

# Let Each Farm be a Bird Sanctuary

*By Evelyn M. Casson, Cater, Sask.*

SINCE I have been fortunate enough to discover the BLUE JAY (I read the last issue from cover to cover) I felt I would like to report any interesting observations on wild life that I may come across.

The Cater district is situated in Northern Saskatchewan about 65 miles north of North Battleford. It is an area of grey-wooded soil with lovely poplar groves, both black and white, some jackpine and a few spruce towering over all. There are plenty of little sloughs surrounded by sweeping clumps of willow and two or three fair-sized lakes. To the west of us is a fairly large muskeg which has water in it all summer.

When we came here to live, twenty years ago, the country was only sparsely settled and as there had been plenty of snow and rain, the lakes, sloughs and muskegs were full of water. It was an ideal place for all kinds of wild life; from the hundreds of frogs singing in the sloughs to the Great Blue Heron with her nest on the very top of the tallest spruce tree on the shore of Birch Lake.

I began to notice many birds that I had not seen before. One warm evening as I worked in the garden, I heard the strangest sound coming from the direction of the muskeg. At the moment I wasn't sure whether it was a bird or a beast but the queer hollow noise which sounded like *Onmph-a-gee! oomph-a-goo* was the love song of the Bittern.

Then a beautiful pair of Baltimore Orioles hung their swinging nest in a grove of poplars near the house. We have had Orioles every year since then. It is an interesting fact which I have noted every spring since then, that the Orioles return here on the 24th of May. Never on the 25th or on the 23rd but each year we hear their clear but somewhat wistful whistle exactly on the 24th.

Then later on the hundreds of perky wrens build their nests in the oddest places such as the exhaust of the tractor or the twine box on the binder. At this time the wrens are not back but will be here any day.

A pair of sleek, tufted Cedar Waxwings gaily stole bits of string from the clothes line for their nest nearby. As soon as the caraganas began to bloom we saw, for the first time at close range, the tiny Hummingbirds, darting about like animated jewels. As I grow more fruit and flowers each year they are becoming quite numerous. I hope someday to find a nest.

In those first years the ducks migrating south travelled over our land. It was a wonderful sight to see thousands flying over or circling to land and feed until they almost darkened the evening sun. In the dry thirties as the sloughs dried up and the water in the lakes got lower, they changed their course. Now we are getting more rain and I hope that they will come back our way.

We all enjoy having the birds around us, apart from their usefulness. We can keep them around by having a good windbreak around the farmstead, building bird baths and fountains is another way to induce them to stay with us. The lumps of suet, hung out on the trees and shrubs, for the Chickadees in winter brings large returns in cheery song.

Last June I was on my way to a Homemakers convention. On the way I passed two pieces of newly broken land. I noticed the breaking came right up to the fences and I thought sadly to myself: "There isn't a twig left for the birds to perch on."

At the convention, that day, our Agricultural Representative gave a talk on that very thing. He spoke of the coming, these last few years, of the big brush cutters that ram down everything in their path. He said there were areas in this district, as in all others, which were not worth breaking and would bring one or maybe two crops and then be waste land—far better to have left it for a bird sanctuary and a place for lilies and lady-slippers to grow.

I know we must break the land to make a living, but let us leave a good wide windbreak around the farmstead and a good row of trees and shrubs along our fences. We

won't miss that bit of land and we will be amply repaid for the pleasure we derive from having the birds and animals and the wild flowers with us.

## An Early Record

By Walter Lund

Brombury P.O. March 31: We saw a Barn Swallow this morning. We have seen one every year for years about the middle of April but this is the first time in March. They have nested here every year. At first just one comes, flies into the doorway, has a look around and perches for a minute or so on a metal hook just inside the door. This they use a great deal during the summer. From this vantage point we have a good chance to be sure just what it is. Then it goes away and is not seen again for about a month.

### IT'S A HARD LIFE

When you feel that being persistent is a task, think of the bee! A clover blossom contains less than one-eighth of a grain of sugar; 7,000 grains are required to make a pound of honey; a bee, flitting here and there for sweetness, must visit 56,000 clover heads for a pound of honey; and there are about 60 flower tubes to each clover head. When a bee performs that operation 60 times 56,000, or 3,360,000 times, it gathers sweetness enough for only one pound of honey! H. J. Higdon

*"The paths, the woods, the heavens,  
the hills,  
Are not a world today,  
But just a place God made for us  
In which to play."*

Mrs. W. L. Grant, Toronto, (wife of the late Principal Grant of Upper Canada College) loaned me the current copy of your magazine, with which I am so pleased that I would like to become a subscriber. I would like to make reference to it in the weekly column of the Globe and Mail. —Anne Merrill, Editor of "Wings of the Wind," Globe and Mail.

## A Friendly Meadowlark

By Elizabeth Barker



ON APRIL 20, following an all day snowstorm I put out a pile of dry bread crumbs and oatmeal inside my enclosed yard in front of my window, for the English Sparrows and Juncos, then hard pressed for food. To my great surprise a Meadowlark soon appeared and hungrily ate the crumbs. This gave me an idea, so I cleared off patches of snow in the garden and roads, hoping a wider distribution of the food might attract more of the hungry birds. This special bird, however, preferred to dine inside the yard, during which act, all of the other birds showed, or rather had to show, great respect for it.

I fully expected this quick lunch to stop with the disappearance of the snow but such was not the case. Mr. Meadowlark continued to feed in the yard until the 28th of April when, for a week, I failed to put out food during a rainy spell.

On May 5th, for a further test, I again put out a pile of crumbs. In less than half an hour Mr. Lark was there. During that day I watched it dispose of fifteen lunches. It is easy to tell when to watch, as he always gives his challenge call and chirps just before dropping into the yard from a higher perch just above. Pieces of bread too large to swallow are broken up by pounding with his sharp beak in true Meadowlark style.

By the end of May the lark was feeding on crumbs as freely as ever, showing more confidence and eating more at his ease than at first.

This Meadowlark and his mate are now nesting a few rods out from my house. The nest, found by some children on May 24, now contains four eggs. Under such conditions and in such a place its chances of survival are very slim. Should their young be reared it will be interesting to see if bread crumbs are allowed on their bill of fare.