
LETTERS

MUSHROOM CORRESPONDENCE REQUESTED

I would be interested in corresponding with anyone who collects, studies or photographs mushrooms and related fungi in the Prairie Provinces and British Columbia. I have been studying and eating wild mushrooms, mostly in Saskatchewan, for three or four years.

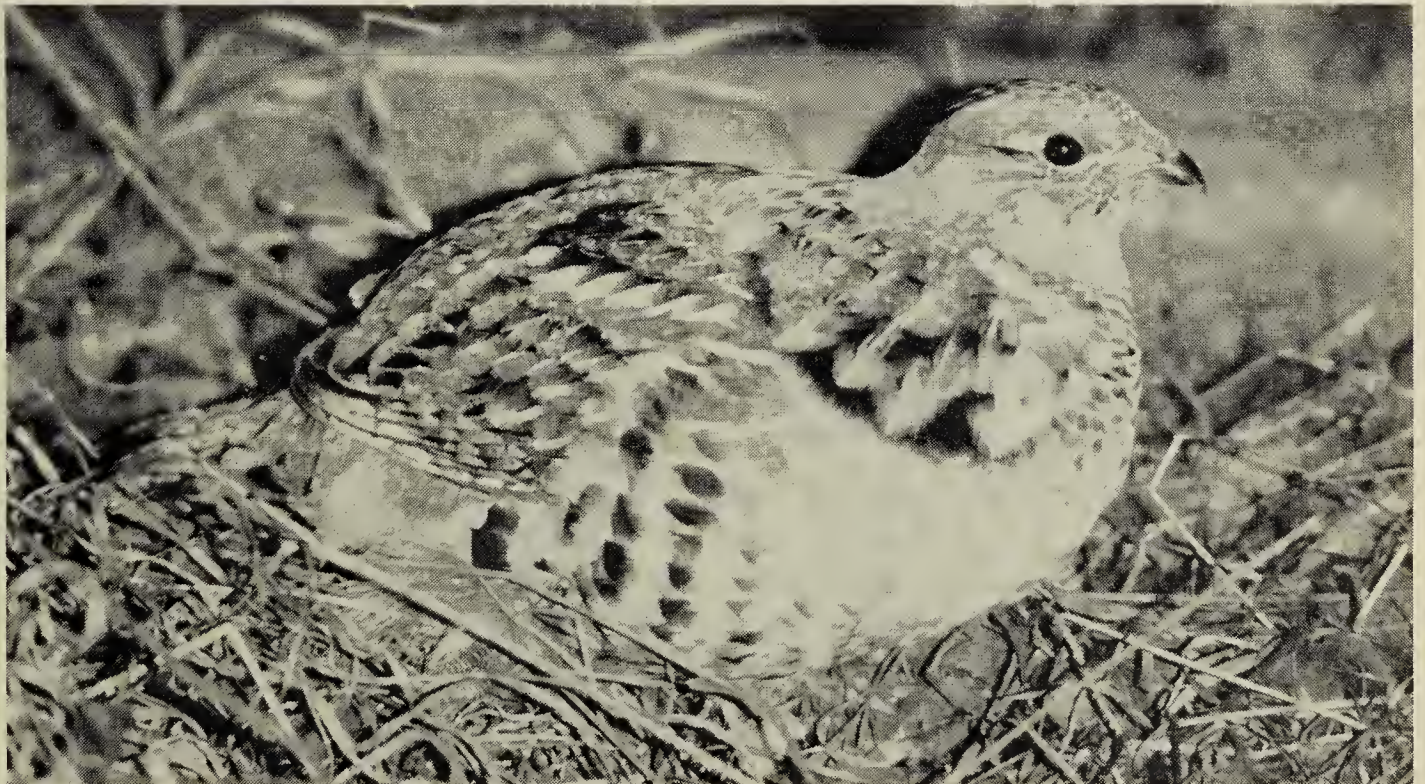
I would like to hear from people with similar interests to compile information on distribution of various species, and also make contacts for field investigations in various parts of the province. If interest seems to warrant, I would be interested in starting an occasional newsletter to be distributed among amateur mycologists. — *Robert Kreba*, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural

History, Wascana Park, Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3V7.

CRAZY GROUSE COMMENT

I was interested to read about other records of Ruffed Grouse crazy flights, as reported by Dennis Fast (*Blue Jay* 37:219-220), and was appreciative of his attracting some dozen of these birds at a time to his winter feeding station.

Since his report was written "in response" to my earlier one (*Blue Jay* 36:193-199), I wish to correct what may create a misleading impression for the reader, particularly if he or she had not read my article. While I did speculate that grouse may mistake a white house for sky, the intent of this speculation was not to show that this was so but rather to indicate



Ruffed Grouse

Fred W. Lahrman and Lorne Scott

that it was *not*. The speculation was originally made elsewhere (J. A. Knight. 1947. Ruffed Grouse. Alfred A. Knopf, New York), as stated in a still earlier article of mine (*Blue Jay* 29:121-124).

I am pleased that Fast's observations of the Ruffed Grouse's flying ability corroborate the conclusion that I had reached: that its limited manoeuvrability (coupled with impulsive flight habits) is not sufficient for it to cope with man-made (and some other) obstructions. Now that this has been pointed out as a possible explanation, other observers may also look to less exotic reasons than they have in the past in studying this phenomenon.

Since my last article was cited in an American publication (*Wildlife Review* 174:154), I have received requests for it from biology departments or wildlife research stations in Vermont, Wisconsin, South Dakota, Oregon, West Virginia, Ohio, New Mexico, Alberta, and Ontario, and the requests are still coming in. — *Victor C. Friesen*, Box 65, Rosthern, Saskatchewan S0K 3R0.

MOURNING OWL?

I have a friend about 70 years old who lives on the Thunderchild Indian Reserve, on the west shore of Turtle Lake (north of Livelong). She has loved birds and nature all of her life and I recently introduced her to *Blue Jay*. Her name is Catherine Okanee.

She related the tale (below) last summer on one of my trips to see her. She is very keen to know of myth and legend about birds other than those of the plains Cree. I am familiar with the Coastal Indian belief about owls meaning death if you hear them say your name. Do other readers have other tales?

Here is her story — verbatim:

"It was in April, late in April when I heard the owl. I heard a loud wail almost like a child in trouble. When I got closer to the sound, I realized it came from up high in the trees. Then I saw a big horned owl. It flew away. It was the big grey owl. It had called my name very clearly 'Cath-er-ine. Catherine'.

"Several days later I was in the same area and found the remains of an owl not yet eaten, lying in the grass. (This was along a cut-line for the power.) It was a place where I threw away bits of fish and things for the wild animals to eat.

"I wonder — was it the mate of the bird I saw? Do owls mourn their mates by calling like this? It said my name so clearly".

It is an Indian belief that owls bring bad luck — especially to old people. A young mother will sometimes tell her wakeful child "Hush, don't make a noise or an owl will put you in his ear and fly away".

The owl was not banded. Owls frequently nest within a few hundred feet of her cottage, but no nest was evident in 1979. *Muriel Carlson*, 406 Spruce Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 2N4.

PARTIAL ALBINO EVENING GROSBEAK

On 18 December 1978, while I was living in Sprague, Manitoba, I had a partial albino Evening Grosbeak visit the bird feeder in my backyard. I was able to take a number of photographs, some of which are unclear due to the plastic storm window in my kitchen. The bird returned again on 22 December and was also seen at other feeders around town. The bird seemed to mingle well with the other grosbeaks of normal colouration. The bird had a pinkish yellow bill, dark eyes and tinges of yellow around its head and back. — *Paul J. Krahn*, Manitoba Dept. Natural Resources, The Pas, Manitoba.