

# Junior Naturalists

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

## LOVE THOSE PARKS

by **Joyce Deutscher**

A year ago when I suggested that Juniors write about their experiences in provincial parks, historic sites, bird sanctuaries and similar places, there was no response. I wondered why. Now, a year later, I will write my own impressions of a provincial park recently visited.

An information folder mentioned self-guided nature trails but park attendants at the entry gate could give us no information on the trails and referred us to the recreation people. Twelve hours later we were able to track down the right person with the right information; he handed us two mimeographed sheets — one for each trail.

A well-constructed sign announced a nature trail and indicated a turn off the main road. We drove a mile or more into what appeared to be a parking lot and selected from among several criss-crossing trails the one we hoped would lead us on our adventure. We guessed right and soon found an old neatly sawed-off post firmly placed in the ground with the number one on its bevelled edge. Soon, however, we found another stake of a less permanent nature also bearing the number one. And so the guessing game continued. By careful sleuthing we were able to follow the trail but fallen logs frequently obstructed the path. It was obvious that the trail had received very little attention from park authorities since the preparation of the guide sheet.

The film show that night in the campground was an American war film, filled with violence and noise. Appropriate for parks?

As we left the park we noticed that the car ahead of us proudly bore the sticker "Love those Parks". My sentiments were different at least after having visited *this* park.

I remembered by way of contrast a day spent in Theodore Roosevelt National Park across the border — its small interpretative museum, a well informed Park Naturalist, well-kept nature trails, a glowing campfire and evening slide show of the park flora, fauna and geographical features.

Do Saskatchewan people not feel the need for park programs similar to those I have just described? Do they go to parks to enjoy city things—golfing, dancing, arts and crafts, ball games, scavenger hunts, eating and littering?

And what of you young people? Do you no longer write about your nature experiences in parks because there are so few of these? Perhaps parks are for motor toboggans, mineral exploration, logging operations, ball games and horseback riding. Perhaps people who really care about nature don't go to parks.

"Love those parks!" Do you?

## NATURE HOBBIES

by **Helene White**, Edmonton

Growing plants in a miniature greenhouse or terrarium gives year-round pleasure. A terrarium is usually a glass bowl or tank. We are going to use a 32-ounce mayonnaise jar for our first attempt. Later you may wish to graduate to a larger container such as a cracked or leaking aquarium or a gallon mustard or pickle jar.

Fascinating mosses and lichens can be found nearly everywhere. Two different types grow in the sparsely grassed area on the north side of our house, while another grows in the dense shade of an evergreen boulevard in the heart of Edmonton. So go out and start searching for your plants. Small plastic bags will keep your specimens moist and healthy and a teaspoon will do the digging. Select only tiny plants that won't outgrow their new home too quickly. Bring

home far fewer plants than you think you will need, for one teaspoon of moss goes a long way in a tiny landscape. The moss lining in my terrarium came from one single mossy stick so I barely disturbed the forest floor at all. When collecting never deface a special spot but search for similar plants in the surrounding area. Always treat nature with respect and leave a spot as you found it. Keep your eyes open for small lichen covered stones, tiny dried branches, and mossy bits of bark. These can turn your greenhouse into a rocky glade or miniature forest.

When you have gathered your plants together, you are ready to start creating. Lay your jar on its side and place a thin layer of washed sand or small pebbles in this pocket. Add a few pieces of charcoal salvaged from a campfire. Over this base spread a layer of soil. The soil level should not be higher than the mouth of the jar but can be built up into a hill for background, near the bottom of the jar.

Arrange your plants artistically in their new surroundings. Spread their roots, cover with a wee bit of soil and tap them firmly into place. A teaspoon and blunt pencil are dandy tools for reaching hard to get at corners. Cover all bare earth with moss. Sprinkle the garden lightly with water and put on the lid.

It is important to place your terrarium in a light place but away from direct sunlight. If it gets the correct amount of light the plants will take root and grow, maintaining themselves on their own water and oxygen as well as the minerals from the soil for a long time.

Should the sides of your terrarium fog up with condensed moisture remove the lid until they clear and then

replace it. If this condition persists, perhaps you have your terrarium in a spot that is too warm or sunny. Try a new location.

## BANDING HORNED OWLS

by Rosemary Nemeth, Yellow Creek

On May 17, Dr. Houston and two of his helpers came out to band the young horned owls. This year my Dad and I were able to find nine nests. There were two neighbours who told us about a few nests which helped us a great deal. But we found most of the nests ourselves. We started looking for them in March.

The young from only eight nests could be banded. There was one nest which had one two-day-old nestling and one egg when we first climbed up to it. Dr. Houston left us two bands to band the little ones in three weeks time. I always liked watching Dr. Houston's helpers climb the trees with great skill; but my dad took it quite easy by using a ladder to get half way up the tree. But when he got to the nest it was empty. We had noticed through the period of three weeks that there weren't any little ones looking out of the nest although the old ones flew around the nest during this time.

Altogether twenty-five young were banded from eight nests. Each nest contained bits and pieces of food.

This year was a very good one for finding horned owl nests and I am looking forward to another trip next year.

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## LETTERS WELCOME

Congratulations to Rosemary Nemeth for her continued interest. Let's hear from more of you. Send your letters and comments to Mrs. Joyce Deutscher, 7200 6th Ave., Regina, by October 15 for inclusion in the next Junior Naturalists Section of the *Blue Jay*.

## SEND THE BLUE JAY AS A GIFT

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