

SAW-WHET OWL — THE CASE OF THE WHISTLING RABBIT

by **Ronald R. Hooper**, Punnichy

The Indians of this area say that the rabbits (Varying Hare) whistle in the spring. They have pointed out this whistle to me since I have come to Punnichy. This call is an oft-repeated "Hooooo-oooo-oooo-oooo," etc., medium-pitched and in the minor key. The call is heard at night from February to April, in poplar woods.

I question whether this was rabbits' whistling for the following reasons. 1. I have been familiar with rabbits all my life, yet I never heard this call until I came to Punnichy. 2. Two or three of the Indians, who are more keen on nature observation have said that it is not rabbits but little owls. 3. My nature books make no mention of rabbits whistling. 4. The staff of the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History have expressed their opinion in favour of it being owls rather than rabbits.

On the night of April 1, 1963, Tony Kinequon (an Indian), and I went out to Daystar Indian Reserve (12 miles north of Punnichy). We took along a powerful flashlight. We heard a "rabbit" whistling, and attempted to locate him. We found that this call could be heard for probably a mile or more. As we drew nearer to its source, we found that it was very loud, and more bird-like. After several attempts, we got near the creature, and shone the light upon a little Saw-whet Owl, who was sitting about ten feet up in a poplar. The light bothered his eyes, so he shook his head, then flew away. It is surprising after coming such a long way, and hearing such a loud noise, to find such a tiny creature. To our own satisfaction, at least, we had solved the mystery of the whistling "rabbits."

THE HERONRY IN STANLEY PARK

by **Mrs. L. Verreault**, Vancouver

Only four years ago I discovered the heronry at Brocton Point, about one mile from the entrance to Stanley Park where the Great Blue Heron nests in five or more tall Douglas firs.

Owing to the density of the forests the nests were not visible from the highway until the cyclone of October, 1962, uprooted some 3,000 of the tallest and oldest (up to 500 years old) cedars and firs. There was doubt as to whether the herons would return to these haunts now that there were conspicuous open spaces throughout the park but by the end of March, 1963, they could be seen flying into the tall trees with small sticks and grasses to rebuild and restore the old nests.

Last year on one occasion I counted 50 birds leaving the nests and flying over the gulf to the Fraser and Capilano Rivers, but I have rarely seen more than one or two in flight at one time and it is difficult to say exactly how large the colony is. There are ten nests in one tree.

On Saturday, June 22, 1963, I sat on the sea wall, about 300 feet from the trees and with binoculars was able to look into the nests and watch the adults feeding the young. If the birds are not disturbed they will, no doubt, return to Stanley Park for many years.

PARTIAL ALBINO REDWING SIGHTED FOR FIFTH YEAR

by **George F. Ledingham**, Regina

On July 21, 1963, while passing the slough adjacent to the Saskatchewan Falconry Association Banding Station just west of Regina I noticed a Red-winged Blackbird with conspicuous white primaries on both wings and with a white tail feather. It was like seeing an old friend again for this seems to be the same bird which I described in 1960 (**Blue Jay**, 18(3): 115) and which Bernard Haysom (**Blue Jay**, 20(3): 115) reported as being in the same territory for four years. Bernard Haysom had reported earlier in 1963 that this same blackbird was back in its old territory but I had failed to see it in my trips past the area until July 21 and again on July 23. Even when perched the bird is conspicuous for he frequently opens and closes his tail displaying the white tail feather. I think it is the same bird seen and described in 1960 even though there were no white tail feathers at that time, for the left wing has two unequal patches of white feathers. If it is the same bird it must now be six years old and the amount of albinism must vary slightly in succeeding years.