, Sovereign, Saskatchewan.*

INSECTS

I have made up a butterfly identification chart which is nonscientific in appearance and arrangement. It may be of some help to beginners in the interesting subject of entomology.

I have now collected 16 of the 18 species of Tiger Beetles which J. B. Wallis records for Saskatchewan.—*Ronald R. Hooper, Box 205, Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan.*

AN UNUSUAL BEETLE FROM MANNING PARK, B.C.



The accompanying photograph of a Snowy Round-headed Wood Borer (*Pachyta armata*) feeding on the nectar of flowers of angelica (*Angelica arguta* Nutt.) was taken by me in Manning Park in July, 1969. This beetle has wing-covers or elytrae that are a rich golden-yellow. The head, antennae and legs are black. Three specimens collected by me averaged 16 mm. in length. This species was observed feeding throughout the day, from about 9:00 a.m. to at least 5:00 p.m., most frequently at sub-alpine levels, i.e., 4000 feet above sea level. I also found them on several occasions feeding on cow parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum* Mich.). All observations were made on bright days, either sunny or cloudy. They were less active on overcast, dark days and inactive on rainy days.

Little is known of this insect's life history. The following information was provided by David Evans, entomologist with the Forest Research Laboratory, Insect and Disease Survey, Victoria, B.C.:

" . . . occurs in B.C., Washington, Idaho and Oregon, but is seldom common. It is more frequently found at higher altitudes. Unfortunately, I can offer little more information. I assume

the larvae require a couple of years to develop and could take much longer under adverse conditions, but I do not know the host plant(s)."—*Al Grass*, 5666 Rumble St., Burnaby 1, B.C.

MEADOWLARK WINTERS AT SOMME

This past winter a meadowlark stayed at the farm of Leland Tessimer. The bird fed around the cattle which were outside in a shelter-bluff of trees near the barn. On cold stormy days in January it went inside the pig shed, using the hole in the wall by which the pigs could always go in or out. The meadowlark survived the winter in good shape and stayed with the Tessimers' cattle until April.—*Donald F. Hooper*, Porcupine Plain.

TURKEY VULTURE SIGHTING

On July 15, 1969, I saw a Turkey Vulture while exploring for clay deposits. The location was about four miles west of Willowbunch, up on a high plateau but near its coulee-riven north edge. As I stood atop a point jutting into the coulee, I saw a large black bird somewhat smaller than an eagle soaring silently on updrafts such as circulate in coulees. It was its silence that drew my attention; a hawk would have been squawking its head off at me. I had binoculars along and thus could make out the bald red head. The trailing half of the wings gave me an impression of translucency; the texts state they are of a lighter colour, however.

I do not know how common mere sightings of the Turkey Vulture are, as opposed to nesting records (*Blue Jay* 27, 37-39, 1969), but this is the first time I ever saw one in a life spent in Saskatchewan.—*John H. Hudson*, Saskatoon.

HEGLUND ISLAND ESTABLISHED AS WILDLIFE REFUGE

The establishment of Heglund Island in Cypress Lake, Southwest Saskatchewan, as a wildlife refuge was recently announced by C. B. Forbes, Director of Wildlife, Department of Natural Resources, Regina.

Mr. Forbes stated that the value of Heglund Island as a nesting site for several bird species had been investigated by Dr. Kees Vermeer, Canadian Wildlife Service, and reported in the March, 1970, *Blue Jay* with a strong plea for protection of the area. The 210-acre island was found by Dr. Vermeer to have large nesting numbers of Canada Geese, Mallards, gulls and, of particular interest, White Pelicans and Double-crested Cormorants.

The Cormorant Colony is the largest of ten colonies of this species in Saskatchewan and this makes up more than one-third of the total breeding population of cormorants in the province. This, plus the fact that the 90 breeding pairs of Canada Geese may constitute one of the largest concentrations of insular nesting geese in Saskatchewan, warranted the need for special protection of the nesting island.

Mr. Forbes stated that some species of birds have been endangered by the use of pesticides in their winter habitat in the United States. Careful protective measures will assist in maintaining these bird populations.

Mr. Forbes requested the public to refrain from visiting the island particularly during the nesting season, at which time any disturbances can result in a large loss of young. *Fishermen and all visitors in the area are asked to co-operate in guaranteeing the privacy of the island until after July 15.*

GRANT FROM DUCKS UNLIMITED

On May 23, 1970, Dr. W. K. Martin, Chairman of the Board and Past President of Ducks Unlimited, Canada, made a presentation of \$8,000 to Wascana Waterfowl Park for the im-

provement and preservation of natural habitat in the park. The presentation was made to the Honorable D. V. Heald, the Minister in charge of the Wascana Waterfowl Park.

The money is not to be used for preparation of display ponds or for any work in this area which will be heavily used by the public, instead, the \$8,000 will be spent to fence and protect that area which was formerly owned by Fred G. Bard and which is used extensively by nesting waterfowl and other birds.

We all know something of the good work that Ducks Unlimited is doing in the preservation and improvement of habitat and this project, directed as it is towards the improvement of an urban area, is particularly praiseworthy. It will help maintain and enhance the quality of this natural prairie marsh in our largest Saskatchewan city.—*G. F. Ledingham, Regina.*

WHOOPIING CRANES SEEN

This apparently is our lucky year! My husband and I were out this morning (April 9, 1970) at 10:30 looking for artifacts when Keith called to me to watch a flock of Sandhill Cranes coming over from the southeast. There were 35 cranes but part way along one wing of the V were two adult Whooping Cranes then two or three Sandhills, then an immature Whooping Crane and two more adults. There was no disputing what they were, for they were fairly low and clearly distinguishable.

We have always wondered if we would recognize the Whooping Crane if we saw it. Now we know. This year we have seen seven, for earlier in the week we saw two. We just can't believe that we have been so lucky as to see seven Whoopers in one year.—*Mrs. Hazel Paton, Oxbow, Saskatchewan.*