



Fig. 4: Then "went into their hopping-flapping dance." Photo from kodachrome (500 mm. telephoto lens, f. 5.6, 1/15 sec.). All photos by F. W. Lahrman.

## A. C. Bent's 1917 Trip to Saskatchewan

by Stuart Houston, Yorkton, Sask.

The "In Memoriam" tribute to Arthur Cleveland Bent by Wendell Taber, published in *The Auk* of October, 1955, included a listing of Bent's field trips. Bent's visits to Saskatchewan in 1905 and 1906 are well known, and were fully documented in his paper on the "Summer Birds of Southwestern Saskatchewan" which appeared in *The Auk* in October 1907 and January 1908. References to his experiences on this trip also appear throughout his *Life Histories of North American Birds*. However, Taber also listed another trip to Saskatchewan: "1917. Northern Saskatchewan alone." This latter item caught my fancy as I could find nothing published on the results of this trip.

The mystery has been resolved by Mrs. Madeleine V. Bent, his widow. She wrote on Sept. 29, 1958: "Mr. Bent actually accomplished no field work in 1917 as he was ill during his entire stay, with a severe sinus disturbance. He remained some time there, hoping to throw it off. However, he grew worse and finally returned, and never found the opportunity to go again."

Mrs. Bent was later able to find two letters written by Mr. Bent during the trip. The first, dated May 24, 1917: "Wynyard, Sask. I have changed my mind and am not going to the place I planned, but shall start tomorrow morning in an automobile for a 25 mile ride up around the

Lake to Quill Lake town, where I learn there is a good hotel. I shall size up the country on the way and if I see any place on the way that looks good to me, I may arrange to stop there. You see I do not know anything about this country and cannot find out much about it, so I shall look it over. If I do not find anything better than I have seen so far, I shall move on farther west."

The second letter, dated May 30, reads: "Prince Albert, Sask. I arrived here last night and have been out all day exploring. I find I can stay at a hotel here and go out early in the morning, and back late at night to various places I want to explore. So far I have found very little that interests me, and the country does not look suitable for the birds that I want to find. I may find some better country tomorrow, or next day but if not I shall "beat it" either back to Quill Lake for a few days or back home."

Mrs. Bent commented in a letter to me on Nov. 20, 1958 that "Mr. Bent must have taken ill soon after this. Feeling discouraged, he gave up and came home." We were thus deprived of what would likely have been valuable contributions to our knowledge of Saskatchewan ornithology.

I wish to thank Wendell Taber, F. Seymour Hersey, and particularly Mrs. Madeleine V. Bent, for the assistance they have given me.