

Lake Athabasca Records of Interest

Compiled by **Stuart Houston**, Saskatoon

Very little is known of bird distribution in the northern third of Saskatchewan. The results of two important collecting trips to Lake Athabasca, by Francis Harper in 1920 and by T. M. Shortt in 1945, unfortunately have not appeared in print. I recently had the privilege of checking the Saskatchewan ranges for the forthcoming new edition of Peterson's *Field Guide to the Western Birds* and realized more acutely than ever how little we know of the breeding ranges of birds in northern Saskatchewan. I wrote to Harper and Shortt concerning certain key species and I felt the information they supplied should be placed on record.

Arctic Loon: One seen August 15, 1920, by Francis Harper on the water about a mile east of Moose Island on the north shore of Lake Athabasca (long 108° 20', east of the former Goldfields townsite). Harper states: "It dove a couple of times at my approach and disappeared then for good, perhaps around an island. I clearly saw the smoke-gray of its occiput." Shortt did not record this species in 1945. There are no known breeding records for Saskatchewan.

Black-billed Magpie: Thomas Heaslip listed this species in his list of birds seen at Uranium City (**Blue Jay** 17: 58, 1959). Correspondence with Heaslip has disclosed that this bird was a winter wanderer that stayed in the vicinity of the Lorado Mining Camp garbage dump for three weeks in November, 1957. This is the first published record of this species for the northern third of Saskatchewan,

though other stragglers have occurred at Brochet, Manitoba (see Snyder, *Can. Field-Nat.* 49: 152, 1935, where Brochet is incorrectly said to be in Saskatchewan). Other stragglers must go even further north, as three were shot by Joseph Yank in 1943-44 on the Dubawnt River, 50 miles southeast of Dubawnt Lake, in the Northwest Territories, and some 150 miles north of the northern boundary of Saskatchewan. (Rand, *Can. Field-Nat.* 59: 45, 1945).

Blackpoll Warbler: T. M. Shortt collected a nest and one flightless juvenile at Fond-du-lac on July 21, 1945. This would appear to constitute the first and only nesting record of this species for Saskatchewan.

Common Redpoll: On July 21, 1945, at Fond-du-lac, Lake Athabasca, T. M. Shortt collected a male (with still large testes) and a female (with ruptured ovarian follicles) within a few yards of each other. He did not find a nest or young birds. There are no Saskatchewan breeding records for this species.

Red Crossbill: On both July 15 and July 16, 1945, T. M. Shortt collected a family group of male, female, and two flying young. This was in one of the most extensive pine areas that he encountered and Shortt presumes that they nested nearby. However, the young were fully developed, and it is possible that they had flown some distance. Although there are summer records for Emma Lake, Prince Albert, Nipawin, and the Cypress Hills, there are no definite breeding records of this species for Saskatchewan.

Some Saskatchewan Bird Observations

by **Lawrence H. Walkinshaw**, Battle Creek, Michigan

During late May and early June, 1947, W. A. Tholen and I visited central Saskatchewan. For several days we were at Yorkton; we spent another few days at Nipawin. From June 6 to 11 we were at Fishing Lake, 75 miles northwest of Nipawin. From June 14 through June 16 we were 3-6 miles northwest of Snowden. Here we had seen some good marsh areas from the air.

At Fishing Lake we had no transportation so had to go by foot or in the lake itself by boat. We saw 74 species of birds right around the lake. Following are some of the more important:

Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grise-gena*). A massive floating nest found June 10, was built in two feet of water amongst the tules of the west side of the lake and contained 3