

# Letters

## REGINA EARTHQUAKE

After reading about the earthquake shock by W. O. Kupsch in the June *Blue Jay*, I asked my dad if he could remember where he was on Saturday evening, May 15, 1909.

After about a minute he said he had been putting up a sod house on his homestead and was walking to a neighbour's place (with whom the family was staying) and on arrival there, his wife told him that a few minutes before the dishes were jumping around on the shelf.

His homestead is 5 miles south of Woodrow, Saskatchewan, or 110 miles southwest of Regina. His age is 93, and he is and always has been interested in birds and insects. — *C. H. Shulver*, Lafleche, Saskatchewan.

## ODD ACRES

We just received our September issue of *Blue Jay*. A letter from a member in Bangor, Saskatchewan really raised my ire. On page 189 she writes about leaving road allowances idle for wildlife. All well and good. I agree with her to a degree that we do need odd acres for wildlife but the sentence that hit below the belt was, "Now that grain is a better price, I can see many farmers eyeing the natural little parks and seeing them as a means of a few cheap acres."

Now I ask you, since when has a farmer been considered cheap? I don't have to use reams of paper and space to extol the platitudes of the farmer — I could go ahead and list a multitude of reasons to defend the poor-always-down-trodden farmer who gets the blame for far too many things.

We farm southeast of Saskatoon and all told we have well over 60 acres of

brush, slough, bluffs and odd acres which we have left for wildlife. We enjoy all the birds and other wildlife which make use of these bits and pieces of sanctuary. We even raise pheasants and turn them out for the foxes to enjoy!

To elaborate a little further. Odd acres is a new term being introduced. These spots or areas are on farms, ranches or acreages. They are places such as fence corners, rocky spots, blow-outs, sinkholes, abandoned roads, sloughs and good land isolated by ditches, streams or gullies. They can be fenced to protect them from grazing animals or from fire by plowing or discing fireguards. Sometimes these odd acres are planted with trees, shrubs and other cover to provide wildlife with food and cover.

Although these odd acres are small, they occur on many farms and ranches and total about 10 million acres over the whole country.

As many will realize, those tree-islands scattered throughout a farmer's field belong to the conservation-minded. If they are bull-dozed out, as many have been already, there won't be a place left for a duck, pheasant or partridge to hide in. Authorities state that a bluff of trees, 30 feet high, can protect soil a mile in circumference around it, from erosion.

This is where we all can help to spread the word by encouraging those that can leave their odd areas for conservation pieces. But it must be promoted and not by calling farmers cheap because someone thinks they may need that extra bit of land. Road allowances should be used if it helps prevent grasshoppers and cutworms from hatching and for control of weeds, such as wild oats which soon take over a food crop.

There is much to be considered before one can take a stand on a project such as your correspondent suggests. For as our population increases, *planned* production of wildlife will become more and more impor-

tant. Wildlife is a crop of the land and only farmers and ranchers can make effective decisions regarding wildlife production and conservation on their land.

We are all conservationists in our field but no matter how strongly we feel on the subject, we must have consideration for those people who have to live with it. — *Mrs. Theresa M. Heuchert*, Box 21, Clavet, Saskatchewan, S0K 0Y0.

### BRANT AT CARROT RIVER

On October 10, 1974, I was in a field watching flocks of geese coming from the Carrot River to feed. Canada Geese were flying quite high and going about 3 miles further south.

About eight black ones separated from the rest and came right over us, very low. They were certainly not Canadas. Godfrey's "Birds of Canada" pictures were right and they were Brant: black with just a suggestion of a chin strap, they flew in a very limber manner, as the wing tips bend up. They are much smaller than geese.

This was on NE1-51-9-W2nd at 6 p.m. They went about a mile east of us to feed; no geese went with them. — *F. B. Armstrong*, Carrot River, Saskatchewan.

### THE PRAIRIE FALCON AND I IN 1973

September 25/73 — As I stepped out, I noticed a Prairie Falcon chasing pigeons around our grain mixer. Around and around they went as I stood watching (rug in hand forgetting that I went out to shake the rug). After many rounds, the pigeons headed for the barn and I lost sight of the chase.

October 18/73 — I noticed a Prairie

Falcon swiftly flying past the feed stacks and then coming back as though looking for something. My curiosity got the best of me, so I went to investigate. I found a house sparrow nipped in two. The two parts, (feet, tail and head, wings) were about 3 yards apart.

October 20/73 — When my husband was doing evening chores a Prairie Falcon refused to leave the area near the feed stacks and two magpies were right there scolding it. I went to see what was going on and found one of my young chickens was the victim. (No hard feelings about the chicken on my part).

October 26/73 — As I got close to the hen house, I stopped in my tracks. There at the corner of the hen house was a Prairie Falcon with a freshly killed white hen. I went back to the house for my books and binoculars; standing within feet of the falcon I studied every mark and line the poor thing had. (The books don't show it exactly like it is.) I didn't need the binoculars because I could almost touch it before it would fly.

I walked very slowly towards it until I was about 3 steps from it. It looked at me with "big round eyes" but did not move. Thinking it could not fly, I decided to pick it up, but as I got to it, it flew to some straw bales that were near by. From there it flew and perched on a granary. I took the hen and on the bales I placed a piece of the rabbit that my husband had brought home for our cats. I went into the garage and watched. It wasn't long before the falcon went back to the bales and at once started eating the rabbit meat. I was so thrilled I went to tell my husband, Nick, about it; he brought the camera along and took some pictures.

I spent at least 2 hours watching the falcon. Nick could not get as close to it as I could, maybe because of the clothes (I had browns, he had blues) or because I walked slowly towards it, while Nick walked too fast.

For the next two days I was going to be away from home, but I left strict or-

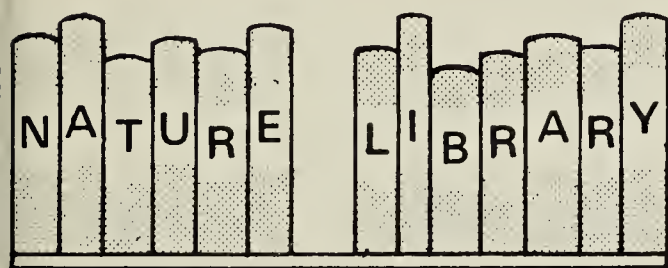
ders with my husband, that if the falcon came back, he was to feed it some rabbit. Well, Saturday evening the 27th, when Nick looked out, not one but two falcons were perched on the bales. He went out and put a piece of rabbit on the bales and watched but before the falcons came back the cats ate the meat, so he put out more rabbit and again the cats ate it; he gave up, too soon.

The next day, Nick saw a falcon

chasing a Great Horned Owl out of our garden trees.

To this day I am sorry I had to be away and miss out on the thrill of watching the two falcons.

I hope the falcons come to our yard for their "chicken dinners" and not to some yard where a gun would get after them. — *Flossie Bogden*, Box 92, Spring Valley, Saskatchewan, S0H 3X0.



## WINTER SEARCH PARTY

**A Guide to insects and other invertebrates**

**By Helen Ross Russell**

Published by J. Thomas Nelson & Sons,  
Don Mills, Ontario  
171 pp. 1971. \$4.95

This book will interest everyone from young child to armchair naturalist. Descriptions of common insects, wonderfully simple line drawings and information on life cycles, behaviour (some of which is truly amazing) and environment, are not only interesting but give a wealth of knowledge to those of us who have not made a study of these creatures. I believe the book was written primarily for young people but the main thought in the author's mind is to make all of us conscious of the fact that our natural history studies, whatever our specialties may be need not cease because of winter weather when most of our birds have migrated to warmer

areas and trees and plants are at rest.

A strong point made by Helen Russell is that one can find insects and invertebrates in one stage or another, without making great treks through the countryside. They are in our houses, garages, sheds, on plants, trees and even in frozen ponds — in fact, most nooks and crannies will produce some form of life for us to study. The book tells us what to look for and where to look, however minute the animal may be.

Equipment necessary for winter study of insects is so simple that most of it can be found right in our own homes.

The author is keen to impress on us all that there is a very important interrelationship between all living things, great and small, and while she condones a certain amount of collecting for study purposes, she is opposed to wanton destruction of any animal — even so-called pests, (although she admits some things need to be controlled to some extent).

Read this book and find out how much you know about insects and other invertebrates. There is a good chance your interest may be stimulated to the point that you will be moved to do some searching of your own, throughout the winter months — or better yet, make it a family affair! — *Pat O'Neil*, 1125 Elliot Street, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.