

BIRD SECTION  
PRAIRIE CHICKEN DANCING GROUNDS

It was most gratifying to receive so many interesting replies to our request for information in the last issue about these areas. It was felt that these sites are not only unusual but are interesting enough to conserve for observation and study purposes. The apparent prevalence of these "happy hunting grounds" will come as a surprise to many of our readers.

Mrs. Marion Nixon of Wauchope, tells us of a Sharptail dancing ground on the south-west quarter of 15-8-33, west of the 1st. It lies on an exposed long knoll across the top of a "T" of open ground, flanked by bluffs. South of it, on the open prairie is an isolated "rubbing" tree, used by grazing stock in the spring time, and serving as a landmark to find the location.

From Grenfell comes the report of two dancing grounds. Mrs. F. Bilsbury writes: "One is located about a mile south of our farm. It is on the side of a grass prairie trail. Thirty or more birds were observed by Mr. Douglas Parsons here on New Year's day. The other one is on the north end of a field on the S.E. quarter of Section 13. When the field is in summerfallow the ground is packed hard around the dancing ground, and likewise in winter the snow is hard enough to hold up a man. Flocks of birds have been noted by myself many times there.

"Although I have lived in Saskatchewan for nearly forty years", writes Mr. H. A. Anslow, of Stony Beach, "I have only once seen this strange and interesting spectacle until about eight years ago. At that time a group of chickens, usually twelve to fourteen, selected a slight elevation in the middle of my cultivated land. Every summer for at least four years they used this same spot. I have stopped the tractor within a few yards of them to watch their antics. I had thought that they danced only in the mating season, but this does not seem to be the case. Every day about four o'clock they would begin to arrive -- the early comers waiting until the others were there before the dance began. The location of the land is about twenty miles north-west of Regina, S.W.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 5, Tn. 19, R.21.

(Mr. Anslow left this farm in 1944 and would be interested in finding out if these dancing grounds are still in use.)

Mrs. John Hubbard, Jr., also of Grenfell, reports three dancing grounds. Apparently these are different areas from those reported by Mrs. Bilsbury. One is on the N.W.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 25-8-18, W.2nd One on the S.E.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 25-8-18 and the other on the N.W.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 5-7-18. About thirty birds use these grounds.

And from Fort San, Mr. Richard A. Nevard describes the locations of two of these interesting dancing grounds. One is on his father's farm at Lipton, located on the S.W.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 13-24-14. The other is on the S.W.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 30-24-14. Mr. Nevard writes that he will make a count in the early spring and give us more details later.

A large dancing ground has been reported near Clashmoor, by Mr. E. W. Arnold, of Valparaiso. He has seen as many as forty or fifty on the field at one time. He will give us the land location later and try to get some pictures of it in the spring.

Miss B. Anita Coneybears, of Strasbourg, informs us that there are two prairie chicken dancing grounds on quarters rented by her family from a neighbor. She has shown these grounds to several people interested in natural history.

This has been a long cold winter, but fortunately the snowfall has been light in comparison with the unusual precipitation of the past two years. Reports from various sections of the province tell of an abundance of haws, rose hips, saskatoons, chokecherries, wolf willow berries, maple seeds and spruce and pine cones, Apparently the birds have been blessed with full stomachs and have wintered well.

Valparaiso - E. W. Arnold: "Hungarian partridge really seem to be on the increase around here. Last winter I noticed only five, but on January 3rd of this year I saw five flocks with from five to fourteen birds in each. The sharp tailed grouse are also on the increase. It is great to see these fine birds coming back. They have been very scarce here for several years."

Arcola - It is good news to hear the report from Mr. Allen Sturges who writes that there has been, this winter, a strong population of prairie chickens in the narrow park belt where he lives, some five miles south of his home town.

Okla - Mrs. W. Roach writes: "Grouse and partridge (Ruffed Grouse) have increased considerably in this locality. In fact there were far too many on our grain stocks during the fall."

Woodrow - Fred C. Parchman: "A neighbor reports about fifty pheasants feeding on his stacks. I have seen much of pheasant life lately too. There are about a dozen which appear on these premises daily and the birds seem to be wintering in splendid shape. On one trip of eight miles to Woodrow I counted seventeen pheasants feeding in a wheat field near a farmer's grove. I also saw seven feeding two miles south of town at Pinto Creek."

Swift Current - George Hooey - Here is a record of interest and we would like other reports of these birds from our members in the south west. "Three Sage Hens", writes Mr. Hooey, put in an appearance in our district last fall -- the first ones ever noted in this district. I understand their farthest northern range is at Beaver Valley, sixty miles south of here. The old-timers of that district inform me that the Sage Hens migrate south to the Milk River Basin in the fall. The birds were first noted by a neighbor, Jeff Payne."

Torch River - C. S. Francis. "Sharp Tailed Grouse, Hungarian Partridge and Ruffed Grouse can be seen on my farm any day", reports Mr. Francis. "The Sharptails and the little Huns seem to very much appreciate the feed we keep out for them around the barn-yard and strawstacks, Of course the Ruffies disdain to eat weedseeds or grain, seeming to prefer black poplar and willow buds.

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#### OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS, HERE AND THERE

SALTCOATS -- Mrs. J. J. Wells.

Mrs. Wells, although now unable to walk far, writes that she is keenly interested in wild life of all kinds. " I feed the chickadees in winter, the Hairy Woodpecker, the juncos and the sparrows. Those are the only birds which are around the house now. We used to have blue jays and ruffed grouse, but I have not seen a blue jay for twenty years now. I saw one ruffed grouse recently, the first in 10 years."

SKULL CREEK - Steve A. Mann.

According to Mr. Mann there are very few prairie chickens in the vicinity of Skull Creek. He reports, however, an unusually large number of ducks on his two watering dams. Twenty families in June and July

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increased to about two hundred and fifty individuals by the middle of September. After that more and more congregated, especially mallards, until at time of freeze-up there were more than three thousand on them. "One morning", he writes, "they were so thick on the shore that I don't think a person could have thrown a stone without hitting one." No one is allowed to hunt on these dams, which cover about five acres.

ROKEBY - Francis A. Switzer.

We are pleased to get this report from Francis, who at the age of eleven, has written that he will do his best to submit nature observations for each issue.

"About the middle of October at Saltcoats Lake, as near as I could judge, a Double-Crested Cormorant stood on the end of a cement pier, preening its feathers. I was in a car at the time, about twenty-five feet away from the bird. It seemed to take little notice of the car. As far as I could learn, Cormorants are very rarely seen in this part". (Under favorable conditions, Francis, Cormorants have been quite common in Saskatchewan. Hundreds have been banded in the Quill Lake area and they are prevalent in the Moose Mountain Park. Dry years have been responsible for their scarcity in the Yorkton area. They may be distinguished by their bill, the upper beak of which terminates in a sharp downward turned hook which must greatly aid the bird in holding its prey. The legs are short and stout and the feet are large and webbed. The tail feathers are very strong and at times help to support the bird when resting in an erect position. ED.)

GRENFELL - Mr. and Mrs. John Hubbard, Jr.

Readers will recall how year after year the Hairy Woodpeckers have been a constant nuisance around the Hubbard's grain bins. "They are quite prevalent again this year and are up to their tricks around the granaries the same as ever." writes Mrs. Hubbard. The Downy Woodpeckers are scarce, due, perhaps to the cleaning of the bush. One Blue Jay was seen at the farm last fall. They are very scarce in the district, although several have been seen in the Qu'Appelle Valley.

FORT SAN - Miss Pearl Guest.

Speaking of Blue Jays -- Miss Guest reports that there were lots of them at Green Lake last fall and early winter. "On my walk the day before I left" she writes, "I saw them knocking seed out of the cones; the striking of the cones on the frozen branches echoing sharply through the woods." (We are sorry to report that due to a nervous breakdown, Miss Guest was admitted to hospital at Fort San early in January and will be unable to work for some months. The BLUE JAY wishes her a speedy recovery.)

WOODROW - Fred C. Parchman.

"Saw what I thought was a Great Grey Owl. It was flying low across the flats. I understand such a bird was seen two years ago. I don't remember having seen its like." (The Great Grey Owl is not commonly seen on the prairie although several observations have been made. It was reported to the Provincial Museum from Indian Head several times - in 1890, 1916 and 1917 by George Lang. J. H. Wilson also located one there in

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1936, This specimen is in the Museum. One pair of feet were received in the Owl campaign of the Fish and Game League during the winter of 1941. ED.)

TORCH RIVER -- G. Stuart Francis.

We welcome again some very interesting observations from Spruce Dale Farm. "We have had a Bronze Grackle Blackbird staying with us all winter and despite very frigid temperatures -- as low as 44 degrees below zero -- he seems to be wintering in good condition. Probably at this time he should be away down in Maryland or thereabouts. We have a large number of spruce trees around the buildings and last summer there was an unusually heavy crop of cones on the trees. Now the Pine Grosbeaks and White Winged Crossbills have most of the cones pulled off. Around some of the trees there is a brown ring of cones, completely surrounding the tree and covering the snow entirely."

REGINA -- Doug Gilroy.

Many of our members and dozens more whom we hope will join with us in this Society are most considerate of the birds which come around the yard during the cold winter days. Mr. Gilroy has been feeding two Chickadees and a male Downy Woodpecker all winter and has been doing his best to keep a fatherly eye on a Robin who has been around the house since December 26. He appeared again on January 18 and once more on February 7. "He was full of life and perky and chirpy as could be, not seeming to bother about the below zero weather."

Dipping down into his record book Mr. Gilroy has brought to light several other interesting observations. On September 28 he came across a little Burrowing Owl sitting in a gopher hole. Although frightened away it returned and remained there for two days. He is of the opinion that it was only resting there on its way south but still wonders why he insisted on remaining there and always returned even when disturbed. Magpies seemed more plentiful than ever before. At the end of September he noticed a large number of flocks with some fifty to a hundred in each. Cooper Hawks were seen October 18. On October 26 a great flock of Robins went through. The woods were full of them. Next day all were gone.

A Tragedy:

On November 6, Mr. Gilroy writes: "While driving to Regina beautiful flocks of Snow Buntings would fly from the gravel in front of the car. Then I began to see dead buntings lying on the road -- birds that waited too late to fly from the front of speeding cars. In a distance of a mile and a half I counted twelve dead ones and doubtless there were others that fluttered into the ditch with broken wings. This is indeed a shame and no doubt the same thing is happening on other highways. If we could only think to slow down our vehicle while passing through flocks of feeding birds such tragedies would not occur."

ARCOLA -- Allen Sturgess.

To Mr. Sturgess and his poultry-raising neighbors the Great Horned Owl is destructive indeed. He writes that over a period of years he has

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lost several hundreds of dollars worth of poultry to this night hunter. He now uses a steel trap set on a high post near the coops and thus takes advantage of the owl's weakness of looking over the situation before the attack. "They would", he said, "have put me out of business had I not been able to take them in this way."

BURNHAM -- Arthur Ward.

"A blizzard struck this district on February 11, yet in spite of it, four Redpolls were observed in the protection of our trees the following morning. Although temperatures have been around twenty below zero, with only an occasional rise above zero, all birds have wintered very well, for there appears to be no lack of feed.

Owing to our visit to England, only 108 birds were banded last summer and fall. One of these, a newcomer to our district, was the Eastern Towhee. Strangely, the last bird caught (Oct. 25) was an Oven Bird. This bird has not been seen later than the last week in August, in former years at our station.

STRASBOURG - B. Anita Coneybeare.

Adequate protection of property against predators seems a much better practice than advocating their complete destruction. The writer states that Magpies are around their place every day, but she knows that they will be disappointed if they cast envious eyes in the direction of their baby chickens. "If they do", she says, "they will have to be content to look at them through glass. As far as we know, Magpies have never taken any of our chicks. We always raise them early and then keep them under glass and wire. The neighbors all complain but they let theirs run."

Mrs. Coneybeare reports having seen a Horned Lark during the second week in February and wonders if it has been wintering here, or just came in time to see what a real blizzard looks like.

SASKATOON - A. McPherson.

Mr. McPherson informs us he has consented to supply quarterly reports for Audubon Field Notes from the Saskatoon district. Information of interest will be passed on to the BLUE JAY.

The following birds have recently been recorded: Downy Woodpecker (one in December), Bohemian Waxwing (several records for January and February but not so common as other years), Blue Jay (one pair in January), Black Capped Chickadee (scarce this year - one pair in February.)

SHEHO - W. Niven.

"Snowbirds are much more plentiful than last winter. A few common Redpolls are seen quite frequently. Pine Crosbeaks are much scarcer than last winter, when as many as thirty were seen feeding around. The Sharp-tailed Grouse are on the increase in this district. As many as fifty have been counted around the straw stacks. Ruffed Grouse are about the same as usual and Hungarian Partridge are very scarce. On December 1st three blackbirds came around the farmyard but they did not stay long. One had white tail feathers -- couldn't make out whether they were Rusty or Brewers species. They seemed to be males, but had no rusty coloration.

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YORKTON - Pauline Summers.

Miss Summers has sent us a very interesting list of bird observations made by the members of the Junior Nature Club at Simpson School. The boys, whose ages range from ten to thirteen, are to be highly complimented on their worth-while project and Miss Summers congratulated on the keen interest she has taken in organizing this Club, encouraging its members and assisting them with their identifications. Two hundred birds of sixteen species have been observed between October 7th and February 5th. Due to lack of space at this time we are very sorry that we will not be able to publish a list of the observers and the birds.

Here are Miss Summers' own observations: January 4, Downy Woodpecker; Jan. 16, Magpie; February 6, four White Winged Crossbills (Miss Summers believes that the only record for a White Winged Crossbill for the Yorkton district, was a female found dead two years ago by Ronald Coghill). February 6 and 12, Chickadees.

NIPAWIN - Maurice G. Street, writes:

"On April 18, 1948, I was kneeling beside a two-funnel sparrow trap removing Common Redpoles and banding them one by one, when I was suddenly interrupted by a whirr of wings. Looking up quickly, I expected to see a hawk either making off or perched in some nearby trees. Seeing nothing I glanced down at the trap, which still contained half a dozen Redpoles, and there was the hawk trying to get through the top. Surprised and excited as I was, I simply closed my hand over it, banded and released it. It was a female Sparrow Hawk in perfect condition, yet probably very hungry, for eighteen inches of snow still remained on the ground at this date."

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A Coopers' Hawk Nest.

On July 26, 1948, in a thickly-treed poplar bluff, a few miles northwest of Sheho, Saskatchewan, M. G. Street found a Coopers' Hawk nest containing four young. The nestlings, fully feathered, flew readily when the nest tree was approached. Three were captured after much difficulty and were banded with U.S. Fish and Wildlife service bands, then released. The adults were quite shy, keeping out of sight amid the dense foliage, but frequently calling -- a call very similar to that of a Pileated Woodpecker or Yellow-shafted Flicker.

Some fifty yards from the hawk's nest a colony of Purple Martins, consisting of 8 or 10 pair were nesting in old tree stumps. Most of the martins were feeding young and they made a great out-cry whenever the adult Coopers' Hawks put in an appearance while bringing food for the young hawks or departing. No attempt to molest the martins was seen, however.

Three hundred yards from the Coopers' Hawk nest a pair of Red-tailed Hawks had raised their young and were still in the vicinity. They screamed incessantly while the banding operations were being carried out.

A quarter mile distant from the first, a second Coopers' Hawk nest was found. One juvenile and both adults were seen. From the amount of white down still clinging to the sticks and twigs about the nest, it was evident that three or four young had only left shortly before.

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MARKET HUNTERS

We are indebted to Mr. A. E. Swanston, of the Provincial Museum for this condensation of an article in "Outdoor Life", written by Michael Norman.

In the years between 1870 and 1890 some people were of the opinion that the supply of animals and birds was inexhaustible. Frank Mayer, the Buffalo Hunter, was one of the last of the professionals who killed game to supply areas not yet reached by the railroads. Mayer contracted to furnish a wholesaler every week with at least three tons of big game, rough dressed. He was paid ten cents a pound for deer, elk and antelope; 12½ for mountain sheep and 15 for bear. His first two days of hunting netted him 5600 pounds of meat.

Most atrocious of the many crimes against our game was the extinction of the passenger pigeon. These birds were so thick that they darkened the skies as they passed on their migratory flights. As late as 1878 a nesting area in Michigan covered 150,000 acres and was populated by an estimated billion and a half pigeons.

The details of the slaughter are revolting. Netting was the favorite method of capturing them. A likely looking opening in the woods was selected and the ground was bated with salt and a few "stool pigeons" -- birds blinded by sewing their eyes shut -- were planted, and a large net was rigged high over head. The birds came to the bait eagerly and when they blanketed the ground two or three feet deep the net was dropped. A single cast netted 500 to 1000 birds and a dozen casts a day were not unusual. The pigeons were either killed for the market or crated alive for sale to trapshooting clubs. In one month in 1878 almost fifteen million pigeons were shipped to market. It is estimated that in that year more than a billion wild pigeons were sold in the United States. The last pigeon died in a Cincinnati, Ohio, zoo in 1914.

King of the Market Hunters was H. Clay Merritt. In 1858, on the coming of a railroad to Henry County, he started hunting. He estimated that each year for thirty years 25,000 jacksnipe were killed for market in Illinois. In the '70's, in Iowa alone, a million prairie chickens were killed each season for several years. For the New York State market hunters shot 1000 grouse in a season. Hotels hired their own market hunters. In Texas, a party of hunters bagged 10,157 robins. Residents of one town in Louisiana killed 120,000 robins and sold them for five cents a dozen. Eskimo curlews were so abundant that as many as 2500 were killed in one day. In the early 70's, market hunters frequently dumped carloads by the roadside when the price fell.

A list of birds once available at New York City markets included bobolinks, grouse, swans, loons, wild turkeys, pheasants, snipe, partridges, plover, sandpipers, curlews, sea-side finches, skylarks, meadow larks, wood tatlers, orioles, snowbuntings, blackbirds, kingfishes, blue jays, brown thrashers, thrushes, juncos, cedar waxwings and bullfinches,

For killing ducks some hunters used what is called a Big Bertha. It weighed 78 pounds and was 10½ feet long. Each charge was 1½ pounds of black powder and a similar amount of BB shot. It sometimes killed a hundred ducks at a single discharge.

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PTARMIGAN

Mr. E. W. Brooman, of Prince Albert, has sent us a very interesting account of efforts to transplant the Willow Ptarmigan from Northern Saskatchewan to Iron River, Michigan. The experiment is being carried out by the state of Michigan, in the hopes that these birds will become established there. The work in Saskatchewan has been conducted by Harold J. Richards, Conservation Commissioner and Dr. G. A. Ammon. Up to the present time about 130 birds have been shipped.

Indian s, who capture the birds with fish nets, are being paid two dollars for each live one. Most of the ptarmigan have been taken from Stony Rapids at the east end of Lake Athabaska. They are shipped to Prince Albert by plane. If direct connections can be made they are immediately flown out again by C.P.A. When connections cannot be made directly, Mr. G. E. Lund, of Prince Albert, cares for them until time for the next plane.

Unfortunately the mortality has been fairly high but with experience these difficulties are being overcome. Reports from Michigan indicate that some of the birds have already been recorded as far as five miles from the point of release. The experiment is attracting much attention there.

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E. W. Hamilton, of Mossy Vale, sent a female White-winged Crossbill recently to the museum. He explained that these birds stopped by the thousands this winter and that he had caught many of them in squirrel traps. "Apparently", he wrote, "they had entered squirrel dens for protection from the extreme cold."

-- W A N T E D --

An attempt on the part of every member  
to  
get a new member in March.



1948 Christmas Bird Counts.

Burnham, Sask. (No date given) - Birds seen within a ten-mile radius of the Ward Farm. Temperature 5 below zero to 20 above zero. About 8 inches of snow. Summerfallow fields blown free of snow. Hawk, (unidentified) 1; Hungarian Partridge, 20; European Starling, 1; English Sparrow, 100; Total, 4 species, 122 individuals. A. Ward.

Fort San, Sask. Dec. 26. - A walk of one hour through scattered trees and shrubs in a valley. Distance covered approximately  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles. Temp. 15 above zero. Calm, bright sunshine. 12 inches of snow. Downy Woodpecker, 1; American Magpie, 2; Black-capped Chickadee, 2; English Sparrow, 50 (est.); Common Redpoll, 4; Total, 5 species, 59 individuals (est.). 4 or 5 Pine Grosbeaks seen Dec. 29. Dried wild fruit and weed seeds plentiful.

Richard A. Nevard.

Gerald, Sask. Dec. 30. - Birds noted about the farm and during a drive of three miles to the Town of Gerald by team and sleigh. Weather, clear. Temp. 24 above zero. 20 inches of snow. Ruffed Grouse, 9; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 6; Hungarian Partridge, 5; Blue Jay, 1; Black-capped Chickadee, 4; Pine Grosbeak, 12. Total, 6 species, 37 individuals. Box Elder seed and snowberry fruit abundant.

Lad. Martinovsky.

Hawarden, Sask. Dec. 25. - Open prairie except for groves about farms. Birds observed while going about the chores, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Weather stormy, strong east wind with drifting snow. Snow 12 in. in depth. Hungarian Partridge, 11; English Sparrow, 150 (est.); Snow Bunting, 2; Total, 3 species, 163 individuals (est.). Other species observed during December include, Sharp-tailed Grouse, 11; Snowy Owl, 2; and Sawhet Owl, 1.

Harold Kvinge.

Lang, Sask. Dec. 31. - Birds seen about the farm and on a walk of two miles along a wooded creek. Time afield, 4 hours, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Strong south-east wind with drifting snow. Twelve inches of snow, drifted to several feet in places. Sharp-tailed Grouse, 27; Cock Ring-necked Pheasant, 1; American Magpie, 15; English Sparrow, 90 (est.); Snow Bunting, 15. Total, 5 species, 149 individuals (est.). Hungarian Partridge, 20, noted Jan. 4.

Leonard Dreger.

Naicam, Sask. Jan. 2. - Sky overcast, light winds with an occasional snow flurry. A walk of 4 miles through brush and fields. Sharp-tailed Grouse, 6; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; American Magpie, 1; Pine Grosbeak, 8; Snow Bunting, 10. Total, 5 species, 26 individuals.

W. Yanchinski.

Nipawin, Sask. to Fishing Lakes, Dec. 31. - 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Bright sunshine, wind, calm. 6 inches of snow. Temperature 16 above zero. Total miles covered, one way only in each case: One observer alone, 7 miles (5 by car and 2 on foot). Two observers together 76 miles (all by car). Goshawk, 1; Pigeon Hawk, 1; Spruce Grouse, 28; Ruffed Grouse, 1; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 34; Willow Ptarmigan, 2;

Hungarian Partridge, 10; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; American Three-Toed Woodpecker, 2; Canada Jay, 6; Blue Jay, 13; American Magpie, 12; Raven, 11; Black-capped Chickadee, 5; Hudsonian Chickadee, 3; Bohemian Waxwing, 12; Northern Shrike, 2; English Sparrow, 700 (est.); Evening Grosbeak, 27; Pine Grosbeak, 5; Common Redpoll, 59; Red Crossbill, 235 (est.); White-winged Crossbill, 23; Slate-colored Junco, 3; Snow Bunting, 161; Total, 25 species, 1357 individuals (est.). Five Horned Larks seen, Dec. 13. Coniferous trees heavily fruited and dried wild fruit plentiful. The Pigeon Hawk has been raiding the flocks of English Sparrows at the Grain elevators daily. The Slate-colored Juncos and Willow Ptarmigan were seen at Fishing Lake. The largest invasion of Crossbills ever recorded at Nipawin.

Walter Matthews, Billy Matthews, M.G. Street.

Ridgedale, Sask. Dec. 28. - 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Four miles on foot. Overcast, with S.W. wind at 10 m.p.h. Temperature 10 degrees. Sharp-tailed grouse, 12; Hungarian Partridge, 3; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Magpie, 1; Black-capped Chickadee, 20; English Sparrow, 80, (est.); Common Redpoll, 8; Total, 7 species, 126 individuals. Snowy Owl noted on Dec. 27.

J. H. More.

Regina, Sask., Dec. 27. - 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Birds seen while driving from Regina to Moose Jaw. English Sparrows, several. Hungarian Partridge, 9 in two flocks; Ring-neck Pheasant, 1 male; Magpie, 2.

Saskatoon, Sask. Jan. 1. - Weather clear; temperature 7 degrees; winds north 15 m.p.h. Distance 7 to 9 miles on foot along the river bank. Mallards, 28; American Golden Eyes, 3. A. McPherson.

Sheho, Sask., Jan. 1. - Birds noted while doing chores about the Niven Farm. Weather clear. Wind, calm. Average temperature, 10 above zero. Snow, 6 inches on level, drifted to 4 feet around bluffs. Ruffed Grouse, 5; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 20; Great Horned Owl, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 3; American Magpie, 1; Black-capped Chickadee, 5; Pine Grosbeak, 4; Snow Bunting, 30 (est.). Total, 9 species, 70 individuals (est.). Three unidentified Blackbirds and 2 crows seen Dec. 1. Dried wild fruit and weed seeds plentiful.

Wm. Niven.

Torch River, Sask. Birds noted about the Francis Farm and surrounding country-side between Dec. 25 and Jan. 1. The greatest number of each species seen at one time only are recorded. Six inches of snow. Weather mild. Sky clear. Goshawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 4; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 6; Hungarian Partridge, 13 (est.) Great Horned Owl, 2; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Canada Jay, 5; Blue Jay, 4; American Magpie, 4; Raven, 4; Black-capped Chickadee, 3; White-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Northern Shrike, 1; English Sparrow, 27 (est.); Bronze Grackle, 1; Evening Grosbeak, 6; Pine Grosbeak, 15; White-winged Crossbill, 10; Snow Bunting, 15; Total, 20 species, 124 individuals (est.). Other species recorded during December include: Golden Eagle, Pileated Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hudsonian Chickadee and Pine Siskin. Coniferous trees exceptionally heavy-fruited.

C. Stuart Francis.

1948 Christmas Bird Counts.

Wallwort, Sask., Jan. 1. - Birds seen about the Turnquist Farm and a walk through Tamarac, spruce and poplar woods and across open fields. Weather mild, bright sunshine, wind calm. 10 inches of snow. Ruffed Grouse, 2; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Canada Jay, 3; Blue Jay, 3; Black-capped Chickadee, 1; Common Redpoll, 15. Total, 7 species, 28 individuals. J. Turnquist.

Yorkton, Sask. (Area 15 miles in diameter with Yorkton as center). - Dec. 26. - 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Overcast in morning, clear in afternoon; SW wind at 10 m.p.h.; snow averaging six inches in depth. Temperature 10 degrees at start, 22 degrees at noon. 10 observers in 4 groups. Total party hours afield,  $9\frac{1}{2}$  (4 by car and  $5\frac{1}{2}$  on foot); total party miles, 42 (35 by car and 7 on foot). Sharp-tailed Grouse, 27; Great Horned Owl, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Blue Jay, 8; Magpie, 4; Black-capped Chickadee, 9; American Robin, 1; Cedar Waxwing, 5 (The Robin and Cedar Waxwings were in the vicinity of an open spring, beside the "Muskeg", just west of Yorkton. Both species were observed for fifteen minutes through 10 x 50 binoculars at distances as close as twelve feet. This appears to be the first record of Cedar Waxwings in Saskatchewan during the Christmas season - C.S.H.); European Starling, 4; English Sparrow, 179; Common Redpoll, 15; Snow Bunting, 342 (est). Total, 13 species, approximately 598 individuals. Four Cedar Waxwings were noted on Dec. 28, and 9 on Jan. 1, in down-town Yorkton. No Bohemian Waxwings have been noted thus far this winter. Wayne Bjorgan, Ken Bowes, Jerry Bulitz, D'Arcy Wershler, Merle Wershler. (Members Simpson School Nature Club); Jim Allen, Neil Black, Brother Clarence, Dr. C. J. Houston, C. Stuart Houston. (Members Yorkton Natural History Society).

1948 Bird Census Summary.

The 1948 Christmas census, consisting of 13 counts from widely-scattered Saskatchewan points, taken under more favorable weather conditions than in past counts, produced a sum total of 36 species and approximately 3023 individuals. This compares fairly well with former counts as to number of species recorded.

Two more species, hitherto unrecorded in previous counts bring the total species recorded in Saskatchewan in mid-winter to 60. The Cedar Waxwings reported by the Yorkton group stresses clearly the importance of never taking things for granted in the art of bird observing. How easily it would have been to have misidentified these birds as just another flock of Bohemians. Yes, its that second look that usually brings to light the rare or unexpected species.

The Pigeon Hawk at Nipawin, is also a new record.

The ever-abundant English Sparrow, the American Magpie and the Black-capped Chickadee seem to be the most often recorded. The game birds, for the most part, have made a great recovery from extreme scarcity of the past few years and with a favorable breeding season this year should almost reach their peak abundance. In the coniferous woods the Spruce Grouse are very abundant, and in the northern areas, at least, the Ruffed Grouse are quite plentiful.

Predators, the Goshawk and Great Horned Owl, are still scarce, (as are their chief prey - the rabbit.)

Pine and Evening Grosbeaks appear to be about as usual. The Bohemian Waxwing was not recorded at any point south of Nipawin, but have been quite abundant there since early fall. The heavy crop of spruce and pine cones are providing the Crossbills with fine fare and they are in unusual numbers in the northern forests.

Maurice G. Street.

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INFORMATION WANTED

We have obtained several March migration records but our information is not as complete as it might be. In March, 1945, 32 species of migratory birds were noted in Manitoba. Can we equal this record? Plan to make a "First seen" note of all our early bird arrivals and let us have a full report for the next issue. Early nesting records such as those of the Horned Owl and Canada Jay will also be greatly appreciated.

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MAMMAL SECTION

THE COYOTE

The unique feature of the BLUE JAY which has made it a treasure storehouse, not only to its subscribers, but to nature scientists in many parts of Canada, has been the inclusion of so many homely stories of interest about our animals and their antics. A keen observation and a sense of humor on the part of Mr. Gilroy, who lives in the Regina district, has added another to the list. He writes:

"I see coyotes practically every day, sometimes as many as four together. At night, especially when the train whistles they do some yodeling. Our dog, Smoky, has a great time with them. This morning two coyotes passed to within 200 yards of the house. Smoky went out to do his regular barking. One stopped and stayed within a tantalizing distance from him; the other went on to a knoll about 500 yards to one side and hung around there in an unassuming manner. Meanwhile the other kept drawing the dog out a little further until finally Smoky could stand it no longer and took after him. Away they went as hard, at least, as the dog could go. The coyote on the knoll stayed there until they had passed, then he took up the chase, closing in from the rear. When they got almost half a mile away from the buildings the front coyote stopped suddenly. It was then Smoky found himself, not with just one coyote, but with another at his rear. He didn't wait to ask questions but headed back home as fast as his legs would carry him, while the coyotes helped him along with little nips on the tail. I sure did laugh and Smoky must have enjoyed it too, for he arrived back looking as happy as a lark.