

Our natality rate was not as high as it had been in the 2 previous years. A large number of infertile eggs was the major factor. Two houses had their roofs blown or knocked off during a very cool and wet week in late June which caused the deaths of all the nestlings within. One box was also ripped from its fence post and thrown in a river, drowning six fully developed young.

This is the second year in which we had four duck boxes along the North Saskatchewan River. With no success in the boxes placed low on the trees last year, we raised them to a height of 25-30 feet. These attracted three Common Goldeneye pairs which had 26 eggs with 23 hatching. We also had a pair of American Kestrels with five young, four of which survived to leave the nest.

If there are any people interested in setting up bird houses or participating in the Prince Albert Birdhouse Trail, they are welcome to contact either Kevin or me.

ANOTHER TAME RUFFED GROUSE

BRIAN L. BJARNASON, 13115 14 Ave., Surrey, B.C. V4A 1G6.

Until the arrival of the June issue of *Blue Jay* we felt that we were acquainted with the only Ruffed Grouse that was in need of psychiatric help. We have a cottage on Saturna Island, British Columbia, in the Strait of Georgia and experiences very similar to those of the Forsbergs.

It may have started the summer of 1975 when the two fellows who framed our cottage told us about a grouse who brought her brood down to the driveway on a number of oc-

casions. They described her behavior as bringing them out on display. A couple of times they deliberately frightened her off as they were concerned about inadvertently hurting one of the chicks. Unfortunately, we did not make it over to the island during the short period of their performances.

Late the next spring I was at the cottage by myself for a few days making a start on the exterior siding. On the first day a male Ruffed Grouse appeared out of the bush and started following me around. By early afternoon he was getting in so close that once I almost stepped on him when I moved back suddenly. During the next couple of days he became a bit of a nuisance as I was swinging around cedar boards of up to 22 ft. in length and I was having to check both ends before moving each one. When standing still while measuring, marking and sawing he would come within a foot or so and would also be around the foot of the ladder whenever I went up. I worked for about 12 hours a day and he was present for most of the time — appearing out of the bush up the hill within minutes of my coming out in the morning. He would disappear for less than an hour a couple of times a day, presumably to feed, as we never fed him and he very seldom was seen to take the odd bit of vegetation around the cottage.

One day I went into the cottage and left the door open behind me. While in the kitchen getting a drink of water, I heard a scratching noise and looking around the corner saw him standing in the middle of the living room floor. As I was afraid of spooking him and winding up with a dead bird and a broken window, I went out the kitchen window. When he saw me later he immediately came out of the door and took up his usual position a couple of

feet behind me.

For that summer and the next he would meet the car at the bottom of the hill and run behind it up the driveway to the cottage. With just my wife and I present he would get to within 2 or 3 feet of us, with more people around he would draw progressively further away. A few times he allowed me to lift him on my outstretched hand but was more relaxed when he walked up my arm to my shoulder, occasionally jumping up onto my head.

When arriving at the cottage very early the third spring he did not appear as we rolled down the hill. To this time we have not seen either him or any Ruffed Grouse in the area.

UNSEEMLY BEHAVIOR OF HOUSE SPARROW

FRANK BRAZIER, 2657 Cameron Street, Regina, Saskatchewan, S4T 2W5.

During the afternoon of 12 May 1980, I saw a very young House Sparrow sitting quietly on a tree limb close to the main trunk. Its bright yellow gape indicated that it had left the nest only recently. I was sitting no more than 10 feet from it at eye-level, and had a three-quarter profile view; its head was to my left. Its sex, of course, was unknown.

While I watched a male House Sparrow, in full breeding plumage, flew to the branch about a foot above the baby, paused for a few seconds, then dropped on to the back of the youngster and performed, briefly, what appeared to be an attempt at copulation. It then resumed its perch above the baby bird.

A few seconds later the mother

sparrow arrived and fed her young one, then flew away. The male also departed.

At no time did any of the participants appear to be excited. The baby bird did not make any of the characteristic food-begging gestures which usually include wing-shivering. This latter act is imitated, by the female House Sparrow when she solicits the male's copulatory attentions. Neither did the baby utter the begging food calls which the female, at mating time, also imitates. If the baby had confused the male by giving the begging food calls or the wing-shivering display his reaction would have been understandable as the plumage difference between the young and the female is slight, and he was perched above and slightly behind the baby and perhaps could not see the yellow gape.

I could find nothing in Summers-Smith remotely approaching the male's inexplicable act.¹

¹SUMMERS-SMITH, J. D. 1963. The House Sparrow, Collins, London.

1980 SASKATCHEWAN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

From Saturday, 20 December 1980 to Monday, 4 January 1981, inclusive. Count area should be a circle, 24 km (15 miles) in diameter. This year, bird count forms will be sent to all compilers who submitted counts for Christmas 1979. Anyone else who wishes to send in a count, please write for a form to: Mrs. Mary I. Houston, 863 University Drive, Saskatoon, Sask. S7N 0J8.

Reports should be sent as soon as possible after the count (by January 15, 1981 at the latest) to the above address.