

FIRST YELLOW RAIL RECORD FOR REGINA

by Margaret Belcher, Regina

The Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*) recovered by Fred W. Lahrman at the TV tower at Regina on October 7, 1962, and reported in the preceding article of this issue of the **Blue Jay**, constitutes the first record for Regina.

The bird collected at the tower was shown to me later at the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History by Fred Lahrman—the first Yellow Rail that I have ever seen. However, I had the good fortune this past summer to hear a Yellow Rail with Manley Callin and a small group of birders who were exploring the marshy meadows at the west end of Pasqua Lake in the Qu'Appelle Valley as part of the field trip program of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society's annual summer meeting (June 16, 1962). The notes we heard were not the commonly described series of "ticking" sounds, but another sequence that Manley Callin recognized as being identical with that recorded by Roger Tory Peterson in his "Field Guide to Bird Songs". Returning from the marsh, we stopped at the Callins' home to listen to the Peterson record and thus verify the identification. Mr. Callin was pleased to find the Yellow Rail at Pasqua Lake since he has heard them farther east in the Qu'Appelle Valley in the marshes at El Capo, Round and Echo Lakes.

This shy and elusive bird is difficult to locate, except by sound, as was well shown by R. D. Symons in his "Random notes on the Yellow Rail" in the **Blue Jay**, 14:8-19, March, 1956. Locating the Yellow Rail mostly by ear, Mr. Symons was able to plot its range at Moosomin and Davidson, and from Saskatoon through Battleford to Lloydminster and north to Midnight Lake. Records of its being heard in the Carlton area and seen at Prince Albert (C. S. Houston and M. G. Street, **Birds of the Sask. River**, 1959) and specimens from the north end of Last Mountain Lake (Carnegie Museum, Pittsburg), Battleford and Somme (SMNH), help to confirm the impression that the distribution of the Yellow Rail is rather general throughout Saskatchewan in suitable habitat.

Dr. R. W. Nero has called attention to the fact that Yellow Rails do not appear to have been commonly reported at TV tower kills. In the survey of casualties at a Florida tower (Herbert L. Stoddard, 1962. Bird casualties at a Leon County, Florida TV tower, 1955-1961) not a single Yellow Rail was found, although it is considered a much commoner bird than the little Black Rail of which three specimens were collected. Again, when the results of five tower kills in Wisconsin from 1957 to 1959 were tabulated (Charles A. Kemper, 1959. More TV tower destruction. **Passenger Pigeon**, 21:135-142) two immature Yellow Rails were considered among the most remarkable specimens.

A GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER IN REGINA

by Frank Brazier, Regina

At 8:30 a.m. on May 18, 1962, I was walking in the Legislative Grounds in Regina when I noticed a number of small birds on a lawn. As I raised my binoculars a small grayish and yellow bird, superficially like a Myrtle Warbler, flew across my path and into a nearby tree. Myrtles were plentiful and I paid no particular attention to this bird. While I inspected those on the lawn (they were Chipping Sparrows), however, something about this one nagged at me, and suddenly I got it—no yellow rump! I swung my 10 x 50's to where the bird obligingly waited, back towards me. I stared in disbelief . . . no rump patch, and dull yellow shoulders—I suspected the unbelievable . . . and then it turned and faced me—an adult male Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*)! In bright sunlight his golden forehead, black face bar and black throat at no more than 30 feet were unmistakable. And then he sang—his unpretentious vocal effort turned out to be the second song described in Griscom and Sprunt's **The Warblers of America** (New York, Devin-Adair, 1957).

Griscom and Sprunt give the breeding range as from southeast Manitoba, central Minnesota, southeast Ontario, central New York and southern Vermont, and Massachusetts south to southern Iowa, northern

Illinois, northern Indiana, northern New Jersey, eastern Tennessee, and in the mountains to northern Georgia. Of special interest for us is the section at the end of the book where W. Earl Godfrey has summarized the status of the warblers in the prairie provinces and states that "the Golden-winged Warbler has been reported in the migration season from Winnipeg, Portage-la-Prairie, Aweme, Ponemah Beach, White-mouth and Vivian, all in southern Manitoba. B. W. Cartwright (in litt.) stated that on July 22, 1932, he, T. M. Shortt, and others succeeded in finding three 'family groups' at Vivian, three specimens of which were collected."

I had never heard of any record of this bird for Saskatchewan so obviously I needed someone to confirm my observation. I left the park at once in my car to get other observers, and within an hour several others were combing the area. However, frustration was the lot of us all as the warbler was not seen again.

VIRGINIA RAIL NEST IN ALBERTA

by **Dennis Gallaway**, Czar, Alberta

Mr. Thomas Randall's comments on finding the nest of a Virginia Rail in Alberta (see his autobiography in **Blue Jay**, 20: 62) has led me to report the following information. In June of 1943 I found a nest of this species some 17 miles southwest of Czar, Alberta, on the SW ¼ of 27-38-7. Czar is about 35 miles from the border of Saskatchewan on Highway #13. The nest was in a shallow slough with about six inches depth of water and it was fairly well hidden in lush grass. There were 13 eggs in the nest. Mr. David Penman of Czar, and his two boys were with me at the time and the nest was found on their land. Also, in the previous year I had found another Virginia Rail nest in a shallow slough on my own farm at Czar, but details were not available.

Editor's Note: Salt and Wilk in **The Birds of Alberta** mention a nest found at Brooks and note that because of the secretiveness of this rail it may or may not be as scarce as the few records indicate.

MARbled GODWIT RANGE EXTENSION IN ALBERTA

by **David Stirling**, Victoria, B.C.

Salt and Wilk state in **The Birds of Alberta**, 1958, that the Marbled Godwit has not been recorded north of Rochester, Alberta. We have some evidence to suggest that the species nests in the vicinity of Athabasca which is about 25 miles north of Rochester. In July, 1947, I saw two adults and two grown young at a slough about five miles east of Athabasca. I lived at Athabasca for a number of years but this was my only record of the Marbled Godwit. More recently, in early July, 1962, my wife, Ruth Stirling, observed a pair of Marbled Godwits at a slough about five miles north of Athabasca. Although no nest was found the birds acted in a way that indicated a nest in the vicinity.

POSSIBLE DICKCISSEL RECORD FOR THE REGINA AREA

by **Doug Gilroy**, Boggy Creek

On September 4, 1962, I saw what I am almost sure was a flock of Dickcissels. It was almost 3:30 p.m.; I was driving down a side road near Condie when up flew a flock of 15 to 20 birds in front of the car. Although I did not have binoculars with me, I had a good chance to observe them at close range; I could see their bright yellow breasts which made them look like a flock of small meadowlarks. In fact, to add to the momentary confusion, two or three meadowlarks flew with them. However, when they lit out amongst the swaths, it was plain to see they were much smaller than meadowlarks. I judged them to be similar in size to Harris' Sparrows. They had brownish backs but as far as I could see there was no black V at the throat such as the Dickcissel is supposed to have. But I understand that in the fall and juvenile plumage this V is minus or nearly so. I had never seen any birds just like them and the only tag I can nail on them is Dickcissel.

According to Margaret Belcher's **Birds of Regina** (1961), the Dickcissel has been practically unknown in the Regina area except when a small colony of these birds nested on the golf course near the R.C.M.P. barracks for two successive summers during the dry 30's (1933, 1934).