

# First Annual Report on the Prairie Nest Records Scheme

By E. L. Fox, Regina

In 1958 the Saskatchewan Natural History Society in co-operation with the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History instituted a scheme to collect information on nesting birds in the three Prairie Provinces, thus bridging the gap between Ontario and British Columbia where similar schemes are in operation. By the end of 1958 thirty-one contributors had returned 655 nest record cards, giving information on 101 species of birds. A total of 3318 nests and 9275 young were reported.

Nests were reported for these species: Common Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Horned Grebe, Eared Grebe, Western Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, American Bittern, Canada Goose, Mallard, Gadwall, Pintail, Blue-winged Teal, American Widgeon, Shoveler, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, White-winged Scoter, Ruddy Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Bald Eagle, Marsh Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Pigeon Hawk, Sparrow Hawk, Ruffed Grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Sora, American Coot, Killdeer, Common Snipe, Upland Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Willet, Marbled Godwit, American Avocet, Wilson's Phalarope, California Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Common Tern, Black Tern, Mourning Dove, Black-billed Cuckoo, Great Horned Owl, Long-eared Owl, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Kingbird, Western Kingbird, Eastern Phoebe, Least Flycatcher, Western Wood Pewee, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Bank Swallow, Barn Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Purple Martin, Black-billed Magpie, Common Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, Catbird, Robin, Veery, Mountain Bluebird, Cedar Waxwing, Loggerhead Shrike, Solitary Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Ovenbird, Bobolink, Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Redwinged Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Common Grackle, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, American Goldfinch, Savannah Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Slate-colored Junco, Chipping Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Song Sparrow, McCown's Longspur, Chestnut-collared Longspur.

These records were submitted by W. Anaka, R. Buhr, D. Buckle, Genevieve Belliveau, F. G. Bard, R. Cowell, R. W. Fyfe, G. Fox, E. L. and Reg Fox, D. Gilroy, Joyce Gunn, F. Gregg, the Hubbard family, Kathleen Hodges, A. Hruska, W. Horseman, S. Houston, F. Howe, R. Klimack, L. Lohr, F. W. Lahrman, Roberta Lee, Mamie McCowan, R. W. Nero, J. M. Provick, K. Paton, J. Robinson, W. Richardson, B. Shier, S. Waycheshen, A. Waycheshen. Worthy of special mention for number of records submitted are Bill Horseman (153 cards), Bill Anaka (92), Stuart Houston (79), Glen Fox (44), Lloyd Lohr (35 from Alberta). F. G. Bard, Director of the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History filed an interesting report on a large

mixed colony of White Pelicans, Ring-billed Gulls, Common Terns, and Double-crested Cormorants at Old Wives' Lake. (Since the preparation of this summary, 199 cards for 75 species have come from Victor and Irving Latta, Winnipeg).

The records of all contributors, whether they sent in a large or small number of cards, are important in this scheme. We are therefore urging all of those who helped in 1958 to help again in 1959. To all those who contributed in 1958, nest record cards will be mailed in March. Any others who have not yet submitted cards—and we hope there will be many new contributors this year—should write at once for cards to use during the breeding season.

We are particularly anxious to have additional contributors because many areas in the three provinces have not yet been covered. Very few reports have come in from Manitoba or Alberta, and in Saskatchewan even points like Saskatoon and Prince Albert where there are active natural history societies have submitted no local reports in the 1958 survey. The three main areas with a concentration of records in Saskatchewan are Regina, Kindersley, and Yorkton district. The remaining records are scattered throughout the province, with no complete coverage at any point.

We need to know more about more species of birds, as well as about more areas in the three provinces. To date, no records have been received for the following common species: Gray (Hungarian) Partridge, Burrowing Owl, Short-eared Owl, Common Nighthawk, Brown Thrasher, Starling. We know there are records that have not been submitted; for example, the nests of the Lesser Yellowlegs and Swamp Sparrow seen by almost all members of the society present at the Emma Lake summer meeting were not reported. Species of special interest for which the committee would welcome reports include the Franklin's Gull. Breeding colonies of these typical prairie gulls must be known to some of our readers, and could be reported. In the last **Blue Jay** (December, 1958) we suggested plotting the

breeding range of the Western Kingbird if sufficient reports of nests could be obtained. You are urged, too, to send in records for longspurs (on which Frank Roy is working), and for the Canvasback (because of our concern about the diving duck population). Finally, several special requests for nesting information submitted to the **Blue Jay** follow this article—when you submit records in answer to these inquiries, please send duplicate cards to us.

In spite of some omissions, we are greatly encouraged by the initial response to the Prairie Nest Records Scheme. We are confident that the number of records submitted in 1959 will increase substantially as more and more interested people learn of the scheme. If you are not already a contributor, write at once for nest record cards to **Prairie Nest Records Scheme, c/o Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina, Sask.**

## INFORMATION PLEASE

**COLONIAL BIRDS** — We need more information about the distribution of the following colonial birds in Saskatchewan: Eared Grebe, Western Grebe, White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, California Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Franklin's Gull, Bonaparte's Gull, Common Tern, Caspian Tern, Black Tern, Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Long-billed Marsh Wren, Yellow-headed Blackbird. For each species about which you can give us information, please indicate location of the colony (nearest town, land location), size of colony, history of colony (has it existed for a number of years? Is

it protected from visitors, predators, shrinking water levels?). **Information to F. G. Bard, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina.**

**GOSHAWK, PEREGRINE FALCON**—An all-out effort to obtain information on nests of Goshawk and Peregrine Falcon is being made this year as part of a programme to determine the distribution of birds of prey in Saskatchewan and to band them. Every effort will be made to check nests reported, and whenever possible adults and young will be banded. I shall gladly send additional information to anyone interested who may be unfamiliar with the habitat and nesting requirements of these birds. **Information to R. W. Fyfe, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina.**

**BUFFLEHEAD**—As a graduate student in zoology at the University of British Columbia I am engaged in a study of the Bufflehead duck. I am especially interested in precise information on the breeding distribution. **Blue Jay** readers may have records that have not appeared in the literature. I should like to ask you to report to me your observations of previous years and to watch for this species in the approaching breeding season. Any precise information on nests or broods of Buffleheads would be useful, but sight records of adult or yearling birds unaccompanied by young are of little value. **Information to Anthony J. Erskine, Dept. Zoology, University of B.C., Vancouver 8, B.C.**

(Please send duplicate cards to Prairie Nests Record Scheme.)

## Plant more Fruit Trees to attract birds

By **Mrs. O. L. Wolters, Tolland, Alta.**

Close to our house are two crab-apple trees, one a rosy-bloom, the other a Siberian that so many birds seem to relish. Flock of from 8 to 30 or more Pine Grosbeaks could be observed there almost daily for a spell this winter. One day eight Evening Grosbeaks paid us a call. I had never seen more than three at a time before, and for years only one came at a time, so I hope they are becoming more numerous.

Early in the fall, five partridge

dined on crabs morning and evening, and what with Blue Jays, Bohemian Waxwings and grosbeaks, needless to say, very few crabapples remained after Christmas. Had we known they'd be so popular, we'd have planted more ornamental apple trees. However, if purchased from a good western nursery, trees bear young, so we are planting a few more this spring. Naturally, they will be near to the house where birds coming to dine can be watched.