

The Sandhill Crane Management Project at Last Mountain Lake

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Following a preliminary crane investigation in the vicinity of Last Mountain Lake in 1960, the Canadian Wildlife Service of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources has intensified its efforts this year. A crew of nine men based at Nokomis under the direction of Doug Stephen, Canadian Wildlife Service biologist, Saskatoon, has been keeping close watch on crane movements throughout the 325 square mile study area.

Different types of automatic exploders for scaring birds have been tested by the Service over the past several years. Each type was found to have mechanical faults which precluded recommendation for use by individual farmers. During the past winter an electrically-controlled exploder was developed by the National Research Council at the request of the Wildlife Service. This exploder has been under test this season and, although rather unwieldy in its present form, produces the loud bang required for scaring with minimum attention in the field.

Crane movements have been followed closely and exploders set up— with permission from the farmer— where cranes were seen damaging crops. It is of interest to note here that one farmer refused permission to install an exploder because he thought the cranes were eating more pesky grasshoppers than grain! In any event the exploders have proved most effective in protecting crops this season. It has only been necessary to use them in thirty fields.

This brings up the point that has been raised—where do the cranes go to feed when chased from unharvested crops? Under early harvesting conditions such as occurred this year and last, there is no great problem as the birds can find plenty to eat in early-harvested stubble fields. However, in years when the harvest is delayed by adverse weather conditions, stubble fields may not be avail-

able for hungry birds. This problem has not been overlooked and initial steps have been taken to solve it. The Saskatchewan Game Branch has grown lure crops for cranes on their Game Preserve for the past several years. Granted the grain so grown would not satisfy the appetites of all the cranes in the area, but this year the Canadian Wildlife Service has cooperated with the Provincial Game Branch to double the lure crop acreage. It is realized that this acreage, too, would probably be inadequate in 'bad years but a start has been made. Further study will be necessary to determine how much more lure crop is required to meet the situation realistically.

What of the future? The most important problem to be solved is the manufacture of a compact exploder of the type devised for the Wildlife Service this year. This machine must be available for acquisition and use by the individual farmer at a price

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RALPH STUECK WINS CONSERVATION AWARD

On October 17, 1961, the Julian Crandall Conservation Trophy was awarded to Burt S. Moore of Andova, N.B., and Ralph Stueck of Abernethy. The trophy is awarded annually by the Canadian Tourist Association to the Canadian citizen who "through word, thought, effort and deed, is considered to have contributed most to conservation of the renewable resources of forest, field and stream in Canada."

We rejoice in this honour that has come to our well-known naturalist, known to his friends as "Hiawatha" because he understands and speaks the language of wild creatures. For his work in Abernethy where he has both a private museum and wildlife sanctuary, and for his contacts throughout the province where he travels with his wildlife films, Ralph richly deserves this honour.

at Watrous. An old carcass of an Eared Grebe (*Podiceps caspicus*) and a recent Swamp Sparrow (*Melospiza georgiana*) were found. Station personnel informed us that in the past they had occasionally noticed dead birds under the tower. Bird watchers ought to be alert to the possibilities of fatalities at this and other towers and structures, especially during the fall and spring migration. Information obtained in this way, in addition to providing distribution records and specimens, may assist in further understanding the basis for these mortalities and thus in finding ways to help reduce this annual loss of songbirds.

AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER IN FALL MIGRATION AT HORSESHOE LAKE

On September 17, 1961, I observed a flock of 17 American Golden Plover at Horseshoe Lake northwest of Yorkton. They were studied in detail while at rest and flushed twice to note flight markings. At rest they appeared generally brown above, three individuals having a distinct golden tinge to their upper parts. In flight, the lack of conspicuous markings was evident—there were no wing bars, rump and tail were evenly dark, and there were no black axillars as in the Black-bellied Plover.

Checking Stuart Houston's list of "The birds of the Yorkton district" (1949. *Can. Field-Nat.* 63: 215-241) and recent issues of the *Blue Jay*, I could find no record of this species in fall migration. However,

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Audubon Field Notes lists numerous observations for interior regions within the last few years, the nearest being in South Dakota in the autumn of 1958 and 1960. In the general summary of the 1958 autumn migration reference is made to the continually increasing number of observations which indicate that more individuals are deserting their traditional ocean migration routes in favour of partial or complete overland flights.—William Anaka, Spirit Lake.

EDITOR'S NOTE: It is always difficult to assess how much migration patterns are actually changing, since a lack of good observers and good records may partly explain the apparent absence of a species. It is interesting to note, as a matter of comparison, that the American Golden Plover was once considered unknown in the Regina area in fall migration, although Margaret Belcher's *Birds of Regina* (1961) cites fall records for as early as 1913. We know of several observations of the Golden Plover again this fall in the Regina area—a group of 21 was seen October 8 by Frank Brazier and R. W. Nero, and a group of five, with one Black-bellied Plover, on October 21 by M. Belcher and L. Murray.

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he is willing to pay. Planning for lure crop planting must go ahead. If Crown land is not available in sufficient quantity to meet the need, suitable private land adjoining the present sanctuary must be acquired. The farming operations required to produce the lure crop could be carried out by local farmers after bids have been submitted on various contracts. These are some of the obstacles that will have to be overcome to alleviate the local crop depredation problem. Perhaps some solution to the problem may be forthcoming through the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act.

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counted ten birds but one got out in the next few minutes. Another got tangled in the net and drowned. I got mired in the mud trying to untangle one bird and fell over with a Sandhill Crane in my arms, saying "I love you, Honey, and some day you will be in a beautiful zoo, admired by thousands of children."

I got six Sandhills for the zoo and Dr. Miller banded the two remaining birds. This adventure was almost as exciting as the time I lassoed a live buffalo in Brandon Park and transferred it to Moose Jaw Wild Animal Park for Mr. Paynter, Director of Wildlife.