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# EDITOR'S MESSAGE

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By the time you get this issue it will be Spring!

The editor's job continues to have its ups and downs. The December issue went to print on 19 December 1997, yet my copy arrived at my home on 3 February 1998 (by then we were well into organizing this issue!). On the up side, the New Year has brought some pleasant surprises. I have been very pleased to get several interesting articles at the beginning of the year. Please keep them coming. Continuing on the upside I received Dan Brunton's article on Salamanders and re-established contact with this old friend. In searching for some information in past issues I discovered Dan had been a contributor to *Blue Jay* for many years. Bernie Gollop, besides being a past editor, has also been a stalwart contributor (as well as an occasional critic to keep us on our toes!). Keep it up Bernie.

When my December issue arrived I realized that the fawn in Ron Jensen's photograph was hidden by the mailing label. If you have not been able to find the second, "hidden," deer look under the label.

I was very disturbed to get a report of the status of British breeding birds. The most astonishing part is that Starlings, a bird that was so abundant it was regarded as a pest by all but the most avid bird lover, has slumped by 45%. The numbers of other birds that were also very common when I started birding in my youth have fallen too. For example, the Tree Sparrow, is down by 95%, the Skylark by 62%, the Reed Bunting by 60% and the Song Thrush by 56%. These were all birds that I regarded as a normal part of my daily life. Many other familiar birds such as Blackbird, Yellowhammer, Pied Wagtail and Greenfinch have all declined by 25% to 50%. What is equally disappointing is that since I left Britain the RSPB (Royal Society for Protection of Birds) has made major strides in protecting habitat and developing both legislation and public attitude for the betterment of wildlife. Recently, the RSPB reached a million members, a symbol of public concern and care. Yet sadly they are seeing similar declines as we are with our prairie birds. The alarm bells are ringing; will the politicians and community leaders take note?

The ever vigilant Stuart Houston discovered that I had omitted the price (\$12.00) of *Birds of Besnard Lake* in *Blue Jay* 54(4): 226-27, in the review by Tony Diamond. I am still waiting for someone to spot the fish dish error! You will know it when you see it. The *Blue Jay* is proof read at least five times before it is printed. The fourth review was done by Agnes Bray of Canadian Plains Research Center. Despite our best efforts Agnes could always find a number of obscure errors. She recently took her much-deserved retirement so will be greatly missed. Please join me in wishing her well and extending our sincere thanks for her important contribution to our journal.

Sincerely,

Roy D. John