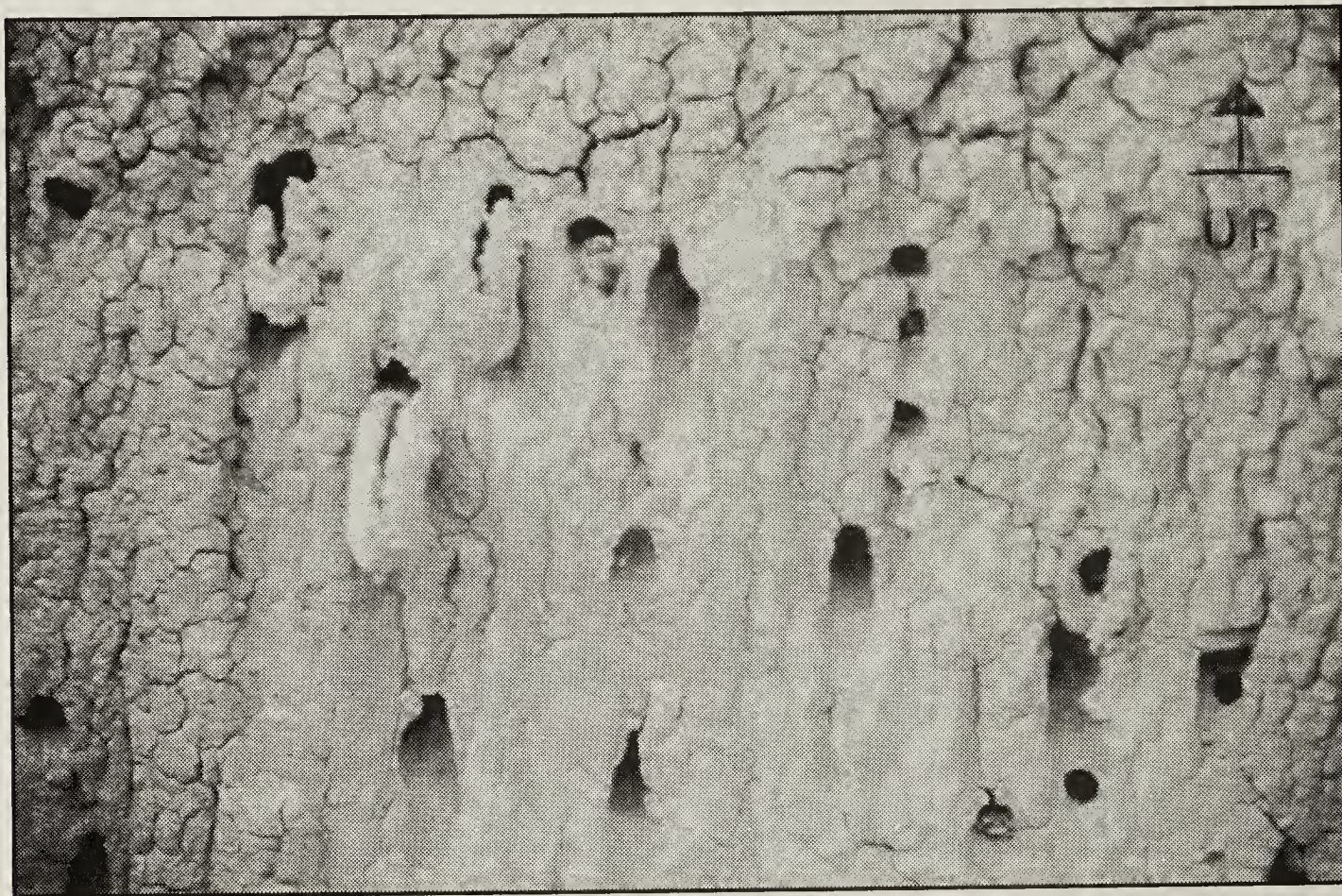

MYSTERY PHOTO

JUNE 2002 MYSTERY PHOTO



The photograph shows a number of holes about $\frac{3}{16}$ of an inch in diameter in a clay bank at Claybank SK on 15 August 1998. Some had pendant, tubelike projections of dried mud, about $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1.5 inches long. Access to the hole in the bank was from the lower end of this tube. Who made these holes and what are they for?

Photograph and text submitted by Paul Geraghty.

ANSWER to the March 2002 MYSTERY PHOTO



Although several people wrote that they thought that the mystery object was possibly a slime mold, it is actually a congregation of FUNGUS GNAT LARVAE (Order Diptera, family Mycetophilidae). Each larva is about 1 cm long, legless and transparent except for a black spot at the head end. The migratory columns are called "snake worms" on account of their appearance and movement, but the reason for the aggregation is not known. The larvae feed on fungi and decaying vegetable material. Some aggregations have been reported to be 4-5

m long, 5 cm wide and 1 cm thick! The adult flies often resemble gnats or midges, and occupy dark, damp places. Their hind legs are adapted for leaping and some species simulate death when disturbed. Thanks to entomologist Dr. Bob Byers for identifying the larvae. Further information was obtained from Imm's General Textbook of Entomology.

The editors would like to thank Teresa Dolman for this mystery photo and preparing the answer for the March issue.



WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?



Photo courtesy of Weaselhead Preservation Society, Calgary

I think the photo is a typical accipiter/pileated encounter. Pileated Woodpeckers escape raptors, especially accipiters, by dodging around a tree trunk. The predator can't fly around the tree as fast as the woodpecker can hitch around, so once the

woodpecker is on the tree and aware of its attacker there isn't much chance it will be captured. In fact, the woodpecker often becomes quite noisy and aggressive, and may attempt to drive the raptor away. There are published examples of pileateds successfully routing Sharp-Shinned and Cooper's hawks. During my research on Pileated Woodpeckers, I and my field assistants were fortunate to observe several interactions with raptors. On one occasion a Northern Goshawk was seen chasing a flying pileated, which barely got to a tree trunk ahead of the hawk. Once on the tree, the woodpecker easily dodged the goshawk, which soon gave up and left the scene. However, the predators win their share of encounters, as goshawks were responsible for most pileated deaths in the study. It's likely that in most of those cases the hawk surprised the woodpecker, which never knew it was being attacked until it was too late.

- Rick Bonar, Weldwood of Canada Ltd., 760 Switzer Drive, Hinton, AB T7V 1V7



Dragonflies resting out of the sun on a cliff bank at Onefour, Alberta on July 31, 2000.

Dan L. Johnson