

NESTING RECORD OF LESSER YELLOWLEGS ALONG THE NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER NEAR HIGHGATE, SASKATCHEWAN

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In the account of the Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) in *Birds of Saskatchewan*, Frank Switzer wrote "Considering the abundance of the Lesser Yellowlegs, little is known about its local breeding biology."¹ Fewer than a dozen confirmed nesting records were recorded at scattered localities in the northern two-thirds of Saskatchewan, although observations of aggressive defence of territories or young by adults suggested breeding had been reported at several other locations. The distribution map given in this account shows a portion of the southern edge of the breeding range extending south to the North Saskatchewan River in the region of Battleford. I confirm this species' nesting there by reporting a pair of Lesser Yellowlegs that uttered alarm calls and aggressively defended a flightless young (Figure 1) at the edge of a backwater of the North Saskatchewan River, north of Highgate (52°87'N, 108°43'W), Saskatchewan, on 11 July 1959. The young was at the water's edge when first observed, but it ran a short distance across a mudflat and into cover. No other young were observed.

The record reported here provides the farthest south breeding record for Saskatchewan. Was this a

late date for a flightless Lesser Yellowlegs? Some individuals of this species have been reported migrating by mid-July, but their status was not known. The stage of development of the juvenal plumage of the young bird shown in Figure 1, however, suggests it hatched several days earlier. Adults with young have been observed elsewhere in Saskatchewan, near Snowdon on 14 July 1947², at Lady Lake on 7 July 1969¹, and a young, with down on its head, at Hasbala Lake on 25 July 1963.³

This is the only evidence of breeding of Lesser Yellowlegs I recorded during extensive observations made during my residence in Battleford (July 1958 through September 1961 and early May to mid-September 1962), and during frequent visits through 2016. I regularly recorded this species, however, during spring and fall migrations. There is an early report of

"two [Lesser Yellowlegs] seen June 11" by Fred G. Bard during a six-week period of field work in the area in 1935⁴, but their status was not determined.

Acknowledgements

My parents, Laurie and Viola Sealy, encouraged my observations, including the use of the car when distances were too great to be reached on foot or by bicycle.

1. Switzer FH (2019) Lesser Yellowlegs. Pages 246-247 in *Birds of Saskatchewan* (Smith AR, Houston CS, Roy JF, editors). Nature Saskatchewan, Regina.
2. Walkinshaw LH (1960) Some Saskatchewan bird observations. *Blue Jay* 18:125-127.
3. Nero RW (1967) Birds of northeastern Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan Natural History Society, Special Publication, No. 6.
4. Belcher M (1972) An early Provincial Museum field camp in the Battleford area. *Blue Jay* 30:8-17. 🐦



FIGURE 1. Flightless Lesser Yellowlegs along the North Saskatchewan River near Highgate, Saskatchewan, 11 July 1959. Photo credit: S.G. Sealy.