

# REVIEW OF SASKATOON 1968 BIRD OBSERVATIONS

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This summary of the more interesting records from Volume 3 of the *Saskatoon Bird Review* covers the period January 1 through November 30, 1968. The district included is a 3,600-square-mile block within approximately a 35-mile radius of Saskatoon. This paper is based on the following statistics:

Issue No.	1968				Totals		
	1	2	3	4	1968	1967	1966
Period	Jan. 1- Mar. 15	Mar. 16- May 31	March- Sept.*	June 1- Nov. 30			
Contributors	32	73	41	52	97	102	101
Records	874	4,659	444	3,594	9,571	6,914	4,500±
Cards	238	2,305	302	1,149	3,994	4,010	2,644
Species	34	199	75	206	230	220	217

\* Breeding records only.

With almost a 40 percent increase in records over 1967, we now have 160± pages of annotated list for three years covering most of the 268 species recorded in the area. While much more breeding and fall data are still needed, plans are to begin a preliminary publication on birds of the Saskatoon district after the 1969 season.

## COOPERATORS

The 97 members of the Saskatoon Natural History Society who have continued to write and send records are to be commended for their persistence. Five teams contributed more than half of the total: Mr. and Mrs. G. Galloway, Dr. and Mrs. J. B. Gollop, Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Hogg, Dr. and Mrs. C. S. Houston and A. L. Nijssen. Nine parties accounted for another third by submitting 200-500 records each: Mrs. W. R. Early, R. E. Gehlert, Mrs. L. M. Hoyte, Mr. and Mrs. W. S. Richards, A. R. Smith, Miss L. P. Strom, F. L. Waite, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Wedgwood and D. W. Whitfield. Florence and Bill Richards, Arnold Nijssen and Mrs. T. R. Smith have contributed much time sorting cards and compiling data. Again Canadian Wildlife Service Staff—Mrs. H. M. Burtonwood, Mrs. L. Brodland, Mrs. R. L. Learmonth, Mrs. D. A. Kendel and Mrs. G. MacKenzie

—have done the typing and mimeographing. To these and to the others who have helped in the production of the *Bird Review* in 1968, the editor extends his thanks.

## BREEDING SEASON

There were 744 nests, broods and coveys reported in 1968 (Table 1), 23 more than last year. Seventy-three of the 127 species believed to breed were included compared to 67 last year. First breeding records were reported for three species. Hooded Merganser: a brood of seven almost full-grown young on Brightwater Reservoir on July 27 and probably on August 4. A Common Snipe was incubating four eggs on May 25 and 26. There was apparently an influx of this species since single winnowing birds were heard near Laura on June 8, Hanley on June 22, and a bird was seen near Burke Lake on June 15. The first nest of a Short-billed Marsh Wren for the district (near Laura) had three eggs on July 1 and six eggs on July 6.

Pied-billed Grebes and American Coots were obviously more common this year than in any of at least the previous five. There were 24 Red-tailed Hawk nests reported this year compared to 22 in 1967 and two in 1966. Burrowing Owls were apparently less common than usual. Male

Marsh Hawks in courting flights were recorded on March 27, April 12, 17 and 27. In view of R. W. Risebrough's report (Pollution, Wildlife and Science. *Canadian Field-Nat.* 82:241-243. 1968) that Marsh Hawks no longer reproduce in parts of Wisconsin, it would be well to keep records of courtship displays in Saskatchewan for the next few years. (Lack of reproduction is the result of a break in courtship activities: the males no longer perform their aerial displays, possibly as a result of DDT contamination.) To get some data on relative numbers of breeding species, we plan to conduct four breeding bird transects in the district in 1968.

### MIGRATION

**SPRING:** White-phase Snow Geese were more common than in the previous two years, numbering 2,000+ at Goose Lake from April 27 through May 4. Blue-phase snows totalled 30 birds on four dates (April 7 - May 16) compared to none in 1966 and 1967. On the other hand, Rough-legged Hawks were less common (14 birds from March 30 through April 28) than in 1967. Three Whooping Cranes were studied in a field near Langham on April 26. Thrushes (except robins) and warblers (except Myrtle) were never common. Rusty Blackbirds were much less common than in the two previous springs.

**Visible Migration.** Birds flying west and northwest during the day were noted as follows: **March 27:** 93 crows (9 flocks). **April 1:** 19 crows; **6:** 3 buteos; **7:** 19 hawks; **11:** 11 hawks; **12:** 94 hawks, 24 crows; **13:** 42 hawks, 101 Sandhill Cranes (8 flocks); **29:** 125 Franklin's Gulls (8), some blackbirds; **30:** blackbirds. **May 1:** 112 Franklin's Gulls (15 flocks); **4:** 131 geese (5); **5:** 120 geese (3), 302 shorebirds (16), 29 Franklin's Gulls (3); **6:** 89 Franklin's Gulls (6), 3,115 longspurs (9); **8:** 10 Tree Swallows (4); **9:** 463 geese (7), 5 small falcons, blackbirds; **10:** 202 swallows (8), 18 Tree Swallows (4); **11:** 140 swans (10), 1,200 geese (23), 213 shorebirds (16), blackbirds; **12:** 101 geese (5), 402 shorebirds (16), blackbirds; **13:**

123 shorebirds (11), 28 plover (3); **17:** 108 Franklin's Gulls (32); **18:** 50 Franklin's Gulls (9); **31:** 50 Franklin's Gulls (4), 25 Tree Swallows (1).

**FALL:** In 1966 and 1967, 5,000± Whistling Swans could be seen on Goose Lake at one time; in 1968 the total apparently never exceeded 60. No White-fronted Geese were identified through the fall although they were fairly common in the two previous years. White geese, however, as in the spring, were more common than usual in the fall. No hawk migrations of more than seven birds in one day (October 20) were reported. Marsh Hawks remained in larger numbers than usual through November, including 5 males and 2 females on November 24 (also into December). Whooping Cranes were again reported on September 22 (2 circling with sandhills) and on October 13 and 14 (3 birds on the North Saskatchewan River). The first fall Bonaparte's Gulls were reported this year (1-5 birds in immature plumage from Oct. 5-26). Red-breasted Nuthatches were more common in August, September and October than in those months in 1966 or 1967.

**Visible Migration.** The following birds flying in a southeasterly direction were reported: **August 17:** 18 nighthawks; **29:** 6 Sandhill Cranes (1 flock). **September 5:** 75 geese (1 flock); **6:** 140 geese (1); **8:** 48 Sandhill Cranes (5); **21:** 81 geese (1), geese heard for 5± minutes, after dark; **22:** 100 geese (2), 60 sandhills (1); **29:** 32 sandhills (4). **October 3:** a few hawks; **13:** 2 buteos; **15:** thousands of ducks flying south; **mid-October:** many small flocks of geese southward; **20:** 7 buteos; **27:** 44 swans (1). **November 13:** 16 dark geese (1); **21:** 50 dark geese (1).

### WINTER

Snowy Owls occurred in about the same numbers as in the spring and fall of 1966 and 1967. There were 60 Bohemian Waxwing observations in April, 1968, compared to 14,000 in April, 1967; fall numbers were similar for both years. No Evening Grosbeaks were reported in the spring of

1967; 110 were reported on nine March-April dates, 1968. Pine Grosbeaks and Snow Buntings were less common than in the fall of 1967. Redpolls were much less common in spring but noticeably more common in fall than in the previous two years.

#### OTHER RECORDS

**Short-eared Owl.** Records of this erratic species for the last 17-month period are:

Nov. 3/67: 1 bird

Nov. 4/67 - Apr. 21/68 (170 days): 0

Apr. 22-29 (8 days): 17 birds, 5 dates

Apr. 30 - Nov. 10 (195 days): 1 on May 25; 1 on Aug. 8

Nov. 11/68 - Jan. 18/69 (69 days): 119 birds on 18 dates

Jan. 19 - Apr. 7 (79 days): 0

Apr. 8/69: 2 birds

The first fall immigrants were reported on November 11 (4 birds) and 17 (2). Peak numbers of apparently different birds were 18 on November 24 and 21 on December 1. The largest concentrations were around Goose Lake on these same dates: 15 and 13, respectively. After January 4, the only records were for January 16 (1 bird) and 18 (2).

**New Species:** There are reports of two new species for the district but neither has adequate written supporting data: 1 Forster's Tern on May 25 at Pike Lake and 1 Audubon's Warbler near the city on May 12.

**CFQC-TV:** The tower was checked 12 times between August 14 and September 28. 63 dead birds of 18 species were found on 9 dates, the largest

**TABLE 1. 1968 BREEDING RECORDS FOR THE SASKATOON DISTRICT**

	Active Nests	Broods* Coveys		Active Nests	Broods* Coveys		Active Nests	Broods* Coveys
Horned Grebe	12	1	Am Coot	65	24	Cliff Swallow	5±	0
Eared Grebe	17	8	Killdeer	4	1	B-b Magpie	11	1
Pied-b Grebe	5	15	C Snipe	1	0	Common Crow	8	0
C Goose Big	1	0	L-b Curlew	1	0	House Wren	4	0
Mallard	5	24	Upland Plover	0	1	L-b Msh Wren	1	0
Gadwall	0	6	Spot Sandp	1	0	S-b Msh Wren	1	0
Pintail	3	9	Willet	1	1	Catbird	1	0
Bl-wgd. Teal	2	3	Am Avocet	10	1	Br Thrasher	1	1
Am Widgeon	0	10	Wils Phalar	2	1	Robin	5	4
Shoveler	0	7	Frank Gull	200±	0	Mt Bluebird	0	1
Redhead	0	1	Black Tern	8	0	Cedar Waxwing	3	1
Canvasback	3	23	Rock Dove	4	0	Loghd Shrike	1	2
Lesser Scaup	0	1	Mourning Dove	2	0	Starling	1	0
Ruddy Duck	0	4	Gr H Owl	36	0	Yellow Wrblr	3	3
Hooded Merg	0	1	Burrow Owl	4	0	House Sparrow	8	4
Sh-sh Hawk	1	0	Long-ear Owl	5	0	W Meadowlark	3	0
Cooper Hawk	3	0	C Nighthawk	1	0	Y-h Blkbird	6	4
R-tail Hawk	24	0	Y-sh Flicker	1	0	R-w Blkbird	17	0
Swains Hawk	6	0	E Kingbird	6	0	Balt Oriole	1	0
Marsh Hawk	2	0	W Kingbird	1	0	Brwr Blkbird	7	0
Spar Hawk	3	1	Horned Lark	1	1	Am Goldfinch	0	1
Ruffed Grouse	0	1	Tree Swallow	3	0	Lark Bunting	1	0
Sh-t Grouse	1	0	Bank Swallow	25±	0	Chip Sparrow	2	3
Gray Part	0	4	Barn Swallow	7	0	Cl-col Sparrow	0	2
Sora	1	0						

Totals: 568 occupied nests; 176 broods and coveys; 73 species.

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

number being 39 on September 2. Red-breasted Nuthatches were found for the first time.

**Banding:** R. E. Gehlert, F. L. Waite and D. W. Whitfield banded 119 Sparrow Hawks, mostly in spring and fall migration. C. S. Houston banded 73 young Great Horned Owls, as well as many other species, and D. W. Whitfield banded 24 young Red-tailed Hawks.

**Large Numbers.** The following are considered to be large numbers or flocks for the periods seen: 184 Western Grebes on Blackstrap Lake on October 5; 4,000± Whistling Swans on April 29; 1,400± White-fronted Geese on April 27 and 2,700± white geese (probably Snow) on September 29, all on Goose Lake; 350 males and some female Canvasback on Radisson Lake on May 20 and June 2; 2,300± Scaup (probably Lesser) on Blackstrap on November 10 and 125+ Ruddy Ducks there on September 7; 350± Golden Plover in a field on the Campus on May 15; 10 Spotted Sandpipers on Brightwater Lake on August 1 and 30 Willets there on July 27; 15,000± small sandpipers on Burke Lake on June 1; 40 Marbled Godwits near Bradwell on June 29; 70± Avocets at Goose Lake on April 12; 2,000+ Northern Phalaropes on Blackstrap, May 25; 100± Common Terns at the city dam on July 29 and 1,000± Black Terns over Brightwater Lake on August 1 (neither species breeds at these locations); 15 Short-eared Owls on November 24 within one mile of Goose Lake! a flock of 15+ Western Kingbirds and one-day count of 32 on July 21; 20 Say's Phoebes on May 12; 24 Black-capped Chickadees in a flock near Dalmeny on November 16; several thousand robins per day in the city from April 20 through 24; a flock of 500± Rusty Blackbirds on October 6; a flock of 55 American Goldfinches on August 15, and a flock of 4,000± Lapland Longspurs on May 4.

**Stragglers and Rarities:** Twenty-eight species (singles unless otherwise noted) were reported on only

one or two dates in 1968 (to November 30). Red-necked Grebe (2 on May 25, June 26); Black-crowned Night Heron (May 8, 5 on Aug. 1); Black Duck (September 13, October 19); White-winged Scoter (3 on May 25); Broad-winged Hawk (May 6); Peregrine Falcon (May 28, September 22); Ruddy Turnstone (30 on May 25, 1 on June 2); Knot (3 on May 25); Buff-breasted Sandpiper (11 on May 24, 137 on May 25); Hudsonian Godwit (3 April 27-29, 2 on May 17); Black-billed Cuckoo (June 9 and 25); Red-shafted Flicker (June 28); Red-headed Woodpecker (May 24 and 25); Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker (November 25); Raven (March 24); White-breasted Nuthatch (September 4); Solitary Vireo (August 18, September 16); Philadelphia Vireo (2 on August 19; August 21); Yellow-breasted Chat (June 8, September 6); Canada Warbler (May 29); Western Tanager (September 11); Black-headed Grosbeak (September 2 and 15); Red Crossbill (June 23, 8 on June 26); Sharp-tailed Sparrow (May 6); Lark Sparrow (2 on May 19, 4 on May 25); Oregon Junco (September 26); Swamp Sparrow (May 6), and McCown's Longspur (5 on May 25, 2 on June 8).

In the same category were two Mockingbirds that spent the period September 30 - December 3 around 309 Lake Crescent. At least one was seen weekly or more often through October and almost daily through November.

### CARDINAL INFORMATION WANTED

Anyone who has records of the Cardinal in the prairie provinces or states is requested to correspond with Martin McNicholl at the Zoology Department, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg. Any information on location, date(s) seen, habitat, details of observation and behaviour of birds seen is welcome. Special note should be made of regularity at feeding stations for winter observations. Previously unpublished records are particularly desirable.