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SOME 1970 SOUTHERN ALBERTA BIRD OBSERVATIONS

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The purpose of this article is to record some interesting observations made in the Calgary area, a circle with its centre in downtown Calgary and a radius of 50 miles. For an observation made outside this area the nearest large town is given. The terms common, rare, etc., are used as in the *Check-list of the birds of the Calgary region*, 1969 edition. On a few occasions, one or more of the following people were in the field with us—Stu Alexander, Don Brookes, Bob Owens, Harry Pinel, Connie Sweet, Merrill Wershler, Chip Weseloh. Unless otherwise noted, all observations were made in the presence of at least one of the authors.

During the fall migration, fewer species of vireos, warblers and other passerines appeared, and of those that did there were fewer numbers.

Common Loon (*Gavia immer*): One, possibly two, on Frank Lake, June 8. One pair on Little Fish Lake (about 23 miles ESE of Drumheller) until June 1 (when the observers left). This pair was observed in courtship flight over the dry prairie just southeast of this prairie lake. Loons have not yet been discovered nesting on the prairie, although there have been several summer records in the past few years.

Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grise-gena*): Several pairs nested on a large slough just north of Turner Valley. Although, according to published data, this species nests only rarely in the foothills and mountains, it may be a regular foothills breeder.

White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchus*): About 75 at Irricana Lake

on the evening of May 31, with 25 still present at 4:30 a.m. on June 1 (Chip Weseloh only). One on Namaka Lake, June 29. Up to 14 recorded several times between June 27 and July 10 at Little Fish Lake (ESE of Drumheller). This species is now only a scarce visitor in our area.

Trumpeter Swan (*Olor buccinator*): One pair on Irricana Lake, April 29. One pair on Glenmore Reservoir (Calgary), June 9 and 10. One pair on Bow River in NW Calgary, October 7 and 8. Considered a rare migrant in our area. Archie Hogg has reported a pair nesting near Longview (about 35 miles SW of Calgary) in 1968 and 1969, and two young were raised to flying stage in 1969.

Cinnamon Teal (*Anas cyanoptera*): One pair near Shepard, May 8. Fifteen (five pairs, four males, one female) on Priddis Slough, May 9. Five pairs on Frank Lake, June 8. This is a repetition of the greater numbers appearing in recent years, such as in 1968.

Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*): One male in southeast Calgary during the late summer. There was an apparent increase during the five years up to 1968, with breeding occurring at several locations. However, there have been few sightings for the past two years.

Greater Scaup (*Aythya marila*): One adult male at Calgary (Inglewood), April 17. A close and careful study was made, with three competent observers noting all field marks. This is the second sighting for the Calgary area.

Surf Scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*): On Glenmore Reservoir (Calgary) 40+ on September 14, and one female on October 3.

Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*): One pair near Chepard, May 14 and 15. Two immatures in Inglewood (Calgary), August 23.

Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*): One adult flushed and chased by Magpies in Bowness Park (Calgary), November 29. Although this species winters in Edmonton, this is the first winter record for the Calgary area.

Harlan's Hawk (*Buteo harlandi*): Eleven (12?) dark-phase hawks at Fish Creek (Calgary), October 11. This raptor is a scarce migrant in our area; however, this day was exceptionally good: e.g., one Red-tail, seven Harlan's and two Golden Eagles passed over within one 10-minute period.

Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*): Five in the Grande Valley - Bighill Springs area, February 25. This is the earliest date yet for Golden Eagles to be migrating into or through our area. However, spring migration is correlated with the emergence of Richardson's Ground Squirrels, and, owing to unseasonably warm weather "gophers" appeared on February 25 in 1970.

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*): One grey phase at Lake Louise dump, August 16; an unusual record in terms of both date and its mountain location.

Sparrow Hawk (*Falco sparverius*): One male up the Grande Valley, January 2. Sparrow Hawks are not generally believed to winter in Alberta.

Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americana*): One at Irricana Lake, April 15, plaintively crying as it flew south over the still frozen land and water. Owing to the cold weather, no other Curlews were reported for another three weeks.

Knot (*Calidris canutus*): One (still in breeding plumage) at Janet Slough, August 9 (a rare migrant in our area).

White-rumped Sandpiper (*Erolia fuscicollis*): One at Miquelon Lake

(SE of Edmonton), May 16 (an infrequent migrant in Alberta).

Dunlin (*Erolia alpina*): One at Conrich in early May. One at Beaverhills Lake (east of Edmonton), May 17. A 1969 record for Calgary is also in the spring — three on May 3. According to Salt and Wilks' *Birds of Alberta*, the Dunlin is mainly a fall migrant, and is quite scarce.

Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*): An unusually large flock of 230+ flew into Irricana Lake from the southeast, July 3.

Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*): One near Shepard, May 8 (a rare migrant).

American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*): A flock of 155+ at Janet Slough, July 29, and a flock of 109+ at the same place, July 30. On both days, an individual with deep, rich chestnut colour from the upper breast to the under tail coverts was seen. It is not known whether this colour was due to a genetic aberration or staining.

Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*): In spite of intensive field work, the first Snowy Owl was not recorded until the late date of December 2 — a dark bird at Twin Bridges. By the end of December, only three Snowies had been seen, an unusually low number.

Great Gray Owl (*Strix nebulosa*): One male calling five miles east of Leduc (south of Edmonton), May 15; this is some distance east and south of its normal Alberta range.

Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*): Only two were seen in the early part of the winter, December 2 and 3. In the last few years Short-ears were regular but uncommon in the winter. Voles were very scarce this winter.

[Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*)]: One flying west with Tree Swallows at dawn over the shore of Miquelon Lake (Southeast of Edmonton), May 15. A good comparison with the Swallows as obtained with respect to colour, size and flight. W. W. Smith, the observer, is familiar with all four species of North American swifts.

Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*): One female

near Lost Lake (35 miles northwest of Calgary), January 10. Not often seen, and then usually in dense coniferous woods.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (*Empidonax flaviventris*): Two singing males, apparently on territory, in mixed woods next to a beaver pond 45 miles southwest of Calgary, June 19, provide us with the first record for the Calgary area. This valley is unique in that it now appears to have all six species of Alberta *Empidonax* flycatchers breeding in it. A second Calgary area record is of one at Glenmore Reservoir, August 19.

Purple Martin (*Progne subis*): One female southwest of Calgary, May 23. Several individuals were seen in other parts of the city investigating bird houses. With some attention this migrant might be persuaded to nest in our area.

White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*): One male in Inglewood (Calgary), September 6, was the only record. Usually 6-7 have wintered in the city in recent years.

Winter Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*): Two in Inglewood (Calgary), September 1, and one on September 2. This wren is a scarce migrant in our area.

Robin (*Turdus migratorius*): One male in Strathmore, December 29.

Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*): Observed in six places in the immediate Calgary area from late spring to late summer; all birds appeared to be nesting. This is unusual as only two of these locations contained anything close to natural prairie and Sprague's Pipits have not bred close to Calgary for at least 10 years.

Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*): A flock of 18 was seen in Strathmore, December 30, 1970; also reports of small wintering flocks in two other areas. This is the second year that Cedar Waxwings have wintered.

Cape May Warbler (*Dendroica tigrina*): One in Inglewood (Calgary), August 24. A very scarce migrant.

Townsend's Warbler (*Dendroica townsendi*): Five in Inglewood (Cal-

gary), September 6. This uncommon migrant is usually seen on 6-10 occasions during any one fall. However, this was the only date on which it was seen in 1970.

Black-throated Green Warbler (*Dendroica virens*): Two in Inglewood (Calgary), September 6. This scarce migrant is usually seen on 5-10 occasions during any one fall. As with the preceding species, this was the only date on which it was seen in 1970.

Canada Warbler (*Wilsonia canadensis*): One adult in Inglewood (Calgary), August 21, 22, and 27.

Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*): One female in Inglewood (Calgary), August 25, 27. This species used to nest as far north as the southern part of the area (early 1900's), but later it retreated to the southern portion of the province. Then in 1967 several were seen in Calgary in the latter part of August. In 1968, three were seen in Calgary, again in August. There were no 1969 records. It is open to speculation why this species has occurred in Calgary in August for three out of the past four years.

Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*): One male singing 30 miles northwest of Calgary, July 26, its actions suggesting that it was a resident. This is the first summer record for the area.

Common Redpoll (*Acanthis hornemanni*) and Hoary Redpoll (*A. flammea*): Three redpolls near Bragg Creek, November 1, and an observation of several in a Calgary backyard were the only reports up to the end of December, 1970.

Pine Siskin (*Spinus pinus*): This year only a few were seen. Red and White-winged Crossbills and Pine and Evening Grosbeaks were also almost completely absent during the fall and early winter of 1970-71.

American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*): Two near Bragg Creek, October 29, were a month later than usual.

Whitethroated Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*): One adult on the University of Calgary campus, January 21; this is our first winter record.