

I arrived at Dundurn, Saskatchewan, on May 7, 1946, immediately set up a collecting camp, and prepared to devote a month to the study of migrational birds in the central part of the province. During the few days when it was warm enough for the birds and myself to brave the elements I managed to make some very interesting observations. One record of particular interest was for a pair of Says Phoebes noted on May 15. Although this seems to be a very northerly record, apparently the most northerly for the province, it is not unexpected since some Says Phoebes nest along the Mackenzie River and are fairly common migrants through central and northern Alberta. Apart from the Phoebes, the best observations were made on wading birds which were very abundant on the few sloughs that remained alive in the Dundurn-Saskatoon area. On May 21, at a place called Proctors Lake, I was fortunate enough to observe 27 species of shorebirds in the space of five hours. These included Avocets, Hudsonian Curlews, Knots, Stilt Sandpipers, Buff-breasted Sandpipers, two races of Dowitcher, a Redbacked Sandpiper and what was almost certainly a female Red Phalarope. Specimens of all these were collected with the exception of the Red Phalarope which was in company with a thousand or more Northern Phalaropes and which could not be reached from shore.

Excepting the shore birds, the only other records of particular interest from this area were for Pinnated Grouse, Coopers Hawk, Virginia Rails, Arkansas Kingbirds and innumerable Starlings. A total of 147 migratory species were observed during the month of May.

After leaving Dundurn I jeoped north past Montreal Lake until the road ran out and I was forced to revert to canoe and feet to carry me over some hundreds of miles of muskeg and spruce ridges. In this great and watery country I managed to spare a little time from the mosquitoes to observe the bird life and some of the more spectacular results of my search were a downy Solitary Sandpiper, which is apparently the first specimen ever to be taken in downy plumage; a breeding colony of Dowitchers that seem to belong to the recently invalidated 'Hendersoni' race; breeding Sandhill Cranes; Franklins Gulls to the number of plus a thousand in one flock; a single Lesser Snow Goose; Bohemian Waxwings; Chimney Swifts; downy Bonapartes Gulls, five miles from the nearest suitable nesting area; a Richardsons Owl; breeding Lesser Canada Goose; and American Three-toed Woodpeckers.

I would like to draw attention to the infinitely small numbers of warblers that appeared in the spring of 1946. I should say that only about five or ten percent of the normal warbler breeding population arrived on the northern nesting grounds this year, and no more than twenty percent of the numbers to be expected were in evidence during migration at Dundurn. I suspect this noticeable scarcity of an entire family of birds can be co-related with a series of unusual snow falls, and prolonged cold wet weather in early June 1945. Someone interested in the effects of climatic conditions on large masses of birds might find some very interesting study here.

Another point that intrigues me is to discover the reason why one of the largest and most potentially productive ornithological areas in Canada, the Churchill River Basin, has for so long been neglected by ornithologists. I am fully convinced that detailed exploration of this area, particularly the Saskatchewan section, will more than fully repay the effort expended upon it, not only by way of providing new data on birds and other animals, but as living proof that the spirit of the Wild West is not wholly dead.

In conclusion I wish to thank the several, able local ornithologists throughout the province who so kindly aided me in my summer's work, and who with great good will managed to heal all of my spiritual wounds - if not my physical ones.

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