

## PROVINCIAL NOTES.

Mrs. John Hubbard, of Grenfell, sent some interesting observations in February on the Hairy Woodpecker. "Have you received any complaints about the destructiveness of the Hairy Woodpecker?", she asks, then goes on to report that, on their farm, "one of these birds had been ripping holes in the bins out in the field allowing the grain to run out, (in "cahoots" with the grouse, no doubt)." Another bird, she states, "is very active in the yard. Not content with the woodpile, it has made many more holes in a granary already badly mutilated by flickers. My husband says he has noticed this bird feeding on "chop" where it has been spilled on the ground, so evidently grain is sometimes relished by this species. Something else that has not added to the popularity of this particular Hairy is that he is now working vigorously on the bottom of a telephone pole. When he gets down to business chips fly in all directions - as a carpenter he makes a good wrecker." (Even if a woodpecker goes to work on apparently sound trees or lumber, you may be sure that the wood-boring grubs have already been at work out of sight. The Hairy has been known to spend nearly an hour of hard labor digging out a single borer.-Editor.)

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Mrs. Hubbard also reports finding a Saw-whet Owl in their garage on Jan. 2 who was not as much impressed with the Hubbard family as they were with him. "When inspected too closely he stuck out his tongue and sputtered like a small rather badly behaved boy." Apparently Saw-whets have been more in evidence than usual this winter; one was reported by Jim Rogerson from Saltcoats in the Xmas Bird Census and W. Niven, Sheho, came across one in January and again in February, and several have been noted in Manitoba. Are any of our members acquainted with the famed "saw-filing" notes of this diminutive owl?

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Bohemian Waxwings are now regular winter visitors in most places, and some interesting comments on this fact appeared recently in the Free Press bird column, "Chickadee Notes." The editor, A.G. Lawrence, points out that "The great increase in the number of crab apple and other small fruit trees and berry-bearing shrubs in the Prairie Provinces has undoubtedly attracted the Bohemian Waxwings in recent years. Formerly the birds were scarce stragglers and seeing a flock was an event."

Most bird books make a note of the Bohemian Waxwing's fondness for the berries of the Mountain Ash and H. Downing, of Moosomin, was telling us that he and Mrs. Downing always spread the Mountain Ash berries, used in the Harvest Festival decorations, on the trellis in their garden for the Bohemian Waxwings and the Pine Grosbeaks. Siberian crabs are also a special favorite of the former and every year the first spot in Yorkton to receive a visit from the Bohemian Waxwings are some very fine crabapple trees in the C.P.R. station gardens. Here, quite unperturbed by the shunting of trains only a few feet away, these birds from the northern solitudes systematically set to, and stripped all the tiny apples from the branches.

And while on the subject of Bohemian Waxwings, have any members ever noticed these birds sallying after insects on a warm day in early spring? On April 9 Mrs. Priestly came across a flock of Waxwings in a bush close to town which were darting into the air "Flycatcher-fashion" after tiny flies. One can quite understand that some tasty morsel would be welcome after a steady winter diet of frozen berries.

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"Man is the worst enemy with which wild life has to contend. If he can be restrained by law, persuasion or education, most wild creatures of prairie and forest will take care of themselves, as they have always done in the past, in spite of epidemics and so-called vermin." -Dr. T.S. Roberts.

PROVINCIAL NOTES (continued)

Support of H. Rayner's plea, in the last issue of the "Blue Jay", for protection of the weasel has come to hand. F. Baines, Saltcoats, writes "I am heartily in sympathy with Mr. Rayner, of Ituna, who thinks weasels should be protected. I know that they sometimes kill chickens, but this is unusual and they probably save many more by killing rats and grey squirrels."

Mrs. J. Nixon also says "Do not make the mistake of holding chicken stealing against the short-tailed weasel, he is a real mouser and, as far as I have been able to ascertain, there are no bad marks against his name. The Long-tailed Weasel is sometimes destructive of poultry and may also rob birds' nests on occasion, but they are to be commended as a natural check on gophers."

And here we should mention a weasel seen last Fall by Mr. Sinclair Mowat of Saskatoon which had so completely lost its sense of direction that it was noted right in downtown Saskatoon opposite the post-office! And shortly after that Mr. Mowat saw another unusual sight - a beaver swimming in the river making his way past the Bessborough Hotel.

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Most of us have had some experience of extreme friendliness on the part of Chickadees. In fact, just recently, Miss E. Jones, of Raymore, wrote that the Chickadees she was feeding this winter had become so tame that they would sit on her head and eat out of her hand all the time. However a letter from W.J. Orchard, Regina, shows the "cheerful Chickadee" in a totally different light.

"A certain Calgary lady," says Mr. Orchard, "who always makes a habit of feeding the birds got on very friendly terms with one particular chickadee in the winter of 1941-42. Last summer while having tea on the lawn some chickadees were heard up in the surrounding trees. The hostess spread some crumbs on her hand and held them out. A moment later a chickadee lit on her outstretched hand and started to pick up the crumbs. But hardly had this started when an angry shriek was heard and a second chickadee came down like a rocket and knocked the first bird end over end. The attacker then came back and perched on her hand but, instead of eating the crumbs, he pecked viciously at her fingers. Evidently the second bird was the one who had been fed that way during the previous winter and considered that he had a monopoly of the affection and benefactions of this lady. Finding a hated rival, he was not content with driving off the interloper but must also wreck vengeance on his benefactor for daring to encourage that rival."

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Dr. R.W. Kirkby, Prince Albert, writes of the Timber Wolf and states, "Timber Wolves are taking an immense toll of the big game animals in the northern part of the province. This last fall, while hunting in the muskegs to the south and east of Candle Lake, I saw far too many signs of their work. Within the radius of our camp we came upon six kills and the hard paths padded down by the wolves were much in evidence. I consider there again should be a bounty put on timber wolves to encourage the trappers to go after this menace to game animals." (This is something with which we in the south have little first hand knowledge, but according to some authorities the timber wolf does not make excessive inroads on the deer population unless there is a shortage of smaller animals, such as the snowshoe rabbit, which normally constitute the bulk of its food. Most animals under natural conditions have marked cycles of abundance and scarcity, and possibly even without any artificial control, the Timber Wolf itself may show a decrease in numbers within the next few years.-Editor)

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The Wild Flowers of the countryside belong to us all. Protect them!