

COMET KOHOUTEK

30 Years Ago

Comet Kohoutek, larger than Halley's Comet, will be visible over the prairie provinces as a hairy or hazy point of light for parts of 4 months beginning November 11, 1973.

No one should use binoculars to view the comet when it is close to the sun. Sun entering binoculars will cause blindness.

Below are the *approximate* sample times that Comet Kohoutek will be visible under clear skies from Saskatoon and Regina. Winnipeg will be about 40 minutes earlier (CST), Calgary and Edmonton also about 40 minutes earlier (MST).

December 4: 6:15 a.m. - 7:00 a.m.

December 14: 7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.

December 24: 8:20 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

January 3: 10:15 a.m. - 6:10 p.m.

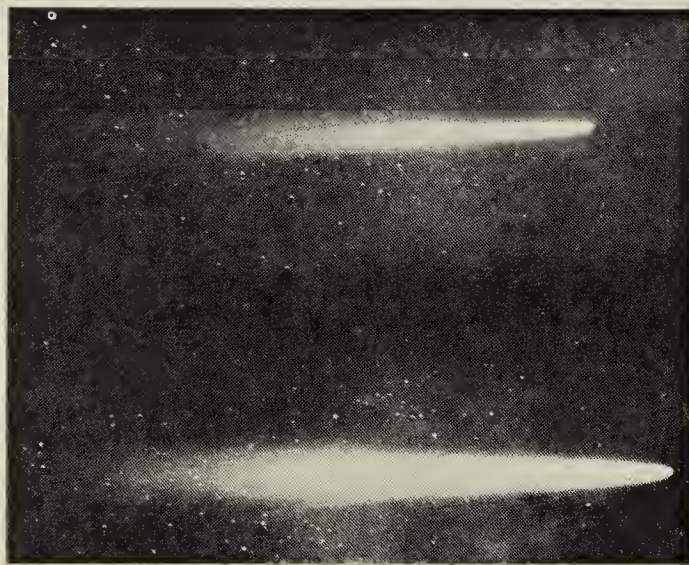
January 13: 5:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

January 23: 7:00 p.m. - 9:10 p.m.

February 2: 7:55 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

February 22: 8:25 p.m. - 10:50 p.m.

The comet will always be moving east, toward the sun in the morning and away from it in the evening. It will appear to move about the same speed as the sun. (We are indebted to Gordon H. Patterson, Physics Department, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, for the above information and the photo below.)



Halley's Comet. Two views, May 12 and 15, 1910, showing tails 30° and 40° long, respectively. A full moon is 1/2°. (Mount Wilson and Palomar Observatories)

Thirty years ago, in the *Blue Jay* editorial for October-December, 1943, Mrs. Priestly reported what may have been the first proposal for a provincial national history society in Saskatchewan. She wrote:

We have also been asked why we do not call our society the Saskatchewan Natural History Society since we have subscribers to the "*Blue Jay*" all across the province. Apart from the fact that this privilege would naturally belong to the Regina N.H.S., which has been active for many more years than we have, it was unanimously decided at our first meeting that our society should be the Yorkton N.H.S. and this is now incorporated in the constitution. What we should like to see, however, is many more local clubs, all of which could then unite to form a federation of Saskatchewan naturalists. Imagine what could be done in the interests of our native wildlife by such an organization! There is no need for a natural history society to be an alarmingly highbrow affair. Our society in Yorkton is a small, friendly group of people who are all interested in the out-of-doors, but we have very definitely learnt the value of being properly organized. For several years, we watched birds and had some pleasant times but, apart from purely personal enjoyment, we "got nowhere" in comparison with what we have done in this past year since we organized as the Y.N.H.S. Now we feel that we are really contributing something of value to the community. Surely there must be sufficient nature lovers in other centres to form similar groups.

It will be remembered that these were the war years. Hence the interest of a description of aircraft bird watching sent to Mrs. Priestly for this same issue of the *Blue Jay* by a young RAF pilot stationed at Swift Current Pilot Officer Mitchell had been a keen bird student in England, and had already listed 85 Canadian species when he wrote to Mrs. Priestly:

Birds are rather a menace when flying. When doing low flying here we have to be careful of them, especially

of the Marsh Hawk, which has an awkward habit of rearing up in its normal quartering over the fields when an aircraft approaches. Fortunately none have, so far, hit any aircraft that I have been flying.

... once while indulging in some very low flying with an instructor over Rush Lake, we saw a heron which puzzled us. However, by doing a steep turn we found it again and noted its broad ash-grey wings and dark green or black

body. Both of us being English knew we had not seen that type of heron before. I imagine it was a Black-crowned Night Heron and, if it was breeding there, the nest would certainly have to be on the ground. That particular trip was fun, for though bird watching at 100 m.p.h. is not easy, we recognized several species we had seen on other occasions, including Blue-winged Teal, Pintail, Bladpate, Red-winged Blackbird, Black Tern, Franklin's Gull and others.

1973 CONSERVATION AWARD

The SNHS Conservation Award is presented annually to a person who "has made a significant contribution to conservation in the Province of Saskatchewan." At the 25th Annual Meeting in Saskatoon on October 13, 1973, this award was given to Mr. Ronald L. Dutcher, Chief Naturalist, Prince Albert National Park. Mr. Dutcher's major responsibility is the nature interpretive program in the Park. This

includes writing brochures, conducting tours and answering questions in all fields of natural history. The popularity of the interpretive programs is truly impressive. The total head count for all activities was 98,088 in 1973, up 25 per cent from the previous year. There were over 6,000 on the conducted nature trails; 9,447 was the attendance at slide presentations, and there were over 9,000 visits to the nature interpretive centre. The new Wolf Country pamphlet had a circulation of 27,000.



Ron Dutcher receives the 1973 Conservation Award from SNHS President Margaret Belcher.

G. W. Seib