

TREE-NESTING MALLARDS

by Spencer Sealy, Battleford

Having just re-read Frank Roy's article on the tree-nesting Mallard in the September, 1958, issue of the *Blue Jay* (XVI:104), I thought that I would tell you about my experiences with this phenomenon. In May, 1958, five and one-quarter miles south of Battleford, a nest of six eggs was found in a twelve-foot willow in an abandoned crow's nest seven feet from the ground. I did not see this nest that year because it was found by another boy, but on May 19, 1959, I went to look at the old nest and found a Mallard nesting in another old crow's nest not ten feet away from the old site. This was eight feet from the ground and contained six eggs. I got a coloured slide of it. Again this year on May 21 I found another tree-nesting Mallard about one-quarter of a mile away from the two other old sites but still in the vicinity of the same lake. It was eleven feet up in an aspen and contained seven eggs. I had planned to make a blind at a good vantage point to make observations and take photographs, but the nest was destroyed before I was able to carry out my plans. I also found another Mallard nest in a tree about five miles south of here on May 28, 1960, which contained the membranes of eggs. This nest was about twelve feet up in an aspen and was quite far from water.

AN UNUSUAL NEST OF A MOURNING WARBLER

by Maurice G. Street, Nipawin

One of the biggest thrills of 1960's summer birding was the finding of my fourth Mourning Warbler's nest on July 6. The habitat was quite different from that of the three previous nests I found also near the ground but in high, dry places. This nest was well in from the edge of a treed muskeg, 1½ miles north of Nipawin. The nest was built several inches above the ground in a tangle of grass and vines amid the branches of a fallen, stunted tamarack lying on one side of a large hummock. It contained three half-grown young. Finding the nest of a

familiar species in new habitat was almost like finding a new species nesting.

Roger Tory Peterson's account of the Mourning Warbler in the new book *Warblers of America* states that "Mourning Warblers seem to have two preferred habitats in which to nest—dry slashings and ravine slopes choked with brambles and other scrubby vegetation, and also the bushy edges of swamps and bogs."

I also found my fourth nest of the Boreal Chickadee on June 5, 1960, with two eggs, in a natural cavity of a tamarack stub, atop a low hummock well out in open bog. The nest opening was two feet above ground. I was able to show it to Connie Pratt and Sylvia Harrison when they called in after the summer meeting at Greenwater.

A SEASON'S NESTING RECORDS FROM A SASKATCHEWAN FARM

by Mrs. K. D. Paton, Oxbow

On our farm at Oxbow we have had a wonderful assortment of song birds this spring. At first the cats did a great deal of harm to eggs and young and four cats and five young kittens met their end as a result, but most of the birds have nested again and the young are hatched or hatching now (July 12, 1960).

I've had a few exciting "finds" this year, the best one being a **Mountain Bluebird's** nest with one egg in a hollow telephone pole on a back road between us and the town of Carlyle (near the lakes). The pole was leaning so I hope someone doesn't decide to replace it soon. We have seen Mountain Bluebirds quite near us this summer and have heard reports of them north of us where there is considerable poplar bluff.

I also found a **Warbling Vireo's** nest in our yard, near my clothesline. The nest is only six feet or so from the ground and now contains four eggs, and the bird is quite tame. We found an empty nest once before but it was much higher up. They're here every year for they sing almost constantly. The little "chebek" flycatcher (**Least Fly-**

catcher) is always here, but I can't find his nest. The **Black-billed Cuckoos** are nesting, too, but I haven't been able to find their nest either.

The **Tree Swallows** looked over our old binder twine box but did not remain—they lost a nest there last year, so I was very pleased to find a nest of young ones in a hollowed-out poplar near our well yesterday. I'll have to use a mirror to try and determine how many young there are. The tree is just a small one, too; it must have been crowded for a **Flicker**. We saw flickers in that bluff last year, but never did find the hole in the tree. The flickers were in a hollow maple this year and I believe they had a successful hatch.

The **Brown Thrashers** had a really early hatch of five but lost them to cats. Now I believe they are nesting again, although I cannot find them. Nests of the **Robins** are also difficult to find here on the farm, which seems strange when you consider how conspicuous the Robin is on a city lawn. Although we looked in vain this year for their nest, we did see at least one young bird. The adults are still about and I think they must be sitting again. Since the maples in the shelterbelt are old there are lots of good corners where nests might be concealed.

There were five nests of **Mourning Doves** for a while, but the wind, cats and **Grackles** got them all, I think. Some have set again, but so far any nests I find are too high for me to examine. **Brewer's Blackbirds** nested everywhere but had bad luck, too. Some have nests again, as have both the **Eastern Kingbird** and **Western Kingbird**. Our **Baltimore Orioles** took some strings off the clothes-line but where they took them, I don't know. We found a dead male just at nesting time but there still seemed to be two or three birds around, and we thought there should have been a brood of young.

There has been no sign yet of the **Mockingbird** that we have seen in the shelterbelt on some occasions. And the **Yellow Warblers** must have nested elsewhere this year because we see them only occasionally. On the other hand, we hear the **Yellow-throats** often and nearly every bluff

seems to have one in it when one is travelling in the country. Down along the Souris River there are lots of **Catbirds** as usual; however, I haven't seen one on the farm this year, though there are some in the town of Oxbow.

Recently a **Willet** and her mate brought their four downy young through our house yard on their way to the slough. It was raining at the time and the old bird would crouch down just like a hen over the young.

The **Meadowlarks** lost two nests here but their singing seems to indicate that they have nested again. Nearly every nest of every species had one or more **Cowbird's** eggs in it this year. I thought this unusual because I have not found Cowbird's eggs in the nests before. The **Bobolink** sang continuously in a little field near our house but now he is gone, and I wonder whether something has happened to his nest. Last year the parent bird brought the young ones for water right to the house.

A friend of ours at the river reports a **Cedar Waxwing's** nest and also a **Mallard** duck that hatched her young in an abandoned **Magpie's** nest there.

Apart from the resident birds that are with us all summer, a great deal of interest in the farm yard is provided by the various migrants. For example, a honeysuckle bush right at our window has provided passing shelter for a large number of strays over the years, even an **Ovenbird**. Early this spring we enjoyed seeing a **Red-headed Woodpecker** make the rounds of all the fence posts in our yard. These transients, however, do not provide the same opportunity for study as the resident birds that nest here with us on the farm.

ANNUAL MEETING

Support your society by attending the annual meeting in the Museum, Regina, October 22, 1960. Learn what the society is trying to do and come prepared to offer your comments and constructive criticisms.