

# The Damage Was

## NIPAWIN

Maurice G. Street

The loss of bird life, due to the low temperature and heavy fall of snow, appears not to have been so great as at first expected. It is quite fortunate that the less hardy species, for the most part, had not yet arrived. As it was, I believe, the worst to suffer was an early wave of migrant Hermit Thrush. The first one of this species seen, I banded April 27; towards evening of the 28th, I refused to band 5 that came to my traps. All were very weak and several I could have caught by hand. When a person can do that to a species as elusive as the Hermit, their condition is bad indeed. Probably 75% of this early wave lost their lives due to the cold, lack of food and last but not least, a horde of Sparrow Hawks that were hard put to find food. Worst of all were the Sharp-shinned Hawks that took a heavy toll of all species, including Robins. These Sharp shins kept the flocks of Juncos, Redpolls and others in a constant turmoil at my banding station. This was bad enough, but when these Sharpshins began bringing birds, caught elsewhere, to my station it was almost too much. They apparently found my grounds a nice safe place. Several Fox Sparrows were also noted in a weakened condition. Due to the rain that preceded the fall of snow, these found the leaves under the deep snow, frozen into a solid mass.

Numerous Myrtle Warblers seemed to take the inclement weather rather well. Near noon one day, with the temperature at 27 above, and bright sunshine, I noted several Myrtle Warblers sipping sap dripping from a foot long icicle that was hanging from an injured branch of a Manitoba Maple in my yard. I had previously noted several species taking sap from a Sapsucker drilling in summer, so probably the Myrtles recognized and took advantage of this unexpected food supply.

## BLADWORTH

P. Laurence Beckie

One of my uncles found a dead Sparrow Hawk in his barn; another uncle found one dead in his machine shop which is two miles from the other place. The birds were very thin. I often noticed Sparrow Hawks during the bad weather, sitting on power lines near the buildings.

We found a dead Killdeer inside a barrel which was lying on its side along a slough in front of our house. I saw this bird the night before — it looked sick then. A neighbor, three miles north, found a Killdeer also.

One of the most surprising items I have to report is about a dead Myrtle Warbler. I found it on our doorstep. I saw one in our tree the night before — this may have been the same one. I saw one the same day in Bladworth, flying along (fluttering I should say) the cafe wall, and looking up as water fell from melting snow on the roof.

There were large flocks of Slate-colored Juncos and Tree Sparrows around here. I fed them screenings — and they weren't at all backward in approaching. A large flock of Brewers, Red-Wings and one Yellow-headed Blackbird stayed around during the heavy snow. They sounded very cheerful and kept up a steady chattering in our trees.

Oh! yes, and we had a Mourning Dove visiting with us during the spell. It ate around a granary, and it stayed for three days at least — whether it survived or not is doubtful. It was really active so that possibly was a good sign. All of our ducks left — for bigger ponds, I imagine.

It would seem that those birds that were able to find their customary foods survived, but those, like the Sparrow Hawk who eat mice or insects, which would certainly be hard to find with such heavy snow falling, would suffer.

# Province Wide!

## YORKTON

Dr. Stuart Houston

Almost everyone seemed to put out food for the birds during the cold weather and deep snow, and though many of the birds were obviously hungry and cold, it is thought that very few perished. The ducks congregated heavily on the few remaining waters that stayed open; others sat cold and glum on the frozen sloughs. Fortunately migration was delayed, and the less hardy birds, such as swallows and warblers, had not yet arrived in numbers. Those that were here — meadowlarks, robins, grackles, juncos, to cite the commonest examples — were species hardy enough to withstand the cold and decreased food supply.

## NIPAWIN

Walter Matthews

The worst damage to birds by the snow and cold that I have seen is that the Sparrow Hawks and Cooper Hawks could not get mice and insects, so they started eating small birds, especially Redpolls and Juncos.

## MILDEN

Mrs. J. W. Dishaw

There is a crabapple tree with low-hanging branches at one side of our garden. Behind the tree is a tall thick caragana hedge. There during the cold weather and snow storms, many birds congregated — robins in particular. One morning there were seven there, by the afternoon seventeen appeared, and when my husband went out after supper he counted forty-seven. What a flock of robins!

Until the weather cleared we fed them all with meat scraps and bread, both white and brown. Several loaves of bread were used up to feed these hungry creatures. With our help they weathered the storm.

## SWIFT CURRENT

Arthur Ward

Although it was very cold and snowing, fortunately there was no wind here and I don't think there were many losses.

I consulted Bob Caldwell. He and I went out to my farm and there was no evidence of damage. In his capacity as a biologist for Ducks Unlimited, he had heard of no cases of fatality. Mr. and Mrs. Begg came to see me this evening and brought a dead female Myrtle Warbler. Last week a farmer out north of here phoned and told me he had seen what he thought were 22 Whooping Cranes going south in the direction of Swift Current. On questioning him I concluded they must have been Snow Geese. He said they had black tips on the wings and were flying in V formation. He could not see the legs stretched out behind. Realizing that there were only about that number living he thought that they must have assembled together up north and the cold had driven them back in a bunch.

In the city, I banded 63 birds in 10 days and there are some of them lingering here yet. Had I been on the farm with the proper traps, I believe I would have got over 100.

## GRENFELL

Mrs. John Hubbard

As far as we can see there were absolutely no casualties to bird life, due to the storm. Maybe we didn't have the storm as severe here, though the ground was covered up to six inches with wet snow.

Little birds became very friendly and came to bare spots around the house to feed. Flocks of Tree Sparrows and Juncos with Song Sparrows, fed under the windows. We saw Snow Buntings at the end of April and Redpolls were still here May 2. Today a Lincoln Sparrow came right up to the kitchen window with the separator going and a child shaking a dust mop out the door.