

# What a feeder

BY IAN MacQUARRIE

Saturday, December 20, 1986. I believe that this is the day when local birdwatchers are out counting. Bunch of voyeurs. I am at home in New Dominion, assembling the bird feeder that Dan McAskill told me I couldn't do without. He also told me that any klutz could put one together, and he's right. I finally finish; I have one hinge and quite a few nails left over - and I found that you can drive those weird little screws with one healthy whack of a hammer. Maybe I'll even paint it, to hide the bent nails.

I set the feeder up in the back yard and charge it up with sunflower seed. O.K. birds, get with it. I stand back against the barn to admire my work.

At this point something amazing happens. A bald eagle, no doubt tired of being counted, lands in one of the big elm trees that tower over my house...and eyes the feeder a bit critically. If I had known he was coming, I could have put a rotten fish on the tray. At this time, Arnie, my biggest cat, is trying the feeder tray out for size, but I think that it is the feeder itself that has the eagle's attention.



A couple of crows land in the next tree to the eagle; they are just hanging out with him in the way that kids like to hang out with a teenager...just to see what happens.

So the crows watch the eagle. I watch the eagle, who doesn't seem to mind. Arnie practices short leaps on and off the feeder. Ah, nature is grand.

The eagle stays for about 15 minutes; he leaves when a car drives in to the yard. He takes his crows with him. Half an hour later I have my first actual feathered visitor to the feeder, a sort of blue type bird. Arnie ignores him, and so do I. Anything is an anticlimax after an eagle.

## Something for everyone



The list of CNF conference tours is now available, describing the various outings in association with the 16th annual conference, June 5-8 at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon.

There are 11 tours, plus a preconference and a post-conference tour. The two extra tours are run by Nature Travel Service. How do these sound? Footsteps of Louis Riel Tour to Batoche National Historic Park, looking at turkey vultures, pelicans, hawks, ducks and parkland songbirds. Or focus on prairie plants and wildflowers on the Beaver creek Prairie Wildflower Tour. Or catch a glimpse of Canada's only colonies of Black-tailed Prairie Dogs on the Grasslands National Park and Cypress Hills Tour. These are just three examples

of the types of activities available. The conference itself features symposiums, slide shows and discussions, as well as social events such as a wine and cheese reception and a banquet featuring wild game. For more information, or registration forms, contact Dan McAskill at 569-4351.