SIXTEEN CANADA GEESE STOPPED IN JANESVILLE ON APRIL 26 WHILE ON THEIR WAY NORTH. ON THE SHORE AT EXTREME RIGHT IS MRS. R. L. TIFFANY WHO MADE THIS PICTURE POSSIBLE BY MANEUVERING THE GEESE INTO POSITION FOR THE GAZETTE PHOTOGRAPHER, A JOB WHICH REQUIRED A LOT OF PATIENCE. MR. TIFFANY SAYS IT IS THE FIRST TIME IN AT LEAST SEVEN YEARS THAT CANADA GEESE HAVE LANDED IN THAT AREA. MR. R. W. BLISS, EDITOR OF THE JANESVILLE GAZETTE, SENT US THE PHOTOGRAPH.

A PLEA FOR THE PENCIL
By MARGARET MORSE NICE

When Dr. Niko Tinbergen was visiting us in the fall of 1946, he told us that in the hostage camp to which the professors of Leyden University were sent, one of the projects had been a class in portraiture and almost all the men did well. “The Dutch seem to have special ability in drawing,” he said.

Some months later I spoke of this to another Dutch biologist, Anton de Vos. “I do not believe that,” he answered. “I think it is that they are taught that it is important.” Well, thought I, if any one can draw, then I will. I had always longed to be able to sketch, but I thought one had to have a gift. My sisters had taken drawing lessons when we were children, but I had shown no aptitude in any skill.

In the “Living Wilderness” I came upon a review by Olaus Murie of Clayton Hoagland’s “The Pleasures of Sketching Outdoors” (Viking Press); this I bought and followed its directions. I was becoming greatly interested in plants at this time and sketched flowers at the Indiana Dunes and trees in Jackson Park near our home. William Beecher of the Chicago Natural History Museum, biologist and artist, gave me
suggestions on technique and on books to get from the library, Arthur Guptil’s “Drawing with Pen and Ink” (Reinhold) proving the most helpful. “You should draw birds,” he said. This seemed to me too ambitious. “Copy from Peterson to learn proportions, then practice on the park birds.” This I did, but the park birds and squirrels and rabbits were not too cooperative with a beginning art student.

In December, 1947, on my journey home from the Wilson Club meeting in Columbus, Ohio, I busied myself sketching trees. This was such fun that I jotted down some thoughts in my notebook, entitled “Sketches in Twenty Seconds.”

“Select a tree in the middle distance, as those close by flit past in 5 to 7 seconds, while those further away may with good luck be seen for 20 to 30 seconds. Not that one can utilize all these precious moments, for first a tree must be seen, then chosen, and by this time several seconds have passed. I choose a tree with grace and individuality and preferably not too many branches; it should stand well out in the open. I decide as quickly as possible on my subject and desperately get down the main lines of the design; I try to fix its image in my mind, add further characters as the train quickly brings me past and shows me its other side and then it is gone forever. For a minute or two I continue working, adding small branches where I know they should go from my acquaintance with the species. Such rapid-fire work gives me a sample of outlines of trees in a locality; it teaches me much of their habits of growth, and will have comparative value for journeys in other regions.”

This sketching from the train window was my chief interest and occupation on the trip three months later to the West Coast; and here I had mountains as well as trees. In between journeys, drawing leaves and flowers was a great aid in my hurried attempt at acquaintance with the new flora, while birds and deer posed different problems.

![Trees from the Train Window](image)

**Figure 1. Trees from the Train Window from Illinois in February to Illinois in May.**

One August afternoon at Jackson Park I had been throwing crumbs as usual to the grackles, pigeons and English sparrows, then drawing hastily until my subjects flew away. As I started home, I came upon some people trying to release a hand-raised meadowlark that did not wish to be deserted. I thought, “What a wonderful model for sketching—a really tame bird!” So I told them of my large cage at home and persuaded them to give him to me. He has proved a liberal education both for sketching and for studying his large variety of poses.
Figure II. Six-weeks-old hand-raised Pekin duckling at Mrs. Winnifred Smith's, on Two Creeks, Wisconsin.

Figure III. Hand-raised Meadowlark; pictures on left, before post-juvenile molt; second from left at bottom, begging; middle on right by WM. J. Beecher.
Visits to zoos are far more valuable to me than formerly. Figure IV shows a selection of sketches from three visits last fall to the Washington Zoo. The scale is confused, but there is one characteristic that all the creatures have in common—they stayed still.

![Sketches of birds, including an emperor penguin, jabiru, rhea, baby guanaco, chameleon, and different positions of the pupil in its eye, a brown pelican, and a flamingo.]

Figure IV. At the zoo in Washington. Emperor penguin, jabiru, rhea, baby guanaco, chameleon and different positions of the pupil in its eye, brown pelican, flamingo.

Sketching has taught me to see more clearly than before; it has made me more aware of the interest and wonder of the world. It has helped me to remember, for it gives a record, at times of pleasure and beauty, at other times of facts of scientific value. I regret that years ago I did not realize that I could draw after a fashion; it would have been of the greatest help in my studies of the song sparrow and other birds. My experience shows what a person without particular ability can do, and I earnestly urge my readers to take up their pencils and draw what interests them in the world around them.

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