

## LONG-TAILED JAEGER IN ALBERTA

by Ian R. Halladay, 1321 Cameron Ave. S.W., Calgary

On the 11th and 12th of June, 1966 some members of the Calgary Bird Club visited Cypress Hills Provincial Park in Alberta where we spent an enjoyable but somewhat damp week-end. While a variety of interesting birds was seen by the club's members during the week-end, the highlight of the trip was a Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*). The jaeger was first seen about 2:30 p.m. on June 12 at the east end of Elkwater Lake by Nora and Ian Halladay and shortly thereafter by Elizabeth and Derek Beecham. During the time the jaeger was observed it spent much of its time walking about on the edge of the highway from where it would take off for short flights along the lake margin before returning to the highway. A 35 mm. colour transparency was taken of the jaeger while it was sitting on the highway shoulder. The photograph shows the bird to be definitely a jaeger and with some magnification the long central tail feathers are discernible. Robert R. Taylor, who has observed this species on its nesting grounds, has confirmed the identification.

In the *Birds of Alberta* by Salt and Wilk, 2nd ed., 1966, the Long-tailed

jaeger is listed as a rare migrant. There are five previous sight records given for Alberta: three occasions between 1932 and 1934 at Baptiste Lake; Lake Athabasca on June 13, 1933; and two near Edmonton on June 3, 1965. The present sighting is the sixth and apparently the first to be documented.

It is interesting to note that the records for which we have dates are in the period June 3 to 13. It would seem possible that in early June the Long-tailed Jaegers moving north in the Pacific Ocean have reached this latitude and some individuals may stray inland. At Kazan Lake in central Saskatchewan, one was closely observed by T. E. Randall on June 13, 1942 (*Blue Jay*, 20:60-72). On Lake Athabasca in Saskatchewan and therefore closer to the breeding grounds, R. W. Nero reports sight records for July 1, 1959 (one), and July 25, 1962 (two) (*Birds of the Lake Athabasca region, Saskatchewan*, 1963).

I am interested in further study of spring records of the three jaegers which occur in this region and would appreciate hearing from anyone who has such information for the Northern Great Plains area.

## FEEDING WEED SEEDS TO BIRDS

by J. F. Alex, Experimental Farm, Regina

Inquiries are often made as to the advisability of using weed seeds for bird feeding stations.

If certain precautions are observed, it can be safe to feed screenings containing some weed seeds to birds. The grinding action in the bird's crop or gizzard and subsequent digestion are usually sufficient to destroy nearly all but the very hardest seeds. Birds which eat weed seeds at such feeding stations are primarily seed-eating birds. Seeds are their food. It stands to reason that, in order for the birds to gain sustenance from the seeds they eat, the seeds have to be digested.

However, a certain proportion of seeds may escape crushing in the gizzard and be passed in the excreta.

Viable seeds of wild mustard, stinkweed, knotweed, plantain, poppy and sheep's sorrel have been recovered from droppings of pigeons. Viable seeds of lamb's quarters, shepherd's purse, groundsel, chickweed, corn spurrey and narrowleaved plantain have been recovered from droppings of sparrows. Other weeds whose seeds have, at least sometimes, passed unharmed through the digestive tracts of birds include orache, common toadflax, gromwell, pale smartweed, creeping buttercup, dock, annual sowthistle, dandelion and field bindweed. The chief factors affecting the dispersal of weed seeds by birds are the palatability of the different seeds (the more palatable ones are likely to be more