

One egg from each of 33 sandpiper nests was collected on river islands in June and July. Fourteen eggs were from upstream of Edmonton, between Huggett and Devon, and 19 eggs were collected downstream from Edmonton between Vinca Bridge and Duvernay. The eggs were analyzed for residues of mercury in order to determine whether they could be used as indicators of mercury contamination sources located at Edmonton and/or downstream from that city. The mean and 95 per cent confidence interval of mercury residue levels in the 14 sandpiper eggs collected upstream from Edmonton were  $0.09 \pm 0.03$  ppm, as compared to  $0.28 \pm 0.06$  ppm in the 19 sandpiper

eggs collected downstream from the city. The difference between those levels is statistically significant and suggests a source of mercury contamination at and/or downstream of Edmonton. As the sandpiper's diet consists of both terrestrial and aquatic insects, the source of mercury pollution could not be further identified.

Although the Spotted Sandpiper does not appear to be a suitable indicator of mercury contamination of the North Saskatchewan River, we obtained a little more knowledge of its food habits and its occurrence along the river. The authors thank Mr. I. Kavanagh for his assistance with the identification of insects.

## RECENT BIRD NOTES OF INTEREST FOR CHURCHILL, MANITOBA

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Shortly after the publication of any local annotated list of birds a number of unusual birds are sure to appear in that locality. The following records include seven species not previously reported for Churchill, three of which are first records for Manitoba. Nearly all were obtained at Churchill at the time the recently published *Birds of the Churchill region, Manitoba* (Jehl and Smith, 1970) was in the hands of the printer. Judging by these additions, the Churchill region still offers ornithological surprises.

The senior author, who was at Churchill studying birds from May 5 to July 23, 1970, looks upon Churchill as the Point Pelee of the north. Birders who have spent any time at Point Pelee National Park on Lake Ontario will appreciate this remark, for the Point Pelee area attracts swarms of migrant birds in both spring and fall. Churchill is now a Mecca for birders who wish to see a lot of birds that are difficult to find anywhere in southern Canada. It also offers a chance to see birds that are rare on the continent.

Thanks are due the following persons for the use of their records for supporting observations: Duncan R. Mackenzie, Churchill; Paul Mirs and others in his party, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario; Dr. I. Newton, Nature Conservancy, Edinburgh Scotland; Jerry Rosenbar, Skokie, Illinois; and Mrs. Blanche Smith and Irwin H. Smith, Churchill.

### SPECIES LIST

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*

A male in breeding plumage was observed by Pittaway and I. Newton on the Churchill River at Cape Mer July 11, 1970. The bird was studied closely for half an hour with binoculars and a Bausch and Lomb 15 x zoom-telescope, at times as close as 200 feet. It was observed swimming in flight, and sitting on exposed rocks. It was last seen by Pittaway on July 14.

This is the first record for Churchill. As pointed out by Manning (1961):

28), Blakiston reported one from York Factory, 140 miles southeast, prior to 1863. There are seven additional Manitoba records, including several specimens, from The Pas southward, from 1898 to 1969. Godfrey (1966: 74) regarded it as a "rare transient" in central Canada.

Common Merganser *Mergus merganser*

First recorded June 16, 1970 when Pittaway and P. Mirsky observed six off Cape Merry.

Only previous record for Churchill, a pair seen June 27, 1941 (Jehl and Smith, 1970: 32).

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

An adult was seen June 9, 1970 by Pittaway and J. Rosenband about a mile north of Twin Lakes. The red upper surface of the tail could be seen easily as the bird glided and moved slowly from east to west.

Jehl and Smith (1970: 32-33) list five previous occurrences.

Whooping Crane *Grus americana*

D. R. Mackenzie reported (pers. corres., November 30, 1970): "On August 12th and 13th, 1969, I saw what I identified as a Whooping Crane about one-half mile east of the Rocket Launching Site. I watched it with 10 power field-glasses for about 10 or 15 minutes. My attention had been drawn to it by three seagulls which were whooping on it; it took off by jumping into the air, not running on the ground, its wing action was slow and strong, dark face and black wing tips, and legs trailing backwards. The second time I saw it it was flying in the same general area and heading south . . . ."

Jehl and Smith (1970: 36) give two records, a family group of three on October 1, 1953, and a group of three on September 6, 1964. Its occurrence in recent years in southern Manitoba, where it might be expected, has been poorly documented and it must be considered a rare transient there. These northern records are far east of the expected migration route

from Wood Buffalo National Park to Texas. An unusual route or even another subarctic breeding locality should be considered.

Yellow Rail *Coturnicops noveboracensis*

One was heard by Pittaway at La Pérouse Bay on June 24, 1970. This is three days earlier than previously recorded (Jehl and Smith, 1970: 37). Often as many as six could be heard calling at once at La Pérouse Bay and one was seen by Pittaway on June 28, 1970.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Pittaway observed an adult of undetermined sex arrive at the National Harbour Board pool nearest the townsite, along with Lesser Yellowlegs and Short-billed Dowitchers at 5:15 p.m., June 23, 1970. Although clearly an adult it was in molt and was closer to fall plumage than breeding plumage. He studied the bird closely with a 15 x 60 telescope while it was feeding, noting two rather large oval white patches at the base of the tail, a stout bill, yellowish at the base, orange-yellow legs, dark brown back and upper breast. A narrow wing stripe in flight and a broad black central stripe on the rump were also recorded. This bird was seen also by Blanche and I. H. Smith, and I. Newton. Pittaway had seen Ruffs on two previous occasions in Ontario; Dr. Newton was familiar with this species in England.

There is no previous record for Churchill or Manitoba. Godfrey (1966: 164) reports one collected at Fort Severn, Ontario on Hudson Bay, about 315 miles southeast of Churchill. The latter author regards this species as an "accidental visitor from Eurasia." However, Peakall (1965) suggests that it may breed in North America. Jones and Myres (1968: 21), reporting on a flock of four Ruffs observed in southern Alberta, May 15, 1967, felt it might be breeding in the Canadian north, "possibly even in one of the Prairie Provinces." Myres (pers. corres., 1968) later said he thought the subarctic area of northern Manitoba

was a likely place to look for it as a possible breeding bird. Other records from adjacent areas include one collected at Regina, Saskatchewan, May 8, 1965 (Brazier, 1965), one seen at Saskatoon May 9-19, 1970 (Roy, 1971), and one studied near Alberta, Minnesota, May 23, 1964 (Strubbe, 1964).

#### Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*

So few late summer dates are available for this species it seems worth-recording that D. R. Mackenzie obtained one with a broken wing in mid-August, 1970 (pers. corres., 1970). It is regarded as uncommon to rare in the region (Jehl and Smith, 1970:41).

#### Wilson's Phalarope *Steganopus tricolor*

Pittaway observed two females and a male in the Harbour Board pools, May 30, 1970. Field marks could be checked easily by comparison with nearby Northern Phalaropes. The Wilson's Phalaropes remained there for at least two weeks. They were seen in the pools by D. R. Mackenzie, J. Rosenband, and a number of others including P. Mirsky.

On July 12, a single Wilson's Phalarope in fall plumage (male) was seen by I. Newton, P. Mirsky and Pittaway in a pool near the airport runway. Blanche Smith observed one with three Northern Phalaropes in a pond near the runway on three occasions during the last two weeks of July.

There are no previous records of this prairie-nesting species for Churchill, other than a supposedly invalid nesting report for the early 1930's (see under Northern Phalarope, Jehl and Smith, 1970: 42).

#### Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

Three adults were studied at close range with a telescope at the Harbour Board pools, June 19, 1970, by Pittaway. Size, yellowish-green leg color and ring on the bill were readily observed. Herring and Bonaparte's gulls were present for comparison. One was seen also on July 2 at Cape Merry.

Jehl and Smith (1970: 51) give one previous record, one seen on June 14, 1968.

#### Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

British ornithologist Dr. Ian Newton observed an adult in breeding plumage at the Fort Churchill garbage dump, July 23, 1970. Being completely familiar with this species in England he had little difficulty making the identification, noting a brown hood, red bill, a flash of white in the wings, and the slaty-colored underside of the primaries. His observation was discussed in detail with Pittaway.

This is the first record of this species for Manitoba. Regarded in Canada as a "rare visitor" from the Old World, it has not previously been reported west of Ontario (Godfrey, 1966: 183).

#### Little Gull *Larus minutus*

An adult in breeding plumage was seen with several Bonaparte's Gulls at the Harbour Board pools, July 20, 1970, by Pittaway, Blanche and I. H. Smith, I. Newton and many others. Pittaway, who was familiar with this species in Ontario, noted its dark hood, dark red bill, slate-black wing linings and lack of white in the forewings. Alongside Bonaparte's Gulls it seemed a third smaller and had a much smaller head. At times it was studied as close as 20 feet. Although details are lost in the poor photograph that is available the smaller size is evident.

This is the first record of this Old World immigrant for Manitoba. A male, apparently on territory in a colony of Bonaparte's Gulls, was collected on June 28, 1962, in north-western Saskatchewan (Nero, 1963: 87). There are numerous records for the Atlantic coast and it occurs frequently in southern Ontario, where it has recently been found nesting (Godfrey, 1966: 185).

#### Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Pittaway observed one June 3, 1970, perched on a rock with a few Arctic Terns at the Harbour Board pools; all were in full breeding plumage. Using a 15 x 60 zoom-telescope he recorded the larger tarsal length, longer bill coloured orange-red (instead of a dark blood red) with a black tip. Paler contour plumage and longer wings, ex-

ending beyond the tail, were evident. One was seen here on many occasions in June and Pittaway was able to show to P. Mirsky.

Jehl and Smith (1970: 53) reported sightings, but none as well documented as the above.

#### Mourning Dove *Zenaidura macroura*

Pittaway and J. Rosenband saw one at close range as it flew along the coast near Paradox Creek, June 12, 1970. Rosenband had seen one a few days earlier.

There are six previous records cited by Jehl and Smith (1970: 55), the last in 1957.

#### Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia*

Pittaway had a good look at one at the Harbour Board pools, June 13, 1970, noting the breast band, brown back, and buzzy manner of flight. He saw one again later on the same day over the water at the tip of Cape Merry.

Although not previously reported for Churchill, H. Hosford observed it to the west on the Wolverine River in 1966 (Jehl and Smith, 1970: 60).

#### Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*

Pittaway and J. Rosenband saw one flying over the townsite, June 11, 1970.

Jehl and Smith (1970: 60) had no records but noted that "its occasional presence in Churchill is to be expected."

#### Brown Thrasher *Toxostoma rufum*

Pittaway and J. Rosenband found a male singing from the top of a power pole on Harbour Board property, June 12, 1970.

Recorded at Churchill on three previous occasions (Jehl and Smith, 1970: 62).

#### Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichus*

D. R. Mackenzie found an immature male (examined in the flesh by Nero) alive but with its tail and claws frozen into the ice in a small pond surrounded by willows, November 11, 1970. It was kept alive until November 13.

Jehl and Smith (1970: 67) reported several summer records, but with no indication of any breeding locally.

#### Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator*

D. R. Mackenzie reported that "one of a flight of five that was around here for about a week" was rescued from a Labrador dog on October 14, 1970 (pers. corres., 1970).

Recorded at Churchill to August 23 with the observation that "later records can be expected" (Jehl and Smith, 1970: 69).

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#### NEST RECORDS SCHEME

For the 1970 season 1476 nest record cards on 129 species were received from 68 Prairie Provinces and NWT contributors. Cards have been checked and entered in the master files. During the year the following cards were used: Tree Swallow (Maritime Blackbird (Royal Ontario Museum); Forest Ranger School); Brewer's Townsend's Solitaire, Lesser Yellowlegs and Indigo Bunting (University of Michigan).

Summary of 1970 contributors and cards may be obtained from the editor. Cards and instructions may be obtained from H. W. R. Copland, Coordinator Prairie Nest Record Scheme, Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, 190 Rupert Ave., Winnipeg 2, Manitoba.