



DR. JOHN LANE — IN MEMORIAM

by ELIZABETH R. CRUICKSHANK*

Dr. John Lane died July 23, 1975, at his home in Brandon, Manitoba. He was 72. For 45 years Jack carried on his railroad job, putting his best into his work. All those years he was as keenly aware of the natural world about him as during his boyhood when it was his consuming interest — especially birds.

A devoted family man, he received both assistance and encouragement from his loving wife, Nora, and from his son and daughter of whom he was very proud. Even before retirement in 1968, he gave unselfishly and enthusiastically of his time and energy to improving the lot of his feathered friends. At the same time, he devoted himself to young people, arousing and encouraging their interest in the birds' world. In his later years he became Curator of the B. J. Hales Museum for which he had voluntarily worked for years.

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On request he wrote "The life history of the Baird's Sparrow" for the prestigious Bent's *Life Histories of North American Birds*. He presented a paper, based on his well documented observations, on "Hybridism of bluebirds" at the American Ornithologists' Union meeting in Toronto in 1967. He was awarded the Cliff Shaw Memorial Award by the S.N.H.S. for his outstanding contributions to its journal, the *Blue Jay*. The Shikar Safari International Society named him Conservationist of the Year, as did the Manitoba Wildlife Federation. He received the Gold Medal of the Manitoba Historical Society in recognition of his contribution to youth — developing in them an appreciation of our native avifauna. The Manitoba Good Citizenship award, the Golden Boy, came to him for his selfless, important endeavors.

To crown his career, the University of Manitoba conferred on him an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree. He was saluted in the citation as "Naturalist, conservationist, writer, sportsman, and accomplished nature photographer."

His labour of love, that of enticing the bluebirds back to Manitoba, was the subject of a fine article in *Reader's Digest* in September, 1973, by Fred McGuinness. It was titled "The man who brought the bluebirds back."

The final tally of nest boxes he and his "boys" had erected along the highways and byways was over 4,500. The trail went from Broadview to McGregor, north to Dauphin and south to Glenboro. A significant percentage of the Junior Birders, 200 membership, who were fortunate to come under his tutelage, have been inspired to pursue studies related to the life sciences for their life work.

Rev. Murray Simmons, conducting his funeral service in Central United Church, Brandon, quoted one of Jesus' favourite sayings: "Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will save it and live." "Instead of trying to husband his strength, Jack devoted himself to a significant cause, to others, and so to the enrichment of the lives of others and to the enrichment of his country. Thereby he himself gained an immensely richer life and satisfaction, greater powers of observation and of expression, an ever expanding circle of friends, an entrance into fellowship with scientists and artists. Experience gave him a finer appreciation of classical music, an ever fresh zest for living and the rich joys of sharing his interests with others and inspiring young people to worthwhile living. His achievements provide one more example of how unbelievably much may be accomplished in this needy world through one person who dedicates himself to a significant purpose or cause and devotes all his energy toward its fulfilment."

As a friend of many years of Jack and Nora, and one who shared their interests, I echo Mr. Simmons' sentiments. And of the many poems Jack penned I have chosen the one he composed on the day of Ernest Thompson Seton's death. Jack, as the great naturalist before him, also roamed the Carberry Sand Hills. Jack called his poem "Spruce Lake Lament." (Substitute Jack's name for that of the man he mourned.)



SPRUCE LAKE LAMENT

These are the solitudes that Seton knew
When first he forayed here to watch the ways
Of bird and beast: yon birch a sapling grew;
This serried skyline often met his gaze.

The tamarack swamp, the secret shadowed rills
Echoed the cry of crane, the bittern's boom;
And the far reaches of the spruce-clad hill
Told and retold the lobo's dirge of doom.

Seton is gone; no longer will he search
For nest of warbler rare. The lobo's howl
Will stir him not again. The groves of birch
And spruce, the songsters gay, the waterfowl —
None e'er will see him more. The wind is harsh
Upon the hills and o'er the lonely marsh.

Dr. John Lane's memory will remain ever green in the hearts of those nearest and dearest to him and in those of his many friends.

