

FRANK BAINES, 1877 - 1968

a tribute by C. Stuart Houston, Saskatoon



Saskatchewan lost one of its devoted conservationists and an important link with its pioneer origins when Mr. Frank Baines passed away at the age of 91 years on October 19, 1968.

He was born in Manchester, England on October 1, 1877. In 1883 the family settled at "Crescent City" (simply a cluster of tents), Assiniboia, N.W.T., some 18 miles south of the present city of Yorkton. Rabbits were their staple food that first winter. Both Frank and his brother Fred, three years his elder, became very interested in the wildlife of the area and they began collecting and preparing specimens to sell to commercial collectors in eastern Canada. Frank skinned the birds and applied the arsenical paste, while Fred handled the "business end" of the project. From about 1887 to 1890, specimens were sent to Mr. Rippon of Toronto,

then for five years to E. J. Cousins of Spadina Avenue, Toronto. Walter Raine of Toronto then received many eggs and a few skins during the last five years of the century. Raine visited the Baines farm for nearly a week in 1901 and took the beautiful photographs of the Horned Grebe, Sandhill Crane, Marbled Godwit and Upland Plover nests that appeared in Chester A. Reed's authoritative *North American birds' eggs* in 1904.

The Baines brothers collected altogether about 60 different species of birds. Data as to date and locality were attached to each bird, or with each set of eggs, but no master record was kept and unfortunately the whereabouts of the vast majority of the birds they collected is unknown. One Little Brown Crane which they collected at Crescent Lake on May 2, 1899, is in the Harvard Museum of

Comparative Zoology.

When the *Blue Jay* was first published by Mrs. Priestly in 1942, Frank Baines was one of the select group of 75 original subscribers. Many of his notes appeared in the first two volumes, including participation in the first annual Saskatchewan Christmas Bird Count. Later contributions to the *Blue Jay* expressed his concern about the decline of the Sharp-tailed Grouse and his article of reminiscences of the early days, entitled "Then and Now", appeared in the Golden Jubilee Museum Issue of September 1955 (13:23-25). A more complete account of his experiences in the early days appeared in two instalments in the *Yorkton Enterprise* on March 18 and July 8, 1948.

He organized the Saltcoats and District Conservation Society on August 20, 1954, which affiliated with the Saskatchewan Natural History Society. That year the Saltcoats society organized 29 observers in 12 groups to cover 10 different rural school districts on the Christmas Bird Count; his sons Dave and Walter and sons-in-law Jim Rooke and Glen Laycock par-

ticipated, together with several of his grandchildren. Ten nailkeg nest boxes were placed around Anderson Lake, Saltcoats in 1955 and at least two were used by Goldeneye ducks in 1956 and 1957. Although the Society "petered out" after two years, Frank Baines continued a vigorous outdoorsman until well beyond his 80th birthday, attended annual meetings of the provincial society and contributed to the program on at least two occasions.

His son, Elwin K. Baines, Tisdale apiarist, is a past Vice-President of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society and Phil, President of the Saskatoon S.P.C.A., is also a member. Dave, on the home farm, passes on significant bird observations each year.

How appropriate that our Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History in Regina was dedicated in Jubilee Year "to the honour of all the pioneers who came from many lands to settle in this part of Canada — a tribute to their vision, toil and courage which gave so much to Saskatchewan and this nation."

BRIEF NOTES ON CERTAIN ANIMALS OF THE CRESCENT LAKE DISTRICT, SASKATCHEWAN, SINCE 1883

by the late **Frank Baines**

In 1950 Mr. Baines, the pioneer to whom the above tribute was written, commented on some of the animals in that region. Included in his remarks was information on the changes in abundance of certain species. Since records of historical distribution are rare and so of particular interest, his comments are reproduced here.

Star-nosed Mole

Condylura cristata):

I believe we trapped a Star-nosed Mole about 1915 on SE $\frac{1}{4}$ 29-23-3 W2, while catching "gophers".

Snowshoe Rabbit

Lepus americanus):

These hares were abundant in 1883 and formed the main item of our diet the first winter. Their numbers have since decreased, but they are still common.

White-tailed Jack Rabbit

(Lepus townsendii)):

Jack rabbits were rather uncommon in the 1880's, but have been common since about 1900.

Woodchuck (*Marmota monax*):

No woodchucks were seen until about 1915, but now they are an uncommon but consistent resident.

Beaver (*Castor canadensis*):

The first beaver noted in the district came to the Cutarm Creek in the 1920's, and resided there until trapped illegally a few years ago. A new pair have since been planted there by the Department of Natural Resources.

Wandering individuals have also