

Tanagers (continued)

Scarlet Tanager. Reported from Nipawin and the Assiniboine Valley near Togo.

Lark Sparrow Colony found on hills north of the San, Fort Qu'Appelle, by E. M. Callin. This would appear to be the most northerly point reached by this handsome sparrow. Formerly confined to S.W. part of the province, but now rapidly extending its range.

Smith's Longspur Seen Sept. 1, by W. Niven, Sheho. Mr. Niven knows this rarely recorded longspur as a spring and fall migrant on the fields of his farm, six miles out of Sheho.

PLANT AND INSECT NOTES

The late spring of 1945 had, of course, a marked effect on plant life. Wild Roses were flowers of July rather than June, and other flowers of early summer overlapped with the first asters and sun-flowers. Each family of butterflies was also said to have come on the wing about two weeks later than usual. Frosts in early June caught the Saskatoon blossoms in most places. Most abundant fruit in eastern Saskatchewan was the wild raspberry which now seems to have recovered from the effects of the dry years.

It was good to hear of yellow Lady's Slippers appearing in many places in greater abundance than for many seasons. Mrs. E. B. Flock while holidaying at Rocanville reported finding Lady's Slipper plants a foot or more high and bearing huge blossoms growing in clumps of ten or twelve in the tall grass along the railroad right of way. To her surprise she learned that the right of way is burned over every year and yet no harm seems to come to the orchids. "And, best of all, they seem to be safe from overpicking," she wrote.

Two other charming native wild flowers, the Shooting Star, and the Mealy or Bird's-eye Primrose also bloomed in great profusion in many meadows this summer.

In the north country mosquitoes apparently reached an "all time high" for ferocity. We doubted some of the tales seeping out, but when M. G. Street, Nipawin, stated that mosquitoes had even stopped him "birding", we knew they must be really bad!

A Wasp Episode

On the Labour Day week-end, while hunting arrow heads on a sand blow along the Assiniboine, we watched one of the digger wasps hard at work.

When first noted the wasp had just begun to excavate a vertical shaft in the fine loose sand. The insect, black and scarcely half an inch in length, was rapidly digging similar to the manner in which a dog digs for a gopher. Working from one spot, the sand flew from between her front feet and was tossed fully three or four inches behind her, over the edge of the hole. As the incline became more steep and sand tumbled to the bottom of the hole, she would run backwards up the side and begin a new trough about an inch from the rim.

When the funnel-shaped hole was about three inches deep, and approximately the same in diameter, the wasp uncovered a smooth green caterpillar, still apparently alive.

Turning the larva over on its side the wasp grasped it by the head and pressed her abdomen against its thorax. We could not observe whether the wasp was administering a sting to paralyse the larva or was depositing an egg. This action was repeated several times.

Although the caterpillar was many times her own weight and over an inch in length, the wasp dragged it out of the hole. Then she got astride it! The wasp reminded us of a small plane with an oversized bomb load, the caterpillar being almost three times her own length.

By some unseen method the larva was underslung to the body of the wasp - probably being held in her strong mandibles. Running on all legs the wasp struck out rapidly across the sand blow. Whenever she met an obstruction in her path she would drop the caterpillar and scout the possibilities of an easier route. At every ten or fifteen feet she would stop for a rest remaining astride the larva.

After watching the wasp carry her heavy load for forty or fifty feet we lost sight of her when she ran into a clump of grass.

Cliff Shaw.

FUR NOT FEATHERS

Bats We received some interesting records of bats this year. Earliest "first seen" date was supplied by J. Hubbard Jr., Grenfell, who saw a bat flying around May 3 and 10 (our previous early record was May 7). On June 26 an injured Hoary Bat was picked up in a Yorkton garden. This bat was forwarded to Dr. Anderson of the National Museum, Ottawa, for positive identification. A second Hoary Bat was found lying stunned on the sidewalk a week or so later. This animal recovered consciousness and was subsequently liberated.

The Hoary Bat is a woodland species and the largest bat found in Canada. Dr. Anderson stated in his reply "It is always considered to be rather rare, but that may be because it flies high and usually hangs up in a thick clump of leaves in a tree and apparently does not go into houses and caves as many of the smaller bats do. A bat might get a broken wing in a number of ways. As you suggested, a cat might have caught this particular bat and then not relished the musky odour!"

In the middle of July two bats were seen for several days hanging high up in a boulevard maple in Yorkton. One was finally captured and found to be a Silver-haired Bat. It was placed by Mrs. Priestly on a small twig in a sealer so that the neighborhood children could have a chance to see it. Then at dusk it was transferred to the branch of a maple tree. After a little while it darted up into the air, circled round the yard as if getting its bearing, and then vanished. Two other Silver-haired Bats were picked up in downtown Yorkton, August 22, after a sudden heavy shower around 8 A.M.