

two sides to the problem of weeds. Weeds are not entirely bad. Nature abhors a vacuum. If we leave the soil bare and subject to erosion, weeds are usually the first plants to move in and cover it. Far better a patch of weeds than an unsightly area of eroded soil. Man can control weeds but he cannot make soil. When unproductive fields are abandoned or other soil left bare the first plants to cover it are usually annual weeds. These are followed by perennial weeds which, in turn, ultimately are succeeded by the native vegetation of the region.

Pastures on native grassland are frequently overgrazed today, as in past centuries, to the extent that palatable plants become seriously depleted while unpalatable weeds such as pasture sage, broomweed, etc., increase in density and size. When asked how to kill these pasture weeds I always advise the removal of the cause first. In a way those weeds are

protectors of the pasture. By their abundance they indicate the fact of overgrazing. They aid the recovery of native grasses by holding snow and reducing wind and water erosion. Ultimately they revert to their normal position as a minor component of the native vegetation. Good husbandry will keep weeds under control as well as provide the farmer with a fair return from the land under his care.

It is well to be mindful of the probability that there will always be weeds. Man is continually disturbing the land surface, attempting to grow plants of his own choice in areas where other plants normally occur. The latter he calls weeds. In many instances those weeds are beneficial to him. Before destroying them he should stop to consider why they are present and, if possible, first remove the causes. Weeds, as I have indicated, are often nature's method of correcting man's mistakes.

Snowy Plover Taken in Saskatchewan

by Douglas E. Wade, Regina

On May 31, 1964, a Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) was discovered by my wife, Dorothy R. Wade, at Buck Lake, 18 miles south of Regina. Later the same day, at our request, the plover was collected by Elmer Fox of Regina. Robert W. Nero, ornithologist on the Regina Campus of the University of Saskatchewan, who prepared the specimen (a male) as a study skin, submitted it for subspecific determination to W. Earl Godfrey, Acting Chief Zoologist, National Museum of Canada, who identified it as the western race of Snowy Plover, *Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus* (Cassin). This race is confined largely to the Pacific coast from southern Washington to southern Lower California and inland from northern Utah and Kansas south to New Mexico and northern Texas. An eastern race, *C. a. tenuirostris* (Lawrence), is found in the Gulf States from Florida to Texas and in Cuba and other islands.

The Snowy Plover has been collected but twice previously in Canada; a specimen was taken in Toronto, Ontario, May, 1880, and again

in the same city in July, 1897 (Bent, 1929); both have been assigned to the eastern race (A.O.U., 1957). The casual or accidental records for the western race include Wyoming and Nebraska (A.O.U., 1957), but Peterson (1961) includes Montana and omits Nebraska. Its occurrence in Saskatchewan must also be regarded as accidental.

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Buck Lake, where the Snowy Plover was found, has been one of our favorite birding areas during the past four years. Not one of our trips there has been disappointing. We think of Buck Lake as a "bald" lake on "bald prairie", although the treeless plains are practically all wheat fields with some farm buildings and tree wind-breaks nearby to the west and the southwest. Here is a neat, clean-cut prairie pothole lake. As you drive down the road you don't see the lake until you are almost into the depression. The lake is circular, shallow and muddy-looking; it and the exposed mud beach that grows quite wide during drouthy spells have very little marsh or aquatic

vegetation. There must be a reason for this barrenness, but we haven't figured it out. Here is one of the few pieces of water south of Regina for 25 miles that hasn't been drained away or dried up entirely since 1956. Although it fluctuates in size it is now about 130 acres.

On that afternoon of Sunday, May 31st, we were the only birders in the vicinity. We had gone down about 3:00 p.m. primarily to get a count on the Canvasbacks. It was a good day to be out birding. A north wind scarcely rippled the surface of the lake; the sky was clear overhead and the air temperatures were in the mid sixties. It was, however, one of those days on the prairie when distant buildings and wind-breaks seemed to float free and appeared bulkier and taller than they actually were. In the right places you might get some good mirages; for instance, the Dirt Hills 15 to 20 miles to the west loomed up like a mountain range. At close range around the lake, the day wasn't hot enough to affect our birding with heat shimmers.

We spotted a few Mallards, Pintails, Gadwalls and Widgeon; and there were about 50 Ruddy Ducks and one Western Grebe, some Eared Grebes and two Pied-billed Grebes to be seen. We counted at least two dozen Lesser Scaup and 40 Blue-winged Teal. The teal were packed into small groups and were staying close to shore. Four male Buffleheads stood out, even though they were on the far side. One female merganser, probably a Red-breasted, swam along at a brisk pace. There was a mixed flock of over a hundred Ring-billed and Franklin's Gulls. Although not abundant, Black and Common Terns were noticeable in flight and sound as they quartered the lake. Black-birds were noticeably uncommon.

Along the shore near us, two pairs of Willets and two pairs of Marbled Godwits fed. Around the lake there were, we estimated, about 50 American Avocets; we knew of at least four Avocet nests, each with four eggs. Four other Avocets, which we thought were nesting, would, when flushed, lead us away with a broken-wing display or "feeding antics" such as moving along in shallow water sweeping the bill sideways.

Across the lake we could easily make out the pattern of Black-bellied

Plovers, and we counted precisely 43. Four or five flocks of Sanderlings, eight to ten each, were constantly cruising the shore and touching down to feed. We marvelled at the speed shown by individual Sanderlings dashing after one another. At least three Spotted Sandpipers trailed with the Sanderlings. One lone Dunlin was prominent.

To get a count on the Canvasback and a few Redheads, I was to remain on the west side with the sun to my back, while Dot worked around the north and east side, then closed in along the south side. In this way, we thought we could double check the shorebirds and keep the ducks moving so I could get a look at them. Dot was half-way around the lake on the planned procedure when she first saw the Snowy Plover. Here is her story:

"I was near the Black-bellied Plovers and some Sanderlings when I saw a very white, small shorebird which I thought at first was a Piping Plover. When the bird turned so I could see its entire white front, I knew almost immediately I was looking at a Snowy Plover. A few days previously while birding at Strawberry Lakes with Margaret Belcher, Lucy Murray and Bob Nero we had seen both the Semipalmated Plover and the Piping Plover. It was then that Bob Nero had told us to look for a bird with a broken neck ring, very white down the front, and we'd have a Snowy Plover. Of course we had not been expecting to see a Snowy Plover at Strawberry Lake or elsewhere in the province, but this reminder of what to look for must have been fresh in my mind.

"I had Peterson's western guide along and for the next 15 minutes studied the bird through 7X binoculars and checked all the field marks. However, although I got to within 30 feet, I was unable to see the plover's legs. It peered at me from a depression and when I moved in still closer to try to get a look at the legs, it flew across the lake, landing south of my husband.

"I knew I had a rare find, so I started to run. If my husband could get a look at it, we could compare notes. I really was quite excited because I felt sure the Snowy Plover

was not on the Saskatchewan checklist."

While I had been working on the Canvasbacks, I could see that Dot had stopped and was giving some particular bird an extra-long study. I also saw her running and was disturbed because the Canvasbacks were going into flight. I finished the count and had about 185 Canvasbacks and 20 Redheads. Meanwhile, the plover which had flown in from across the lake had attracted my attention and as it moved leisurely along the shore, passing to within 40 feet, I was able to study all of its field markings. When Dot came within shouting distance, I yelled: "There's a strange-looking plover down the beach about one hundred yards! Where is Peterson's?" Dot told me she thought it was a Snowy Plover and we should phone or try to contact some of the birders in Regina for confirmation. After referring to Peterson's, I agreed with her that here was a Snowy Plover and at once we set out to find a phone.

Before long we had alerted a number of birders and had left word for Bob Nero to try to get to Buck Lake, hoping to obtain the backing of several observers and possibly even a specimen. We returned to Regina at 5:00 p.m., and an hour later picked up Mrs. Ruth Tempel and drove back to Buck Lake. Ruth and Dot started around the lake and before long,

almost at the original place, they spotted the Snowy Plover. The wind had shifted to the east and the lake was choppy. At about this time, Elmer Fox drove up with his family, Mrs. Fox, Reg and Doug. Fortunately for science, Elmer possessed a collecting permit and a suitable gun. I directed Elmer and his son, Reg, around the south end of the lake, pointing out about where I thought Ruth Tempel and Dot had the plover located. In a half hour and after much extremely fine stalking, the Foxes flushed the plover and Elmer brought it down with one well-aimed shot, thus positively establishing the occurrence of this species so far from its usual haunts.

Within a few minutes after this tense drama, other observers arrived, including Dr. and Mrs. George Ledingham, Bob Nero, Robert R. Taylor and Miss Carla Stein. Soon we all had a close look at the Snowy Plover. Though there were some who were sorry the bird had to be collected, all agreed that obtaining the specimen was scientifically desirable.

LITERATURE CITED

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First Specimen Record of Pine Warbler for Saskatchewan

by Margaret Belcher and Robert W. Nero, Regina

A "million dollar" rain, welcomed by farmers across the prairies after a dry spring, began to fall in Regina on Saturday evening, May 2, 1964. Two days of heavy showers followed, and already by Sunday, May 3, waves of migrant sparrows, thrushes and warblers were "grounded" in the city. Large flocks of Myrtle Warblers were watched in the rain on Sunday and Monday, flying down from the branches of the leafless trees to feed on the lawns and roadways in the Legislative grounds. With the Myrtles on Sunday, May 3, were small numbers of Orange-crowned Warblers, several Black-and-white Warblers

and a Blackpoll Warbler, and the first of the season's Northern Waterthrush. Then on Monday, May 4, Palm Warblers were noted, and a first Yellow Warbler (the earliest recorded spring arrival for the Regina area). Naturally, Regina birders spent considerable time in the Legislative Grounds observing this unusual concentration of warblers, and on Tuesday and Wednesday we were still taking sandwiches to eat in the park so that we could watch them at the noon hour.

The early arrival of several of the warblers—Yellow Warbler on May 4, and Ovenbird on May 6, was an in-