Junior Naturalists

Edited by **Joyce Deutscher,** 7200 6th Ave., Regina

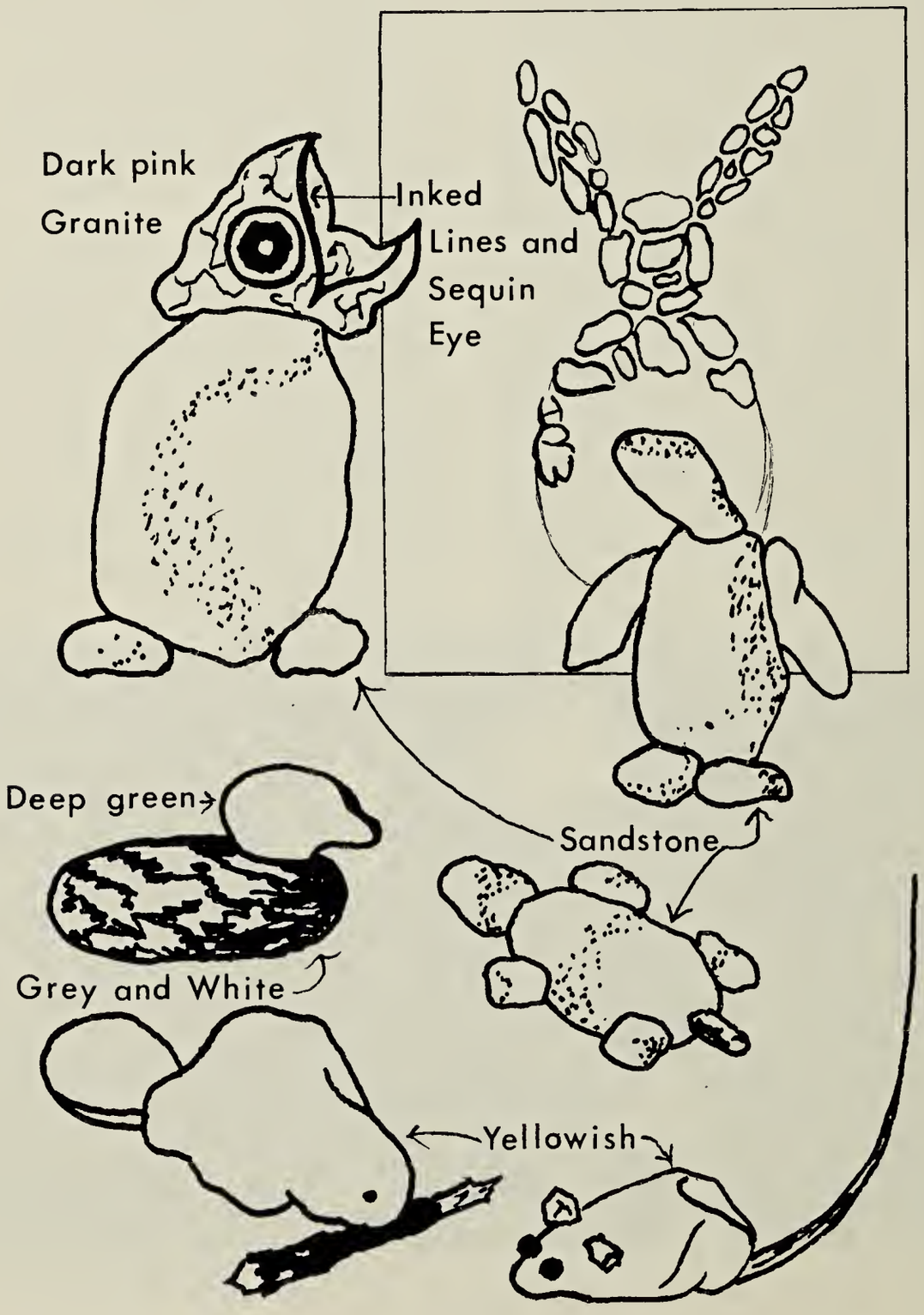
NATURE HOBBIES

by **Helene White,** 7732 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton 20, Alberta

Pebbles of varied colours, shapes and sizes can be picked up now even though a late snow storm seems to have blocked all the roads to spring. The sun has been busy nibbling away at winter's armour in many sheltered spots, laying the earth bare. So let's start a rock collection.

Wash your collection, and while it dries, gather together a roll of wax paper, some salt or sand, a small box, a bottle of white all-purpose glue and a square or two of cardboard.

The cardboard will provide the backing for a mosaic picture. This is the best project to start off with if the outline is kept simple. It helps you to get to know your stones and even the youngest member of the



family can glue pebbles inside a simple bunny outline.

Once you start to see shapes in your rocks graduate to the turtle. Select and arrange your stones on a piece of wax paper then glue your critter together. When the glue has dried just peel the paper away.

The feet of the penguin, set side by side, were glued together on wax paper too. The rest of him was laid out on a bed of salt in the small box and glued together. Then, when all pieces were dried, the feet were cemented to the body and he stood on wax paper, propped in place by a couple of larger stones until he dried completely.

The salt box came in handy for the wood duck too, because his head kept slipping out of place. I marked the spot for his head, buried the body, added glue and the head, then kept the head where it belonged with a wall of the salt. Since the owl's head was just as stubborn, it was treated in the same way. His feet were glued in place as he stood up and, because he insisted upon wobbling, a very tiny pebble was glued under him for balance.

Balance was no problem in constructing the beaver, but you must first be able to visualize the final product in order to choose the appropriate rocks for each section of the body. Then just glue them together. The same thing applies to the mouse, my favourite. Watch for a likely shape, add two tiny rock chips for ears, seed beads or black chips for eyes and with a grass tail he is ready to grace anyone's rock collection.

Each one of these critters was originally part of our gravel driveway. With a little imagination, rocks and glue, an interesting pastime developed.

Even the humblest rock is interesting. The planet we live on is one huge rock ball. The soil that gives us life was once rock before exposure to the weather and microscopic animal and plant life started to work on it for us. Rocks are very important history books, telling us how our earth evolved and (now they tell the story of the moon.)

Rocks, directly or indirectly, provide us with fuel, bricks for buildings, clay for our dishes, metal for our cars, pots and pans and countless other things that we take for granted every day.

Common ordinary rocks and their hidden minerals are nearly as important to us as the air we breathe, so have fun, learn a great deal at the same time,* and display your pebble pets with pride.

*Ed. Note: This might be the moment to visit the geology section of the Saskatchewan Natural History Museum in Regina. Hopefully you will become interested in attempting to identify various rock formations.

BANDING HORNED OWLS

by **Rosemary Nemeth,** Yellow Creek

Last year my Dad and I found five horned owl nests. We started looking for them in March with our Ski-doo. Then on May 11 Dr. Houston and three of his helpers came to band the young owls. The first nest had two young and for food they had a hind quarter of a rabbit. Two young were banded in the second nest which contained no food.

In the third nest, two were also banded. This tree was awfully thin and the climber couldn't see if there was any food in it or not. Three were banded in the fourth nest in which there was no food. The fifth nest had the most young of all; there were four and for food they had pocket gophers. Dr. Houston and his helpers banded a total of thirteen young out of the five nests. I am looking forward to another trip next year.

MALLARD IN BALESTACK

by **Janet Gray,** age 14, Indian Head

In the first part of June, 1969, my brother spotted a Mallard duck sitting on her nest ten feet up in our balestack beside the barn. She was not disturbed by our presence. In fact, she didn't even move when we lifted her up to examine her eggs; she only hissed at us. She seemed very tame. Closer observations revealed that she

had eleven eggs that were starting to hatch. The next morning my Dad took a picture of her while he was in the bales and about an hour later the duck and her eleven ducklings were down at our dugout about a hundred yards away. Several days later we found them in a slough approximately four hundred yards from the dugout. However difficult the trip, nine out of the eleven survived.

BIRD HOSPITAL

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

On October 28th, I came across a wounded Slate-colored Junco. It had probably hit a power line. I noticed that its wing feathers were out and that it had been bleeding. I had him in a cage for over a month, feeding him on wheat, flax seed, and canary seed. In the mild weather of early December, I let the fully recovered junco go.

I also looked after a wounded pigeon. In the spring of 1968, our neighbours brought over a wounded pigeon with a band on its leg. I had it for two weeks or more and decided to see whether the pigeon could fly or not. When I opened the cage door, it flew away as if it had never been wounded.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE JUNIOR NATURALISTS PAGE

Send your illustrations, stories and letters about nature to Mrs. Joyce Deutscher, 7200 6th Ave., Regina. We will be looking forward to hearing from you.

The Blue Jay Bookshelf

POPULATION ESTIMATES OF BARREN-GROUND CARIBOU, MARCH TO MAY, 1967. By Donald C. Thomas. 1969. Canadian Wildlife Service Report Series No. 9.

The barren-ground caribou of the Canadian Arctic and Sub-Arctic are (and have been for untold years) a valuable source of subsistence for the Eskimo and Indian people of our country just as the reindeer (wild and domestic) are to the Hyperborean tribes of Eurasia.

That in the last half century (especially) the numbers of these animals have been considerably — it was thought dangerously — reduced, has been a matter of concern to those interested in the continuance both of aboriginal people and of wildlife.

It is therefore good to read in this booklet that the situation appears to have improved in the last decade, at least up to 1967, the year this report was produced; but before becoming over-optimistic we must stop to consider that since then the "Arctic fever bug" has bitten industry far more deeply; and so rapidly is the mechanical invasion of our Arctic regions being pushed forward that the future is almost unpredictable. Any changes in environment caused by lowering the water levels or fire or possible pollution can from now on work only to the disadvantage of not only the hair-trigger balance of wildlife but of our own native peoples. "Messing about with" this unique and highly vulnerable area could be as fatal as plowing-up semi-desert lands, or even more so.

In summary this report comprises a condensation of the results of an aerial census survey made from March to May 1967 by the author, who contracted with the Canadian Wildlife Service to cover the Mac-Kenzie District of the N.W.T. and parts of adjacent Alberta and Saskatchewan: all west of the 102nd meridian. The first job was to locate the main herds in the area. A number of flights were carried out to determine spring migration routes, to make a census, and finally to assess utilization by hunters, etc., on winter range.

The main herds in the area dealt with are:

(1) The Bluenose herd — winter range north of Great Bear Lake.
(2) The Bathurst herd — winter