

SIGHT RECORDS FOR THE YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT IN SOUTHWESTERN MANITOBA

by **John Lane** and **Wayne Miller**, Brandon, Manitoba

Although there appear to be no published records for the Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*) in southwestern Manitoba, at least three sightings have been made in that part of the province during the past 50 years. In one June in the early 1920's, while tramping in the Brandon Hills south of Brandon, the senior author traced a loud medley to its source and saw his first Chat. On May 22, 1966, Miller noted a male of this species flitting through the bush on the west side of Sewell Lake. This bird was silent and soon disappeared.

On June 12, 1968, we shared a third sighting of the Yellow-breasted Chat along the Souris River west of Buncloidy bridge. While engaged in a fruitless search for a pair of Orchard Orioles reported a week earlier by Mr. W. Cowan and Mrs. H. Watson, we were attracted to an area just south of the river by repeated outbursts of unusual bird notes. We quickly spotted a male Yellow-breasted Chat singing from the top of a dead aspen which overlooked a small fen surrounded by a tangle of deciduous growth. He appeared to be singing on

territory and we believed there was a good chance that a nest might be found. A cautious search of the underbrush resulted in two sightings of the female Chat.

On June 15 we returned to the area and found the male Chat still singing from the tip of the dead aspen and as we watched he gave a display of the famous flight song, in which he left his perch and towered to a considerable height, singing all the while. When he reached his highest point he hovered there until the song ended, then dropped straight down and regained his perch.

A third visit to the site on June 18 revealed no sign of the Chats, and subsequent searches were without result. One trip to the area in early June, 1969, in search of this species was also fruitless.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Manitoba Museum of Man & Nature has the following Yellow-breasted Chat records on file: Pilot Mound, May 29, 1929, Mrs. J. E. Hunt; Hillside Beach (Lake Winnipeg), June 27, 1933, F. J. Rogers; Whitemouth, August 13, 1933, V. Latta; Souris August 21, 1945, G. Willets; and Delta, July?, 1948 (reported to R. W. Sutton). So far as is known, a specimen is still lacking for the province.

NINTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BRANDON JUNIORS' NESTBOX PROJECT

by **David Randall** and **John Lane**, Brandon, Manitoba

The nesting season in 1969 showed a continuation of the remarkable increase in Mountain Bluebirds (*Sialia currucoides*) while Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) failed to make any appreciable gain over the 1968 totals reported to the *Blue Jay* by Brian Cutford (*Blue Jay*, 26:4). As usual, Mountain Bluebirds were back by mid-March, despite snowstorms and below-zero temperatures. By April 29 they were building nests, the first egg

noted May 2. By such early starts, second broods are feasible and we estimate over 50 per cent of this species raise a second brood. Our latest date for vacating of the nest by Mountain fledglings was August 17. A few early Eastern Bluebirds had begun nesting by May 15 and the first egg was noted May 18, but mated pairs were still appearing locally in early June. Our latest date for vacating by young was August 25. Very few