

## THE BLUE JAY

With this issue "The Blue Jay", as the official organ of the Yorkton Natural History Society, will cease to exist. Those who have been responsible for its publication since the death of Mrs. Priestly, after much thought and serious consideration, have come to the conclusion that under the present set-up it would not be wise to continue.

Much credit is due to the Editor, Associate Editors and to the officers of the society, who have freely given so much of their time in order that each issue might bring something of worthwhile interest to nature lovers throughout the Province. Special mention must be made of the untiring efforts and splendid work accomplished by our Editor, Mr. Cliff Shaw. He has been keenly interested in the "Blue Jay" and it is due, in no small measure, to his personal enthusiasm that its publication has been made possible during the past two years.

With the assured assistance of Mr. Fred Bard, Director of the Provincial Museum, it is hoped that the publication of the "Blue Jay" will continue. The success of the venture will depend entirely on the active support given by the subscribers. We invite you to read the preface to the questionnaire on the last page of this issue then answer the questions and send your answers to the Provincial Museum by January 8, 1949.

### "WHAT IS THE BLUE JAY"

The seeds from which the Yorkton Natural History Society had its beginnings probably had their origin in July, 1942. At that time, Mrs. Priestly, with the help of several Yorkton bird enthusiasts, prepared a short annotated list of birds entitled "A List of Birds Identified in the Yorkton District in Recent Years." This list received very favorable comment in the columns of A. G. Lawrence's "Chickadee Notes" in the Winnipeg Free Press, and the demand for it exceeded all expectations. Encouraged by this, and by the interest shown by a number of Yorkton people during the preparation of the list, it was decided to formally organize a small nature group. To make up for the absence of a bird column in any of the Saskatchewan daily newspapers, it was thought a few pages of mimeographed notes and observations might be distributed from time to time.

The organization meeting was held in the home of Dr. C. J. Houston on September 11, 1942, and it was decided to adopt the name of the Yorkton Natural History Society. Mrs. Priestly was elected President; J. R. Foreman, Vice-President; C. Stuart Houston, Secretary-treasurer, and Miss Ethel Lloyd, Mrs. E. Johnson, Vernon Barnes and Harvey Beck, Directors. It is interesting to note that the secretary and two of the directors were collegiate students. The executive decided to begin publication of a quarterly bulletin, the "Blue Jay". Circular letters, soliciting subscriptions to the new publication, were sent out to all those who had written for copies of the bird list. The first issue of the "Blue Jay" came out that same fall, 125 copies being mimeographed. Though this number was deemed to be more than ample, it was exhausted in very short order. For the first two years, the membership fee, including a subscription to the "Blue Jay", was only 25¢ per year. The bulletin was written and edited by Mrs. Priestly, mimeographed by Stuart Houston and finally made ready for mailing by a "Bee" of members who stapled it together, rolled and addressed it. In fact, a number of members were even persuaded to revert to childhood for the time-consuming task of coloring in, with blue crayons, the title letters on the front page.





Mrs. Priestly's friendly, informal style rapidly attracted a growing number of subscribers, while favorable comment concerning the scientific value of the information contained in the "Blue Jay" was received from leading ornithologists throughout Canada and the United States, and even the famous British Museum of Natural History requested a subscription. The late P. A. Taverner, author of "Birds of Canada", wrote that: "It is one of the meatiest things of the sort I have seen ----- There are many notes of interest worthy of the attention of naturalists."

In the fall of 1945, the secretary left Yorkton to begin his University studies, and Miss Ruth Beck took over his secretarial duties, while the Provincial Museum kindly offered to assist with the publishing of the "Blue Jay". It was intended at that time that Mrs. Priestly should move to Regina and carry on the editing of the "Blue Jay" from that point, in co-operation with the Provincial Museum. Such plans, however, came to an abrupt end with Mrs. Priestly's unexpected death on April 23, 1946.

Though they knew it would be next to impossible to maintain the high standard of quality set by Mrs. Priestly, the Y.N.H.S. determined to continue the publication of the "Blue Jay" as a tribute to Mrs. Priestly's memory. Cliff Shaw, although a very busy man, took on the heavy task of being both president of the Society and editor of the "Blue Jay." Miss Pauline Summers was elected secretary. However, the Society became progressively more handicapped as its keenest members, all former officers -- Miss Ethel Lloyd, Miss Gladys Fraser, J. R. Foreman, Jim Smith, Sgt. A. E. Smith, W. A. Brownlee, Jack Brownlee, Harvey Beck and Vernone Barnes -- left Yorkton.

Nevertheless, Mr. Shaw was fortunate in being able to secure the assistance of a capable group of assistant editors from other centers in the Province: Maurice G. Street of Nipawin, Wm. Fuller of Saskatoon, Lloyd O. Peterson of Indian Head, L. T. Carmichael of Regina, and Fred G. Bard, director of the Saskatchewan Provincial Museum. In this way, the publication of the "Blue Jay" has been carried on for the last two years.

By One of the Founders of the Society,

ISABEL M. PRIESTLY

Many subscribers to the "Blue Jay" did not have the privilege of knowing Mrs. Priestly to whom the magazine is now dedicated. For this reason, it was felt that this issue, would not be complete without some mention of her work.

Mrs. Priestly was the founder of the Yorkton Natural History Society, and also the originator of the "Blue Jay". From its inception until her death, she edited every issue, and wrote literally hundreds of letters each year in connection with its publication.

To those who knew and loved her, Mrs. Priestly's most outstanding characteristic was her joy in the world about her. She delighted in every aspect of nature, from the song of the robin to the shape of a snowflake. Children loved her, and were constantly bringing her everything from live bats to dead houseflies. No matter how simple their contribution, she always took time to discuss it with them, and many young people in Saskatchewan owe their interest in nature to Mrs. Priestly's enthusiasm. She was not only an outstanding naturalist, but was also a charming person.