

REPORT ON THE RED LILY BY THE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE,
REGINA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The questionnaire sent in December, 1945, to representative points throughout the Province regarding the present status of our floral emblem, the Western Red Lily, was met with enthusiasm. Scores of letters have been received in reply. From the information given and the timely and valuable suggestions offered, the Committee has been able to form a general over-all picture of the situation. Efforts will be put forth immediately in an endeavour to cope with it and to conserve this flower, so that future generations may enjoy the rare beauty of Saskatchewan's emblem.

The northern border of the Brown Soil Zone, or the Short Grass Prairie Region, is roughly a line drawn from Estevan to Macklin. That line also marks the southern boundary of the area where the lilies are now generally growing, or have grown in the past. The great area of the province stretching north from this line to Loon Lake and Torch River is, on the whole, the natural habitat of the flower. Due, however, to lack of precipitation, the clearing of the shrubs and trees of park area, the drying up of creeks and natural water reservoirs, the ploughing of waste lands, the grazing of cattle, and the thoughtless, destructive and indiscriminate picking by so-called flower lovers, the Red Lily is decreasing in numbers year by year in most districts. There is grave danger of its becoming extinct, or nearly so, in this province, where more than in any other it is desirable that it remain prolific.

Although correspondence from about two hundred communities in this area have reported that the lilies are decreasing at an alarming rate, there is a bright side to the picture also. From the following points comes the good news that they are actually increasing in numbers: Big River, Damour, Glen Elder, Kamsack, Kinistino, Le Roy, Loon Lake, Maryfield, Naicam, Nipawin, Okla, Porcupine Plain, Valley Centre, Wallwort, Windthorst, Wood Hill, and Wroxton.

On the other side of the picture comes the sad, passenger pigeon-like story of the realities of yesterday becoming only the dim recollections of today; places like Assiniboia, Bracken, Conquest, Glentworth, Gull Lake, Hawarden, Hazlet, Holdfast, Lawson, Meota, Mossbank, Traynor and Yellowgrass can only hope that the day will come again when our emblem will once more grace their roadsides and pastures.

It is gratifying to learn that the lilies are not entirely absent from the South and South-west, and are growing at Portreeve, Carmichael, Gull Lake, Swift Current, Rush Lake, Neville, Old Wives, Tinley, Ormiston, Ogema, Big Beaver and Big Muddy. To many other communities throughout this area, however, our provincial emblem is meaningless, for the people there have never seen them in their own community.

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Suggestions

The many suggestions received in respect to conservation emphasize to the Committee the immensity of its task. Most of these may be roughly grouped as follows:

That education through the schools is of prime importance, first, to point out to the children that Saskatchewan has a floral emblem and, second, to create a pride in its existence and a desire to protect it. That this might be done through the distribution of pictures in color, posters, short articles in readers and other text books, the encouragement of drawing contests and the awarding of prizes for essays.

That teachers should be fully advised on the subject through the medium of the Provincial Normal Schools and the co-operation of the Saskatchewan Trustees' Association.

That the active support of the Departments of Education and Natural Resources and provincial and national Parks Boards should be sought to assist in wide-spread publicity.

That community effort should be encouraged by the formation of local conservation committees so that, in districts where lilies abound, prominent patches may be fenced off to prevent damage by grazing cattle. That such patches be marked as sanctuaries. That plants be removed from danger areas and set out again along the road allowance. That small badges, in the design of the Lily, be distributed to those who are willing to assist.

That the proper authorities be approached to instruct that a patch be grown on every government experimental farm. That signs announce the fact that this flower is our provincial emblem and should be protected. That a special demonstration plot be grown in the provincial park at Cypress Hills.

That the subject be given more frequent, widespread publicity through newspapers, farm magazines and over the air.

That tourists be handed cards at the gates of our provincial and national parks, instructing them as to the desirability for wild flower conservation, and that the Lily and Prairie Chicken (our Provincial bird emblem) should appear prominently on all tourist literature.

That the National Film Board be approached on the advisability of preparing a film in color, with a running commentary, describing its growth, habits, etc. That films be prepared and distributed by our audio-visual education branch.

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Meetings will be held by the conservation committees of the Regina and Yorkton Natural History Societies, to consider what steps should be taken in respect to the splendid suggestions offered.

(Signed) Lloyd T. Carmichael.

Convenor, Conservation Committee,

Regina Natural History Society.