

IN HIDDEN VALLEY

R. C. MacKenzie

The Regina Natural History Society maintains a wild life sanctuary in the Qu'Appelle Valley, about twenty-four miles north-west of Regina City. It comprises a half section of land and this area includes a long narrow valley, tributary to the main valley of the Qu'Appelle River, and all or part of five connecting coulees.

It is a surprising place of bare steep hills and deep wooded ravines. The high ridges of the hills are fully three hundred feet above the valley bottoms, and the windswept, boulder-studded, grassy uplands offer contrast to the shady woods and thick undergrowth of the deep coulees. The poplar, Ash, Elm, and Manitoba Maple woods, that fill these ravines, are sanctuary and home to every variety of bird in this region. White tailed deer live there, as do porcupines and badgers. There are ground-squirrels and chipmunks aplenty, and a multitude of rabbits. Nor are the predators absent, where the larder is so well filled. The Great Horned Owls nest there, as do many of their smaller cousins, and there are crows, magpies, hawks, weasels, and coyotes.

One warm sunny evening in late summer, I set up my tent in this unfrequented retreat. My camp was on a small flat area of bottom-land in a deep ravine with the hills rising in sheer heights above. The place was deeply shaded by poplar, ash, and maple trees. As I kindled a fire and prepared my supper, a ground-squirrel watched me inquisitively from a nearby brushpile, a chipmunk chattered loudly in a tree above, and crows and magpies, flying low, noisily voiced their disapproval of this intrusion into their domain.

Later that evening I climbed the trail up the west hill to the place of teepee rings on the highest point of the ridge. Rabbits were stirring in the sheltering dusk as I passed through the cherry thickets and when I gained the cactus-edged hill-top trail distant thunder roared, and I could see storm clouds streaked with lightening approaching from the south and east. I looked across the velvety shadow-filled ravines, then to the wide Qu'Appelle valley north and west and to the lights of Craven town blinking in the far distance.

It rained heavily in the night, but morning dawned clear and bright with every rain-gemmed leaf and twig sparkling in the warm sunlight. There was music of many small birds in bush and tree, the coo-ing of wood pigeons, and as the sun rose higher, the sweet music of meadow larks on the hill above. Gathering wood in a thicket I came upon a bush partridge with young, the old bird flew almost into my face to draw my attention away from her babies, the young ones scattering out of sight in the thick bush. Half an hour later, following a deer trail up a side coulee, I came upon a fine buck with 'fullpointed' horns. He turned with remarkable speed, and with a great crashing of branches disappeared into the undergrowth. Minutes later I saw a doe and a beautiful little spotted fawn, catching a momentary glimpse of them as they fled through the thick woods, covering fallen trees and tangled brush with long, graceful leaps. Climbing the side of the ravine where black poplar and birds woods cast barred shadows on the moss covered ground I passed through thickets of choke and pin cherry, saskatoon, hawthorn and silver willow, so to the sun-warmed grasses of the upper hills partly overgrown with prickly cactus and aromatic sage.

Signs mark this trail, naming each plant and tree - the work of L. T. Carmichael, Editor of the BLUE JAY. A sign points to the nest of an owl, the

home of a kingbird, robin, or dove, the work of a Porcupine, the burrow of a badger. At intervals a sign written in poetic verse praises the wonder of nature and the beauty of the world.

Wood pigeons called one to another through the noon woods, the soft music punctuated here and there by the cry of a red-tail hawk in the blue above.

That afternoon, hiking back after a swim in the Qu'Appelle River, I saw a porcupine industriously barking a small tree, and a coyote run swiftly across the open slope of a hill, and with a great burst of speed, pass out of sight over the high ridge.

With the setting of the sun, the lengthening shadows of the hills stretched out, and filled all the coulees with darkness. The silence of the dark woods was suddenly broken by a long-drawn, deep-toned Whur-who-o-o, the voice of the Great Horned Owl from his home and nesting place in the upper ravine - a thrilling menacing sound, carrying with it all the mystery of night in the deep coulees.

I packed my tent and camping equipment, and as the moon, climbing the darkening dome of the sky, poured silver light on misty hills and solemn woods, I reluctantly left the sanctuary in Hidden Valley.

MAMMAL SECTION

Mr. C. Stuart Francis reports that a shortage of spruce and pine seed this fall in the Torch River area is causing the red squirrels to gather their winter stores in other quarters. A great many of these have been seen around the edges of harvested wheat fields, gathering up the stray heads of wheat for their winter needs.



ports that a shortage of spruce Torch River area is causing the stores in other quarters. A round the edges of harvested heads of wheat for their winter

BRUIN



Bears are very numerous in the same district. During harvest they were very partial to ripe oats. A neighbor of Mr. Francis counted six bears at one time in his oatfield. Needless to say they caused considerable damage in a short time.

All in all, Bruin has been having a hard time of it this year. Not long ago a very surprised bear got his face in the way of a pail of hot dish water and no less surprised was Mrs. Glen Shoemaker, of Hudson Bay, who hadn't expected to see a riled bear rear up when she tossed the water over the backyard fence into some bushes.

The bear sighted, she dropped the pail,