

## SUMMER OBSERVATIONS

by  
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I had always thought that Purple Martins favored nesting sites well up in the air. However this spring I found a pair had built in a crude bird house placed on a fence at the back of a house about three feet from the ground. Although the nest seemed quite finished when I saw it, a pair of wrens afterwards drove the big birds away and took possession. A couple of years ago I found a great number of Martins in a small village east of Winnipeg which had nested not ten feet from the ground. Several nests had been placed on a board under the eave of a store on the main street. The parent birds fed their young without paying the least attention to me, though I could have reached up and touched them. Many merchants had made holes in the false fronts of their one story stores for the accomodation of the birds.

One evening about five o'clock I set up a three compartment Martin house on a pole 20 feet from the ground. Next morning a pair had taken possession of one of the rooms. Many other Martins looked the place over but the other two nesting sites remained unoccupied.

Almost every day the nesting pair had visitors and their conversations was a delight to hear. A week or so after the young hatched I noticed about 15 very excited Martins flying around our yard. Five or six at a time lit the Martins' house, all of them chattering incessantly. Dozens of times they tried to look into the nest but were driven off by the parent birds. It just seemed as though they were relatives of the family and having heard of the new arrivals were determined to have a peek at them. This went on for a day or so and then the visitors left, much, I think to the relief of the distracted parent.

We usually expect to see Warblers flitting about in trees but this spring during migration I found great numbers of them at a marsh a few miles from Melfort. However this is not uncommon during migration if the weather is cool and the air is warmer near water. There must have been a hundred Myrtle Warblers flying about the rushes where they appeared to find an abundance of insects. Near by were many Palm Warblers perching on the wire fence and lighting on the road where they seemed to be finding some food much to their taste. These pretty little fellows came right up beside the car entirely unafraid when we poked our heads out of the windows to look at them. Near the marsh I also spied a Black-throated Green Warbler and a Northern Water Thrush. Many birds of the last mentioned species visited our garden in late summer and for weeks delighted us with their very distinctive calls.

In the past issue of the "Blue Jay" mention was made of finding a Marsh hawks nest on an old muskrat house. Some years ago I found a similarly situated nest in a large slough near Melville. This nest contained six young birds, the eldest quite a big fellow able to sit up and snap his bill at me and the youngest just half out of the egg. Hawks begin incubation as soon as the first egg is laid and I considered myself very fortunate in finding a nest with the young ranging from the tiny chick just emerging from the shell to one six days old. Not more than twenty feet away a little Scaup duck sat on a nest built on some rushes where the water was only about an inch deep. Scaups build as near to water as they can, but this was the first nest I ever found actually over water.

## BOOKS

CANADIAN DINOSAURS by C.M. Sternberg. Here is an account of the various forms of Canadian dinosaurs which roamed the continent many millions of years ago. It is presented in a style designed to interest the general public and is illustrated with many plates and figures. Send 10 cents to the Department of Mines and Resources, Ottawa.

BIRDS AND ANIMALS OF THE ROCKIES by Kerry Wood (H.R. Larson Publishing Co., Saskatoon, Sask., 157 pages \$1.50)

A valuable contribution to the natural history literature of Western Canada. This book will be of interest to any visitor to the rockies, whether a newcomer or a veteran. Personal observations and sidelights makes it an informative and readable little book, quite worthy of a place in your library.