

Botulism at Old Wives Lake

by Fred G. Bard, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History



Photo by Bard

ARLENE AND LORENE BARD WITH A SICK DUCK

The island on Old Wives Lake was visited on August 17, 1957, for the purpose of picking up the zoology field camp where Dr. R. W. Nero and Fred Lahrman carried out behaviour studies of the Western Grebe. The pelican young were about ready to fly and four were taken for the Calgary Zoo.

While travelling to the island we observed ducks diving to escape the boat. They appeared to swim and dive with difficulty. As I watched them I thought of the possibility of their having

ing botulism. We landed in the south bay of the "Isle of Bays." Here several ducks were found dead and dying on the shore. These showed the usual symptoms of botulism, green around the vent and paralysis.

To make a survey I walked a quarter of a mile along the beach each way from our landing point. The following dead birds were found in this area: Mallard, 19; Pintail, 22; American Widgeon, 1; Double-crested Cormoran, 1; Ring-billed Gull, 3; total 46. All are believed to have died from botulism. No attempt was made to search the vegetation for other birds which probably would have sought shelter when about to die.

GREAT HORNED OWL TRAVELS 450 MILES

A Great Horned Owl, banded as a nestling on May 24, 1956, near Yorkton by Dr. Stuart Houston, was found injured and blind in one eye at Bluffton, Minnesota on Dec. 17, 1957, by Gary Schwartz, who reported that it died two days later. This owl had wandered some 450 air-line miles, which more than is usually expected for a non-migratory species.



Photo by F. W. Lohrman

WHISTLING SWAN IN SPRING MIGRATION, 1958