

# Junior Naturalists

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

## NATURE HOBBIES

by **Helene White, Edmonton**

Did you manage to find a butterfly, moth or dragonfly these past months? If you found but one specimen and wonder how you can show it off don't worry, there is an answer as well as one for the lucky person who found several. But first we must relax them. Select a wide-mouthed covered jar or tin for your relaxing box. My choice was a plastic fridge container with a tight snap lid. Cover the bottom with absorbent cotton, sand, sawdust or even salt and lightly sprinkle with water. A little alum dissolved in the water before using will prevent mould from forming in your box. Cover this moist bed with a piece of wax paper, then lay your insect on this. Put on the lid. Twenty-four to forty-eight hours in the box will usually soften the specimen so that it can be spread easily.

Meanwhile you can be scrounging two pieces of corrugated cardboard for your drying board, a few straight pins and some narrow strips of paper. Tape the cardboard pieces together with the corrugations at right angles to each other, then cut a strip of the paper away with a razor blade to form a trench as shown.

Lay your relaxed butterfly on the drying board with the body in the trench. Pin it through the thorax, but never try this on a dry one. Then using a strip of paper and the pins gently secure first one pair of wings and then the other. Leave it to dry thoroughly, about three days.

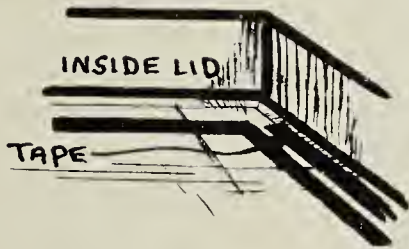
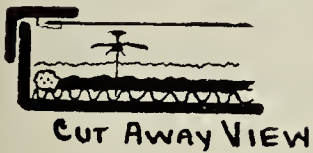
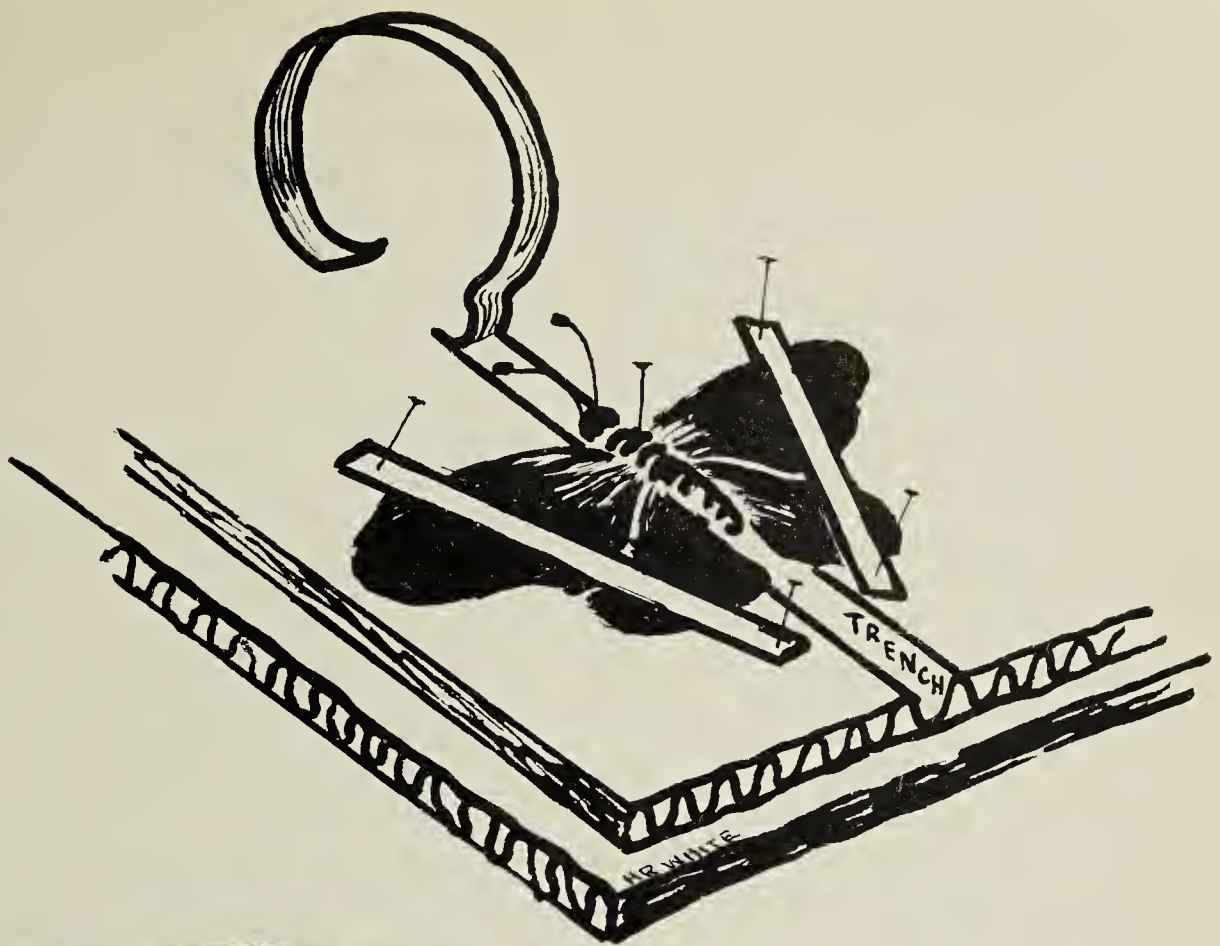
During this time gather together some interesting dried grasses, weeds, pressed flowers and a paper plate. The one shown was used by a supermarket to hold produce. This plate is to become a picture so colour the bottom with water colours or blackboard

chalks (glue won't stick to crayons) or cover with coloured paper or cloth, leaving the rim to act as a frame. Arrange your dried plants in a pleasing way on this background, then glue them down lightly with dots of white glue. Remove the pin and glue the butterfly to the picture. Instead of glass, cover the picture with clear plastic wrap from the kitchen, taping it securely to the back. Write the names, common and scientific, date and place found on the back, then tape a string hanger in place. Your study is ready to add to your home natural history museum.

To construct a professional looking case for several specimens you will need a box similar to the ones Christmas cards come in, making certain it is at least half again as deep as your straight pins are tall. Cut a window in the box lid leaving a one-inch frame all around. Tape clear plastic kitchen wrap to the INSIDE of the lid. Line the bottom of the box with two layers of corrugated cardboard, corrugations running at right angles to each other. Add a sprinkle of moth crystals or cut a hole in the boards to receive a mothball or two, then cover with a layer of absorbent cotton. The case is now ready to receive your collection.

Each pin-mounted specimen must be labelled. These pin labels should be small and neat but easily read. Print the locality and date found plus the names of your butterfly on each and pin beneath the insect. Cover the collection with the windowed lid and if the case is full, tape the lid down for added protection from dust and insects.

A true collector keeps a notebook on his observations of the live insects. What do they eat? Where do they spend their days and nights, winters and summers? How long do they live? Countless interesting questions will



HIDING A  
DAMAGED  
WING.



Illustrations by Helene R. White

pop into your mind. Write them down, then search for the answers.

Since the next time we meet it will be cold, we had better gather our materials for the coming project in the warm fall sunshine. Look for goldenrod galls, dried grass, and for whittling, dead twigs and branches from the woods or those pruned from city trees. Please don't deface a live tree. Also search for some sturdy pliable house wire. From these materials we are going to construct a creche and start a wood collection with a difference.

### SAW-WHET OWL

by Rosemary Nemeth, age 13, Yellow Creek

While my dad and I were looking for horned owl nests we came across an old tree. My dad kept on walking. I looked up at an old tree and saw an owl looking out of a hole in the tree. I called my dad back and we looked at it for a while. Then I guess the owl got tired looking at us so it went back down the hole. We tapped the tree. The owl popped its head out and went down again. Then we left.

Then a week later Doug Whitfield came out. We told him about the

little owl and we thought it was either a Boreal Owl or a Saw-whet Owl. We went and banded the mother owl. It was a Saw-whet Owl. It had six white eggs.

On June 7 Doug Whitfield came out to band the little owls. There were six little owls, one bigger than the others. Doug put them on an old branch and took pictures of them. They were the cutest little owls I have ever seen.

The Saw-whet Owl's call is a series of long whistles. It is very unusual finding a nest in the Yellow Creek district because they usually nest up by the Saskatchewan River.

It was a very beautiful bird.

### MY OWL

by Robert Galloway, Oxbow

I once had an owl named Magrew  
Don't laugh, for it's perfectly true.  
He had only one leg  
And ate fish and eggs  
My lame little owl named Magrew.  
He sat on a perch in our basement  
And hissed a strict little statement.  
He seldom would hoot  
But his face was quite cute  
My nice horned owl in the basement.

**Editor's Note:** Robert's owl was an injured one which was housed for the winter in the Galloway home. They released the owl in the spring but heard no more of it.

### BANDING A HAWK-OWL

by Lyall Hunter, Waitville

On April 27, while walking in the bush I saw a Hawk-Owl land in a tree nearby. I walked towards him and he flew into a clump of large trees. I noticed one of the trees had the top broken off.

Two weeks later I went with Dr. Houston and others interested in bird banding to the trees where I saw the hawk disappear. When we reached the tree a Hawk-Owl flew out and landed in a nearby tree. Then Doug Whitfield climbed the tree. When he was half way up the male attacked and fell to the ground and was caught and banded. When he reached the top the female landed about two yards away

from him and was caught and banded.

The nest had eight white eggs in it.

### WILBER SCHRAMM'S "CLASSROOM OUT-OF-DOORS"

Boys and girls will be pleased to know that someone as far away as San Diego, California, is right in there rooting for them when it comes to outdoor education. One of the newer members of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, Gerald Fox from San Diego, sent us an excellent book entitled "Classroom Out-of-Doors" by Wilbur Schramm. The author does what few do well; he writes about educational philosophy, methods and statistics — the discovery method of teaching in particular — in a very readable and interesting style. The book is written in a conversational manner and deals with every phase of outdoor education from the initial planning and selection of staff to the way energetic sixth graders are handled by expert camp teachers. A week in camp school is described, although the author spent much more time than a week in compiling his material and absorbing the atmosphere of the San Diego camp schools.

Throughout the book students and teachers are continually bringing up questions. Can we pick up a snake if it is not poisonous? What would the Indians have done here that might have turned the soil black? What would we eat? Remember we are Indians. What is there to eat? What did this land look like millions of years ago?

The purpose of the San Diego camp schools is stated in Schramm's book by Denver Fox, one of the people actively involved with the camps for over 20 years: "Above all, we would like to help the child become a more complete person — not only educationally, but spiritually and socially too. To give him experiences he otherwise never would have had. To help him become more self-dependent, more mature, more competent in skill and knowledge. To help him view the world in new ways of

questioning, wondering, discovery, solving problems."

Although this book is written primarily for adults, I would highly recommend it to any young person who is considering taking up teaching or who is interested in outdoor education.

The author practises what the school preaches—the discovery method of learning, and we discover along with him how an outdoor education program is successfully organized and run.—Reviewed by *Joyce Deutscher*.

## SASKATOON JUNIORS' BIRD HOUSE PROJECT

by **David V. Houston**, President, Saskatoon Junior Natural History Society

The Saskatoon Junior Natural History Society was formed in November, 1968 and we began building bluebird houses in January. All the materials were donated and Mr. Wm. Brucks precut some of the lumber for us. Following Lorne Scott's directions, the houses were 9½" high with outside measurements of 5½" by 5½", with a 1½" diameter hole and a backboard of 12". To avoid the expense of hinges, wood strips were nailed on the inside of each lid to make it fit snugly into the top of the box. With the lid on the box, small holes were drilled through the sides of the box into the wood strips. Shingle nails were then inserted to keep the lid from blowing off in the wind, yet allowing the lid to be removed whenever we wanted to check the contents of the box or clean it out.

During eight afternoons, 207 houses were constructed by a crew composed of Michael and Rod Bantjes, Jeff and Joan Besant, Ray Bisha, David and Kim Epp, Dave and Don Houston, Jeff Krolik, David Nowosad and Gordon and Tom Teed. Five afternoons in late March and early April were required to place the houses, two or three per mile, from south of Saskatoon to Simpson.

The tops blew off many boxes and at first we thought that the boxes had been vandalized, but we later

realized that the prairie wind was too strong for shingle nails! In fact, many farmers had been putting the tops back on, adding rocks on top to hold them down. During the year, we replaced the tops on 70 of our houses, now using two-inch nails. Twenty-five were knocked down by cows, farm operations or vandals.

We feel that the project has been very successful because of the high rate of occupancy of desirable species (3 pairs of Mountain Bluebirds and 128 pairs of Tree Swallows) and the very low rate of unwanted species (1 House Sparrow and 2 House Wren nests and no Starlings). Both wrens were in boxes on posts in shubbery.

Next year we hope to put boxes all the way to join up with Lorne Scott of Indian Head. Since Lorne has already joined with Jack Lane of Brandon, this would mean a trail 400 miles long! Although we had only three pairs of Mountain Bluebirds this year, we hope their numbers will increase as the years go by.



Saskatoon Star-Phoenix Photo  
Locating a blue bird house,  
southeast of Saskatoon, 1969.