

# Some 1962 Bird Records for the Saskatoon District

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The following is a list of unusual observations of birds made during 1962 in the Saskatoon district. This is a 3,600 square mile block which includes Townships 31 to 40, Ranges 1 through 10, West of the Third Meridian. Towns near the north, east, south and west boundaries are, respectively, Radisson, Elstow, Hanley and Kinley. Observations were recorded by one or more of the authors unless otherwise noted.

Seven species were recorded for the first time, at least within the last five years:

**VIRGINIA RAIL:** One young was observed for several minutes at Moon Lake on August 18.

**KNOT:** One fed with a flock of Sand-lings and Stilt Sandpipers at Rice Lake on May 26.

**HUDSONIAN GODWIT:** Two of the authors and W. G. Richards found three of these birds on a shallow slough about 20 miles northwest of Saskatoon on May 6.

**LONG-EARED OWL:** One spent at least ten hours on November 6 in the yard of H. W. Wickenden, Saskatoon.

**YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER:** One was picked up August 31 at the CFQC-TV tower. It was probably killed on the night of August 29-30.

**GRAY-CROWNED ROSY FINCH:** On October 20, one landed on a telephone wire within the city and was observed for several minutes.

**LE CONTE'S SPARROW:** At least one was seen and heard on July 5 near the Saskatoon airport. On August 18 at least two were seen four miles northeast of the city.

Unusually large late summer and fall concentrations of at least eight species were recorded this year. The following were the largest flocks or roosts noted in the Saskatoon district during the last half of 1962:

**MOURNING DOVE:** 90 ± August 15, 8 miles south of Saskatoon.

**EASTERN KINGBIRD:** 75 + August 22, Borden Bridge.

**COMMON CROW:** 25,300 ± September 21, Beaver Creek.

**ROBIN:** 1,235 + October 6, Moon Lake.

**MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD:** 65 + August 19, 5 miles south of Saskatoon.

**WESTERN MEADOWLARK:** 47 +, September 22, Rice Lake.

The Mourning Doves were around a dugout and dry slough in a pasture; the kingbirds were in trees along the south side of North Saskatchewan River in a strip 50 by 150 yards. The crows and robins each used 15-20 acre roosts. In the case of the crows, the roost was the same as in 1961, when a maximum of possibly 70,000 birds used the site at one time. The meadowlarks concentrated in approximately three acres of pasture while the bluebirds were feeding in five acres of summerfallow and trees.

**SPARROW HAWK:** On September 3, two of the authors on opposite sides of the South Saskatchewan recorded at least 192 Sparrow Hawks. More than 75 were observed in summer-fallow and stubble along a one-mile stretch of road between Pike Lake and the river. Across the river 84 birds were noted, most of them along five miles of road north and south of the concentration on the other side.

**BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE:** Flocks of more than 50 birds were unusual in this area in previous years. However, in 1962, the following were reported: August 10, 62; August 12, 95 +; August 13, 525 ±; August 18, 256; August 25, 441; September 12, 55 +. These flocks were in weed-grown summerfallow, pasture and stubble.

The following observations may also be of interest:

**RED-NECKED GREBE:** This species has been thought to be a transient in this district, but two adults were seen feeding three young, two-thirds grown, on Pike Lake, July 28.

**HAWKS:** Larger numbers than usual were seen in migration. The greatest

numbers in spring were on April 6, 7 and 8, when 108, 44 and 68 were noted, many over the city of Saskatoon itself. The highest rate was 64 in one hour near Moon Lake on April 6. Buteos and Marsh Hawks made up the major parts of the flights.

Exactly six months later, on October 6, Michael Gollop counted 121 hawks from his back yard in Saskatoon in four hours, while 69 buteos and accipiters were recorded east of the city during the same period. The following day 95 buteos, mainly Rough-legged Hawks, were seen in the same length of time, and on October 8, 36 buteos and Marsh Hawks were recorded in five hours. Hawks moving in smaller numbers were seen both before and after these dates.

**SANDHILL CRANE:** This is the first year that cranes have been noted throughout the summer in this district. Six on June 9 near St. Denis was the smallest number recorded for each month from April 14 to October 21.

**SHORT-EARED OWL:** Only one record for the entire year: September 29, one at Moon Lake.

**YELLOW-SHAFTED FLICKER:** J. D. Hogg had one bird in his yard in Saskatoon during January and February. One was reported regularly in the city until December 24 by Dr. and Mrs. J. M. Pepper and G. Michalenko. Mr. J. D. Hogg and Miss N. P. Cordery saw two at Beaver Creek on December 26.

**HORNED LARK:** On December 29 half way between St. Denis and Vonda two were seen together. On December 31, 48 were noted in one flock between Delisle and Asquith.

**THRUSHES:** At 2 a.m. on September 2 a particularly heavy migration of unidentified birds was in progress. Short, lilting, one-syllable notes were heard continuously for fifteen minutes. The effect was like an eastern marsh full of spring peepers. It was raining heavily at the time, the rain having started about 9 p.m., September 1, and continuing until 8 a.m., September 2. Because of poor roads, the CFQC-TV tower, eleven miles east of the point that the migrating birds were noted, was not checked that morning. Very few

birds were heard migrating early in the evening of September 2. A check of the TV tower on September 3 yielded 37 birds—the highest kill ever reported at this structure. All of the birds found had apparently been killed during the night of September 1-2. Twenty (plus one live, injured bird) were Swainson's Thrushes and two were Gray-cheeked Thrushes, the remainder being warblers and vireos. This might be interpreted as an indication that most of the calls heard during the rain were thrushes. On the other hand, H. L. Stoddart (1962. Bird casualties at a Leon County, Florida TV tower, 1955-61. Bull. No. 1. Tall Timbers Research Station, Tallahassee, Florida), based on almost daily year-round checks of a Florida TV tower for more than five years, states that "heavy showers during the early night apparently ground the majority of vireos, warblers, and thrushes, and other passerines with the exceptions of the finch tribe".

**CEDAR WAXWING:** Once regarded as a summer resident, this species has now been recorded on four of the last eight Christmas bird counts. Twenty were seen on December 26.

**COMMON GRACKLE:** Two wintering at Wickendens' in the city were recorded on the Christmas bird count.

**WHITE - THROATED SPARROW:** Harold Belcher recorded the first summer occurrence of this species when he heard and saw a single bird at Maple Grove on July 6 and 13.

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