

The Trumpeter Swan

By MARGARET BELCHER, REGINA

One of the things that attracts "birders" to the Cypress Hills is the expectation of seeing a pair of the world's largest swans, the Trumpeters. Only about 1,300 of these rare native swans exist today in North America. They are to be found in small flocks or as individual pairs in Alaska, British Columbia, Alberta, and in the states south of the border. Red Rock Lakes Migratory Waterfowl Refuge in Montana is the home of the American flock of Trumpeters, which fluctuates in size but approximates 600 birds. The birds have a usual range of about 100 miles from the refuge—notably in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks and adjacent National Forests—but banding returns have proved that there is some interchange of birds between the Canadian and American flocks. The Canadian flock is "at home" about 850 miles north of Red Rock Lakes. In recent years, another breeding flock has been discovered along the Copper River in Alaska (*Auk*, 1957, 74:92). The only flock left in British Columbia seems to be the one at Lonesome Lake, 300 miles northwest of Vancouver, pictured in the *Leader-Post* of April 1, 1957.

I have seen Trumpeter Swans only once—a pair in the Wildfowl Trust's sanctuary at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire. These swans were placed in the Trust's care by the Queen to whom they were presented by the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia during the Royal Tour in 1952. It seemed strange to see the first pair of Trumpeters so far away from

home, when a pair have nested several years in Saskatchewan in the West Block of the Cypress Hills.

In 1953 the first Museum nest record for the Trumpeter in Saskatchewan was established (*Blue Jay*, 1953, 11:4:26-27). However, residents of the area had noticed the birds in previous years at Bottley's Lake, where they nest, and at Adams' Lake and Harris' Lake to which they move their young (see item by Percy Drury of Swift Current in *Blue Jay*, 1954, 12:2:11).

According to Taverner, the Trumpeter was at one time a regular sight throughout the prairies and British Columbia. Perhaps its disappearance is accounted for largely by the fact that it was easily shot. Although one of America's endangered species, the Trumpeter is still being subjected to hunting pressure. This is shown by a fluoroscopic study of birds carried out in 1956 in the Red Rock Lakes Refuge. During the summer moult, flightless swans were caught by refuge personnel using thrust boats in a part of the refuge where no broods would be disturbed. Thirteen out of 100 swans carried lead pellets in their tissue, despite the fact that the Trumpeter is on the fully protected list. This is probably due to the Trumpeter's being mistaken for the Snow Goose, a protected species. In any case, the proof of hunting pressure emphasizes again the need for untiring effort ensuring the protection, through education and legislation, of rare birds like the Trumpeter Swan and the Whooping Crane.

BIRD NOTES

EVIDENCE OF STRATEGY IN THE HUNTING OF THE SNOWY OWL: One morning while going out to do chores, I noticed a Snowy Owl perched on the combine. As there was a flock of partridge in the trees nearby, I imagined he had tried to catch one and failed, so was waiting for another chance. As I was going into the barn, a few pigeons flew out,

and the owl immediately gave chase but of course the pigeons had the difficulty of keeping out of his reach. After a few circles around the barn the owl gave up and glided to a telephone pole, 30 rods east of the barn, and soon the pigeons settled down on the east slope of a grassy roof, in full view of the owl.

About 20 minutes later

...king toward the house, I saw the
...leave the pole and fly leisurely
...a northeasterly direction, looking
...y much as if he were leaving,
...I had already forgotten about
...n when suddenly he flew from be-
...d the house and past me, making
...ee-line for the granary on which
...pigeons were sitting. As he was
...v on the northwest side, they did
...see him until he was among them.
...dently, as soon as he was out of
...ht of the pigeons, he made a right
...out turn and attempted to sur-
...se them. He certainly did surprise
...m, but despite his strategy, he
...ssed and had to go hungry that
...rning. This shows that while the
...l was sitting on the pole, he was
...ng a bit of thinking, and this is
...of that our hunting birds as well
...our hunting animals are capable
...resorting to cunning when they
...l to catch their prey otherwise.

—S. O. JORDHEIM,
White Bear, Sask.

**MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE AT
SKINE, ALBERTA** — Lloyd M.
...hr tells of the regular visits this
...st winter of the Mountain (Gam-
...l's) Chickadee—his first record. A
...ountain resident, the Mountain
...ickadee is rare in east central Al-
...rta.

**FEBRUARY RECORD OF GOL-
DEN-CROWNED KINGLET NEAR
REGINA** — Two Golden-crowned
...nglets were observed Feb. 7, 1957,
...the deciduous trees of the Was-
...na Creek valley 10 miles northwest
...Regina. G. F. Ledingham, M.
...elcher.

CEDAR WAXWINGS IN MARCH—
...he Cedar Waxwing is generally
...nsidered to be the summer wax-
...ng, and the Bohemian, the winter
...axwing. However, a close look is
...ways indicated, as in recent years
...small flocks of Cedar Waxwings have
...een noted as remaining in Saskat-
...ewan until early January. Simi-
...r observations have been made in
...anitoba and northwestern Ontario.
...On March 28, 1957, Dr. Stuart
...ouston noted a flock of fifteen
...edar Waxwings in the C.P.R.
...rounds at Yorkton. They presum-
...ably wintered in Saskatchewan, and
...ould hardly be considered early
...pring migrants, since the Cedar
...Waxwing is ordinarily about the last
...bird to arrive in the spring. The earl-

...iest record at Yorkton is May 26,
...and the average, June 1.

**AN ATTACK ON MAN BY A
WHOOING CRANE** — Following
...Fred Lehrman's article on the Ag-
...gressive Behaviour of a Whooping
...Crane *Blue Jay*, 1957, 15:14-15), it
...is interesting to have James L. Par-
...ker of Gilbert Plains, Manitoba re-
...call a record of an attack on man by
...a Whooping Crane in Grant's and
...Macoun's accounts of the Sanford
...Fleming expedition of 1872. Grant
...describes the incident in *Ocean to
Ocean* as follows: "On our way to
...dinner, two large white cranes rose
...swan-like from a wet marsh near
...the road. Frank (sixteen year old
...son of Sir Sanford Fleming) with
...his gun and Willie (half-breed of
...same age in charge of the horses)
...with a stone made after them. The
...larger of the two flew high, but
...Willie's stone brought down the
...other. As he was seizing it, the big
...one, evidently the mother, attacked
...him, but, seeing the gun coming,
...flew up in time to save herself. The
...young one was a beautiful bird, the
...extended wings measuring over six
...feet from tip to tip. As soon as Willie
...had killed his game, he rode off in
...triumph with it slung across his
...shoulders. In twenty minutes after
...his arrival at camp, he and his mates
...had plucked, cooked and disposed of
...it, all uniting in pronouncing the
...meat delicate and 'first class'."

...Macoun also tells of the incident
...in his *Autobiography* and says, "the
...flesh tasted very good, but was a
...dark colour." The date was August
...12, 1872, and the place, according to
...Grant's map, on the Carlton trail just
...northwest of the Touchwood hills.
...Macoun says it was "out on the
...prairie south of Quill Lake."

...If the crane killed was a juvenile
...it is interesting that it was so well
...developed on that date. It is hardly
...probable, however, that a juvenile
...would be described as white.

**BRONZED GRACKLE NESTING
IN BIRD HOUSE** — Utilization of
...bird houses for nesting by species
...which do not ordinarily nest in holes
...is uncommon as is indicated by the
...list compiled by Kalmbach and Mc-
...Atee (1942. *Home for Birds*, U.S.
...Dept. Interior, *Cons. Bull.* 14:2).
...Todd (1947. *Birds of southern Sas-
katchewan. Annals Carnegie Mus.*,
...Vol. 30:417) reported Bronzed

Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*) using "sheltered boxes" at Davidson, Saskatchewan, but he gave no details of the box type. Bronzed Grackles have nested in a duck nest barrel at Regina, Saskatchewan, for the past several years, according to Fred W. Lahrman (see photo). This nest barrel has an opening 5 inches in diameter and is fastened about 14 feet above the ground to a pole which stands some 25 yards back from the edge of Wascana Creek. The barrel was originally set up by Fred G. Bard on his sanctuary to attract Golden-eye ducks (*Glaucionetta clangula*). Young Grackles fledged from a nest in this barrel about July 4, 1956. Nesting was also successful in 1955 as well as in several previous years. Other Grackles have frequently nested in the usual manner in a small grove of trees which reach to within 10 feet of the nest box. A report of the possible nesting of the Red-winged Blackbird

(*Agelaius phoeniceus*) in a birch house at Last Mountain Lake, Saskatchewan, has been published in the *Auk* (Nero, 1956, 73:284).—R. Nero, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina.



Photo by F. W. Lahrman
Bronzed Grackle nesting in duck nest barrel

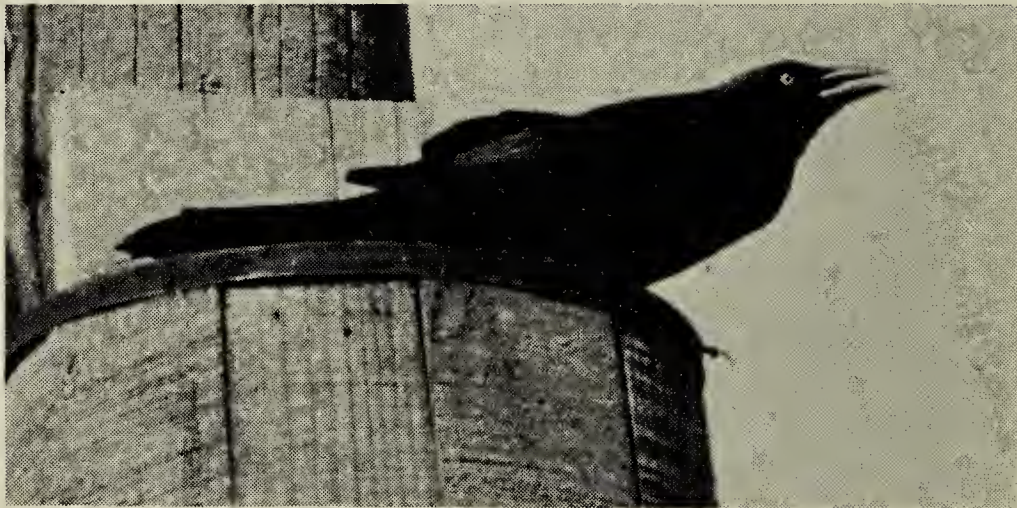


Photo by
F. W. Lahrman

Mourning Dove Information Wanted

A year ago the *Blue Jay* published a request from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service asking for assistance in banding Mourning Doves. Fred Bard, Director of the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, has received a request again this year for co-operation in the project, from Harold S. Peters, Research Biologist of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who writes: "We would appreciate having your active assistance in this programme and hope you may induce other persons to band dove nestlings during this summer." For further particulars, see the *Blue Jay* (1956, 14:49).

In the southern part of its range the Mourning Dove is considered a game bird. In fact, it is the most im-

portant of all migratory game birds being harvested in greater numbers than all species of waterfowl combined. Since Mourning Doves are migratory, their hunting is regulated by the Federal Government, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is therefore interested in any information relevant to the management of the bird.

A five year project of dove nesting banding was inaugurated in 1956. It met with a fine response from game department personnel and interested members of the general public, North Dakota leading the nation in number of nestlings banded (3,634). The intensified dove nesting programme is being continued in 1957.