

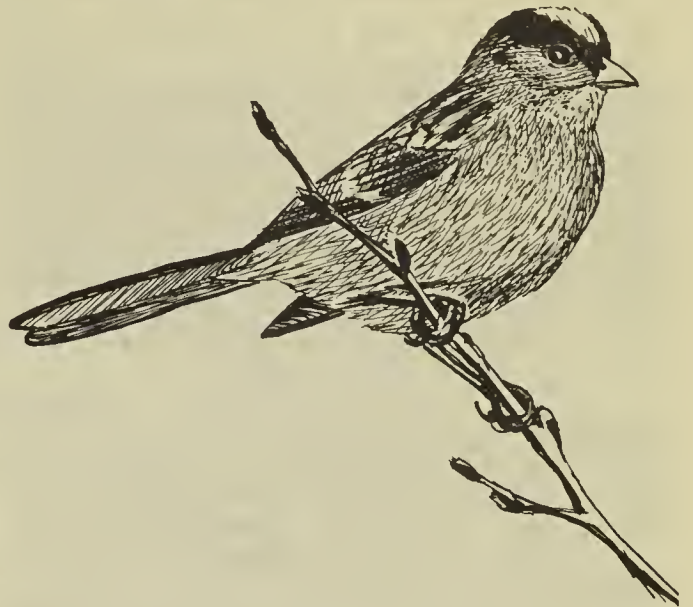
Golden-Crowned Sparrow Found in Saskatchewan

By R. W. NERO, Regina

A Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia coronata*) was obtained by us on May 19, 1956, approximately five miles east of Regina. This is evidently the first report of this western species in Saskatchewan. The bird was spotted on this date together with 5 White-crowned Sparrows (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) at 10:00 a.m. by Mr. Elmer Fox who gave it this identification after checking a book. At 12:00 Mr. Fox returned to the area with Mr. Frank Brazier. The bird was located and examined by both observers. Mr. Fox visited the same area again at 6:00 p.m. with me and after both had observed it, I collected it for positive identification. A study skin has been prepared and is now in the collections of the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History.

The Golden-crowned Sparrow winters in California, migrating through Washington and Oregon to its breeding grounds on the alpine meadows of British Columbia and Alaska. According to Taverner (1928: 290) it is also found in the adjoining foothills of the Rockies in southwestern Alberta. Brooks and Swarth (1925: 94) mention a breeding record "... from the Alberta side of Moose Pass ... the southernmost in the Rocky Mountain region." Rand (1948: 6) did not find the species in southern Alberta but he indicated their probable occurrence in the mountainous areas: "The alpine grassland above timber-line harbours at least white-tailed ptarmigan and the leucosticte probably belongs here. Other species such as the golden-crowned sparrow and the timberline sparrow will probably be found here."

The Golden-crowned Sparrow has occurred widely as an accidental species. According to Peterson (1947: 255) it has been found in Louisiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, New Jersey and Massachusetts. So far as we were able to determine it has not been reported in Canada east of Saskatchewan, in Montana or in North Dakota. The Wisconsin records, based on four specimens date back from 1853 to 1858 (Kumlien and Hollister, 1903: 86.)



— Sketch by F. W. Lahrman

The situation in which the Saskatchewan specimen was found seems significant enough to warrant description. King's Park lies five miles east of Regina on a small body of water which is part of Boggy Creek. This general area consists of rolling hills and is a bit more rugged than the surrounding terrain. The main area is grassland but in the bottoms of the valleys and along the edge of the lake one finds Willow (*Salix* sp.), Dogwood (*Cornus* sp.), and Poplar (*Populus* sp.). On the south side of this pond a steep bank rises abruptly about 15 feet. On May 19 a few mounds of snow as much as 3 feet deep still remained beneath the trees along the bottom of this northfacing slope. The White-crowned Sparrows and the Golden-crowned Sparrow were found along the edge of the lake frequenting these snow-banks. Several times when the birds were flushed they were seen to fly from one snow bank across bare woods to alight in the trees above the next snow bank. Our observations of the rare sparrow were mainly made while it was moving about on top of the snow.

This new addition to the fauna of the province means that observers will need to pay closer attention to White-crowned Sparrows. With this in mind we wish to point out that the main feature of identification of our sparrow was the broad black line on the side of its head. In the few glimpses we had before it was collected it appeared to us to be a

black-capped bird of about the same size as the accompanying White-crowns.

As the number of field observers increases we can expect an increased number of reports of rare or unusual species. Mr. Fox's success in adding a new species to the list can be partly attributed to a deliberate effort to check individuals of even the common species. This is the kind of activity that pays off in excitement, but nevertheless it is not the most significant. Far more important is

the need for additional data on the status of our common species. Few can expect to find a new species, but everyone can help to bridge the gaps in our knowledge of distribution, nesting periods, migration, etc. The non-professional birder is in a better position than ever before to contribute to our knowledge of birds. As ornithological information accumulates the values of each observation becomes more apparent. A rich field of exploration lies before us.

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Bonaparte's Gull

by FRED G. BARD, Regina.



— Sketch by F. W. Lahrman

In Saskatchewan nesting reports of Bonaparte's Gull are still something of a rarity. In 1955 and 1956 I had the opportunity of field checking the birds in Lamotte's Swamp about 10 miles south-west of Glaslyn. The swamp is situated west of No. 4 and south of No. 55 Highway. Mr. R. D. Symons, Field officer for the Department of Natural Resources, had first shown me this interesting swamp in 1935. At that time I photographed two nests with three eggs in each. A single pair of Sandhill Cranes was seen and was no doubt nesting in the area.

In July, 1955, I saw one young Bonaparte's Gull flying with adults in a small slough about one mile south of the swamp. In 1956 I found only one nest containing three eggs. In the accompanying sketch Fred Lahrman shows the elevated nest of the gull. The nest is built on bulrushes of the previous year that have been somewhat flattened by the winter snow. Five adults were seen in 1956. While the area is small its unusual habitat is sufficient to encourage these interesting birds as well as Short-billed Marsh Wrens, Yellow Rails, Wilson's Snipe, Swamp Sparrows, and Juncos.