

Letters

BIRD BOX SUGGESTIONS

I run a small line of bird houses, and have enjoyed birds and conservation for years. Here are some of my views on bird boxes.

If you have trouble with vandalism, place your boxes in a small amount of cover. Also have your boxes on the opposite side of a post, *not* facing the road. Generally the vandals are lazy gunners who shoot from vehicle windows. In this way they have less chance of spotting boxes and also less target if they do.

Our House Sparrow is a constant threat. I keep my houses low, below the top fence wire; this attracts few sparrows. Had only two out of 35 last week. These I try to catch and destroy.

Another thing I'm going to do is make two entrance holes for swallows and bluebirds. This will give them an escape route if danger threatens — *Ron Klimock*, Box 754, Russell, Manitoba. R0J 1W0



"DO AS I DO"

Three young robins were perched on the 3-foot fence in my flower garden. The mother robin was obviously coaxing them to get down into the garden to look for worms, but the young ones did not want to move. After about 5 minutes or so, the mother robin flew up, and then came swooping down and bumped the first young robin with its head, and the youngster fell into the garden. She then repeated this operation with the second and then the third.

The young robins must have known what this was all about, as all three began to look for worms, and I might add that they were successful in their attempts. — *Mrs. Anne Andrusyshen*, 1120 Main St., Saskatoon.



BULLSNAKE NEAR KYLE, SASK.

On July 11, at approximately 11:00 a.m., Jim Goring and I were driving on a grid road 13 miles south and 3 miles east of Kyle, Sask. We encountered a snake sunning itself on the road and could not avoid hitting it. Upon comparing the snake to a photo, we found it was a Bullsnake, 5 feet in length. Another person confirmed our identification of the snake. Unfortunately, conditions for preserving the specimen were unfavorable, so we destroyed it. — *Rodney Wapple*, Box 1153, Biggar, Sask. S0K 0M0



30 Years Ago

From the July-September, 1946. *Blue Jay* (Vol. 4, No. 4): *Bird Watching from a "Jeep"*. By Farley Mowat. I arrived at Dundurn, Saskatchewan, on May 7, 1946, immediately set up a collecting camp, and prepared to devote a month to the study of migrational birds in the central part of the province. During the few days when it was warm enough for the birds and myself to brave the elements, I managed to make some very interesting observations. One record of particular interest was for a pair of Say's Phoebes noted on May 15. Although this seems to be a very northerly record, apparently the most northerly for the province, it is not unexpected since some Say's Phoebes nest along the Mackenzie River and are fairly common migrants through central and northern Alberta. Apart from the Phoebes, the best observations were made on wading birds which were very abundant on the few sloughs that remained alive in the Dundurn-Saskatoon area. On May 21, at a place called Proctor Lake, I was fortunate enough to observe 27 species of shorebirds in the space of five hours. These included Avocets, Hudsonian Curlews, Knots, Stilt Sandpiper and what was almost certainly a female

Red Phalarope. Specimens of all those were collected with the exception of the Red Phalarope which was in company with a thousand or more Northern Phalaropes and which could not be reached from shore.

Excepting the shore birds, the only other records of particular interest from this area were for Pinnated Grouse, Cooper's Hawk, Virginia Rails, Arkansas Kingbirds and innumerable Starlings. A total of 147 migratory species were observed during the month of May.

After leaving Dundurn I jeeped north past Montreal Lake until the road ran out and I was forced to revert to canoe and foot to carry me over some hundreds of miles of muskeg and spruce ridges. In this great and watery country I managed to spare a little time from the mosquitoes to observe the bird life and some of the more spectacular results of my search were a downy Solitary Sandpiper, which is apparently the first specimen ever to be taken in downy plumage; a breeding colony of Dowitchers that seem to belong to the recently invalidated '*Hendersoni*' race; breeding Sandhill Cranes; Franklin's Gulls to the number of plus a thousand in one flock; a single Lesser Snow Goose; Bohemian Waxwings; Chimney Swifts; downy Bonaparte's Gulls, five miles from the nearest suitable nesting area; a Richardson's Owl; breeding Lesser Canada Geese; and American Three-toed Woodpeckers.

I would like to draw attention to the infinitely small numbers of warblers that appeared in the spring of 1946. I should say that only about five or ten percent of the normal warbler breeding population arrived on the northern nesting grounds this year, and no more than twenty percent of the numbers to be expected were in evidence during migration at Dundurn. I suspect this noticeable scarcity of an entire family of birds can be correlated with a series of unusual snow falls, and prolonged cold wet weather in early June, 1945. Someone interested in the effects of climatic conditions on large masses of birds

might find some very interesting study here.

Another point that intrigues me is to discover the reason why one of the largest and most potentially productive ornithological areas in Canada, the Churchill River Basin, has for so long been neglected by ornithologists. I am fully convinced that detailed exploration of this area, particularly the Saskatchewan section, will more than fully repay the effort expended upon it, not only by way of providing new data on birds and other animals, but as living proof that the spirit of the Wild West is not wholly dead.

In conclusion I wish to thank the several, able local ornithologists throughout the province who so kindly aided me in my summer's work, and who with great good will managed to heal all of my spiritual wounds — if not my physical ones.

Richmond Hill, Ontario



**28th ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE
SASKATCHEWAN
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

October 15 and 16, 1976
Museum of Natural History
Regina, Saskatchewan

This year the meeting will be held jointly with the **Parks Association of Canada**. Each society will conduct its separate business meeting, and that of the S.N.H.S. will be held in the morning and early afternoon of October 16.

October 15:
Registration 6:30-10:30 p.m.
Program 8:30 p.m.

October 16:
Business Meeting, Program
and Banquet