

INFORMATION PLEASE.

In an article in the Leader Post in August, Mrs. Elizabeth Flock commented on the great influx of Short-eared Owls (Marsh Owls), and suggested that this might be due to an abundance of mice brought about by the large amount of unthreshed grain that was left in the open last winter. It will be interesting to note if Short-eared Owls stay on longer than usual this fall, or even remain for the winter, as they sometimes do when mice are abundant. Last winter F. Roy, Tullis, recorded one Short-eared Owl in the Christmas Bird Census.

What is the situation this fall with regard to prairie chicken (Sharp-tailed Grouse)? Last year the majority of our members reported that a marked decline in numbers had taken place.

How well known is our namesake the Blue Jay? We had imagined that it was a familiar bird, at least in Eastern Saskatchewan, wherever there were trees, so it came as quite a shock to learn that Mrs. Marion Nixon, Wauchope, has never seen one, especially as Blue Jays are reported in Mitchell's Catalogue of Saskatchewan Birds as nesting in the Moose Mountains. (By the way, it will be remembered that we really chose our title because "Sammy Jay" was the "roving reporter" of the Burgess Bedtime Stories world).

Have any members ever come across an instance of the coyote, -the prairie wolf, preying on deer in winter time? Apparently coyotes will sometimes attack deer when the latter are in a weakened condition at the end of a severe cold spell.

"In the nature column of an English newspaper received recently, there was an account of the Great Spotted Woodpecker (close relative of the American Hairy) making a new hole to serve as a winter shelter. Has anyone seen either our own Hairy, or the Downy, excavating a new hole in the fall of the year? Very little is known, in fact, of where birds pass the long cold nights of winter. Chickadees will all pile into one small cavity, but where does "Sammy" Blue Jay spend the hours of darkness? Has anyone ever come across a roost of Bohemian Waxwings?"

We repeat this query, which appeared in the second issue of our bulletin, as the question of winter-shelters of birds is an interesting and largely unsolved problem of bird study.

In answer to our query regarding the decrease in the number of Cliff Swallows throughout the west, the general opinion seems to be that the common house sparrow is largely to blame, the latter not only destroy the eggs and young of the Cliff Swallow, but also take possession of the nests.

Last summer Miss Ethel Lloyd came across an actual instance of this in the Qu'Appelle Valley. Under the bridge at the east end of Katepwe Lake she located a nesting colony of Cliff Swallows and, "since the water was only flowing through the center span, it was possible to investigate the two spans on either side." She reports that "plastered against the overhead beams were numerous bottle-shaped mud nests of these swallows. Occasionally one caught a glimpse of the wee face of a young bird at the entrance to the nest. Parents fed the hungry young and chattered quietly back and forth before darting away. And then, much to our surprise, along came a noisy English sparrow with a grub in his bill. He flew directly to a perfect gourd-like nest, wriggled in through the crooked neck and disposed of the grub. It was the first time that members of our party had known that the pesky House Sparrow would evict a Cliff Swallow and take possession of the nest."