

## Yellow-breasted Chat Nesting Near Fort Qu'Appelle

By DR. STUART HOUSTON

Th summer's most unusual record was that of a Yellow-breasted Chat nesting in the Qu'Appelle Valley near Fort San. E. M. Callin first heard its song on the evening of June 7th and next morning was finally able to locate the source of the unusual voice. As Mr. Callin reported in "Chickadee Notes", the Winnipeg Free Press:

"I sat down and in a few minutes he flew up to a commanding position in a tree and commenced his amazing repertoire of notes. During the next half hour I watched him from distances of 35 to 60 yards as he moved from tree to tree or down into the scrub and back up again. Seldom was he silent during this time, the singing or scolding ceasing just long enough for him to engage in his clownish antics — bowing or swinging his head from side to side or indulging in the most ridiculous flight manoeuvres to the next tree. A number of his notes are of a quality similar to those of the Brown Thrasher but the delivery is quite different and there is much more hesitation."

Although Mr. Callin visited the area at various times of day, he only saw the Chat in the early morning and heard him singing in the morning and also in the late evening between 9:45 and 11:45 p.m. His next exciting discovery he reported to the "Blue Jay" as follows:

"The obvious conclusion was that nesting was in progress but it was not until the early morning of June 21st that both birds were sighted. By this time the male was becoming more shy and his vocal efforts had been markedly reduced.

"On the morning visit of June 21st I felt that the time was now ripe to commence the search for a nest and in my mind selected the starting point for the search. Somewhat breathless and excited I returned at 4:30 in the afternoon to the chosen starting point. To my amazement I found the nest after a search of only ten minutes. Neither of the birds were seen at this visit, but the nest was constructed so exactly according to the descriptions in the bird books.

"On June 27th I again visited the

area and found the bird on the nest. She remained on the nest until I was about six feet away, then she slipped away quickly but silently. The nest contained four Chat eggs plus one Cowbird egg, the latter egg being removed. The nest was 2½ feet from the ground in a Saskatoon tree five feet in height. The nest was bulky for a bird the size of the Chat but well constructed—sturdily built and well "cupped." On July 6th the nest contained three young Chats and one egg, this egg obviously being infertile."

Apart from the Frenchman River Valley near Eastend, where it breeds, and the adjacent Cypress Hills region, the Chat has been recorded from only one other area in Saskatchewan. On June 26, 1939, Norman Clarke of Tregarva informed the Provincial Museum that a pair were resident in a coulee on his farm eight miles NNW of Regina; they were carrying food but a nest was not found. They have been found nesting at Kenmare, North Dakota, just 25 miles south of the Canadian border. When present, this species is frequently heard but seldom seen. Other Saskatchewan observers should be on the lookout for it.

(Incidentally, the mention of the Yellow-breasted Chat at Fairy Hill by Clarissa Stewart in the Jan. 1953 "Blue Jay" was in error.—C.S.H.)

### A Towhee in December

Charles Thacker, Broadview, Sask.

On December 14th last I saw a Towhee just off the Pipestone Creek valley. He was feeding on the road on some spilled grain. When I stopped the car and got out he flew across the ditch. I placed the car where I wanted it, as near the grain as I could, to get the best possible vision, climbed in and waited. In a few minutes he worked his way across the ditch and back to the "feast." I observed him for a considerable time, noting that he was quite able to fly. On December 15th I went that way again — and found him again. On the 16th he was gone. Rather late for the Towhee up this way, I think!