

THE WARBLER SITUATION AT NIPAWIN DURING 1945 and 1946.

by

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Almost continuous cold weather, augmented by intermittent snowstorms during May and early June, 1945, considerably reduced the number of migrating warblers usually seen each spring at Nipawin. The main migration of these feathered migrants took place in the last few days of May and the first ten days of June, considerably later than usual. At Yorkton, a heavy snow storm around "V-E Day" (May 7) took a heavy toll of Myrtle Warblers, numbers being picked up dead; later storms and continuing cold weather were equally as hard on the many species of Warblers which arrived later in the month, and all the survivors were reported as being in a weak condition. However, not a single instance of a warbler dying from cold or lack of food was recorded in the Nipawin district, - this probably was due to the fact that the main wave of migrants did not reach this northern point until after the worst of the snow and cold had passed. It is thought that the heaviest toll was taken in the more southern regions, as even south of the border, observers reported warblers somewhat down in numbers.

Rather than give in detail the number of individuals of each species observed in the spring of 1945, as compared with other years, a summary of the various species is given in brief. Only three species were seen in their usual numbers during the spring of 1945: the ovenbird, the Northern water-thrush and the black and white warbler. Nearly normal in numbers was the Yellow-throat, while the Mourning Warbler was only noted on three occasions instead of the usual dozen or more times. The Myrtle Warbler, usually very abundant, was away down in numbers; not quite so great a decrease was shown by the Palm, Black-throated green and Black-poll'd warblers. Only two Cape May warblers and one Nashville warbler were seen, but as these two species are not regularly observed every year, no indication of abundance or scarcity can be given. The rather uncommon nesters in this area had also apparently suffered some losses; no Magnolia warblers were noted during the breeding season, while only two pairs of Chestnut-sided warblers were found nesting in their usual haunts. In more than one place where several pairs of Yellow Warblers had been found nesting in previous years, not a single bird could be seen. (Yellow Warblers are never common at Nipawin). As could be more or less expected, the "Flycatching Warblers" suffered the greatest loss. Less than a dozen of the usually fairly abundant Wilson's warblers were observed in migration, and where ten or more nesting pairs of Canada Warblers could often be seen at the several favored areas along the Saskatchewan River in summer, only two pairs, and possibly a third, were noted. Redstarts, generally only next to the Myrtle warbler in numbers during migration, were very scarce.

During the fall of 1945, little improvement was noticeable. The Myrtle warbler had come back in somewhat stronger numbers, as had the Tennessee. This past spring, 1946, found the Myrtle warblers still far below normal, while the Redstarts appeared in even fewer numbers than in 1945, when they were considered very scarce. Quite surprising was the unexpected abundance of Palm warblers - after the first migrant was noted on May 19, it was estimated that over two thousand were seen during a two hour period on the afternoon of May 23. A marked increase in the numbers of this species was also reported from Yorkton. This, compared with the comparative few noted during the fall of 1945, leads one to wonder whether a shift in their migration route had occurred.

The autumn of 1946 showed all species of warblers to be more abundant, except for a still very depleted supply of Redstarts. Tennessee warblers were particularly abundant, the writer, during a short period, catching twelve of this species in his bird traps, that were ill-meant to catch such aristocrats as warblers.