

1944 CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS

In spite of extremely severe weather thirteen Christmas Bird Censuses were made, giving a count of 35 species and approximately 4000 individuals. This is four more species than were listed in 1943 and 1942, counts which both rated 30 species. Eight birds not noted in either of the two previous counts were seen this year, these being the American Rough-legged Hawk, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Raven, Nuthatch, Robin, Starling, Red-winged Blackbird, and Song Sparrow.

Some interesting points have been brought out by this season's census. The Black-capped Chickadee and the Magpie head the list as appearing in 12 of the 13 lists. The fact that the Magpie is so widely dispersed over the province is not welcome news. Redpolls which last year were the most frequently seen species, this year were almost entirely out of the picture and were only reported from Skull Creek in the southwest and from Benito just a few miles inside the Manitoba boundary on the northeast.

By the way, it is most interesting to compare the list sent in from Skull Creek by Steve Mann with those from Nipawin, Torch River or Benito - the one from the western plains and the others from the northwoods. It should also be noted that although Tree Sparrows and Horned Larks would be regarded as "wintering summer birds" in most sections of the province, at Skull Creek they regularly remain on during the winter. No Short-eared Owls were reported this year. Game birds seem generally scarce, as do Snowy Owls. No Evening Grosbeaks were seen further south than Wallwort (south of Tisdale).

So far, our three Christmas Censuses have produced a list of 42 different species of birds seen in Saskatchewan in mid-winter.

Benito, Man. Dec. 26. Distance covered, $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles on foot through open and wooded country. Goshawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 1; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 1; Hungarian Partridge, 9; Great Horned Owl, 2; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Blue Jay, 2; Magpie, 2; Raven, 1; Black-capped Chickadee, 2; Evening Grosbeak, 2; Pine Grosbeak, 30; Redpoll, 19; Snow Bunting, 64. Total, 15 species, 140 individuals. - A. ISFELD.

Grenfell, Sask. Jan. 7. Area covered: a circuit of about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles by two observers on foot across stubble fields and pasture broken by bluffs. Also 22 miles by car on Highway No. 47, later on same day. Temperature -10° at start, -14° later; about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches of fresh snow. Hungarian Partridge, 14; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Magpie, 5; Black-capped Chickadee, 15; English Sparrow, 50. Total, 6 species, 86 individuals. Sharp-tailed Grouse, Ruffed Grouse and Snow Buntings have been seen recently. A Meadowlark has stayed so far through the winter, and is seen on a spot on No. 47 highway - it was last seen Jan. 6. -MR. AND MRS. JOHN HUBBARD, JR.

Hawarden, Sask. (open prairie). Dec. 28; 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Raw SE wind, Temp. 5° . Mallard, 1 (female, wintering with tame ducks, and staying by flowing artesian well); English Sparrow, 100 (est.); Snow Bunting, 175 (est.). Total 3 species, approximately 276 individuals. A Golden Eagle flew over, Dec. 26. -HAROLD KVINGE.

Indian Head, Sask. Distance covered, 12 blocks. Time spent out, $\frac{3}{4}$ hour. Temperature -15° . Magpie, 1; Black-capped Chickadee, 3; Bohemian Waxwing, 11; Starling, 1. Total, 4 species, 16 individuals. -BILL WILSON.

Raymore, Sask. Dec. 28. Distance covered, one mile on foot. Weather cold and windy. Downy Woodpecker, 1; Magpie, 7; Black-capped Chickadee, 5. Total, 3 species, 13 individuals. -MISS E.K. JONES.

1944 CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS (continued)

Nipawin, Sask. (through town of Nipawin, and south along east bank of Saskatchewan River). Dec. 24; 1.15 p.m. to 4.45 p.m. Clear, bright day; Wind, W to NW, 10 to 15 mph; 8 to 10 inches of snow. Temp. -15° at start and finish. 1 observer afoot. Total hours afield, $3\frac{1}{2}$; total mileage, $4\frac{1}{2}$. Goshawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 1; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 5; Great Horned Owl, 1; Pileated Woodpecker, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; American Three-toed Woodpecker, 2; Canada Jay, 2; Blue Jay, 16; Magpie, 4; Raven, 2; Black-capped Chickadee, 11; Hudsonian Chickadee, 2; Bohemian Waxwing, 15; Common Starling, 2; English Sparrow, 300 (est.); Evening Grosbeak, 3; Pine Grosbeak, 9. Total, 18 species, approximately 379 individuals. - MAURICE G. STREET.

Scott, Sask. January 1. Two miles covered on foot, "near planted trees and hedges of Experimental Farm all the way." Weather calm, bright sunshine, temperature -7° . Sharp-tailed Grouse, 2; Hungarian Partridge, 35; Magpie, 2; Black-capped Chickadee, 6; English Sparrow, 65; Snow Bunting, 80. Total, 6 species, 190 individuals. - F. ROUSE.

Skull Creek, Sask. (Birds recorded from day to day between Christmas and New Year, around the ranch and driving into town). Goshawk, 2; American Rough-legged Hawk, 2; Golden Eagle, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 2; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 7; Hungarian Partridge, 46; Pheasant, 1; Great Horned Owl, 4; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Horned Lark, 23; Magpie, 27; Black-capped Chickadee, 5; Robin, 1; Bohemian Waxwing, 700; English Sparrow, 108; Tree Sparrow, 14; Song Sparrow, 2; Redpoll, 5; Snow Bunting, 8. Total, 19 species, approximately 959 individuals. - STEVE A. MANN.

Torch River, Sask. Birds seen around barn-yard and fields between Dec. 25 and Dec. 31. First occurrence of each species recorded. Weather cloudy and very cold, lowest temperature -35° , highest temp. 2° . Sharp-tailed Grouse, 9; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Canada Jay, 3; Blue Jay, 2; Magpie, 4; Raven, 2; Black-capped Chickadee, 2; Northern Shrike, 1; English Sparrow, 20; Evening Grosbeak, 14; Pine Grosbeak, 11; Snow Bunting, 7. (The Shrike was daily raiding the flock of English Sparrows). Total, 12 species, 76 individuals. - C. STUART FRANCIS.

Tullis, Sask. (fields $\frac{1}{2}$ mile E. and $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles N. of Tullis, together with trip to Hitchcock Coulee and the South Saskatchewan River, 10 miles E. of Tullis.) Dec. 27; 10:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Overcast; Wind, light, E; 1 inch of snow. Temp. 2° at start, 4° at return. 4 observers in two groups. Total party hours afield, 7 ($1\frac{1}{2}$ by car, $5\frac{1}{2}$ on foot); total party miles, 32 (22 by car, 10 on foot). American Rough-legged Hawk, 1 (noted flying over coulee, identity positive); Ruffed Grouse, 2; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 8; Hungarian Partridge, 16; Snowy Owl, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; American Magpie, 5; Black-capped Chickadee, 20; English Sparrow, 105 (est.); Snow Bunting, 1. Total, 10 species, approximately 161 individuals. -L.J. ROY, WARREN S. ROY, MRS. LILLIAN VERRAULT, J. FRANCIS ROY.

Wallwort, Sask. (Through heavy timber and second growth) - Jan. 1; 7 inches of snow; light N.W. wind; Temperature -16° at start, -12° at finish; about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles covered on foot, one observer. Hawk, unidentified, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 3; Great Horned Owl, 2; Hairy Woodpecker, 5; Pileated Woodpecker, 2; Canada Jay, 1; Blue Jay, 4; Magpie, 4; Black-capped Chickadee, 11; Nuthatch (White-breasted? -Ed.), 4; English Sparrow, 10; Evening Grosbeak, 11; Pine Grosbeak, 7. Total, 13 species, 65 individuals. - JOHN D. RITCHIE.

Walseley, Sask. (In garden and around country close to town.) Christmas. Ring-necked Pheasant, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 5; Magpie, 15; Black-capped Chickadee, 6; Bohemian Waxwing, 50; Starling, 20; English Sparrow, 25. Total, 7 species, 123 individuals. - JOHN R. GARDEN.

1944 CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS (continued)

Yorkton, Sask. (area 15 miles in diameter, with Yorkton as center). - Dec. 26; 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Clear, bright day, cloudy in late afternoon; Wind NW, about 8 mph; only slight sprinkling of snow on fields. Temp. -8° at start, 6° at finish. 12 observers in 6 groups. Total party hours afield, 10 (5 by car and 5 on foot); total party miles, $53\frac{1}{2}$ (47 by car and $6\frac{1}{2}$ on foot). Goshawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 2; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 39; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Blue Jay, 1; American Magpie, 3; Black-capped Chickadee, 17; Bohemian Waxwing, 39; English Sparrow, 525 (est.); Snow Bunting, 877 (est.). Total, 11 species, approximately 1507 individuals. One dead Hungarian Partridge found on road during census. Snowy Owl noted Dec. 25; Great Horned Owl, Dec. 28. Pine Grosbeak, Dec. 28. American Robin seen at close range by three observers, Dec. 27 and 28. Red-winged Blackbird seen Dec. 22 and Dec. 31. This bird is still around (Jan. 27). - RAY ADAM, VERNON BARNES, NEIL BLACK, JACK BROWNLEE, W.A. BROWNLEE, BROTHER CLARENCE, C. STUART HOUSTON, DR. S.C. HOUSTON, MRS. J. MEEKMA, MICHAEL PRIESTLY, MRS. I.M. PRIESTLY, MR. AND MRS. C.C. SHAW (members Yorkton Natural History Society).

Note: GAME BIRDS. As already stated, game birds seem generally down in number all over the province, but some notes on conditions in different localities may be of interest. In the Yorkton area the Christmas Bird Census shows the Sharp-tailed Grouse or "Prairie Chicken" to be holding its own, the count from 1940-1944 inclusive being, 25, 22, 28, 39. On the other hand, Hungarian Partridges show a marked falling off according to our counts, from 133 in 1941 to nil this year. However, several of the farmers of the district report knowledge of good-sized flocks around, so the picture may not be so black after all.

The Sharp-tail is reported as definitely being down in numbers, at Grenfell, Wolseley, Hawarden, Nipawin, Skull Creek and other points. John R. Garden, writing from Wolseley, states - "Prairie Chicken have all but disappeared; a five year closed season for these birds should be in order." And from Skull Creek, Steve A. Mann reports - "Prairie Chicken have been very scarce this year, even during the hunting season. Everyone in these parts has noticed the same thing." "On the other hand," he says, "the Huns are noticeably more numerous. Possibly this can be accounted for by the fact that hunters could only obtain two boxes of shot gun ammunition and left the Huns alone in favor of easier game."

The Ring-neck Pheasant, now well established in the southern part of the province, seems making its way northward. Several have been seen in the Yorkton area this past Fall. Mrs. J. Hubbard, Jr. reports that Pheasants are "moving into the Grenfell district" and Mr. Garden says many flocks have been seen close to the town of Wolseley this Fall.

Mr. Garden also writes of seeing about fourteen Chukar Partridge, the first record of such birds since some were liberated in the Wolseley district four years ago. He asks - "Have you any idea how Chukars are doing all over the province? It would be interesting to hear."

PROVINCIAL BIRD EMBLEM.

We failed to mention in our last issue of the "Blue Jay" that the Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Pediacetes phasianellus*), commonly known as the "Prairie Chicken" was the bird selected by the greatest number of our members as their choice for a provincial bird emblem. The "Sharp-tail" was also the bird picked for this honor by the Regina Natural History Society and the Saskatchewan Fish & Game League. We shall be forwarding a letter recommending it as such to Hon. J.L. Phelps, before the next session of the Provincial Legislature. While admitting that many other birds suggested by members had a good claim to suitability we think most people will agree that the Sharp-tail is a typical western bird and well worthy of taking its place beside Saskatchewan's floral emblem, the Red Lily.