

one usually finds mouse tracks from one side of the road directly into shrubbery or some type of cover on the other side. If you are out walking this time of year, you will probably notice remains of old mouse burrows where the snow has melted. Spring, to most of us, means a liberation from warm coats, heavy boots and cold cars, but, to a mouse, it means a loss of a protective covering!

Kathy Martin,  
Biology Dept, U. P. E. I.

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EARLY SPRING MIGRANTS

Mild weather combined with very little snow in the month of March during the last two years seems to be encouraging songbirds to return to our province earlier than normal. This observation is based on records I have been keeping over the last 19 years, from 1955 to 1974. One of the first songbirds to return to P.E.I. is the bronzed grackle. This year, I saw the first bronzed grackle on March 9, six days earlier than any previous arrival date recorded. This species normally arrives between March 30 and April 9. In 1973, it returned on March 15.

Another early bird this year was the red-winged blackbird, of which, I saw four individuals on March 16. This was, also, six days earlier than any previous arrival date in my records. This species usually arrives between April 1 and April 15. It arrived last year on March 22.

Other song birds which arrived earlier than normal in 1973, were the cowbird on March 25, the robin on March 26 and the song sparrow on March 31. These species usually return to P. E. I. during the second week of April. So from now on, be on the lookout for avian visitors from the south.

Bruce MacLean,  
Milton, P.E.I.

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A NATIONAL GRASSLANDS PARK

The Saskatchewan Natural History Society requests our help in their struggle for a national grasslands park in southern Saskatchewan in the Killdeer-Val Marie area. The options open to this area are to do nothing, establish a provincial park, or establish a national park. The SNHS feels that a national park is the most desirable for the following reasons:

- 1) No fully protected grassland area exists in North America. The vast grasslands are gone forever. Neither this generation nor generations to come can ever hope to replace them, but in the sparsely inhabited lands between Killdeer and Val Marie, there exists a part of this vanishing legacy.
- 2) The last black-tailed prairie dogs in Canada are found within the boundaries of the proposed park.
- 3) A large number of species have evolved a dependence on the prairie dog as a food source or use their burrows as protection from predators or the elements (e.g., kit fox, black-footed ferret, burrowing owl, ferruginous hawk, golden eagle and rattlesnake).
- 4) Sizable rodent populations and minimal human disturbance make the area one of the last refuges in Canada for nesting prairie falcons, golden eagles and ferruginous hawks.
- 5) Because of multiple use practises in Saskatchewan's provincial parks and the ease of changing park boundaries by order-in-council none of the unique or representative features of this short-grass prairie would be fully protected.
- 6) More than 90 % of this area is crown land.

The short-grass prairie of southwestern Saskatchewan is the most important natural region not represented in Canada's national park system. Your support is urgently needed.

Write to: Premier Allan Blakeney  
Legislature Building,  
Regina, Saskatchewan.

If you don't feel qualified to compose your own letter, use the following form letter:

Dear Premier Blakeney: