



# LETTERS

## YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD!

If this money is late reaching you, please don't expire the subscription as I'm experiencing much trouble in getting my letters and such away in time; due to weather and drifted lane; (Jan. 9/78) we're still on the farm (retired). I've been a subscriber to the Blue Jay from its inception.

I've been feeding such a flock of chickadees, a nuthatch and woodpeckers that I can't get any more suet. I have to buy sunflower seeds and peanuts, so it's been expensive but they have to be fed, regardless.

We're old age pensioners of 82 and 91 (the last is my husband's age) so we're finding it difficult in a winter like this. — *Mrs. Harold J. Bray, Box. 32, McLean, Saskatchewan S0G 3E0*

## BIRD FEEDING TRAY AT FENTON

We live in the hamlet of Fenton, half a mile from the Fenton Ferry. The grain elevator and the little railway siding building have been removed.

We have 10 or 12 Evening Grosbeaks that come daily to our feeding tray. As the days get longer, they come a few minutes earlier each day — today, January 23, they came at 8.25 a.m. They share the sunflower seeds, flax and gravel with up to 14 Black-capped Chickadees. I was thrilled and excited to find one grosbeak wearing a band. We had a Blue Jay yesterday. Pine

Grosbeaks have been rather scarce here for 3 or 4 years, but we had one yesterday and three on January 23. Birds are seldom frightened when the train goes by.

The woodpeckers get along very well with the others — woven plastic bags of suet attract as many as five or six at a time — Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers both come, sometimes both species together. — *Mrs. Eslie Weegar, Birch Hills, Saskatchewan.*

## 1931 MAGPIES

I read with interest Dr. Houston's account of the spread of the magpie back across Saskatchewan in the 1920's. This fits in well with my experience. In the winter of 1931, we caught a Black-billed Magpie in a weasel trap along the Battle River about six miles north of Neilburg. Since we came from Holland we immediately recognized what it was. We took it home and fed it rabbit meat. Many neighbors came to view the bird, because most had not seen a magpie before. We released it in the spring.

I remember that winter we were hard up we lived on beans and bannock, tea and sugar. There was a tremendous snowshoe hare population. We had a .22 rifle and lived on one rabbit every day.

Part of the day we cut scrub at five dollars per acre. Towards evening the rabbits came out of the bush to chew the bark off the felled trees. We kept

ood supply of rabbit meat on hand  
 and hung the skinned and gutted  
 carcasses on the trees. Only  
 chickadees bothered them, as magpies  
 were not yet in evidence. When we  
 made tea, we had to strain our snow  
 water carefully to sift out the rabbit  
 pellets, the rabbits were so numerous.  
*Hans de Vogel, Box 219, Neilburg,*  
*Saskatchewan.*



*Bonaparte's Gulls*

*Larry Morgotch*

## BONAPARTE'S GULL AT McOUAT LAKE

On August 28, 1977, I observed 14  
 Bonaparte's Gulls at McOuat Lake,  
 locally known as 'Goose Lake', 14  
 miles north of Yorkton. Since I had no  
 photographs of this species, and since  
 it was not listed in Houston's 1949 list  
 for the region (*Can. Field-Nat.* 63:215-  
 21), I returned on the rainy Labour  
 Day weekend of September 4 and 5  
 and set up my blind at a quiet bay on  
 the east shore of the lake. I was able to  
 obtain the accompanying  
 photographs.

I have since learned that the Anakas  
 have recorded flocks of up to 70 birds  
 during fall migration at Good Spirit Lake,  
 less than 10 miles to the northwest. The  
 species breeds in the northern half of  
 the province. — *Larry Morgotch, 51*  
*Charleswood Crescent, Yorkton,*  
*Saskatchewan S3N 2R5*



*Bonaparte's Gull*

*Larry Morgotch*

## NOISY NIGHT FLIGHT OF CROWS

On the evening of April 1, 1978,  
 having retired for the night, I was  
 engulfed in a delightful blanket of  
 sleep when suddenly the unmistakable  
 call of a crow penetrated my brain.  
 Crows wake me up every morning,  
 even before the House Sparrows set up  
 their usual din, so I now thought  
 "Surely it can't be time to be wakened  
 yet!" Opening my eyes, I discovered,  
 to my great joy, it was still pitch dark  
 — the time was 11:15 p.m. — but those  
 crow calls! They were increasing in  
 number and volume as the birds ap-  
 proached rapidly from the south,  
 passing over our house and continuing  
 northward. I attempted to count the  
 calls and tallied 35 during a one-  
 minute period. The birds were very  
 noisy, perhaps even agitated. After  
 three or four minutes their voices  
 faded away in the distance. Normally  
 crows are not night flyers. Had a  
 "roost" been violently disturbed? If so,  
 why were the birds flying directly north  
 in a seemingly orderly, if noisy, flight  
 rather than a helter skelter disper-  
 sement? I have no answer. Perhaps  
 someone else can provide one. —  
*Patricia O'Neil, 1125 Elliott Street,*  
*Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 0V4*

## MARKED WHOOPING CRANE

I received word from Aransas that the six Whooping Cranes that stopped near Neilburg for 20 days in October, 1977, arrived safely on the 9th of November. The group could be identified because of the banded juvenile. —*Hans de Vogel*, Neilburg, Saskatchewan.

## NEW MAGAZINE

By the time this June *Blue Jay* reaches its readers, Pollution Probe will have published the first issue of Probe Post. The Probe Post will be a bi-monthly publication aimed at a business and institutional audience. It will emphasize analytical presentation of news and issues related to energy and environmental matters, offering subscribers an understanding of the issues being raised and confronted by Probe and its allies as well as careful, original and concise accounts of trends and developments in our field. The Probe Post will be printed on tabloid size newsprint and will use a newspaper-like format. Subscriptions will be \$20.00 annually for individuals and \$30.00 for corporations and institutions.

Most of the contents of Probe Post will be produced by Probe staff. Nevertheless, we are actively seeking contributions (articles, columns, short pieces, updates, even feature reports) from other groups and experts, and we will be happy to receive unsolicited contributions.

In particular we will be including regular surveys of the current activities and concerns of environmental organizations across the country. In order to do this properly, we will have to rely on people like you to keep us informed of efforts by your group and in your area. So please help us to publicize your work by keeping us

informed of your latest initiatives. —*Bob Gibson*, Editor, Pollution Probe, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1A1.

## TRUMPETER SWAN SOCIETY CONFERENCE

The Trumpeter Swan Society will hold its Sixth Conference in Alaska. The papers, sessions and panel discussions will be held at the Anchorage Westward Hilton on September 7, 8, and 9, 1978. On September 10, 11, and 12, a field trip is being planned to observe Trumpeter Swan habitat.

The Trumpeter Swan Society, founded in 1968, is composed of conservationists, biologists, and citizens from across Canada, the United States, and England who share a common interest in conserving Trumpeter Swans and in restoring them to their former range. The conference is being held this year in the state in which 80% of the world population of Trumpeter Swans lives in summer.

Anyone wanting additional information or wishing to participate in the conference please contact David K. Weaver, The Trumpeter Swan Society, P.O. Box 296, Maple Plain, Minnesota 55359, U.S.A.

## CORRECTION

The photograph on page 215 of the December, 1977 issue of the *Blue Jay* was misidentified as a Greenish Blue. It was actually an Arctic Blue (*Plebea aquilo rustica*) as evidenced by the presence of a small dark dot in the center of the hindwings plus small marginal dots at the base of the same wings.