

1967 REVIEW OF SASKATOON BIRD OBSERVATIONS

by J. B. Gollop, Canadian Wildlife Service, Saskatoon

This paper attempts to summarize the more interesting records from the Saskatoon Bird Review for the period January 1 through December 31, 1967. Although this is the sixth annual review of birds reported within a 40-mile radius of Saskatoon, it is only the second one based on data from more than a handful of observers. The following statistics indicate the cooperation of members of the Saskatoon Natural History Society in this venture.

Bird Review:	Vol. 2 No. 2	2 (3)	2 (4)	2 (5)	3 (1)	Total	
Period:	Jan. 1- Feb. 28	Mar. 1- Apr. 16	Apr. 17- Jun. 11	Jun. 12- Oct. 9	Oct. 10- Dec. 31	1967	1966
Contributors	24	46	54	41	41	102	101
Records Received	417	1,513	2,021	2,025	938	6,914	4,500±
Cards Received..	211	1,103	1,352	934	410	4,010	2,644
Species Reported	30	67	188	184	79	220	217

The important comparison with last year is the number of records—a 50 per cent increase over 1966. We now have 115± pages of annotated list for the two years. If this level of cooperation can be maintained and if the proportion of data on breeding observations and on the numbers of migrants, particularly in the fall, can be increased, there should be adequate information after the 1969 season for a preliminary publication on the birds of the Saskatoon district.

Contributors

There were about the same number of reporters each year, and we wish to express our thanks to all of them. Fourteen people were involved in two-thirds of the records. They comprised the nine parties who contributed more than 300 records each: E. R. Clark, Dr. and Mrs. J. B. Gollop, M. A. Gollop, Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Hogg, Dr. and Mrs. C. S. Houston, A. L. Nijssen, Mr. and Mrs. W. S. Richards, A. R. Smith and Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Wedgwood. One-quarter of the year's reports came from people submitting 100 to 300 records: J. R. Cartwright, R. V. Folker, J. M. Gerrard, Mr. and Mrs. G. Galloway, M. R. Lein, G. O. Michalenko, D. M. Murray, J. F. Roy, J. A. Slimmon and D. W. Whitfield.

Without contributors there would be no annotated list, but without several other people there would be no Bird Review. While production of the report itself has never been a one-man effort, this has been particularly true in 1967. The editor wishes to express special thanks to Mrs. R. L. Learmonth, Mrs. H. M. Burtonwood and Miss L. E. Dressler of the Canadian Wildlife Service who have assisted in all phases from compiling records to operating staplers. Several members of SNHS have also assisted in putting issues together: Arnold Nijssen, Alan Smith, Cliff Matthews, Bill and Florence Richards.

Breeding Season

There were 721 nests, broods and coveys reported in 1967 (see Table 1), 61 less than last year. Sixty-seven of the 116 breeding species were included, 9 less than in 1966. While no new breeding species were recorded in 1967, the first positive evidence of breeding was found for four species: Cooper's Hawk (3 nests), Purple Martin (a colony of 9 nests), Blue Jay (1 nest) and American Goldfinch (a recently fledged brood of two).

There are still at least five regular breeders for which nests or newly fledged young have not been reported:

Table 1. Breeding species in the Saskatoon District with 1967 breeding records.

	Active Nests	Broods** Coveys		Active Nests	Broods** Coveys		Active Nests	Broods** Coveys
*Red-nk Grebe	...	...	Willet	...	3	Robin	3	...
Horned Grebe	2	1	Marbl Godwit	...	...	Swain Thrush	...	...
Eared Grebe	10	33±	Am Avocet	3	...	Veery	...	...
Pied-b Grebe	...	1	Wils Phalar	...	...	Mt Bluebird	3	...
*Gr Bl Heron	...	...	*Frank Gull	57	62±	Sprag Pipit	1	...
*Am Bittern	...	...	Black Tern	1	1	Cedar Waxwing	4	...
*C Goose	...	2	Rock Dove	7	...	Loghd Shrike	1	...
Mallard	8	23	Mourning Dove	1	...	Starling	4	...
Gadwall	...	5	Bl-b Cuckoo	...	...	Red-e Vireo	...	...
Pintail	1	8	Gr H Owl	44	...	Warbl Vireo	...	...
Gr-wgd Teal	...	1	Burrow Owl	...	6	Yellow Wrblr	1	...
Bl-wgd Teal	...	4	Long-ear Owl	6	...	Ovenbird	...	...
Am Widgeon	...	17	Short-ear Owl	1	...	Yellowthroat	...	...
Shoveler	...	3	*Saw-whet Owl	...	...	*Am Redstart	...	...
Redhead	...	2	C Nighthawk	1	...	House Sparrow	36	...
Canvasback	5	17	*B Kingfisher	...	...	Bobolink	...	...
Lesser Scaup	...	1	Y-sh Flicker	5	1	W Meadowlark	5	...
*C Goldeneye	1	...	*Y-b Sapsucker	...	...	Y-h Blkbird	19	...
Ruddy Duck	4	1	Hairy Woodp	...	...	R-w Blkbird	80	...
*Sh-sh Hawk	...	...	Downy Woodp	...	...	Balt Oriole	...	...
*Cooper Hawk	3	...	E Kingbird	2	3	Brwr Blkbird	1	...
R-tail Hawk	22	...	W Kingbird	1	...	Com Grackle	...	...
Swains Hawk	4	...	E Phoebe	...	...	Br-h Cowbird	2	...
*Ferrug Hawk	...	...	Lst Flycatch	...	...	*Pine Siskin	...	...
Marsh Hawk	3	...	Horned Lark	...	2	Am Goldfinch	2	...
*Merlin	...	...	Tree Swallow	...	...	*Red Crssbill	...	...
Spar Hawk	6	...	Bank Swallow	10	18±	Ruf-s Towhee	...	...
Ruffed Grouse	...	...	Barn Swallow	2	1	Lark Bunting	...	...
Sh-t Grouse	...	7	*Cliff Swallow	...	...	Savan Sparrw	...	...
R-n Pheasant	...	1	*Purple Martin	10	...	*Grssh Sparrw	...	...
Gray Part	...	3	*Blue Jay	1	...	Baird Sparrw	...	...
*Virginia Rail	...	...	B-b Magpie	33	...	*LeCnt Sparrw	...	...
Sora	4	1	Common Crow	29	...	Vespr Sparrw	2	...
Am Coot	18	12±	B-c Chickadee	...	...	Lark Sparrw	...	...
*Piping Plov	...	...	*R-b Nuthatch	...	...	Chip Sparrw	...	...
Killdeer	...	4	House Wren	2	...	Cl-col Sparrw	4	...
*L-b Curlew	...	...	L-b Msh Wren	...	...	Song Sparrow	...	...
Upland Plover	...	1	Catbird	...	...	McCown's Longspr	...	...
Spot Sandp	...	...	Br Thrasher	1	...	C-col Longspur	...	...
Total 476 occupied nests			67 species					
245 broods and coveys								

*Rare or irregular (estimated that fewer than five pairs per year laid eggs since 1960).

**Flightless young out of nest or flying young being fed by adult.

Belted Kingfisher, Swainson's Thrush, Ovenbird, Rufous-sided Towhee and Grasshopper Sparrow. And, assuming that we need at least 30 nests, broods and coveys of a species spread over several years to determine breeding dates, clutch and brood sizes, we are

far short of this quota for about 95 of the 116 species that breed in the area.

Changes in breeding status were noted for several species. There were 22 Red-tailed Hawk nests this year and only two in 1966. While part of

this difference can be attributed to increased effort, much of it is due either to a higher population and/or better success. There were six Burrowing Owl broods in 1967 and none last year. Long-eared Owls, which apparently "exploded" in 1966, appeared to be down to about normal numbers this year (18 nests vs. 6). Lark Buntings, which were more common last summer than in any recent year (one colony was estimated to have $100 \pm$ breeding pairs), were almost non-existent this summer. They appeared in normal numbers in May, but after that there was only one report for 1967.

Some interesting nesting situations were reported: A colony of 30 to 40 adult Bank Swallows were occupying burrows in a hole 13 feet long, 9 feet wide and 10 feet deep on July 15. There were 35 holes in the west and north banks (none in the other two) and young were seen at three holes. A House Wren on June 18 had six eggs in an old Barn Swallow's nest in a barn and, on June 12, about 15 House Sparrow nests were found in Bank Swallow holes.

Migration

The largest hawk migrations were reported over the city on April 10 (132 birds, including 105 Buteos) and April 13 (183 birds). Franklin's Gulls were noted migrating on six dates between April 26 and May 22, and the heaviest Black Tern migrations were reported for May 21 and 22. There was a major wave of juncos between April 19 and 23; 1,100+ were reported on the latter date, including 800+ in 55 miles between Saskatoon and Dundurn. On this same trip 200+ Tree Sparrows were recorded. Hermit Thrushes, Harris' and Fox Sparrows were more frequently reported this spring than last. Pine Siskins and White-throated Sparrows, on the other hand, were less common on spring migration but more common in the fall than in 1966. Whistling Swans were also noticeably less common this spring than last. Northern Phalaropes were unusually common: there were

thousands on sloughs between Vonda and Buffer Lake on May 21 and 27.

Comparisons with the spring of 1966 for most species are not practical because the four major contributors last year (J. E. Black, R. V. Folker, J. B. Gollop and J. F. Roy) had to significantly reduce their efforts this year.

On June 12 there was another of the annual, but rare, indications of a movement of Canada Geese through the district to northern molting areas: 14 birds were watched until they disappeared to the north-northeast over the city.

Two large migrations of crows were reported in the fall: 2,800+ birds on October 1 and 7,010+ between 1:15 and 2:50 p.m. on October 8. The major migration of small birds apparently occurred on September 12, 13 and 14. It involved Swainson's Thrushes (49 killed at the TV tower and 33 banded on University Drive), Gray-cheeked Thrushes (21 dead at the TV tower, one banded), Black-and-White, Tennessee and Blackpoll Warblers and Lincoln's Sparrows (7, 7, 21 and 8, respectively, at TV tower), and Ovenbirds (field observations and TV tower).

Sparrow Hawks and Stilt Sandpipers appeared in much smaller numbers than in the 1966 fall migration and no significant nighthawk migration was reported in August or September. On the other hand, Solitary Vireos and Magnolia Warblers were each recorded on five dates in these months; there were no reports for 1966. There were seven Black Duck observations on five dates from August 30 through September 17 and none last year.

Incidentally, the latest date for adult male Cowbirds was July 15; it was July 16, 1966. The latest Baird's Sparrows this year were reported for July 23.

Winter 1966-67

Bohemian Waxwings were present for six months last "winter": November 5, 1966 to May 5, 1967. Based on 58,913 waxwing sightings, the species

reached a peak between December 11 and 31, dropped off significantly to a low between January 21 and 31, increased several-fold in the next 10-day period and maintained that level until April 20 except for a peak smaller than the December one between March 21 and 31. Snowy Owls occurred in their normal low numbers. Not a single Evening Grosbeak was reported last winter.

TV Tower

In 1966 only 22 birds were found dead at the CFQC-TV tower in 13 inspections between August 7 and September 24. In 1967 the tower was checked on seven dates between August 28 and October 7. No birds were found on October 7, 163 were picked up on September 14 and 45 birds on the other five dates. The 191 birds picked up on September 4, 1964 was the only kill to exceed that of September 14, 1967.

In a five-minute period beginning 11:20 p.m. on September 13, 707 bird calls were heard over well-lighted Market Mall in Saskatoon. Five birds were seen flying beneath the parking-lot lights. In a nine-minute period beginning at 5:48 a.m. the next morning, more than 1,600 calls were heard at the TV tower. At 6:25 a.m., 70± birds could be seen flying around the antenna at all heights but concentrated near the top. The latest bird to be killed (by hitting a guy wire) was at 6:27 a.m., and by 7:03 no birds were seen around the tower. The major species in the kill were Swainson's (38) and Gray-cheeked Thrushes (21), Blackpoll Warblers (21) and Ovenbirds (19).

New Species

On April 16 at Beaver Creek, G. O. Michalenko flushed a white phase Gyrfalcon at a distance of about 20 yards. It was observed for about 30 seconds with binoculars in good light; a field guide was available for checking. As the bird flew into the bush its "unowlish wings" were noted and its alarm notes were heard as it was harassed by crows.

On May 28, a male McCown's Longspur was studied for about five minutes as it sang and flew around a small part of a stubble field south of Goose Lake. On July 23 one other bird of this species was positively identified in a flock of 10 longspurs.

On September 3, the first positive identifications were made of Short-billed and Long-billed Dowitchers. One of each was banded at Rice Lake by Stuart Houston.

Large Numbers

This section deals with what are considered to be large numbers of the 31 species and groups listed—either for an entire year or for a particular season. The 66,700± individuals included were all reported in 1967.

Large flocks or concentrations: a flock of 200± White Pelicans flying north over the city on April 28; 5,400+ Whistling Swans on Goose Lake on October 15; 21,000± ducks and 1,100 Sandhill Cranes on the same lake on September 17; 26+ Bufflehead on Blackstrap Reservoir on November 5 and 1,100± Lesser Scaup there on November 12; 89 Gray Partridge on December 23; 3,500± American Coots on Radisson Lake on September 10; 25± Upland Plover near Vonda on May 22; 1,500± dowitchers on Rice Lake on September 1 and 4; 800+ Stilt Sandpipers in Blackstrap Coulee on May 27; 263 Mourning Doves flying to roost west of Dundurn on September 5; 14+ Yellow-shafted Flickers south of the TV tower on August 26; 1,000+ Tree Swallows on September 3 west of Dundurn; 750+ Robins in a 2-mile stretch of road and 300+ in a 3-mile stretch, both near Patience Lake, and 500± in a 55-mile drive between Saskatoon and Dundurn, all on April 23; 350± young House Sparrows in one flock at the Forestry Farm Park on August 22; 10,000± blackbirds and Starlings at Rice Lake on September 10.

Reported one-day counts that were particularly high were as follows: 48 Marsh Hawks and 47 Sparrow Hawks in 120 miles between Saskatoon and Goose Lake on April 23; 630± Rock

Doves on December 26; 9 Snowy Owls on March 3; 15 Short-eared Owls on April 22; 950+ Horned Larks in 33 miles in the Vanscoy-Delisle-Asquith area on March 24; 10 Black-capped Chickadees on March 2 and September 9 and 41 on December 26; 67 Mountain Bluebirds on March 24 and 145 on August 29; 75+ Myrtle Warblers on May 21; 181 Western Meadowlarks in 130 miles southwest of Saskatoon on May 28; 42 Savannah Sparrows banded at Rice Lake on September 4; 12,000± Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings (a few) on May 21 between Vonda and Buffer Lake, and 4,500± Snow Buntings on April 8.

Stragglers, Rarities and Other Abnormal Birds

This section has been restricted to the 25 species reported only once or twice in 1967. They total 83 individuals. Except as noted in parentheses, there was a single bird per date.

Black-crowned Night Heron on April 23, Ross' Goose on September 9 and 17 (6), Cinnamon Teal on June 11, Turkey Vulture on May 31, Broad-winged Hawk on April 24 and August 26 (2), Prairie Falcon on May 18, Peregrine Falcon on May 7 and 14, Virginia Rail on September 9 (2), Piping Plover on May 27 (2) and June 4, Ruddy Turnstone on May 27 (13), Knot on May 21 (5), White-rumped Sandpiper on May 27 (20+) and June 10, Dunlin on May 27, Buff-breasted Sandpiper on May 27 (2), Hudsonian Godwit on May 18 (5), Black-billed Cuckoo on June 11 and

July 16 (much less common than in 1966), Saw-whet Owl on February 7, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher on August 23 and 27, Western Wood Pewee on June 11, Olive-sided Flycatcher on May 26, Boreal Chickadee on February 14 and 15, Brown Creeper on April 29 and December 23, Townsend's Solitaire on April 22 and September 22-24, Nashville Warbler on September 12 (banded), Grasshopper Sparrow on June 15.

Single partial albino House Sparrows were seen on May 6, September 13 and February 1-20. Single Brewer's Blackbirds with a few pure white feathers were reported for June 12 and September 2.

Habitat Changes

Tree clearing has continued at a rapid rate. The Hudson Bay Slough was largely destroyed to make way for a divided highway. On the other hand, three permanent bodies of water were created in and adjacent to the Saskatoon district. Brightwater Reservoir is on Beaver Creek just south of the district, while Blackstrap Reservoir, east of Dundurn, and Bradwell Reservoir, south of Bradwell, are within the area.

STEVE A. MANN

As we go to press we learn of the death on August 10 of Steve Mann, Piapot. His many friends in the SNHS send heartfelt condolences to his wife and family.

EIGHTH ANNUAL MAY BIRD CENSUS, REGINA

Regina's annual May bird count was taken on May 11, 1968. A rather disappointing total of 131 species and 15,145 individual birds was reported. Several factors contributed to this low species count which incidentally equals the previous low, recorded on

the first annual count in 1961; the earliest possible date (we count on the Saturday prior to the long weekend in May) eliminated a number of warblers and other species which do not usually arrive until after mid-May; probably more significant was