

CHILDRENS' NATURE STORIES

We are pleased to learn that a series of Nature Stories, written by Mrs. John Hubbard, Jr., of Grenfell, is to be broadcast by the C. B. C. The series will start on July 4 and will continue once a week for thirteen weeks.

These stories, written a few years ago, have been altered to make them of uniform length for radio. Mrs. Hubbard informs that she is adding a nature note with each story and hopes she will be able to put in a plug for the BLUE JAY from time to time.

The Society offers its congratulations to Mrs. Hubbard, who for many years has been an enthusiastic naturalist. Members will look forward with interest to the time when they can hear these stories.

THE HORNED LARK

Here is a child's story written by Robert J. Spring, of 1379 Elphinstone St., Regina. Bob is keenly interested in nature and in a few years no doubt will become an ardent member of our Society. He is now twelve years of age.

"I have a story about seeing and finding a Horned Lark's nest which I did not disturb. I put food out for the Horned Lark. The food consisted of bread, cookie crumbs and bits of fat which were put into a box that sheltered the eating birds. The box blew away on April 4th. Here is my story for your magazine:

The well-known Horned Lark was sighted on the outskirts of Regina. When the bird was seen it was eating food someone put out for it. The food was inside a box so it would not blow away, but on April 4th the box did blow away and the birds could not eat in the shelter.

The Meadowlark and the Horned Lark are alike in many ways, but the Horned Lark is easily distinguished by two black feathers sticking up like horns. The Horned Lark got its name on account of these two feathers on the top of its head. The Meadowlark got its name because it was always in meadows. The Indians used to say that the Horned Lark was an evil spirit."

OUR DUTY

As Naturalist and citizens of Saskatchewan, it is our duty to teach our children, by example, to take an interest in our wild life - to appreciate the beauty and value of our flowers, birds, and other animals and to protect them from harm.

Predator control is not a subject for children. It is our duty to teach them to conserve and not to kill. We should encourage them to write essays on conservation and not on destruction. "My Wildlife Heritage and What it Means to Me" is a splendid subject, but its context should not be directed towards extermination -- not by school children.

Yet two major campaigns have been conducted within our schools by the predator control committee of the Fish and Game League. Scholarships and a fifty dollar prize have been awarded for the best essay under the above title -- an essay dealing with ruthless destruction. It has even been suggested that predator control films, dealing with ways to slaughter crows, magpies and coyotes be prepared and distributed to our schools.

OUR DUTY (Cont'd)

It is the boast that the result of these campaigns against predator wildlife in 1949 has accounted for the destruction of 189,161 adult and fledgling birds and eggs. As a regular program it is now urged that the ineffective bounty system be replaced by a "big prize money system" -- prizes to be won by your children and mine.

Predator control in many cases may be necessary. But let the adults handle the problem -- it is not a job for children. I would never permit a child of mine to enter such a contest -- would you?

The Editor.

SUGGESTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

S.P. Jordan, Saskatoon

Here is a thought that occurred to me when reading information in the BLUE JAY -- information which had been sent in by people who were widely scattered throughout the province. Would it be possible to publish a map and mark on it the names of the cities, towns, villages and farms from whence the most contributions are sent?

I thought the last edition of the BLUE JAY was particularly excellent. I consider the "Long-tailed Weasel" by Wm. Yanchinski, "The Coyote" by Kerry Wood and "It Lives by its Wits," by Ed Wiley, the best three conservation articles I have read for some time.

My nature observations for the last two or three months have been rather scanty but they might be of some interest and value.

To see a robin, a flicker and a meadowlark in one tree might not be a phenomenal occurrence but I was surprised to see these three birds sitting on the same branch on April 30.

On a trip from Davidson to Saskatoon on May 5th I saw many ducks; it seemed as if there were at least one pair on every patch of water. Pintails and Mallards predominated. I noticed a pair of crows attack what I suspect was a Marsh Hawk. I also noted four or five other slow-flying hawks.

Some of the people in Davidson told me that there were Sandhill Cranes in the vicinity and that they had been out shooting them. They treated the matter very casually and called the Cranes "Turkeys." They prided themselves in the number that they had shot and that at one time a wounded crane had actually attacked a man. Such people as this certainly suffer from a dearth of supervision and an overdose of ignorance. I wonder if our Society could do anything about such killings. Posters in the local pool-room warning people of the consequences of law infractions might be of some help. Education is a little late for these people.

On a walk along the river bank at Saskatoon, on Sunday, May 7th, I noticed that two crows had built a nest. I consider the crows rather nervy because the nest is only a few steps to the city streets and the path that runs by it is used by many pedestrians. My faith in human nature will be restored if the crows successfully raise their young there.

I hope all are looking forward to the summer and to the seeing and hearing of our many interesting birds and animals and flowers. I do love flowers and even though I can't identify many of them I still like to see them growing in the fields.

BIRD BANDING AT BURNHAM

Arthur Ward

The cold weather of the first week of April was not very conducive in the way of movement of birds at this point. About this time the Tree Sparrows and Juncos, which generally lead the way, are arriving in large numbers. Only a few Tree Sparrows, however, called and then quickly passed on. It was not until the 23rd of April that the first Junco was banded. After that they continued to come until the sixth of May. Water is very plentiful everywhere so that many species are not congregating in the small sanctuaries around the farms.

The Barn Swallow, usually dated May 9th, did not arrive until the 12th.

Some trees are showing signs of budding (May 14) and are not likely to be far enough advanced to suffer, should there be a repetition of the disastrous frost of 19 degrees above zero, which destroyed all foliage and birds' eggs on May 22nd of last year.

To this date, 18 species of birds have been observed in the sanctuary and 9 of these species have been banded. They are:

42 Slate-coloured Juncos	6 Gambel Sparrows
2 Myrtle Warblers	1 Red-breasted Nuthatch
1 Song Sparrow	1 Eastern Towhee
2 Tree Sparrows	3 Lincoln Sparrows
2 Olive-backed Thrushes	

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BIRD BANDING IN CALIFORNIA

In our last issue we told how Mr. and Mrs. Ward were enjoying the flowers, birds and scenery of Sunny California, while we were shivering during those forty days of forty below. Not being convenient to take his traps with him, Mr. Ward had to make them on the spot, for to him, bird-banding is a "must." Following are some of his notes on the subject.

"The presence of trees in and around places adjacent to Los Angeles afford attraction to many species of birds. One of the most noticeable is the Mocking Bird. The white wing patches and outer tail feathers, conspicuous in flight, were seen everywhere. They were on the roofs of houses and were certainly more plentiful than the House Sparrow, of which there were remarkably few.

I trapped most kinds of birds that frequented the Gardens where we were staying in Whittier. Among them were the Brown Towhee, Gambel's Sparrow, Song Sparrow, House Finch, California Jay, Ring-tailed Dove, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Audubon Warbler and the Mocking Bird.

The latter, when trapped, loudly sounded its resentment and used its beak to good effect. This bird, though having a lengthy repertoire, in my opinion, is not as entertaining as the English Thrush. The Jay, though noisy, when at large, seemed to enjoy being handled and would linger lying on its back in the open hand before taking off.

The birds there seemed more difficult to catch with the type of trap used than in Saskatchewan. Instead of flying to the back of the trap, they quickly backed out at the slightest noise.

Continued

BIRD BANDING IN CALIFORNIA (Cont'd)

To a point of enthusiasm nothing could hardly excel that of the members of the Audubon Society of Whittier and Los Angeles in the methods of conservation. Theirs is not just a matter of bird spotting, something of which they are adepts, but their activities are conducted on a scientific basis. Both sexes, dressed in hiking attire and armed with A.O.U. cards and binoculars, assemble monthly for a scheduled field trip within some bird sanctuary.

We were invited to take part in these field trips during our stay there, and the associations and outings proved very interesting. After the jaunt, lunch is partaken of and the results of the observations are carefully tabulated. Some of the members come long distances for these occasions."

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WINTER VISITANTS AT YORKTON

C. O. Shaw

Had they known it, the friends from the North might have stayed for another month without any signs of discomfort. As it was, they remained at Yorkton until late in May.

The Bohemian Waxwings were first seen on November 9, and remained until March 6. The Pine Grosbeaks visited the territory in fairly large numbers during the last week in January and the first two weeks in February. From March 5 to March 12, ten Evening Grosbeaks spent their time stripping maple seeds from the trees surrounding the Rotary Club Kiddies' Park. On March 23, Dr. C. J. Houston saw between 30 and 40 Evening Grosbeaks on his home grounds.

(On April the 20th the Grosbeaks were still at Yorkton. We have had no report since, but indications up to May 15, as far as the weather is concerned, points to the fact that they may still have been there).

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THE WHOOPER LAYS AN EGG

Saskatchewan Nature enthusiasts are Whooping Crane conscious these days. With fingers crossed, but yet with a glimmer of hope, they look forward to the day when these great and lovely birds will come back to their Saskatchewan home again in numbers, to grace the country with their presence and to once more rear their families.

Of particular interest them is the following report from Corpus Christi, Texas, written on April 24.

"The world's only captive whooping crane 'lovers' have produced an egg - and maybe more.

This is big news, since there are only 36 whoopers left in the world.

The lovers are Josephine and Crip. They are honeymooning on a 150-acre nesting ground at Arkansas national wildlife refuge near here.

The egg was discovered Monday by Julian A. Howard, refuge manager, in a nest 300 yards off shore in short marsh grass. He doesn't intend to bother the birds enough to find out about a second egg. An almost-constant watch will be maintained through powerful field glasses from an observation tower.

Continued

THE WHOOPER LAYS AN EGG (Cont'd)

"If the eggs come to maturity, the refuge will have the only young whoopers raised in captivity. For two years, the United States fish and wild-life service has sought a mating in a hope of helping to stop the extinction of North America's tallest bird.

This year's nesting is the second for Josephine. She laid two eggs, which turned out to be infertile, last spring. Her mate then was Pete, who died last July. In October, Jo and Crip were introduced and they have been carrying out a whooping crane courtship ever since."

AN EARLY NESTER

C. Stuart Francis

On April 4th my son and I found a Great Horned Owl's nest in a stand of mixed forest of Aspen, Poplar and White Spruce. The nest contained three eggs, which we removed and took home. They were slightly incubated and of the usual pure white color of most owl's eggs.

In the area, adjacent to the nesting site, quite a number of Ruffed Grouse had met their doom by this cruel night terror. The nest was first built last year by a pair of Cooper's Hawks. The owls had added more material on top of it and made it larger. The nest was about eighteen feet from the ground. There was a good foot of snow at the time we discovered the nest.

(P.L. Beckie found a Horned Owl's nest at Bladworth on March 25. The nest was in a clump of poplars. It was down-lined and contained three eggs).

INGRATITUDE

Last winter we began putting out grain for Sharp-tailed Grouse about January 1st, and within a week there were about forty or more of these birds feeding in the yard. They usually arrived early in the morning before sunup, coming from a north-east direction where there was good sleeping territory about half a mile distant. On arriving from their snow-beds they almost always alighted for a brief period on a row of Jack Pines I have planted for a windbreak. These trees are about eighteen feet high and when a bird as heavy as a Sharp-tail lands on the uppermost branches of a coniferous tree during severe sub-zero weather, of from ten to forty-five degrees below zero, (as it was throughout January and most of February) it means severe damage to the tree, if it is done often enough. The result, in this instant, was that branches up to eighteen inches in length were snapped off. By spring, the tops of these pines had a very bedraggled appearance and had lost from one to two season's growth.

In future we will be feeding the Sharp Tails out in the fields around the strawstacks instead.

Gifts of the BLUE JAY for the current year have been supplied to the Tisdale High School reading room, by Mr. E. W. Van Blaricom, K.O., Tisdale, and to the Swift Current Public School Library by Mr. Arch. C. Budd, Swift Current.

DANCING GROUNDS

We have now quite a fine record of Sharp-tailed Grouse dancing grounds. These records are valuable and have proved especially so to a party of American photographers who have built up in color one of the most interesting records of the antics of these birds ever recorded on the screen.

Three more have been reported. **P.L. Bookie**, of Bladworth, tells of a dancing hill on the farm of his uncle. It is on the N.W. quarter of Section 27, Township 28, Range 1, W. of 3rd. Although the Beckies live half a mile away the birds are distinctly heard at times. About fourteen birds congregate on this hill.

And then he reports that there is another dancing hill on the S.E. quarter of Section 36, Township 28, Range 1, E. of 3rd. The number of birds dancing there is considerable. The ground has been used for at least six years. The first mentioned is on cultivated land; the second is an unpastured prairie.

George H. Heber, Deputy Game Warden at Duval, informs us that the Sharp-tails are very busy every year parading their skill on a hill of the S.E. quarter of Section 26, Township 25, Range 21, W. of 2nd.

CHICKADEES AT WORK

H.M. Rayner, Ituna

During most of the winter I have had some fat meat tied to the tops of some bushes close to the window of our dining room. I have had the opportunity of watching chickadees at close range for an hour or more every day for more than three months. During this time I observed that when a chickadee dislodges a morsel of meat or fat that is too large for him to swallow at once, he at once flies to another bush or tree, at some distance from the bait. If the lump is of such a size that there is a reasonable prospect of its getting down his gullet, he will press it against a twig or branch. This enables him to open his beak and get a fresh hold on the food without dropping it. Thus he manages to get it down.

If the morsel of food is too large for this procedure, he proceeds as follows: pressing the food against the twig on which he is perching, he brings his feet and legs tight together (with the food between them) and thus holds it until by pecking he can reduce its size.

Woodpeckers, both Downy and Hairy, came to the same bait. The woodpeckers appear to know nothing of the technique employed by the chickadees, and as a result they frequently drop lumps of food when trying to swallow them down; for in order to take a new gulp, they must first open the beak a little, and thus they let go of the food. Chickadees stayed near the ground under the bait when the woodpeckers were feeding, and promptly snapped up the pieces the woodpeckers would drop.

I am sorry I was unable to take photographs. I have no suitable camera for this kind of work, and - alas - have not the time necessary to obtain pictures.

There is one picture I would like to have in particular. It is Chickadees bathing in dry snow. They use the same movements as they would in water.

1950 SPRING MIGRATION RECORDS

As suggested in our last issue, it is not possible for us to publish the migration record lists of all our correspondents who have so kindly sent them to us. These records, however, are very valuable for purposes of reference. The thought occurred to us that the publication of one list might serve both as an incentive for new members to do the same and also as a comparative list for those who have already cultivated the habit, and who live in a different area.

For these purposes, then, we have selected the records from Bladworth, compiled by P. Laurence Beckie.

March	2	Horned Lark (main flock)	April	19	Red-winged Blackbirds (flocks of them)
	20	Prairie Falcon		19	Shoveller Duck
	25	Horned Owl nest (3 eggs)		19	Sharp-shinned Hawk
	29	Crow		20	Great Blue Heron (first I ever saw)
April	2	Mountain Bluebird		20	Geese (unidentified, (200 birds))
	2	American Goshawk		20	McCowan Longspur
	5	Marsh Hawk		22	Chestnut-collared Longspur
	5	American Rough-leg Hawk		22	Franklin Gull
	6	Slate-coloured Junco		23	Lesser Canada Goose
	7	Swainson Hawk		23	Ferruginous Rough- legged Hawk (nine)
	9	Meadowlark		23	Blue-winged Teal
	12	Sparrow Hawk		24	Brewer's Blackbird
	13	Herring Gulls		24	Vesper Sparrow
	13	American Long-eared Owl		27	Myrtle Warbler (an unusual date)
	14	Tree Sparrow (in large numbers this spring)		28	Marbled Godwit
	14	Pintail Duck		28	Common Grackle
	14	Mallard Duck		28	Yellow-shafted Flicker
	14	Sandhill Crane		30	Common Shrike
	15	Lapland Longspurs (thousands during the past month)		30	Western Willet
	15	Pigeon Hawk			
	15	Robin			
	15	Killdeer Flover			
	May	6	Green-winged Teal		
		8	Solitary Sandpiper		
		8	Spotted Sandpiper		
		10	Lesser Yellow-legs		
		11	Red-breasted Nuthatch		

FLASH! (Friday, May 26)

Josephine and Crip are proud parents today. Rusty, the first Whooping Crane ever to be born in captivity arrived at last. It is a great event, not only for Jo and Crip but to naturalists throughout the world.