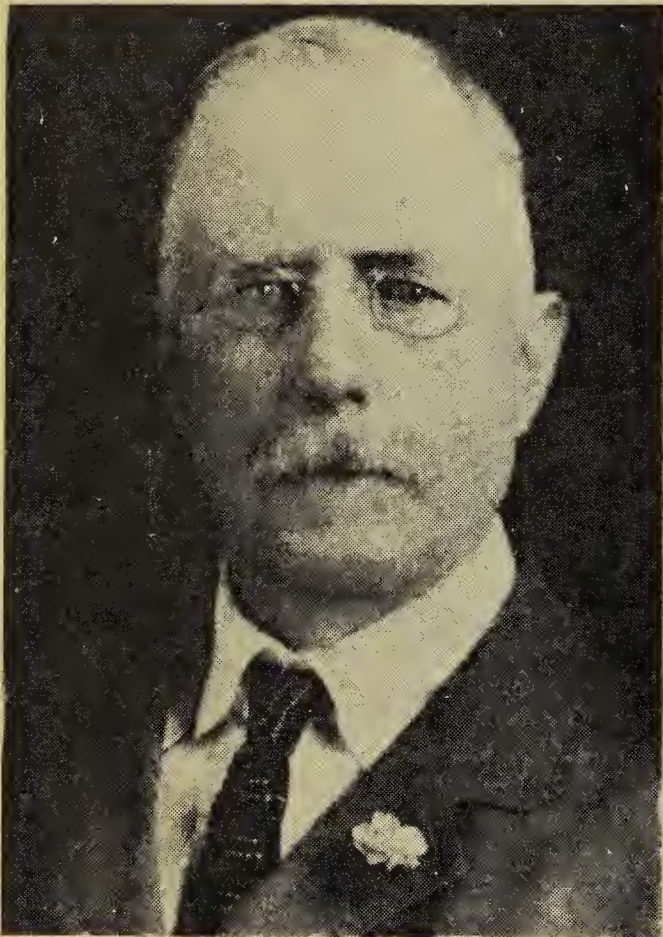


Saskatchewan's First Resident Bird-Watcher, Geo. F. Guernsey

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Sir John Richardson, Thomas Drummond, and Captain Thomas Blakiston all made important studies of Saskatchewan birds, the first two in the 1820's and the latter in the 1850's. However, they were members of exploring expeditions and only temporary visitors. The first **resident** bird-watcher of whom we have record was George F. Guernsey.

Guernsey's bird records were used in the **Birds of Western Manitoba** by Ernest E. T. Seton, published in **The Auk** in April and June of 1886. Seton in his introduction said, "The observations for the region are my own, as I have visited nearly every part of it. I have, however, received much valuable assistance from Mr. G. F. Guernsey, who is responsible for the records from Qu'Appelle." In 1891, the Smithsonian Institute published a revised and enlarged work entitled **The Birds of Manitoba**, by Ernest E. Thompson (Seton's alternate name). This gave Guernsey's observations more fully with 96 species listed from Fort Qu'Appelle, with spring migration dates given for most of these. When one considers

that books on birds for the amateur were virtually non-existent, and that identification was made at that time largely from collected specimens, the number of sight records is very creditable indeed. Ninety-three of the 96 are acceptable to this writer only three being open to serious question (Greater Scaup, Field Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow). Some of the Fort Qu'Appelle migration dates were for 1885; it is not clear whether the majority were from 1884, and only a few addenda from 1885, or whether all were from 1885.

Here is Guernsey's list of 96 species observed at Fort Qu'Appelle, with indications of their status in the area, and first arrival dates:

Common Loon: Common summer resident; breeds; arrival April 28.

White Pelican: Common summer resident; very plentiful on lakes in 1884. Toward migratory season I saw flock of upwards to 500 birds (letter May 18, 1885).

Double-crested Cormorant: Rather common summer resident; breeds; arrival about April 25.

Great Blue Heron: Tolerably common summer resident; breeds; arrives May 6.

American Bittern: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives May 21.

Canada Goose: Common summer resident; breeds; April 1 to 10.

Snow Goose: Transient; passing over May 3 to 28.

Mallard: Common summer resident; breeds; April 5 to 15.

Gadwall: Common summer resident; breeds; April 20.

American Widgeon: Common summer resident; breeds; April 20.

Pintail: Common summer resident; breeds; April 5 to 15.

Shoveler: Common summer resident; breeds; May 1.

Wood Duck: I know of one being shot here in 5 years.

Green-winged Teal: Common summer resident; breeds; April 5 to 15.

Blue-winged Teal: Common summer resident; breeds; May 10.

Redhead: Common summer resident; breeds; April 23.

Ring-necked Duck: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives April 20.

Canvasback: Common migrant; April 23.

Greater Scaup: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives April 20 in flocks with Lesser Scaup and Ring-necked.

Lesser Scaup: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives April 20.

Common Goldeneye: Tolerably common summer resident; breeds; arrives April 15.

Bufflehead: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives Sept. 20.

Ruddy Duck: Common summer resident; breeds; May 1.

White-winged Scoter: Common migrant; May 1.

Surf Scoter: Rare migrant; May 1; Specimen taken in fall of 1883.

Hooded Merganser: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives April 20.

Common Merganser: Tolerably common summer resident; May 5.

Red-breasted Merganser: Tolerably common summer resident; May 1.

Turkey Vulture: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives May 20.

Bald Eagle: Occasional; does not breed; April 30.

Marsh Hawk: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives April 15.

Osprey: Occasional summer resident.

Pigeon Hawk: Tolerably common; arrives April 20.

Sparrow Hawk: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives April 15.

Ruffed Grouse: Common; permanent resident; breeds.

Sharp-tailed Grouse: Common; permanent resident; breeds.

Whooping Crane: Transient; passing over April 28 to May 1.

Sandhill Crane: Transient; passing over April 28 to May 1.

American Coot: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives May 6.

Killdeer: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives April 17.

American Golden Plover: Tolerably common migrant; May 20.

Upland Plover: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives May 12.

Common Snipe: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives April 20.

Greater Yellowlegs: Common migrant; May 5.

Lesser Yellowlegs: Common migrant; May 5.

Marbled Godwit: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives May 10.

American Avocet: Occasional; plentiful on alkali ponds to the west.

Black Tern: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives May 18.

Mourning Dove: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives May 12.

Passenger Pigeon: Occasional; May 10.

Black-billed Cuckoo: (noted)

Great Horned Owl: Occasional; not common.

Snowy Owl: Have seen specimens but not common.

Whip-poor-will: Occasional.

Common Nighthawk: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives May 21.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Occasional; not plentiful.

Belted Kingfisher: Tolerably common summer resident; breeds.

Yellow-shafted Flicker: Common; summer resident; arrives April 25.

Hairy Woodpecker: Tolerably common; permanent resident.

Eastern Kingbird: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives May 24.

Eastern Phoebe: Tolerably common summer resident; arrives May 20.

Horned Lark: Common summer resident; arrives April 1 to 25.

Tree Swallow: Summer resident; breeds; arrives about May 10.

Bank Swallow: Summer resident; breeds; arrives about May 10.

Barn Swallow: Summer resident; breeds; arrives about May 20.

Cliff Swallow: Summer resident; breeds; arrives about May 10.

Blue Jay: Tolerably common summer resident; arrives May 6.

Black-billed Magpie: Occasional; plentiful 100 miles north.

Common Raven: Occasional.

Common Crow: Common; breeds; April 1 to 5.

Black-capped Chickadee: Common permanent resident; breeds.

House Wren: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives May 12.

Short-billed Marsh Wren: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives May 15.

Catbird: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives about May 15.

Robin: Common summer resident; flocks of 4 to 5 about April 12.

Veery: Tolerably common summer resident; arrives about May 20.

Cedar Waxwing: Common; arrives May 22.

Loggerhead Shrike: Common; breeds.

Yellow Warbler: Common summer resident.

Bobolink: Tolerably common summer resident; breeds; arrives May 15.

Western Meadowlark: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives April 5.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives April 18.

Redwinged Blackbird: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives April 18.

Baltimore Oriole: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives May 18.

Common Grackle: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives April 25.

Brown-headed Cowbird: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives April 20.

Scarlet Tanager: Occurs sometimes but is rather rare.

Evening Grosbeak: Common winter visitor; large flocks seen in Feb. and March.

Pine Grosbeak: Common winter visitor; large flocks seen all winter.

Common Redpoll: Common; arrives April 1.

American Goldfinch: Tolerably common; summer resident; breeds; arrives May 24.

Chipping Sparrow: Summer resident; breeds; arrives April 13.

Field Sparrow: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives April 15.

Swamp Sparrow: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives September 18.

Song Sparrow: Common summer resident; breeds; arrives April 1 to 5.

Snow Bunting: Common winter visitor; leaves about May 10.

George Forbes Guernsey was born Nov. 6, 1861, in Aldershot, England, the eldest son of Major Forbes William Guernsey of the 45th First Nottinghamshire Regiment — Sherwood Foresters. He spent some time in India as a boy, and lived in Dublin and London until his father retired from the Army and brought his family to Port Hope, Ont. in 1871. Young George was articled to a lawyer in Port Hope, but before finishing his law course he came west and joined the Royal North West Mounted Police at Fort Walsh on Aug. 21, 1880. He was a member of "B" Division and served chiefly at Fort Qu'Appelle. He was part of the escort for the Marquis of Lorne when he visited the "Wild West." He received the North West Rebellion medal, and had three sketches illustrating Riel Rebellion activity published in the Illustrated War News of Toronto on May 9, 1885. He took his discharge from the R.N.W.M.P. on Dec. 12,

1886, but was immediately re-engaged as a Special Constable until June 21, 1887. We are told that it was because of the good duck-hunting and fishing that he remained to settle at Fort Qu'Appelle (then in Assiniboia, N.W.T.). He was a magistrate, notary public and insurance agent. E. M. Miller, Q.C. of Regina reports that when he worked for Guernsey in the early 1900's, Guernsey was an auctioneer and general agent, and was the Dominion election agent, keeping a voters' list and registering all vital statistics. His home was about a mile from town, along what is now the road to the San. He married Charlotte Morrison and they had four children: George Forbes Jr., Eva, Laura (who died in infancy) and Elizabeth. I am indebted to Miss Eva Guernsey, of Vancouver, for most of the information given in this article.

Mrs. Guernsey died in 1903, and Mr. Guernsey later married Winnifred Morgan. They had two sons Charles and Terrence, born in Penticton where the family moved about 1907. In Penticton, Guernsey was a prominent citizen, serving as magistrate, president of the Conservative Association and recruiting officer in the first world war.

George Guernsey was always interested in wild life of every kind. At Fort Qu'Appelle his children had a succession of pet crows and even a Sandhill Crane which would follow Mrs. Guernsey around like a dog. His son had a collection of birds' eggs. At Penticton, he kept Mallards on the pond near his home, and these attracted many other ducks. He often went on the "speeder" with work crews on the Kettle Valley Railroad to fish in mountain lakes. He was instrumental in releasing pheasants in the Penticton area. He also had a small orchard of choice fruit trees and was fond of gardening.

For years, Guernsey wrote articles for **Rod and Gun** and for the Mounted Police annual **Scarlet and Gold** under the name of "Waseecha Hoska." This was Indian for "long white man," the name the Indians had given him on the prairies (he stood six feet tall in his sock feet).

He retired in 1935 and died April 6, 1937, in Penticton at the age of 75. At his funeral, he was accorded full military honors, including a firing party.