
LETTERS

OWLS

Last spring I reported having observed a Screech Owl on our farm near Southey, Saskatchewan (Nature Notes from Southey, *Blue Jay* 43(3):201). On 16 December 1985 about 11:00 a.m., we found an owl perched on top of a birchhouse in the corner of our back yard in Southey. The house is on top of a post about 12 ft. high. It was watching for a meal, I suppose, in the field adjacent to our yard and it sat there for quite some time. I was able to get a good look at it from our window and did take a picture of it. The vertical bars on its upper breast and the horizontal bars on its underparts and the lack of ear tufts convinced me that it was a Barred Owl. Why was it so far away from its usual habitat of wooded ravines? I believe this owl is also scarce and usually found in the northeast part of the Province. — *Gertrude B. Hillier*, Box 351, Southey, Saskatchewan. S0G 4P0

COLLECTING PALAEO- TOLOGICAL SPECIMENS

In 1984 I wrote an article on the legality of fossil collecting in Saskatchewan published in *Blue Jay* (Tokaryk, Tim. 1984. Collecting vertebrate palaeontological specimens in Saskatchewan. *Blue Jay* 42(2):75-76, and Tokaryk, Tim. 1985. Correction to collecting vertebrate palaeontological specimens in Saskatchewan. *Blue Jay* 43(2):127). Since then I have received some comments about the article which I would like to clarify.

Near the end of the article, I used the word 'pillaged' in reference to the collecting of fossils in Canada by foreign institutions after the turn of the century. I

regret using this word because if it were not for the American museums taking interest in our fossil beds, it might have been much longer before we realised the potential of collecting fossils, mainly in western Canada.

The point I was trying to make was that I, personally, felt that it had taken the Canadian government too long to realise this potential.

I apologise to everyone I might have offended, especially my American colleagues. — *Tim T. Tokaryk*, Earth Sciences Program, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina, Saskatchewan. S4P 3V7

HUMMINGBIRDS — SAPSUCKERS

This photograph was taken a matter of weeks before the September 1985 *Blue Jay* arrived with an article on cooperation between sapsuckers and hummingbirds. During the summer my firm was involved in a highway surfacing project north of Maidstone, Saskatchewan. We had a site trailer set up in the shelterbelt-surrounded yard of the C & S Groceries about 20 km north of town. Several times in late August I was there for the day and noticed both species outside the trailer window, and on 15 August 1985, I snapped the picture which shows the sapsucker on the tree and the hummingbird buzzing in front of it. The sapsucker apparently visited the trees in the shelterbelt daily to eat bugs stuck to the sap, and the hummingbird followed it around, feeding on the fresh sap. The hummingbird would move in close to the sapsucker for a minute or two, feed, then retreat to a perch for a few minutes. The



sapsucker would methodically move up the tree and every few minutes the hummingbird would return for more. I assume this behaviour is most prevalent in the fall when other food sources for the hummingbird have ceased flowering. — *Christopher J. Escott, 271 Sylvian Way, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7H 5G1*

ALBINOS AND MEMORIES OF GROUSE

On 2 July 1984 I rode with David Watson of Swift Current to Stewart Valley and Riverhurst to see some fine Saskatchewan scenery. We headed south on #644 as we wished to see all the wildlife we could. After travelling southward several miles and coming to the edge of a wide hollow, we saw a car parked by the roadside. The occupants were watching three fox kits romping around the mouth of their distant hillside den.

We saw one glistening albino with the two normal red ones; we were told that there had been another which was not so white, but it seemed timid and went below. I kept the sighting quiet then, for I feared if it were seen in print, many would try to see and shoot the albinos. I hope they have survived and by doing so give others the pleasure of the rare sighting we had.

Years ago, I saw a black and white, crow-shaped bird south of Birtle. It was one of an early spring flock of crows, and although colored a lot like a magpie, it acted very much like a crow. I have also seen a partial albino robin near my home in east end Brandon, and my late wife also saw it.

I am now in my 75th year of birdwatching, and as a lad not yet 5 (years old) I had the rare experience of poking bread crumbs from the ventilator holes where both Sharp-tailed and Pinnated grouse scrambled for them. My two older sisters and I got our fingers pecked if we were too slow withdrawing them. — *Harold E. Watson, 220 Franklin Street, Brandon, Manitoba. R7A 5P3*

BIRD FEEDERS

Just as the eastern sky begins to show a rosy glow, there is a distant stirring of chirps and softly whistled trills in the large poplar bluff around our house. Soon the flocks come closer, and the birds, one by one, glide or flutter down to the feeding trays located in front of the living-room windows. Lady Luck smiled our way this year — we've never hosted so many feathered guests before. Good sized flocks of Evening Grosbeaks, Pine Grosbeaks and redpolls come regularly to the feeders, keeping the resident birds company.

For a number of years, one of our most pleasant winter activities has been feeding and watching the birds at the feeding stations. Here, in the parkland area about 25 mi. north of the Qu'Appelle Valley, usually about a dozen chickadees and a pair each of Downy and Hairy woodpeckers seem to be yard residents the year around. These birds eagerly accept offerings of suet and their antics and cheery calls brighten many a frost day. The suet is hung from a tree branch so house sparrows can't steal it.