
JUNIOR NATURALISTS

CYPRESS HILLS BIRDS

This month, I received a letter about a bird count by a young contributor:

On 17 December 1982 I, my brother Guy and Wayne Renaud left our home in Biggar for Maple Creek to do the Fort Walsh/Cypress Hills Christmas Bird Count the next day. On the trip down we saw a Rough-legged Hawk at Tompkins, a Prairie Falcon at Maple Creek, a Merlin at Elrose and 10 Snowy Owls, all of them between Biggar and Swift Current.

When we got to Maple Creek we went straight to Cypress Hills, (30 miles south

of Maple Creek) to see if there were any birds around. We went to three ranches and saw a Rough-legged Hawk, two Golden Eagles, 30 Ring-necked Pheasants, four Hairy Woodpeckers and Wayne saw ten Tree Sparrows and a Harris' Sparrow; then we spent the night in Maple Creek. The next morning we all got up early and 13 of us set out for Cypress Hills at 07:30 a.m.; it was really windy but it wasn't cold. We went through the morning and didn't find any Common Snipe as our group usually does but we did see one Golden Eagle, one Prairie Falcon, ten Ring-necked Pheasants, one Northern Shrike, one Great-Horned Owl, one Common



Cypress Hills near Fort Walsh

Chris Adam

Raven, five Common Redpolls, ten Tree Sparrows, one Harris' Sparrow, and one Hairy Woodpecker and we also saw about 20 White-tailed Deer and an old Heron Colony. At noon, all the groups met at the Fort Walsh visitors' center to exchange information and eat lunch.

In the afternoon we went back to the ranches and saw two Downy Woodpeckers, a few Black-capped Chickadees, six Rock Doves which are rare for the area and two Mallards on Battle Creek. And my brother almost got sprayed by a skunk in a bale stack.

At about 05:00 p.m. we all met at the trailer dropoff near Fort Walsh and the total number of species was tallied to be 31, not including one Buteo species and two Woodpecker species. Some birds the other groups saw were six Common Ravens, one Common Snipe, one White-breasted Nuthatch, one Ruffed Grouse, three Pine Siskins, lots of Red Crossbills and about 80 Red-breasted Nuthatches. — *Robert Wapple*, Grade 9, Box 1153, Biggar, Saskatchewan. S0K 0N0

YOTTA

Do you have trouble identifying waterfowl, other birds, mammals? Here is a game that can help. It also is lots of fun!

Six on the black die and three on the white . . . Let's find the right square . . .

Maybe I should start at the beginning. We have one stack of cards about mammals (more than the number of squares) and each square is covered with a mammal photo card. Six black and three white is a Black Bear. If we play this game at beginner's level, I just take

WHITE DIE

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1						
B L A C K						
2						
3						
D I E						
4						
5						
6						

Yotta Board

the card and read the names (common and scientific) and the information about the animal (written on the back of the card) to the other players. The first one to get 7 cards wins!

The game can be played at other levels too: intermediate, when one has to name the animal correctly to get the card, and expert, when one needs to name the animal and add some information about it before being allowed to collect the card. Of course, the one who throws the dice is the one who has a chance at the card, and a double gives you a second turn.

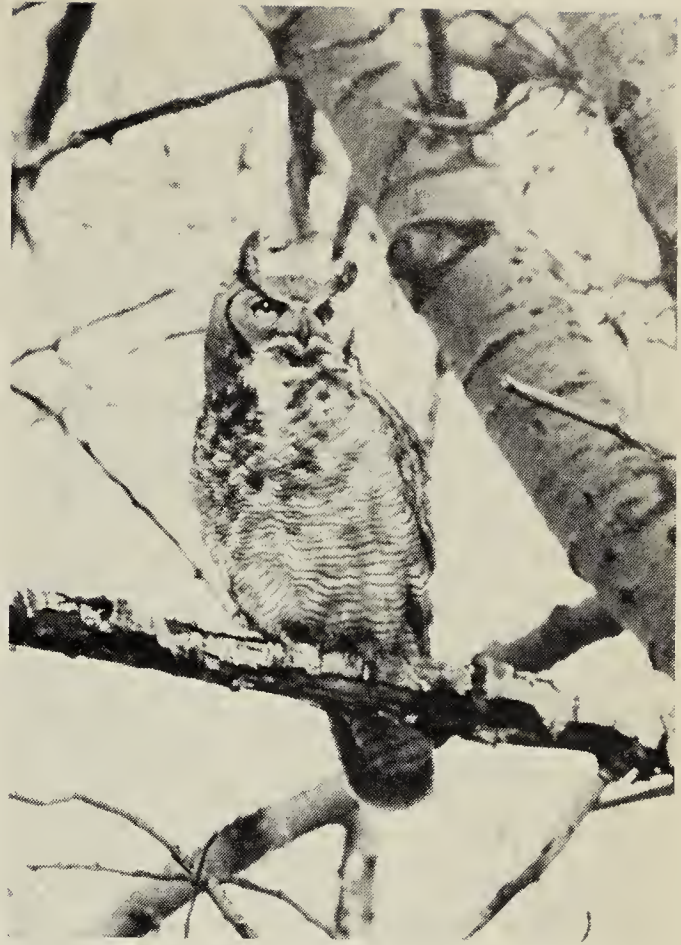
The game also comes with 2 other sets of cards: one on birds and one more specifically on waterfowl. Of course, there would need to be too many cards to cover all the North American species in each group so each series covers only a good sample, a lot is relevant to Saskatchewan. Out of the 88 bird cards, 58 represent Saskatchewan species, out of 54 waterfowl cards, 37 are applicable to Saskatchewan, and 33 out of 63 mammal cards.

The information is encyclopedia style but most of it is adequate, although it could certainly be more interesting. The makers of the game sometimes forget

that Canada exists by only giving the United States distribution on some of the species also present in Canada. If one plays the expert level as it should be played, one cannot get a card if all the information in the back is not given exactly. I think that this could be changed to accommodate extra information or substitute more interesting data. I understand that there should be more card series available in the future such as stars and the solar system.

I have not heard that this game is distributed in Canada yet, but the American address is — *YOTTA, INC., 417 Denny Way, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A. 98109.*

The price of the board with one box of cards is \$7.00 U.S.; extra cards are \$3.50 U.S. per box. I think one would also have to pay some import taxes on it.



Great Horned Owl

K. Morck

WHO . . . WHO . . . KNOWS . . . ANSWERS

Tamara referred to Great-Horned Owls who, because of their large size and nesting close to humans are the most noticed owls in the southern prairies.

Do owls build their own nests? Tamara mentions how dilapidated the nest is. If the birds had built it themselves, would they let it fall in such disrepair? Most owls just use old crow and hawk nests.

Are the owls useful? Tamara mentions the corn getting eaten by other birds if the owls are not present. It is true that a lot of birds have developed a "freeze-up" reaction when the shape of a winged predator gets in their field of vision. I suppose that if it happens too

often, they may just try to find a more suitable area to live or feed in. The Great Horned Owl's diet consists mainly of small mammals such as hares, rats, pocket gophers, and waterfowl such as the American Coot and ducks.

The two species of owls nesting in the Prairie habitat are the Burrowing Owl and the Short-eared Owl. Maybe you could try to find out more about them. The other three species nesting in bluffs, farmyards, coulees are the Saw-Whet Owl, the Screech Owl and the Long-eared Owl.

Have a good spring and don't forget to drop me a line about what you are doing in natural history at school, at home or wherever! Or maybe you have questions that you would like answered. That's what I am here for! — *Paule B. Hjertaas, 919 Cook Cres., Regina, Saskatchewan. S4X 2L9*