

# Courtship Behaviour of Lesser Scaup

by **Frank Brazier**, Regina

While driving by Wascana Lake in Regina on the morning of April 23, 1963, I noticed that the large number (about 170) of Lesser Scaup which had been there the previous day had either moved out of the area or over to the Waterfowl Park and that only about 12 were left on the lake. Close against the near shore was a group of six consisting of one hen and five drakes. Some sort of courtship display was going on so I stopped to watch. Snuggled up against the hen was a drake, evidently the favoured one, but he did nothing except remain as close to her as possible; the hen kept tossing her head upwards in spasmodic jerks, opening and closing her bill meanwhile. The four rejected swains would edge in closer and whenever they got within two or three feet the hen would lower her head, stretch out her neck and drive furiously forward, opening her bill at the same time. I was too far away to hear any sounds from her, but she looked like an infuriated goose attacking and

perhaps she too was hissing. The rejected drakes would move off somewhat casually, their dignity unruffled by the hen's hysteria, when she would return to the chosen one, and continue her head tossing. She interrupted this only to chase off the others, and twice she dived, re-appearing to continue her display, at which time her drake would swim calmly to her side, and remain snuggled up very closely, now at her side, now under her chin. I watched this for ten minutes and it was still going on when I left.

In the last few days we have also noted little groups of Lesser Scaup in flight over the lake, consisting of several males and one female, and these are presumably the so-called "rape flights" with the males pursuing the excited female. Although rafts of Lesser Scaup always stay for some time in migration at the Waterfowl Park and on Wascana Lake, courtship behaviour is not often described.

## Winter Feeding Habits of Bohemian Waxwings

by **Dorreene Inglis**, Estevan

Probably the best fed and the most photographed wild birds in Western Canada this past winter were Bohemian Waxwings which spent the cold months at Estevan, Saskatchewan.

In past years, flocks of waxwings have stopped for a while in Estevan during their flight south. In the grounds outside St. Joseph's Hospital near some evergreens and a big elm, is a large crab-apple tree. Until this winter of 1962-63, once the apples were finished, the waxwings were soon on their way to winter quarters elsewhere. This year Sister Doloretta, whose record-office windows are very close to these trees, decided to augment the bird food available outdoors. A bird lover, Sister had Audubon books in her personal library which suggested dried fruits. She offered raisins, which they ate. Then

she mixed raisins and bits of prunes. However, she watched with amusement as they picked out the bits of prunes and discarded them in order to get at the raisins. During her early observations of the birds feeding, she noticed that after taking a raisin, often a bird would fly immediately to a snow bank as if it needed some moisture to help it swallow the fruit. From then on, she washed the sticky raisins first in hot water to separate them, and then in cold water. Further, she discovered that they had a preference for light-colored raisins. She first dropped the raisins on to the ground outside her window, then she put them on the outside window ledge and it was not too long until the birds were eating the raisins out of her hand in the open window.

These birds stayed all winter, eat-





Bohemian Waxwings at Estevan, 1963.

Photo by W. G. Squires.

ing as much as 100 pounds of raisins in a week. Only through the generosity of bird lovers in Estevan and elsewhere was the feeding of these winged creatures made possible. At one time there were approximately 120 in the flock and they became so adventurous that they would settle on a hand or a forearm held just within the window—a remarkable sight which has been recorded on ordinary black-and-white film as well as on colored 8 mm. movie.

A yellow shoe box in which some of the raisins were kept was not long in being identified by these waxwings and its appearance at the window immediately brought swarms of them to that window. The birds were fed at fairly regular hours several times daily, and if for some reason Sister Doloretta was a bit tardy, they were not hesitant to let those around know by chattering away on the trees and also by swooping down on the window sill and pecking at the window. The feeding time varied somewhat according to the winter sunrise and sunset but it was roughly between eight and nine a.m. and four and five p.m. There were always some, however, which were not reluctant to accept food at other hours in the day and these afforded the doctors working in the hospital and some visitors the pleasure of feeding

them by hand. After the last feeding in the afternoon the birds would disappear mysteriously only to return at the appointed time in the morning.

One mild day in March, Sister Doloretta manoeuvred her wheel chair to the grounds outside the hospital and near the window at which the birds were accustomed to being fed. What a thrill it must have been to her when a goodly number of her wild friends flew down from the trees to settle in her lap and on her head!

#### CO-OPERATIVE MIGRATION STUDY — SPRING OF 1963

The following species are listed for observation for the spring of 1963: Whistling Swan, Canada Goose, Mallard, Pintail, Marsh Hawk, Killdeer, Common Snipe, Mourning Dove, Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Eastern Kingbird, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Wood Pewee, Barn Swallow, Purple Martin, Common Crow, House Wren, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Wood Thrush, Eastern Bluebird (male), Eastern Bluebird (fem.), Red-eyed Vireo, Black-and-white Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Myrtle Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Ovenbird, American Redstart, Bobolink, Redwinged Blackbird, Baltimore Oriole, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, American Goldfinch, Slate-colored Junco, Chipping Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow.

Information will include first arrival (date, number), and if possible dates and numbers of peaks, and departure. If you have information on any of these species not yet submitted, send report by June 15, 1963, to Mrs. Dorothy Wade, 1351 Jubilee Avenue, Regina.