

about nature's miracles is the subject of this book for both children and adults.

635.965 M989

BRINGLE, Laurence. *Discovering the outdoors*. 1969. A nature and science guide to investigating life in fields, forests and ponds and suggesting scientific experiments and investigations that can be conducted on each site.

Y 574 P957

CHEFFER, V. B. *The seeing eye*. 1971. Well illustrated book with colour photographs in which a naturalist shows you how to see the marvellous forms, textures and colours of nature.

Y 500.9 S317

CHOENFELD, C. A. *Cabins, conservation and fun*. 1968. A complete guide to leisure time living in the country with the pleasures and pitfalls encountered in finding and developing a rural retreat.

333.76 S365

CHOENFELD, C. A. *Everybody's ecology*. 1971. A field guide to pleasure and perception in the outdoors.

574.5 S365

CHWARTZ, Alvin. *How to fly a kite, catch a fish, grow a flower and other activities for you and your child*. 1965. A parents' do-it-yourself guide to recreation, athletics and nature.

790.0192 S399

COANE, E. A. *The complete book of bicycling*. 1970. Comprehensive guide to all aspects of bicycles and bicycling including buying, history, maintenance, cycle competitions, cycle camping and touring trips (another copy in reference and at the Circulation desk).

796.6 S634

MARIDGE, N. A. *The teen-ager's guide to collecting practically anything*. 1972. Aimed especially at teen-agers, this book suggests the traditional collectibles as well as those from new areas such as ecology, the environment and American arts and crafts.

Y 790.132 S636

Letters

ONE MAN'S MEAT. . .

I agree with the views expressed by Robert Page concerning the rights of predators (*Blue Jay*, March 1974). In this connection I would like to draw attention to portions of two articles which have appeared in the *Regina Leader-Post*. The first (Jan. 19, 1973) was discussing the permits to be issued by the Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources for hunting coyotes and foxes:

"Snowmobile hunting by special permit requires hunters to chase down a coyote or fox until it is exhausted. Once the animal is exhausted or cornered, the hunter can dismount from his machine and kill it."

The second (Mar. 22, 1974) relates to a court case in Winnipeg:

"Maximum fines and jail sentences have been imposed on two Manitoba men who used a snowmobile to run a fox into a state of exhaustion and then shot the animal".

How can two neighbouring provinces with similar governments have so vastly different predator policies that one promotes a practice which brings severe punishment in the other? —
Nora M. Stewart, Craven, Sask.



Coyote

Fred Lahrman

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE OF OUR WILDLIFE

(The following is a condensed version of a letter that appeared in the Meridian Booster (Lloydminster) on Oct. 24, 1973. We thank Mrs. F. W. Parker of Blackfoot, Alberta, for sending it to us.)

In 1972 I went back to Holland after an absence of 27 years and my sisters showed me the letters I had written home since 1930 . . .

The letters written in the winter always mentioned wolves howling outside. I never used the name coyote, as "wolves" sounded so much more exciting and, I reasoned, they did not know the difference anyway!

One letter told of a trapping experience about the first coyote we trapped that winter . . . Another episode I had written about when I went coyote hunting with a professional hide hunter who had a winter camp somewhere in one of the coulees of the Battle River . . .

A letter dated one winter later recounted an episode of a big dog coyote caught in one of our traps. When we first approached him he fought madly to escape, but when approached, he lay down in the snow and looked at us for all the world like a dog who had just had a licking. For me, that little scene was the turning point, I became fed up with the whole trapping business and never set a trap again.

In those depression days, however, trapping was still a necessity, as some families depended on the father's ability as a trapper for little extras in the way of food and clothing. It is interesting to note that the market value of hides in the depression days were not much lower than they are today. The animals most commonly trapped then were coyotes, weasels, badgers and a few lynx.

There were only a few mule deer in those days. I never saw a whitetail until after World War II. For the information of those people who think that we have to control coyotes to save our precious deer population, I would like to point out that there were twice

as many coyotes then, when the whitetails started their increase.

In a later letter, I told how the bobcoveys of Hungarian partridge pair off at the end of February. This, to me, was always the first sign that spring was on the way . . .

A letter written in the spring mentioned the drumming of bush partridges which carried on day and night, and the big dancing ground prairie chicken not a quarter of a mile from the house. From sun-up until 10 a.m. and again in the evening, you could hear the cackling and cooing of hundreds of chickens.

I must have been a budding conservationist then already, because I remember severely reprimanding a group of native people who had covered my chicken playground with dozens of number 0 weasel traps, each nicely staked to a little willow post driven into the ground.

Last summer, a granddaughter of the people I wrote those letters to visited us here on the ranch with her husband and little daughter. They were both born and raised in one of the most densely populated areas of Europe . . .

Like many urban people, they were anxious to see our wildlife. It is true they saw beaver and deer, but we had to go as far as Alberta's foothills before they saw a live coyote. (At home we found some coyote carcasses the result either of poison or skidoo hunters.) They never saw a sharp-tailed grouse or an Hungarian partridge.

For years we had had denning coyotes on our lease, right amongst our precious cattle, and I know it would have been an experience of a lifetime for them to have gone there some sunny summer evening and seen the pups play around the den as I had done many times myself. No such luck, somebody deemed it necessary to put a whole 1080 poisoned sheep within a quarter of a mile of our land boundary. It was still there on May 6 and carelessly buried, so it probably had its deadly effect on our wildlife all summer. What about the few beautiful

MARSH HAWK CAPTURES MEADOWLARK

In spring, among the earliest birds to arrive are Western Meadowlarks and Marsh Hawks. The bright yellow plumage and cheerful notes of the first Meadowlark delight the eye and ear; Marsh Hawks coursing over the fields are silent but graceful harbingers of warm days.

Though the Marsh Hawk has occasionally been mentioned as a predator of young waterfowl, I still think of them in terms of mice and voles. Thus, when we saw a male Marsh Hawk hover and drop down into a damp meadow we were sure it had taken a vole (meadow mouse). We stopped driving to get a closer look and when it flew up we were surprised to see it clutching a Meadowlark to its breast. After flying about 50 feet it dropped its legs full length, still holding the bird, but apparently laboring with the weight. It flew a few hundred feet further away from us, dropped down onto the ground and shortly began plucking its prey. This was about 4:30 p.m. on a bright day, March 25, 1973, near Meadows, Manitoba.

Presumably, a Meadowlark foraging in deep grass would make a fairly easy target for a low flying Marsh Hawk, though the Meadowlark's protectively colored back plumage would make it difficult to see. A. C. Bent's perennially useful series of *Life histories* lists meadowlarks as a food item of the Marsh Hawk, along with many larger birds, including ducks, grouse and pheasants. B. R. Wolhuter observed a much smaller raptor, the Sparrow Hawk (Kestrel), killing a Western Meadowlark (*Bird-Banding* 42:221; 1971). — Robert W. Nero, 546 Coventry Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba. R3R 1B6.

* * * * *

The mouse is a sober citizen who knows that grass grows in order that mice may store it as underground haystacks. *Aldo Leopold*, A Sand County Almanac.

agles that stay till early winter and must live partly on carrion? Why bread poisoned baits all over municipalities where there are very few sheep raised, and where farms with loose-running chickens are scarce indeed?

I think part of the answer is that it is made too easy. A casual trip to the municipal office and the poison bait is put out in the middle of nowhere, miles away from where there are, or ever will be, any sheep or poultry.

If you ask people why they want poison bait put out, you get the most surprising answers: "Because the loggers keep me awake, howling at night" or "To maintain the balance of nature". One even suggested that we could get rid of all our beaver because they chewed off poplar stumps which might hurt the udders of their huge cows!

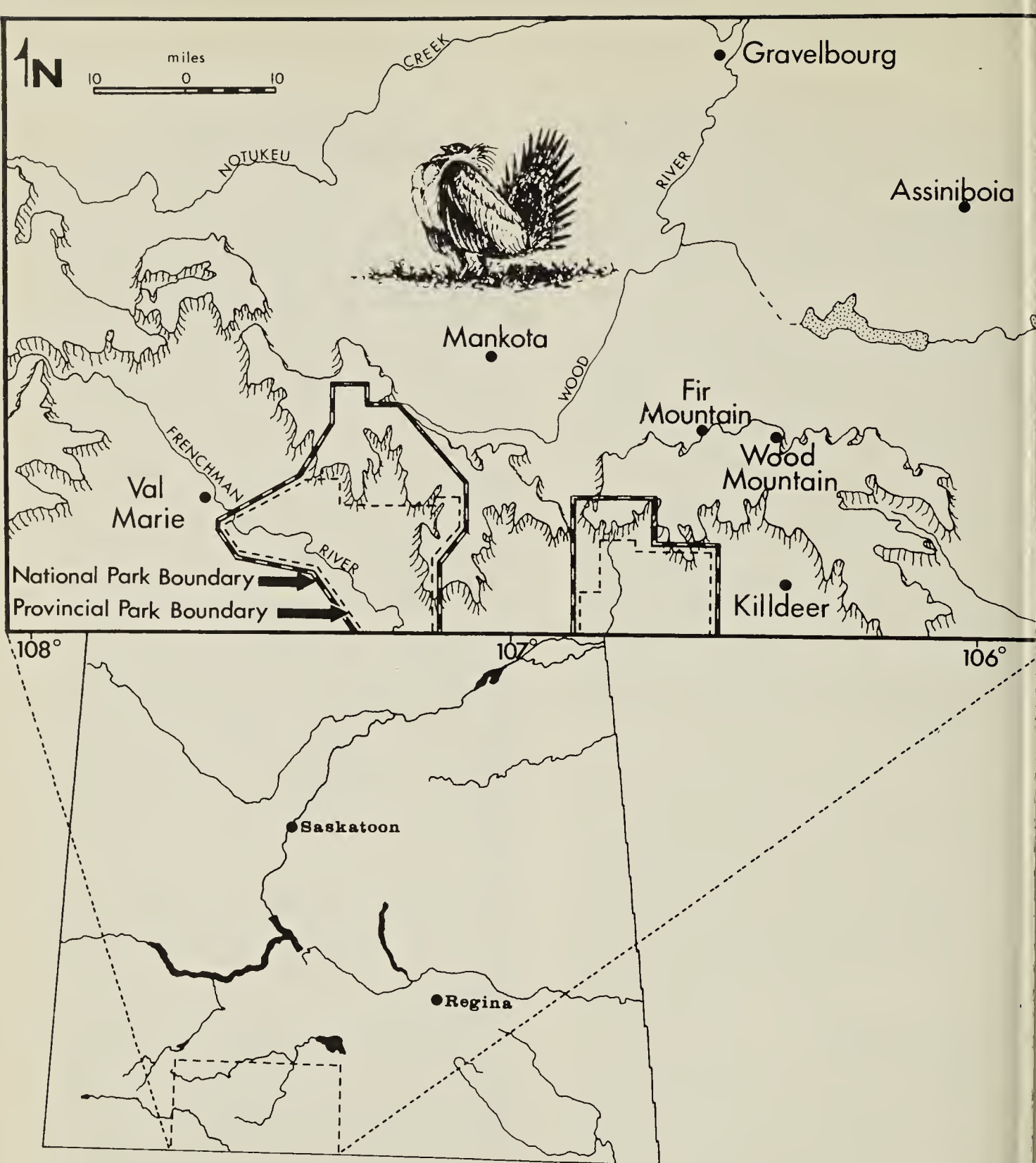
What about organized coyote skidoos? Is their purpose to provide much needed warm clothes for school children? Or is it to save the hard-pressed sheep herder's livelihood? What about the trucks you see all over? Are those highpowered, scoped rifles used in the war against cattle rustlers, or to fight our innocent-looking road signs?

Is all this inevitable? Surely not . . .

The few dedicated conservation officers we have, have such huge territories to cover that they cannot possibly be everywhere at the right time.

I will end this letter by quoting a warden of one of the many well-run national parks in South Africa, where there is little or no wildlife left outside the parks. I told him the way I saw the situation in Northern Saskatchewan and had difficulty explaining to him that a skidoo is (we settled on motor-sleigh). I then asked him about the same laws in South Africa. He smiled and said that they did not need them anymore and added, "I do not think that you will need them either in the year 2,000."

I hope he is wrong — *Hans de Vogel*, P.O. Box 219, Neilburg, Sask. S0M 2C0.



Location of the two parts of the proposed national grassland park.

Wayne Renau

LOOKING BACK

To date much energy has been expended by many individuals and organizations both to inform the public and to demonstrate public support for a national grassland park. Looking back on these efforts, one cannot help but be disturbed that one consequence of the federal election should be a delay in park negotiations between the provincial and federal governments. It will be particularly important to reaffirm our support as soon as possible after the election.

If you have never visited the area, why not plan on spending at least a week there this summer? Even if you manage to miss seeing sage grouse, antelope prairie dogs, burrowing owls, prairie falcons, ferruginous hawks, a ferret, kit fox or short-horned lizard, the landscape and flowers will be sufficient to ensure your participation when support is needed again. (Maps and other information on prairie dog colonies appeared in the March, 1971, and June, 1972, *Blue Jay*, and on the badlands in the June, 1973, issue.)