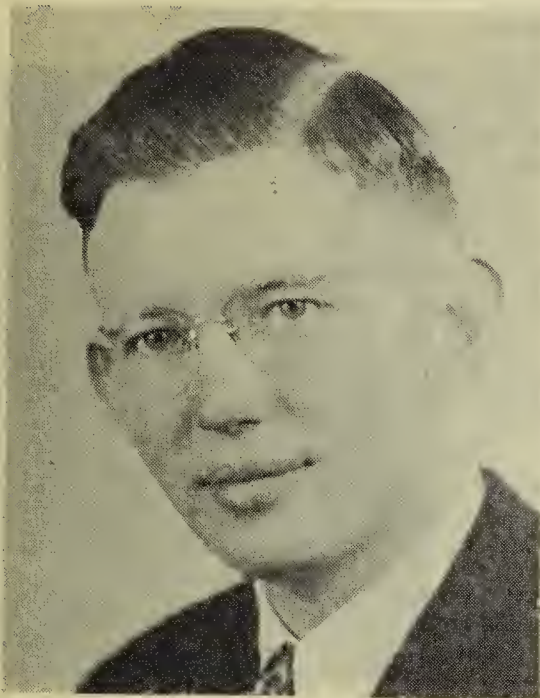


Birding at Good Spirit Lake

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I had been to Kitchemonetoo, Good Spirit Lake, many times as a youngster, but didn't remember what a unique place it really was. Mary and I revisited it this year - in fact, we were so pleased with it that we made a total of three visits there.

The lake is better known locally as "Devil's Lake", but who is responsible for this contradictory twist in nomenclature, I do not know. It is a relatively large lake, eight miles wide, oval in shape with a very regular shoreline. The sandy beach is hundreds of yards wide, and sand dunes 10 or 15 feet high, wooded on top, mark the sharp transition between lakeland and farmland.

Our first discovery on June 23 was the Piping Plover. This is a paler, more diminutive edition of the Killdeer, with only one band around its neck instead of two. It is a common bird along the shoreline, with a pair every few hundred yards, emitting their clear piping note. Half an hour's quiet observation of one male revealed that he consistently went from the beach to a group of rocks fifty yards back from the shore. We then searched the area carefully, knowing that the eggs would look at first glance like two more pebbles. The frantic



"broken-wing display" of the parents told us we must be getting near. However, Mary finally found, not eggs, but a well-camouflaged downy fellow squatting perfectly still in the sand. I had thought that little Killdeers a few days old were about as cute as anything could be, but a little Piping Plover of the same age is smaller, more delicately colored and cuter still. His three brothers and sisters, all the same size, were soon seen twenty yards distant running after their mother. They had well developed legs and ran at a phenomenal speed for such little creatures. Then when their mother gave a different signal, they would squat flat in the sand and remain stationary even when touched.

My best birding record for the summer was made June 26, two miles east of Good Spirit Lake. While driving along at about 30 mph, a yellow-breasted bird flew across the car just a few feet in front of the windshield. Mary thought it looked like an Arkansas Kingbird, which it did indeed in certain respects. However, the northern edge of their range is more open country than twenty miles south, and I wondered if it might not be a Crested Flycatcher. I stopped and was fortunate in locating the bird with its mate, about fifty yards in from the road. They called from the edge of the poplars, then sat on the fence to display their rufous rumps and ruffled head feathers - the first Yorkton district record for the Crested Flycatcher! After awhile, they flew to another bush, and sat on the limbs of a hollow dead stump. They became quite excited when I approached, and I found their young in a hole on the stump eight feet from the ground. So I found not only a new species for the district, but obtained a new nesting record as well.

Another new nesting record for the district was made on June 26 when we found a nesting colony of Common Terns on several small sandy spits just offshore, along the east shore of Good Spirit Lake. These birds, although immaculate in appearance,

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Nipawin Provincial Park

By C. Stuart Francis, Torch River

This has been a very ordinary summer as far as unusual happenings are concerned. The weather has been much too wet all through July and early August, but now seems to have improved.

We have made three trips into the Nipawin Provincial Park since July 1st. This is a very beautiful region with scores of lakes of various sizes, most of which contain several species of fish. Beautiful rolling hills surround the lakes. In some places the hill-sides are so steep that you can throw a stone into the water below from the top of a 150 or 200 foot hill. The forest is very varied and consists mostly of White and Black Spruce, Jack and Banksian Pine, White Birch, Tamarack, Aspen Poplar, Balsam Poplar, Balsam Fir, and in some places native Juniper and Box Elder. Pin Cherry, Chokecherry, Hazelnut and Highbush Cranberry are widespread throughout the region.

On August 3rd., while travelling through the Narrow Hills, the native Crocus was observed starting to

bloom again in more than one spot, on stems two to three inches high, as in early spring. Possibly the very wet weather had something to do with this unusual occurrence.

We have recently acquired a lot on which to build a cabin at Fishing Lakes, which is about the centre of the park area. This lake is surrounded with evergreen forests. The lake and the streams near by contain the following species of fish: Northern Pike, Pickerel, Perch, Whitefish, Tulibee and Trout. Our cabin will be situated on a high bank overlooking the lake. It will be about 25 feet above the water on the north-east corner of the lake, in a sheltered location.

In this park are also to be seen many stands of Mistletoe infested Jack Pine. These infested trees are known as "Witches Broom" on account of the odd broom-shaped form of growth of the branches of the entire tree. It reminds one more of a desert or Mexican landscape, than of Northern Saskatchewan.

Ringside Seat -

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At such a brave display, even a tractor tiller had to turn aside; first to the west side, then to the east. But the nest was never forsaken either time. I believe that when eggs are far on in incubation the birds are much more reluctant to fly than when they are still laying eggs.

A couple of springs ago, while seeding near the buildings and also near Killdeer nest, sudden sleet storm came blowing in from the west. Ice pellets that stung the face sent me quickly heading for shelter. Wind that hurled dust and stubble tore in gusts across the field. Horses and cattle raced for the farm. And that night it snowed.

In the warm security of the house, that evening, I wondered if the Killdeer's nest would be thrown away. The answer came a couple of days later one sunny afternoon, when I noticed little fluffy balls on matchstick legs stumbling across the pasture. On rough ground they are easily caught

and these Killdeer babies were examined and cuddles a bit by the rest of the family and then returned to their anxious parents.

But how any bird could face those stinging pellets - cling to the ground in the wind and keep her eggs warm while an unreasonable snow covered the ground - well that is one of the intriguing things of nature.

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are careless nesters - most of the nests were just hollows in the sand, without lining or cover. Many single eggs lay in the edge of the water, apparently blown from their nests by the wind and waves. Other eggs found back on shore had evidently been eaten by crows. There were between twenty and thirty tern nests in four different locations along half a mile of shoreline. On July 16, some nests still contain eggs, but I banded 24 young which had exchanged their down for feathers and were old enough to swim.