

# HANS de VOGEL, 1904 - 1989

CHRISTINE PIKE, Waseca, Saskatchewan. SOM 3A0



*Hans de Vogel observing wildlife in farmland*

*Hayo Heeroma*

Hans de Vogel was born in Semarang in what was then the island of Java, now known as Indonesia, in the Dutch East Indies, son of the chief surgeon for the entire region. Hans grew up in a fascinating world of jungle flora and fauna, and of people.

It was his father's wish that Hans become a doctor but when de Vogel Sr. visited Holland where Hans had been sent to high school, he was startled to find his son working on a farm during holidays and not applying himself to his studies. He decided to let his son attend a vocational agriculture school. Hans enjoyed it especially since horses were then used on farms.

Arriving in Canada in 1927, Hans worked for dairy farmers in Ontario. He came west in 1929 and found land of his own, for sale at one dollar an acre for tax

arrears. It was untouched land between Lashburn and Neilburg, Saskatchewan, south of the Battle River, and had a variety of wildlife on it. With a friend he lived in a shack, living frugally indeed, trapping to help earn a living. When he acquired cattle he shipped cream. He always remembered the help he received from neighbours.

In 1941, during the war, Hans sold his cattle and horses and joined the Dutch army. He sent all his army pay to a Canadian bank and when he was discharged he bought more land. He never said much about his war experiences or the treatment of his relatives captured by the Japanese who over-ran Java/Indonesia. However, some family members were later able to come to Canada to visit Hans, among these his niece Kitty. She made a delightful journal, illustrated with water-colour scenes, of the life with

Uncle Hans. Those were the days of real farming — lots of neighbours, plenty of visiting.

During his farming years Hans was constantly observing wildlife, becoming an “amateur expert.” He joined the Wildlife Federation and the Saskatchewan Natural History Society (S.N.H.S.) in the 1960s.

In 1962 Hans’ nephew, Hayo Heeroma, came from Holland and gradually began to manage the farm. This eventually gave Hans more free time and he became an appreciated attendee of S.N.H.S. general meetings where his ready wit and pointed remarks often helped promote lively discussions. In 1976 he became a Representative-at-large for the Society.

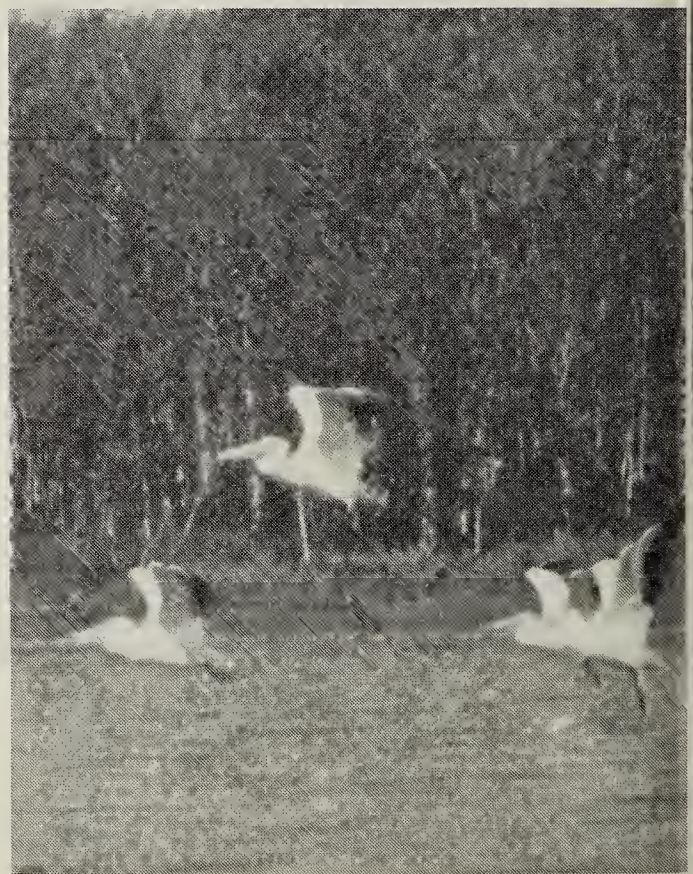
Hans joined in the 13½ year struggle to make the unique area around the mouth of the Big Gully Creek, where it runs into the North Saskatchewan River north of Paynton, into a protected area. He gave a large amount towards the rent each year and paid for a sign which was erected at the west gate. He often had his canoe (out of which he had a lot of pleasure particularly on Big Manitou Lake south of Neilburg) on the river, and spent a summer camped there at the “Mouth of the Gully.” After that he wrote an article for the *Blue Jay* [December 1979; 37(4):225] on the Pileated Woodpeckers which nest along the river. Some of his beautiful slides became part of the fine photographic collection of the area, a collection which helped influence the ratepayers of the R.M. of Paynton to sell the land for a sanctuary in 1984.

Hans also helped start a bluebird trail in the Marsden-Neilburg area and was happy to assist anyone studying wildlife, for instance in the recording of nesting sites of the more rare birds.

Hans had worked hard on his farm and on selling it to his nephew in 1978, began to travel extensively, always with the intent of seeing wildlife. Hans was not merely an observer. Since his basic education had been sound and because he was well read, he could write good letters to newspapers, and clear articles. His belief was that wild creatures should have space and should generally be left undisturbed. Hayo and his wife Marianne maintain wildlife habitat on the farm Hans knew for so long.

Unassuming, but outspoken and forthright, easily moving in all strata of society, Hans de Vogel had his own standards and special personality.

His headstone has etched upon it ducks in flight. The name “de Vogel” means “the bird” and all his life Hans showed his concern for them, for all creatures and the habitat in which they exist. He was posthumously made a Fellow of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, his death occurring just 4 days before he was to receive that honour.



*Pelicans at Manitou Lake H. Heeroma*