

The

Young Naturalist

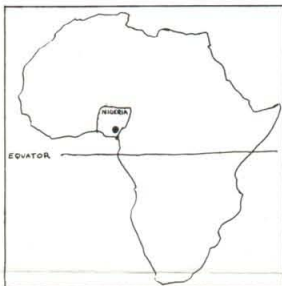


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The Best Pet I Ever Had



The following is the second in a series of articles by Robert Bateman who spent two years in Eastern Ni-

geria. This is a tropical rain forest region noted for its many fascinating animals. The Long-nosed Mongoose, shown in the sketch, was one of the many different pets kept and observed by Mr. Bateman.

He was the best pet I ever had. What is a good pet? A good pet is interesting, amusing, friendly and devoted, well-behaved and intelligent. I have had dogs, cats, racoons, crows, owls, turtles, chameleons, and even a Mexican Koata. But he was the best pet I ever had.

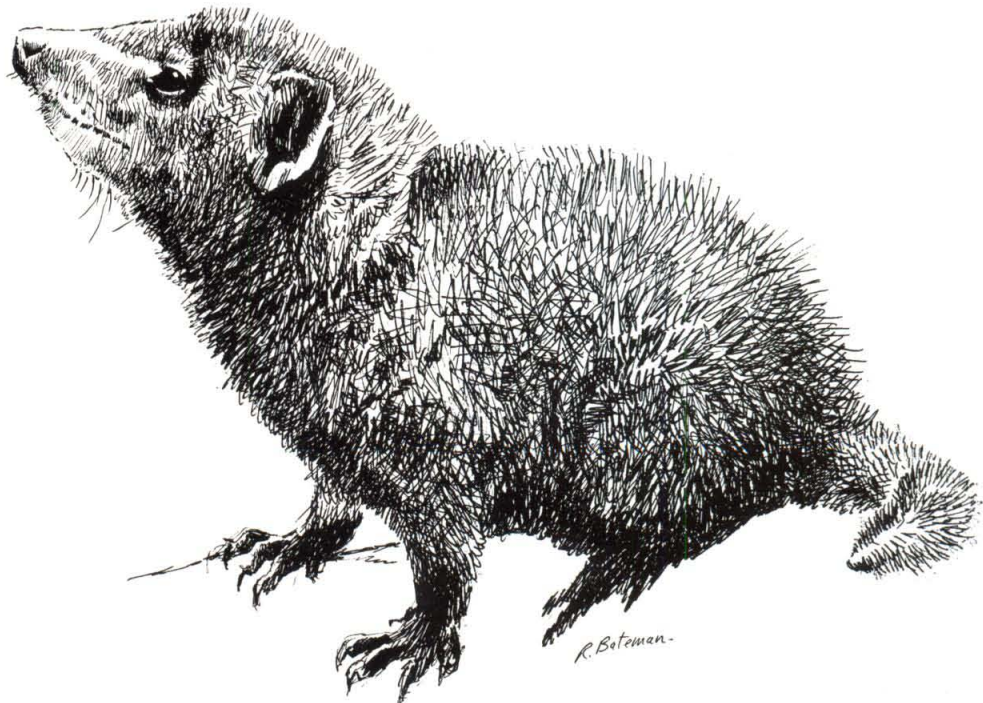
He came to us with several of his brothers and sisters, mouse-sized babies found by a hunter. We expected him to die as did most baby animals taken from their mothers. The doll's baby bottle and powdered milk just could not take the place of the mother. But to our surprise and delight one little fellow lived. He eagerly sucked the tiny rubber nipple and twittered like a contented bird. Since his eyes were not yet open when he came to us, we were the first creatures he saw. As far as he was concerned, either we were mongooses or he was a person.

Actually he was a Cusimanse (pronounced KOOSEEMANSEE) a member of a large and varied tribe known as mongooses. "Rikitikitavi" of Kipling's stories is only one of many different kinds, not all of which eat snakes. There are about thirty-five species, all members of the Viverid family which also includes genets and civets. They live mostly in Africa and Asia and are the

counterpart of weasels, racoons, and skunks which are found in the Americas.

However, our little fellow knew none of this; he thought that we were all in the same family. Since Cusimanses are gregarious (enjoy company), he wanted to be with us at all times. He was happy only if we were in sight and when he was not playing or eating, he wanted

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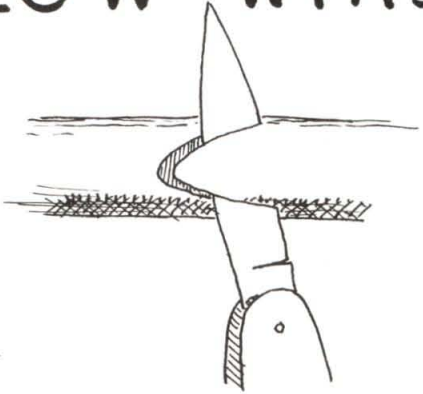
The Long-nosed Mongoose or Cusimanse is one of some thirty-five members of the species. They live mostly in Africa and Asia.

A WILLOW WHISTLE - AN INTERESTING SPRING PROJECT

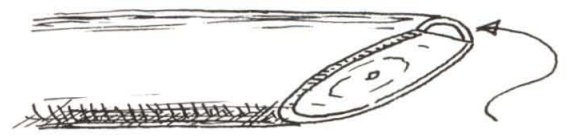
O. G. R.



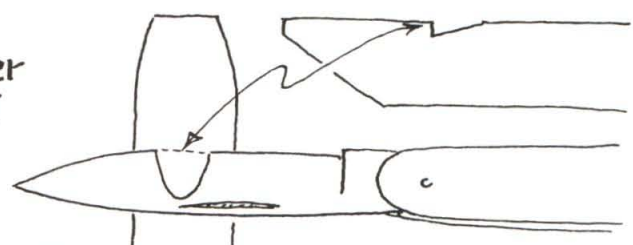
1 Select a straight branch of willow or basswood without side twigs - about 3/4" diameter and 8"-10" long. Use the smaller end of the piece.



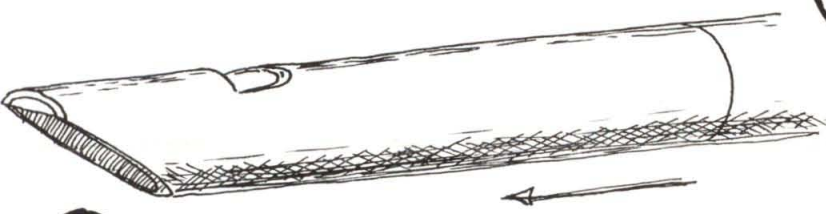
1 Cut off smaller end at a slant



2 Cut off tip straight across

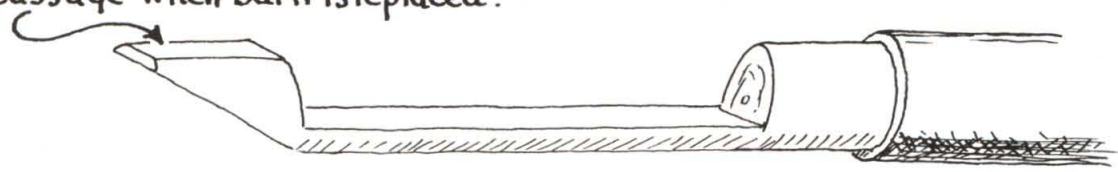


3 One inch from the end cut a notch as shown. Be sure to cut through the bark and remove a thin slice of the wood.



4 Carefully cut right through bark all around - try to slide the tube of bark off in one piece in the direction shown. If bark tends to hold on tap it smartly all around with another stick or the handle of your knife to loosen it. Save the removed bark tube carefully.

cut flat to leave a small air-passage when bark is replaced.



5 Cut the wood core as shown. The pitch of the note produced by your whistle depends on the length of the hollowed-out part. Slip the bark tube back in place and your whistle is finished. Because the bark will dry out and shrivel up, your whistle's lifetime will be limited - but then you can make another one!

Club News



Recently, Mrs. Barbara Wilkins, the Editor of *Club News*, spent a few days in the hospital. Her stay there was brightened by the receipt of a letter from each member of Miss Audrey Wilson's class at Burnham School, Cobourg, Ontario. We regret that it is not possible to print all of the letters, but with apologies for the omissions, a few of them have been included — *Editor*.

Dear Mrs. Wilkins:

Thank-you for putting some of the kid's names in the *Young Naturalist*. I was not in but I was still happy. In the one issue, thank-you for putting in about Golden-rod galls for we are talking about them. Yesterday we had a hike to collect some. We have two mice. One is a father and one is a mother. The mother had 8 babies. After about 2 weeks we gave them away to Kelly Wilson, Mike Dowson, Brian Tamaso, Cheryl Loutenback, John Bastan, Terry Nixon, Wayne Smith, and Beth Cowin. The only two who did not get them were Kelly Philp and Micky Butler. I was not allowed to get one because my mother did not know what to do with it, when we go camping. That is all for now.

Your friend,
Wendy Silver.

Dear Mrs. Wilkins:

There are many new things that have been happening.

We have a hamster in our room. His name is Gussie. Today one girl Wendy Briggs was bitten by Gussie. Gussie is white and sleeps a lot. He eats carrots, lettuce, milk and pablum.

We went on a hike the other day. We saw a Groundhog's house, many birds Am. Merganser, Savannah Sparrows, Starling, Grackles and many more.

Mrs. Wilson brought a glass cage full of stuffed birds today.

Well I must sign off for now.
Jane Harvey.

P.S. We saw 19 different birds.

Dear Mrs. Wilkins:

At school we have mice. There is a Mother and Father mouse. The Father had to be taken out because the Father

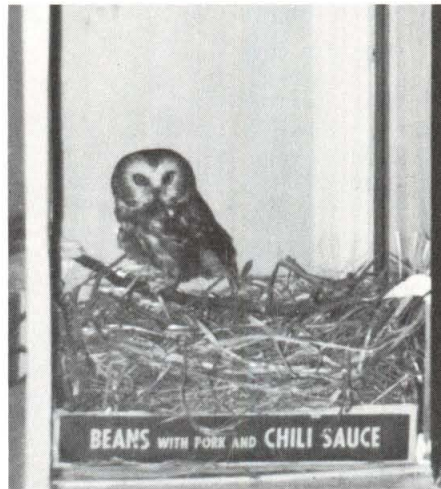


Photo by Beth Cowin

"Willy", pet Saw-whet Owl of Miss Wilson's pupils, Burnham School, Cobourg.

would kill the babies. Not usually they do this. There were 8 mice. We drew to see who would get the mice. There were 10 or 11 to draw. 8 were lucky. Mike Dawson had the best cage. There was a big wheel in it.

Your friend,
Raymond Kerkhoven

Dear Mrs. Wilkins:

We have a pet hamster and we call him Gussie. Just today Gussie bit Wendy Briggs. He is all white and he is 5 inches long. All the baby mice were given away to 8 children. We think they are going to have babies again. The mice eat vegetables sunflower seeds and rabbit pellets. They like milk and pablum also. We finally got three mice for Willey. He is five inches long. We have fourteen pellets from Willey.

Your friend,
Michael Nolan.

Dear Mrs. Wilkins:

I do thank you for putting our names in the *Young Naturalist* books. I have already been on one of the early morning hikes and have enjoyed it. I like the Wood Duck the best for I liked it when the male and female made love. Our group was lucky to see this duck. Well I must sign off now.

Your friend,
Jim Lindsay.

BEST PET — from Page 1

actually to be touching us. His greatest joy was to spread out on his back in our lap and get tickled. He would close his eyes and utter his bird-like twitter. He, of course, wanted to sleep with us, but we insisted he sleep in his cage. Sometimes he was able to trick us so that he could sleep with somebody for part of the night.

Our son Alan was born while we were in Africa, and our Cusimanse naturally looked on him as a brother. He would hide in Alan's room long before bedtime and after the baby was tucked in and the door closed, the Mongoose would creep out of hiding and climb up into the crib. We would check hours later and find both babies, human and mongoose, sleeping together.

Aside from this, our Cusimanse was well-behaved. He house-broke himself, he came when he was called without being taught, and went for long walks without going astray. He would sit on my lap while I ate at the table but never jumped on the table, although he easily could have done so. When we went for walks he would want to be so close that he would walk between our feet and we were always kicking him like a little ball.

He is the only animal I ever knew who played his own "fetch-it" game by himself. He would take the plastic top from a ball-point pen, carry it over to one side of our living room and fight it. After he had worried the pen-top for a while he would turn around and snap it between his legs like a football. It would spin across our slippery cement floor, between two hoops in the coffee table legs and stop at the far side of the room. He would dash over, seize the pen-top, scold it for escaping and trot back to his original position lined up with the coffee table hoops. Then he would do it again.

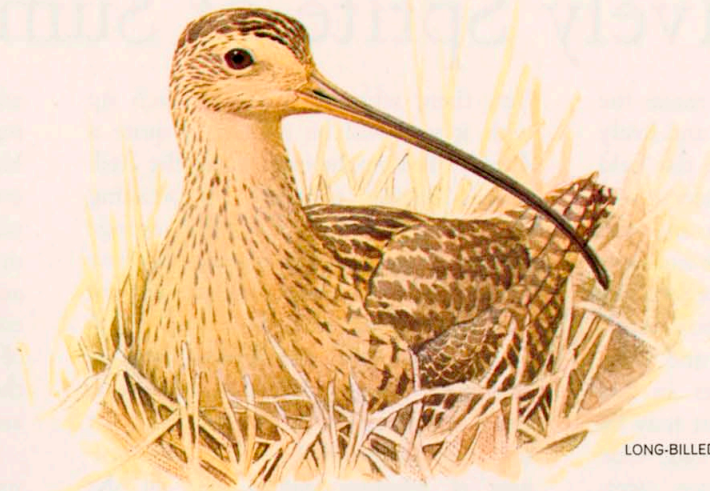
In the wild, these animals are known to "snap" eggs and snails between their legs against a rock or tree to break the shells. So the special little trick of our Cusimanse was perfectly natural. Even though we knew that his interest and devotion to us were the same as he showed his mongoose relatives, it was a pleasure to have him in the family.

R. BATEMAN

Shorebirds

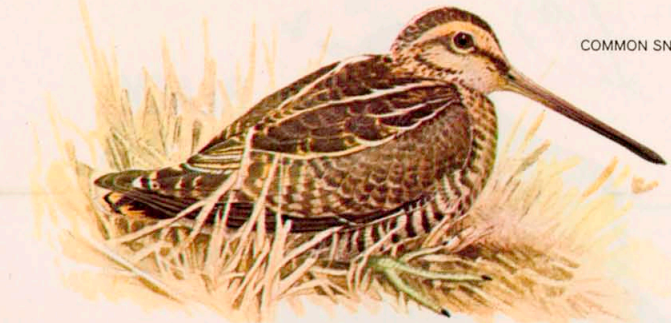
The plovers, sandpipers, and other waders of marshes, mudflats, beaches and lakeshores were at one time killed in enormous numbers by market hunters. That is a thing of the past now, though one or two are still sought after by gunners. These are among our hardiest birds. Some are champion long-distance migrants; some nest high above the Arctic Circle. The best times to see them are late spring and early fall.

The MARBLED GODWIT is a large and spectacular shorebird of the prairies. In flight it is very colorful, as the under sides of the wings are bright cinnamon. The word "godwit" is supposed to be an interpretation of the bird's loud, ringing call. Almost as large is the striking and lovely AVOCET, with its characteristic upturned bill. It feeds by swinging the bill from side to side in the water, almost like a scythe. WILSON'S PHALAROPE lives on prairie ponds. Phalaropes reverse the procedure of most birds; the females are more brightly colored than the males, and the latter look after nesting duties! The LESSER YELLOWLEGS nests in open evergreen forests of the north. In migration, it is one of the very commonest of our sandpipers. The SPOTTED SANDPIPER is extremely widespread in Canada; few lakes, ponds, and streams are without it. This small wader has the peculiar habit of bobbing and teetering as it makes its way along water margins. Note the unusual shape of the bill of the RUDDY TURNSTONE. It is used as an instrument for prying small invertebrates out of difficult places. This bird is perhaps the most brilliant of our plovers. The sweet whistle of the BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER is easily imitated, and hunters used to decoy flocks of the birds in this way. It is one of our most immaculate birds. Its close relative, the GOLDEN PLOVER, breeds in the arctic and winters in the lower parts of South America. Western birds winter in Hawaii. The little SEMIPALMATED PLOVER, also an arctic nester, is identified by the single dark ring on its breast.



LONG-BILLED CURLEW

The much larger KILLDEER of the south has two breastbands. This noisy and conspicuous plover is the most familiar of our shorebirds. The COMMON SNIPE is a bird of bogs and wet meadows. Its bill has a flexible tip, the better to catch earthworms deep in the soil. The LONG-BILLED CURLEW of grassy western uplands is easily identified by its size (over 2 feet long) and a bill the like of which is owned by no other Canadian bird.



COMMON SNIPE



AVOCET

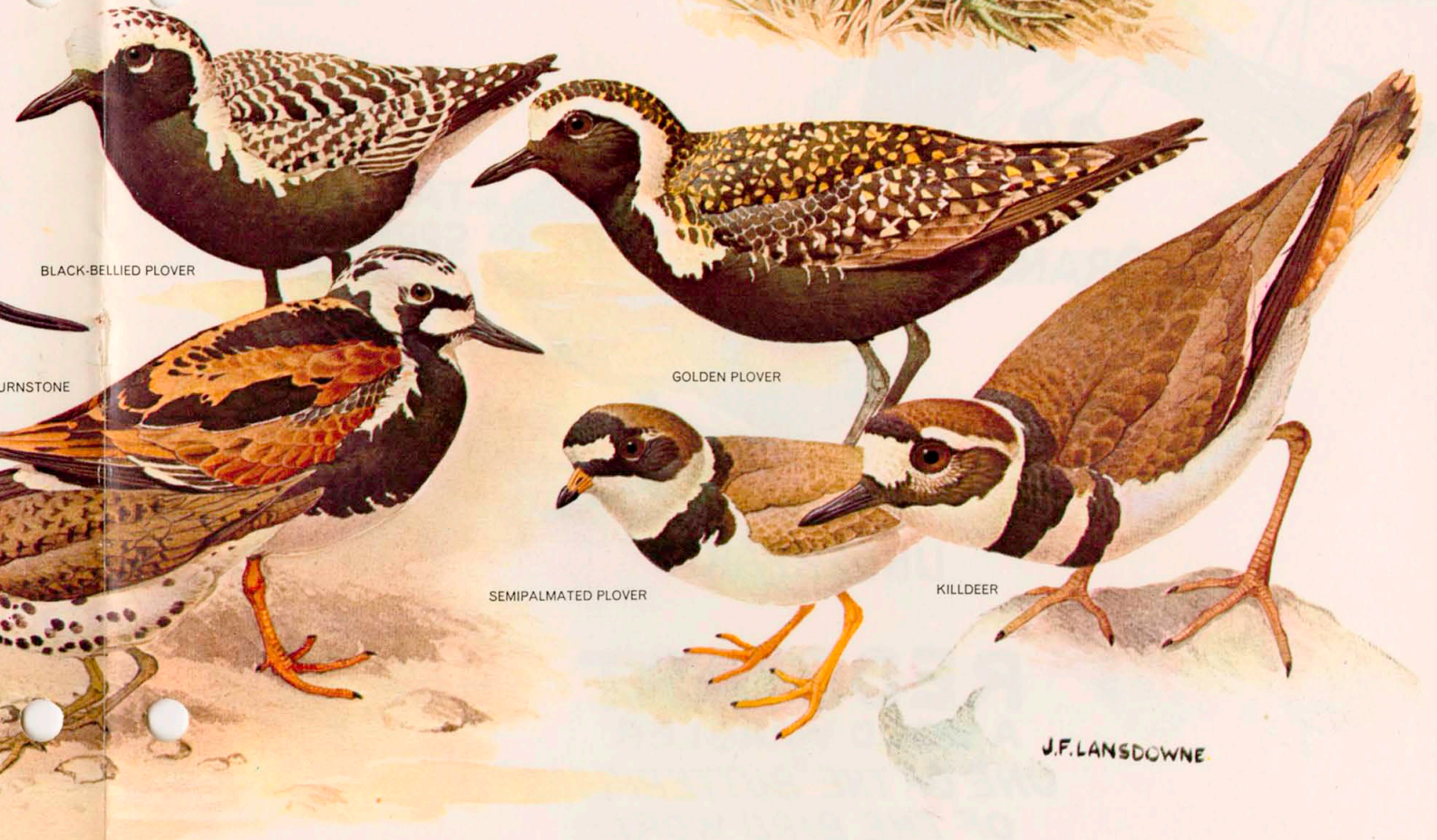
MARBLED GODWIT



WILSON'S PHALAROPE

LESSER YELLOWLEGS

SPOTTED SANDPIPER



BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER

RUDDY TURNSTONE

GOLDEN PLOVER

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER

KILLDEER

J.F. LANSLOWNE

Lively Sprite of Summer

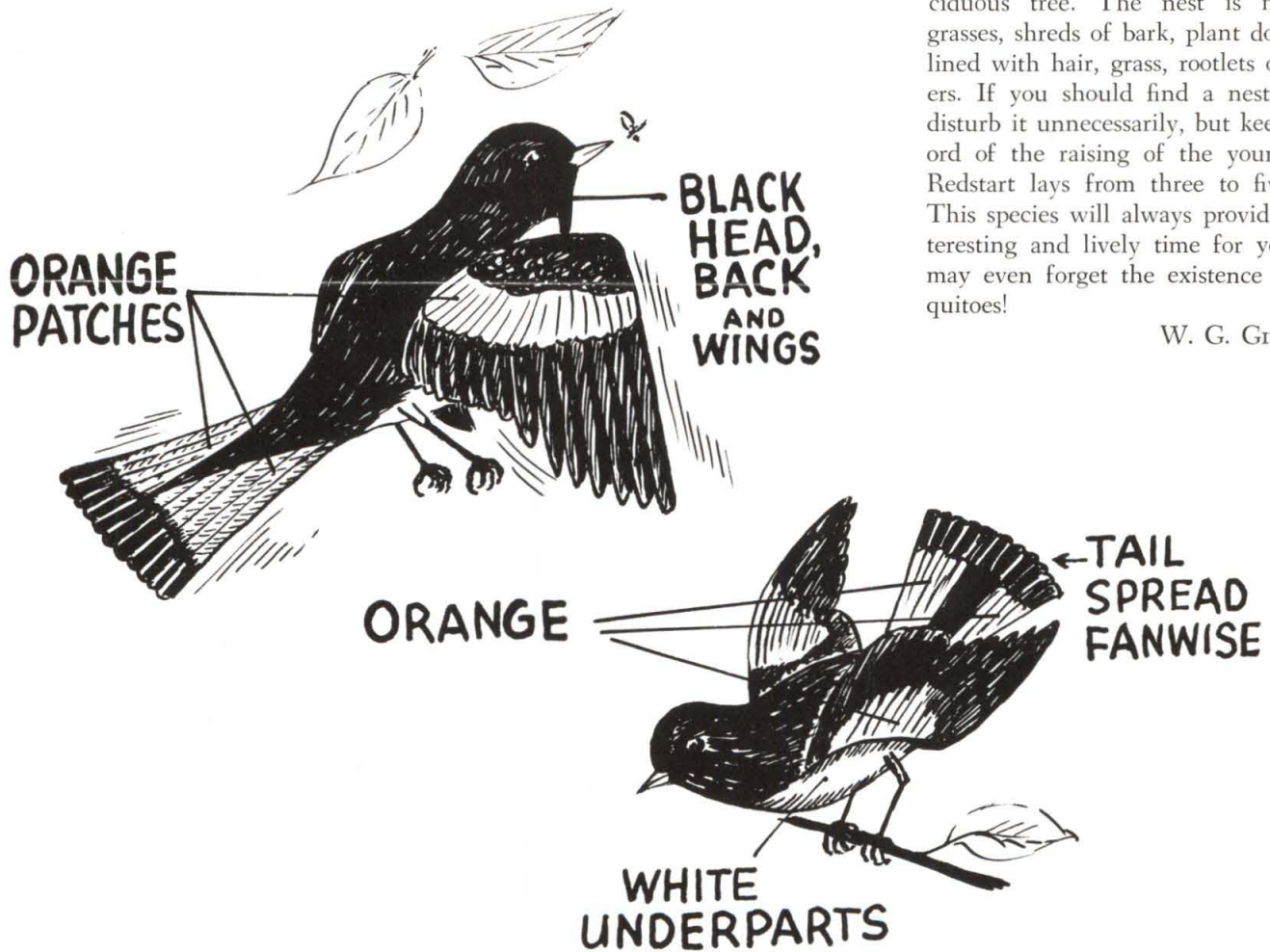
Perhaps you already have made the acquaintance of this energetic and lively bird. If you have been out in the field in May, searching out warblers, perhaps the Redstart will have come into view many times. If you have not seen one yet the opportunity is not lost, for this bird inhabits the deciduous woods over a wide area of Ontario and Canada. When all else is quiet in the woods the song of the Redstart may be heard, for it seems to like to sing. One of its songs is "tsee, tsee, tsee, tseet, tseet," the last note higher than the rest. There are many variations to its song. This makes for very interesting comparisons and it is sometimes puzzling.

But, then, when you finally catch up with it you will be treated to quite a display. You might even think the Redstart is "flirting" with you. By spreading its tail, revealing the bright orange patches and spreading its wings to show more orange. You wonder if you are not looking at an orange-coloured bird! Then it will dash into mid-air, and on quivering wings pick up an insect, again revealing its bright colouring. It may now just quietly go about the business of hunting insects, but all the while ever alert and almost ready for a game! Its movements suggest this to a great degree. If you catch the Redstart in a cross-light when it spreads its tail

and wings, the colour is really outstanding. It is indeed a handsome bird, the black head, throat, upperparts and tail contrasting sharply with the orange patches in the wings and tail and white underparts. The female is just as active as the male, but it is not so brilliant in colour. In the female the orange colour of the male is replaced with yellow, and the black is replaced with olive brown and white underparts.

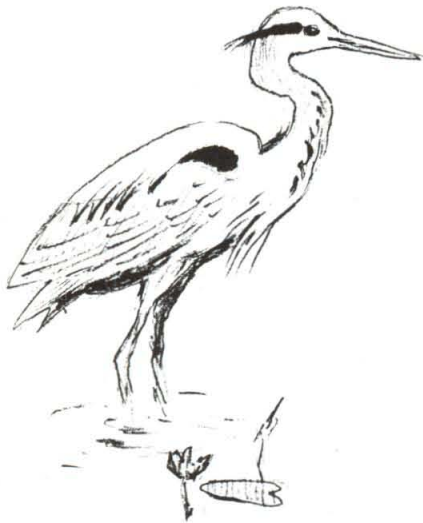
Once the birds have established a territory and you know they are frequenting the area daily, it is fun to look for the nest. The Redstart builds it about fifteen to twenty feet up from the ground, generally in the crotch of a deciduous tree. The nest is made of grasses, shreds of bark, plant down and lined with hair, grass, rootlets or feathers. If you should find a nest do not disturb it unnecessarily, but keep a record of the raising of the young. The Redstart lays from three to five eggs. This species will always provide an interesting and lively time for you! You may even forget the existence of mosquitoes!

W. G. GIRLING



REDSTART
A WOOD WARBLER
ONE OF THE "BUTTERFLIES"
OF THE BIRD WORLD

LIFE AROUND THE LAKE



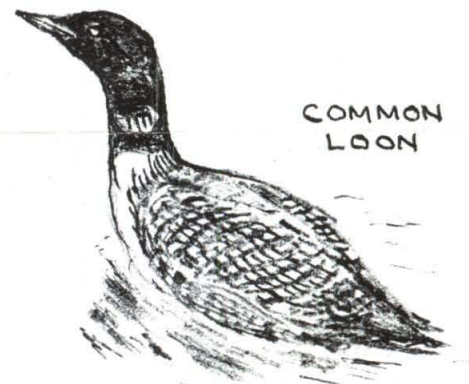
GREAT BLUE
HERON



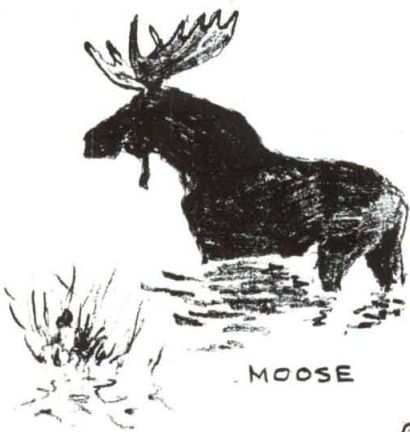
NORTHERN WATER-THRUSH



BEAVER



COMMON
LOON



MOOSE



SNAPPING TURTLE



OTTER

John Bateman

WOODLORE

FOR THE NATURALIST

John Macfie

MIND YOUR OUTDOOR MANNERS

Many popular Ontario hiking and canoe routes are an unsightly and unsanitary mess by the end of summer. Nothing destroys the wilderness aspect of canoe and hiking country so readily as littered trails, portages and campsites.

Burn all garbage that accumulates at camp or lunch stops, including cans. Carry well back into the bush whatever isn't consumed by fire; scoop a pit in the earth and cover it completely. This will reduce the risk of attracting flies and

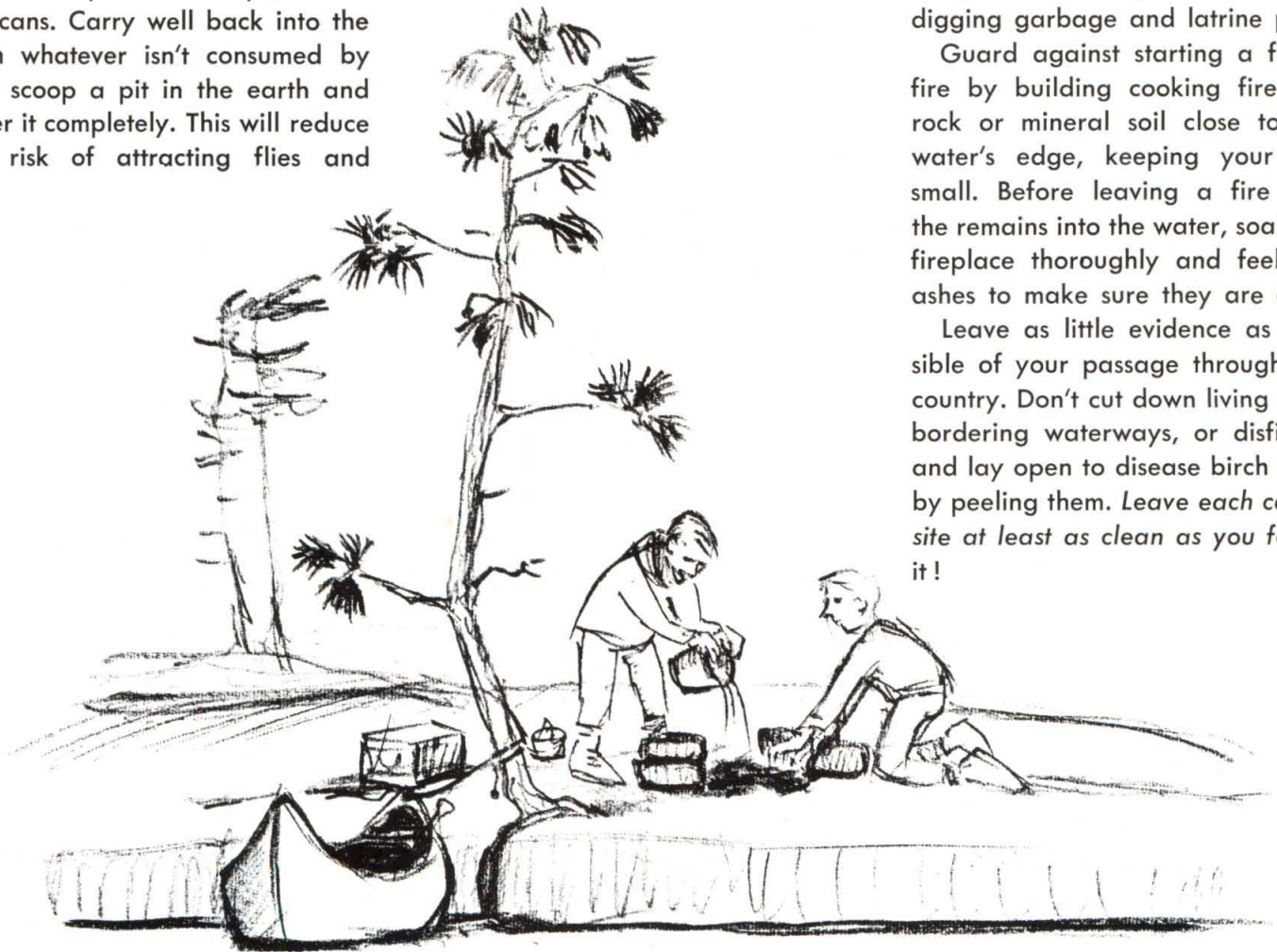
bears, and leave the area in an unspoiled condition for those who follow you. If you don't use a lunch fire, carry your garbage home. Don't discard candy wrappers, etc., on portage trails or in the water;

take them to the next campsite for burning.

On camping trips, select a site well-removed from camp and the water's edge for a latrine pit, and add earth after use. If you intend to use a campsite for more than one day, you will find it worth while to carry a small collapsible shovel for digging garbage and latrine pits.

Guard against starting a forest fire by building cooking fires on rock or mineral soil close to the water's edge, keeping your fire small. Before leaving a fire kick the remains into the water, soak the fireplace thoroughly and feel the ashes to make sure they are cold.

Leave as little evidence as possible of your passage through the country. Don't cut down living trees bordering waterways, or disfigure and lay open to disease birch trees by peeling them. *Leave each campsite at least as clean as you found it!*



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