

Crow and Mallard Nesting in Close Proximity

by **John B. Millar**, Canadian Wildlife Service, Saskatoon



View of the shelterbelt on an abandoned farm east of Swift Current, Saskatchewan, showing the location of the nests of a crow (left-hand arrow) and a Mallard (right-hand arrow).

On June 5, 1963, while passing an abandoned farmstead just east of Swift Current, Saskatchewan, I noticed a lone Common Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) perched on a branch of a dead tree in the shelter belt. Thinking that perhaps there would be a nest with young old enough to band, I stopped to investigate. A short search soon revealed a nest some seven or eight feet up in a small dead spruce. As I approached, a hen Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) flushed from an old crow nest six feet up in another dead spruce not 15 feet from the first tree. I began to work my way through the underbrush to the Mallard's tree and as I did so eight newly hatched ducklings tumbled from the nest one by one and scurried away into the deep grass. A quick examination of the nest revealed that all eggs had hatched successfully. I then returned to the first nest and flushed a crow off a clutch of five eggs.

It is evident since the Mallard had hatched her brood while the crows

were still incubating, that she had begun nesting before they arrived and therefore it seems certain that the crows would have discovered the duck while searching for a nest site. Furthermore, the positions of the two nests were such that the sitting birds were in full view of each other at all times. Considering the crow's reputation as a ruthless predator of duck nests it is noteworthy that this Mallard was able to incubate a clutch of eggs successfully in such an exposed position in close proximity to this breeding pair.

AN UNUSUAL GULL ACCIDENT

by **John B. Millar**,

Canadian Wildlife Service, Saskatoon

On September 19, 1961, I visited the site of a colony of Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) and California Gulls (*Larus californicus*) on a peninsula (formerly an island)