

## SOME MORE NOTES ON SASKATCHEWAN BIRDS

WITH ONE PHOTO

By H. H. MITCHELL

AS MIGHT BE expected in this comparatively new province, several interesting ornithological finds have come to hand since my last notes appeared in the *CONDOR* (xxv, 1923, p. 159). The few birds listed beyond are all included (some hypothetically) in the provincial bird list recently published, with the exception of the Hudsonian Curlew. That species was unexpected so far inland and no information whatever on its occurrence in the province was available.

The spring migration of 1924 was a late one, apparently owing to continued north winds and chilly weather. On May 22 I commenced my collecting at the north end of Last Mountain Lake (Imperial Beach) with Master Bert Lloyd as assistant, whose vigilance, I might here say, was responsible for our first locating the Hudsonian Curlews. The lake is approximately fifty miles long, with an average width of two miles, lying north and south, and surrounded for the most part by treeless prairie. The south end (twenty-five miles north of Regina) I had not found previously a favorable migration ground; but at the north end I found conditions far more interesting, which suggests that birds traveling in their usual northwesterly direction strike the lake toward its northern end.

My note book under date of May 25 reads: "Still cold, wind N, frosts at night. Take a Forster Tern (from among Common Terns), a young Horned Lark nearly full grown, a Snow Bunting, and Tennessee, Myrtle and Yellow warblers. Find Ring-billed Gulls have eggs mostly incubated; a large compact colony of these on long, sandy point. Common Terns have eggs mostly fresh; a few pairs of California Gulls appear to be building on island near Ring-billed Gulls. Saw several swans on lake, well out. Sandhill Cranes in great numbers soaring and circling very high up, but working northward; many Black-bellied Plovers and a few Golden Plovers appear to be in fine plumage. Bert finds two or three Bonaparte Gulls lying on beach, apparently dead a week or so; Turnstones appear to be more plentiful than previously noted."

On the evening of May 27 we discovered an interesting roosting ground in a small, low, stony island about 500 yards off-shore. It was dusk when we were passing this island on our return to camp, and hearing a commotion among some terns, we headed in to investigate. As the boat approached, hundreds of Turnstones, comparatively tame in the failing light, flew off, most of them returning in a few minutes to alight on the far side of the island. A few Black Terns and Common Terns, bent on getting settled down for the night, kept up a continual noise. As we drew away to watch proceedings, flock after flock of Turnstones, with smaller numbers of sandpipers (Least, Baird and Pectoral, as near as we could tell), arrived every few minutes until the island was literally covered. As I had previously noted the Ruddy Turnstone as uncommon, I was surprised to see them in such numbers here.

A few Snow Buntings were seen as late as May 30, and a Lapland Longspur was taken on May 31; the Black-bellied Plovers and Turnstones were still there, though in less numbers, on June 5, when we left.

From June 11 to 24 we were in the Moose Mountain district, part of that time being camped on the north shore of Rocky Lake. This district, southeast of Regina, is hilly and well wooded with innumerable sloughs and small lakes. On one small island in Rocky Lake we found a joint colony of Great Blue Herons and Double-crested Cormorants nesting in old, mostly dead, birch trees. The herons' nests were

highest up, the less bulky nests of the cormorants below in the same trees. It was interesting to note that most of the herons' nests contained nests of the Bronzed Grackle, built into the sides or underneath. The Grackles were busy feeding their young at that time; some of the cormorants and herons also had young.

On another smaller and very low island a pair of Canada Geese had nested; two addled eggs and shells of two others that had been hatched remained in the nest, which was built in the center of the island. At the water's edge on the same island we found on June 16 a nest of the Loon with two heavily incubated eggs; but most of the

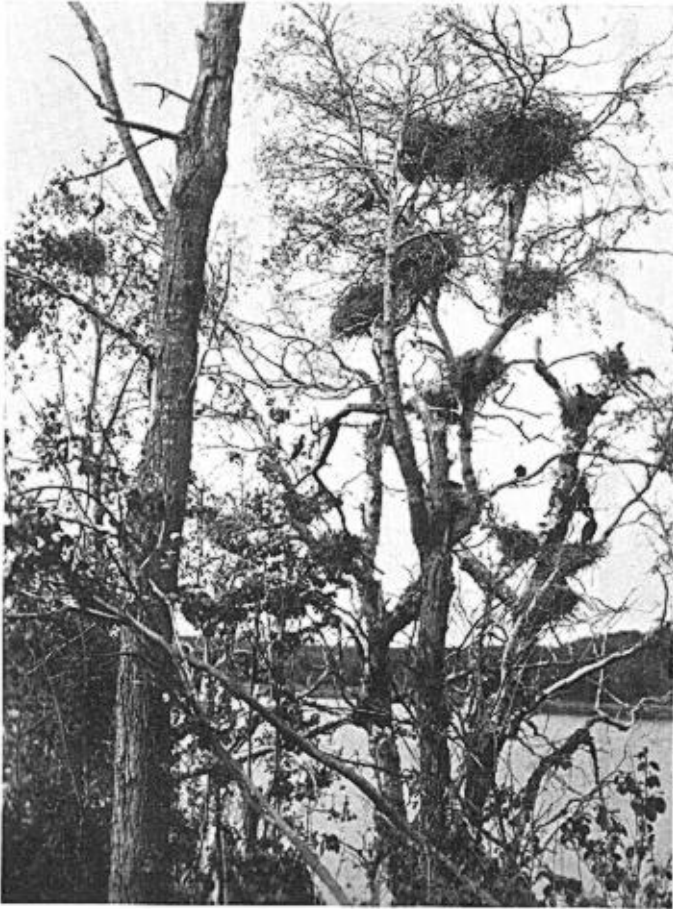


Fig. 22. NESTS OF DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS AND GREAT BLUE HERONS IN BIRCH TREE ON AN ISLAND IN ROCKY LAKE. NOTE BRONZED GRACKLE IN UPPER LEFT-HAND CORNER. PHOTO TAKEN JUNE 16, 1924.

numerous Common Loons we saw in the district had downy young with them at that date. It was interesting to watch, through the field glasses, the parent birds feeding their two tiny chicks.

It was in this locality that I was glad to get a specimen of another bird that is rarely seen in this province, the Crested Flycatcher. Baltimore Orioles were quite

common, several pairs of Purple Martins were found nesting in holes in trees, and Black-billed Cuckoos were frequently seen or heard. If the latter birds are partial to a diet of caterpillars they were then in clover, as the American tent caterpillars were a pest at the time we left there.

**Sterna forsteri.** Forster Tern. A male taken May 25, 1924, the first specimen to be recorded for the province so far as I know. Another, a female, was taken in the same locality, Imperial Beach, on July 26, 1924, by Bert Lloyd.

**Anas rubripes.** Black Duck. Mr. R. Lloyd tells me he saw a Black Duck, taken by a local sportsman at Imperial Beach in October, 1924, which constitutes the third known record for Saskatchewan.

**Querquedula cyanoptera.** Cinnamon Teal. A male that was taken south of Moose Jaw by Neil Gilmour, May 22, 1923, is the first specimen recorded in the province that I know of.

**Micropalama himantopus.** Stilt Sandpiper. One taken at Imperial Beach, May 23, 1924, from a flock of nine. On May 29 another flock of twelve was seen in the same locality.

**Calidris canutus.** Knot. Three were secured, of five seen, at Imperial Beach, May 27, 1924. These are the first I have seen in this province.

**Limosa haemastica.** Hudsonian Godwit. A male and female were taken May 22, 1924, at Imperial Beach, the only ones seen. They are apparently rare here.

**Numenius hudsonicus.** Hudsonian Curlew. One, a male, was taken from three seen; these were very wild. They constitute the only known record for this province.

**Falco islandus.** White Gyrfalcon. One was taken at Indian Head, December 25, 1897, by G. Lang. This sole record for Saskatchewan was only recently "dug up" in the shape of a much battered mounted specimen.

**Tyto alba pratincola.** American Barn Owl. A mounted specimen was discovered in the shop of a local taxidermist, taken at Aylesbury, May 5, 1924. Previous to this there was a sight record of one being seen at Indian Head in 1910.

**Cryptoglaux funerea richardsoni.** Richardson Owl. At the present time our only record is of a specimen taken at Mistatim, February 25, 1923.

**Melanerpes erythrocephalus.** Red-headed Woodpecker. One that was taken June 22, 1924, near Eastend, makes the second specimen from that locality secured by L. B. Potter.

**Myiarchus crinitus.** Crested Flycatcher. A female that was taken June 20, 1924, in the Moose Mountain district is the only specimen I know of for the province.

**Cyanocitta stelleri annectens.** Black-headed Jay. A specimen, apparently referable to this subspecies, was taken by G. Lang near Indian Head, May 24, 1923. Subsequently Mr. H. Fields of Regina reported having seen one in the Qu'Appelle Valley in November, 1924.

**Melospiza georgiana.** Swamp Sparrow. While engaged in bird-banding, Bert Lloyd trapped a male at Davidson, October 1, 1924. It is now mounted in the museum, as but few specimens have been available.

**Spiza americana.** Dickcissel. Three pairs seen and a male taken at Lake Johnston, June 20, 1923, by H. McCrae. This species was rather to have been expected farther south, near the Manitoba-North Dakota boundaries, as it is apparently not uncommon in the Turtle Mountain region.

*Regina, Saskatchewan, December 19, 1924.*