

THE REMOTE NORTHERN WILDERNESS . . .

In 1959 Thomas Heaslip reported some observations of birds in the Uranium City area on the north side of Lake Athabasca (*Blue Jay*, 17:57-58). Heaslip had arrived there three years earlier, coming to that northern mining centre from Northern Ireland, where he had been an active member of the Copeland Islands Bird Observatory Society. In his article he included the following message: "I hope that in the future, a greater degree of protection may be afforded the birds of Northern Saskatchewan. In the spring season I have come across ravens and grebes killed by .22 bullets. Perhaps some of the people in our northern camps, particularly newcomers to the country, are not even aware of bird protection laws. It would help, I think, if the provincial government could see that copies of game and bird protection laws were posted conspicuously in every camp."

In the last few years several examples of the violation of existing laws protecting northern birds have come to our attention, reminding us of Heaslip's perceptive comments.

In this issue of the *Blue Jay*, Wayne Davis, graduate student at the University of Arkansas, writing about birds at Cree Lake, reports that Canada Geese were being killed in the spring, and that in the summer of 1965 two men cut down a tree which held a Bald Eagle nest in order to get the two young which were then kept in captivity. According to local informants the Bald Eagle is now faring better than in former years when it was much persecuted.

Ross Lein and Richard Sanderson in 1964 (field report to R. W. Nero), noted that the Bald Eagle at Wollaston Lake seemed "to be living under adverse conditions, for if it is not destroyed itself then its nest is chopped down by the Indians in the hope that the eagles will leave the area and no longer rob their traplines. We travelled what we felt was the equivalent of several eagle ranges and could only find one nest, even with the help of an Indian guide who endeavoured to show us the area where eagles had been seen before; the one nest we did find had been chopped down." They also reported that some of the local inhabitants were taking eggs for food from Common Tern colonies.

In a letter in this issue of the *Blue Jay*, Ralph Carson reports the destruction of a White Pelican colony on an island in Suggi Lake, along the newly opened Hanson Lake road. This was done by local commercial fishermen who apparently believed that the pelicans were a threat to their livelihood. It is ironical that a Natural Resources employee at Regina seemed to be in agreement with the fishermen, although the Honourable J. M. Cuelenaere, Minister of that Department, assured the Saskatchewan Natural History Society that this species was completely protected (see *Blue Jay*, 23:24).

As long as the supply of wild life is unlimited in these distant northern places, we can perhaps justify the idea of taking gull and tern eggs for food, or of trappers driving away Bald Eagles to protect their traplines. What we fail to appreciate is that "wilderness" recedes as rapidly as man uses it, and that in spite of existing laws, the wild life of these areas is being depleted. The main point here is that it is no longer realistic to depend upon the availability of an endless store of wild life in the remote northern wilderness.