

UNUSUALLY LARGE FLOCK OF KNOTS AND RUDDY TURNSTONES FEEDING IN STUBBLE FIELD

by **Fred W. Lahrman**, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina

On May 21, 1972, while observing birds at the north end of Last Mountain Lake, I was surprised to discover a large flock of shore birds feeding on a burned-over stubble field of Durum wheat. The flock was huge and I estimated it must have contained at least 5,000 birds.

I was even more surprised when I discovered that it consisted mainly of Knots and Ruddy Turnstones for I do not recall seeing these species feeding on dry land before. There appeared to be slightly more Knots than Turnstones. Other birds noted feeding on the field were 12 Black-bellied Plovers, a few Ring-billed Gulls, Franklin's Gulls, approximately 15 Pintails and a pair of Widgeons.

The field was located approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ mile west of the lakeshore and southeast of Liberty, and the birds were observed between 7:30 and 8:00 p.m. They presented a lovely view as they moved busily over the ground,

feeding as they went along. They often burst into sudden flight as shorebirds will and after erratically flying about in their twisting formation, they would settle on a different part of the field sometimes separating into two or three groups, and at other times uniting into one again.

Earlier in the afternoon I had noticed flocks numbering up to 30 or more birds feeding along the lakeshore and flying northwards up the lake. I do not know why they chose this certain field or what particular food attracted them.

In previous years, I had noted that the week of May 20 was the time when the peak of the migration of these birds passed through, but I have never seen such large numbers as this.

Also noted in larger numbers than usual were Stilt Sandpipers of which flocks of hundreds were seen feeding in shallow bays along the lakeshore and nearby sloughs.

TWELFTH ANNUAL NESTBOX REPORT OF THE BRANDON JUNIOR BIRDERS

by **John Lane**, 1701 Lorne Avenue and **Randy Bauman**, 431 17th Street,
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Since our last report our club has built 375 more nestboxes and had another 125 donated by J. Plum and H. Watson. With the aid of an open winter all 500 were set out by last Spring, repeated trips being made during both Christmas and Easter vacations. This brings our overall total to 3500 nestboxes set out since 1959, of which we estimate 250 as no longer habitable. Our nestlines now extend over 1000 miles of highway and railway. Many Mountain Bluebirds and the earlier Eastern Bluebirds were appearing along our nestlines by mid-

March, and we found the first eggs of both in late April. Cross-breeding between the two species continues to increase, three cases of Eastern males mated to Mountain females being noted. In addition, two more male hybrids were found, in each case mated to Mountain females. The first instance occupied Nestbox 1238, east of Carberry on Highway No. 1; his mate laid and hatched five eggs and raised the nestlings without aid since the hybrid father disappeared when the young first appeared. The other hybrid was found at Nestbox 129 southeast of