

# Letters and Notes

## TIMBER WOLVES

It has been my pleasure for the last several years to receive the very excellent *Blue Jay*. Few indeed are the natural history publications that can boast so varied, yet cohesive a mixture of subjects. From your sensitive and highly significant editorials, to the fascinating "Junior Naturalists" section, the SNHS, through the *Blue Jay*, consistently shows its importance to present and future appreciation of our natural environments.

However, I have "a bone to pick" with you! In Newsletter No. 3 (April, 1969), the editor outlined resolutions passed at the Annual Meeting. All are good—but No. 3 ("concerning Timber Wolves"). It states that the SNHS will make representations to the Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources to the effect that . . . "the program of deliberate poisoning of Timber Wolves be terminated, except where it is locally necessary for the protection of agricultural practice."

Regardless of how one feels towards the belief that wolves create significant problems to agricultural practices (a supposition which I cannot accept), surely one cannot support *any* program of predator control that includes poison as one of its tools.

Have we not learned our lesson with regards to these biocides? Must we allow the indiscriminate slaughter of numerous other species along with the so-called "menace"? Surely not!

Such programs would seem to be completely contrary to the very essence of any natural history society. We cannot afford to stand by complacently and permit such destruction. We cannot afford to stand by complacently and condone (by default) *any* poisoning campaign. Above all, we cannot afford to stand by complacently and allow further reduction of our Wolf populations.

Let's give Resolution No. 3 further consideration before leaping into

something that we will almost certainly regret later.—*D. F. Brunton*, Killbear Provincial Park, Ontario.

## ENJOYING WILDLIFE IN ITS NATURAL HABITAT

I am a member of SNHS and a university student, and my fiancée and I are fond of the outdoors and like to spend evenings driving in the country around Saskatoon. One day this spring we were interested to see 26 large white birds on a small slough at the edge of a stubble field just east of Sutherland. On closer inspection, the birds were identified as Whistling Swans. When we returned that evening we noted only two birds on the slough, but several minutes later 42 of the long-necked white birds flew into sight. About 24 of the group landed on the slough and the remainder headed north. We checked the swans carefully through our binoculars, but none had the black, yellow or blue marking described from the John Hopkins University banding project.

On the same slough as the swans, we observed three American Avocets, several Killdeer, California Gulls, Lesser Scaup, Shovelers, Mallards, Blue-winged Teal, and a host of Red-winged Blackbirds. In the area only a few miles from the slough, were two Burrowing Owls, several Loggerhead Shrikes, American Widgeon, and a multitude of crows, Brewer's Blackbirds, Robins, and meadowlarks. As well, a pair of Gray Partridge revealed themselves in a stubble field.

These are not uncommon species for the area, but it seems to us remarkable that we can drive out to observe them so close to the city of Saskatoon. All of us in Saskatchewan should be thankful that we are able to see wildlife in its natural, unspoiled, as yet unpolluted environment. We should all strive to keep our country in its natural state for all to enjoy.—*Garth Turner*, Saskatoon.





Photo by F. R. Vance

The white crocus

### THE CROCUS ANEMONE OR PASQUE FLOWER

I suppose in future years we shall refer to the year 1969 as the year of the "Crocus" or Crocus Anemone or Pasque Flower.

The abundance, the beauty of form, long stems, large beautiful mauve blossoms and the high incidence of occurrence in a single plant (as many as 36 blossoms with 10 or 12 being very common) all contributed to the most welcome sight of the early spring.

The display was at its height on Saturday, April 19, 1969 and my wife and I considered it the most unusual in all of our experience of observations of crocuses in the Regina area. The mauve flowers made a continuous show along Highway No. 6 above the Qu'Appelle Valley for as far as the pasture land continued south.

In our usual quest for a still more beautiful picture of the Crocus Anemone we followed the slopes of the valley east of Highway No. 6. It was along this slope that we found a single plant with four white blossoms. We

continued our search for a distance of approximately a mile to determine if there were others but none was found.

The location of this plant was intriguing. Approximately 50 feet up the gradual sloping pasture there was located a small bluff which during the winter had served to catch the snow and form a huge drift. On this day, the melting snow formed a continuous supply of ice cold water for the plants below. The soil was soggy wet and my usual stances and photographic procedures were now being submitted to a thorough soaking while I recorded in a series of seven photographs the most exciting find.

We marked the plant. Returning again the following day, we found that another seeker had been there and removed the blossoms. The plant has now been removed.

This photo is among our prized collection of kodachromes of Saskatchewan. Currently, our objective is 300 flowers; we now have taken photographs of 213 all within Saskatchewan's boundaries.—*Fenton R. Vance, Regina.*





Photo by Connie Pratt

The cairn and plaque in the Saskatchewan Prairie Dog Sanctuary, June 14, 1969

### PRAIRIE DOG SANCTUARY

A 40-acre prairie dog town has recently been bought in Southwestern North Dakota by the state's Game and Fish Department. The state hopes to preserve a chain of prairie dog towns. They hope that this will also protect the endangered black-footed ferret which lives exclusively in prairie dog towns.—*Conservation News*, Washington, D.C.

### COWBIRD EGG IN MOURNING DOVE NEST

On the weekend of May 20, 1967, while visiting our old farmstead at Lady Lake, I found a Mourning Dove nest with one egg, eight feet up in a spruce in the backyard. Two weeks later, on June 3 and 4, the nest was revisited. It was deserted and contained one dove egg and one cowbird egg, while a second dove egg was on the ground below the nest. According to Houston (*Blue Jay*, 24:44, 1966)

and McNicholl, (*Blue Jay*, 26:22-23, 1968), there have been no previous published records for Saskatchewan of the Mourning Dove as a host for the Brown-headed Cowbird.—*Donald J. Buckle*, Lady Lake, Sask.

### BIRD SLIDES

The Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, appeals again for donations to its collection of kodachrome slides of birds. The collection is used for teaching and research. Since a variety of shots of each species is wanted to meet sundry requests, sometimes for just a portrait, sometimes for the bird on the nest, at a feeding station, in flight, bathing, and so on, kodachromes of even the commonest species may be acceptable. Send original slides and, if you wish, duplicates will be made and returned for your own collection and use. Slides may be sent to the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York, 14850.