

SIGNS OF SPRING

P.L. Beckie, Bladworth



Spring is welcome once again after a cold and long drawn-out winter. The game birds have pulled through quite well. The Hungarian Partridge have fought their duels and paired off. They have left their winter feeding-grounds and returned to their chosen home for the coming season. The Sharp-tailed Grouse seem to have had quite an easy winter. Nearly every day we saw them feeding on the stubble next to our yard, the usual number being from 7 to 11. On one or two occasions there were 29 or 30. On calm sunny mornings they are to be heard in their dancing booms and mumblings.

Magpies are plentiful. I saw one flock of twelve, and earlier in the afternoon, four singles. They are busy locating nesting trees. Some Horned Larks remained all winter, but the main body arrived again on the second of March. I saw a Prairie Falcon on March 20; the first crow on March 28. Both the Mountain Bluebird and American Goshawk put in an appearance on April 2.

The Golden Eagle was a regular visitor. I saw singles on February 5 and 26 and on March 12, 13, 15, 18, 21 and 25.

NOTES FROM PUNNICHY

Madeline B. Runyan

Birds were late returning this spring. Two pairs of Rough-legged Hawks are nesting on our farm. Sharp-tailed Grouse wintered well. On May 3rd I counted a flock of eighteen. Ruffed Grouse are very scarce.

A Whiskey Jack (Canada Jay) wintered in the district. This is the first one seen for many years. The farmer, at whose place it stayed, did not know what it was, but my husband, who had lived in the Carrot River district where these Jays are plentiful, identified it at once.

HAIRY WOODPECKERS

Mrs. John Hubbard, Grenfell

With the help of a Hairy Woodpecker we unintentionally provided a feast for a number of grouse last winter. The woodpecker made his usual hole in the granary of wheat. The grouse couldn't reach the hole so the woodpecker obligingly kept pecking away and thus kept the grain running to his friends below.

The Downy Woodpeckers are very scarce now but the Hairy have evidently adapted themselves to civilization and stay around even in the thinning bush.

I want to tell you this story. Kerry Wood's note on Coyote drives brought it to mind. At one hunt near here a Hairy Woodpecker flew down a row of advancing hunters and it is reported that every man in the line fired at it -- and missed! It seems to be the general practice to shoot at everything shootable or movable.

There has been nothing remarkable in the way of spring birds so far, except for their lateness. Mountain Bluebirds are numerous and two are hanging around our shop. If they can contend with the sparrows they may nest there. There appears to be a pair of Mallards on every slough.