

June, and found at least two pairs breeding (a female, ROM 124416, had an active incubation patch) in deciduous bushes at the south end of the Norman Wells airport, 26 June.

LINCOLN'S SPARROW. We found a pair breeding (the female, ROM 124417, had ruptured follicles and an active incubation patch) in a deciduous thicket along a stream through an old burn at the south edge of Inuvik, 1 July. Edwards and Weir reported the species at Inuvik.¹

¹EDWARDS, M. H. and R. D. WEIR. 1972. *Lincoln's Sparrow at Inuvik, N.W.T. and Common Starling at Whitehorse, Yukon.* Canadian Field-Naturalist 86(1): 85.

²EISENMANN, E. (and committee). 1973. *Thirty-second supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American birds.* Auk 90: 411-419.

³GODFREY, W. E. 1965. *Range extensions of some birds in western Mackenzie.* Canadian Field-Naturalist 79 (1): 34-38.

⁴GODFREY, W. E. 1966. *The birds of Canada.* National Museum of Canada Bulletin Number 203. 428 pp.

⁵JOHNSON, J. W. 1970. *A bird list for Thompson, Manitoba.* Blue Jay 28 (1): 14-19.

⁶ROE, N. A. 1975. *New records of birds in west-central Mackenzie District, Northwest Territories.* Canadian Field-Naturalist 89 (2): 135-142.

⁷WEBER, W. C. 1976. *Birds of north-central Manitoba, 1973.* Blue Jay 34: 84-94.



PRAIRIE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS, 1906 - 1941.

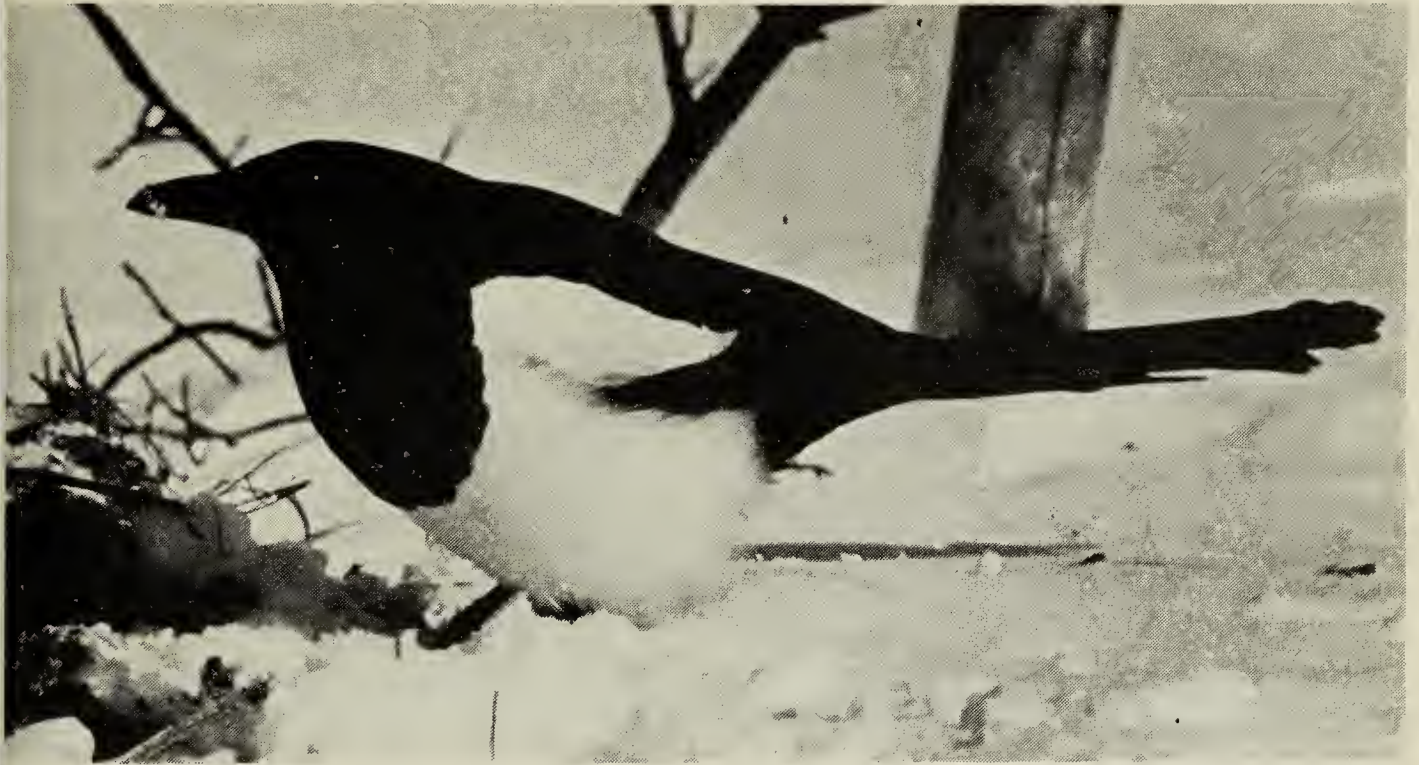
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In the December, 1900, issue of *Bird Lore*, editor Frank M. Chapman proposed a new type of Christmas day recreation to replace the sportsmen's "side hunt", whereby teams went out on Christmas day to see who could slaughter the greatest number of wild birds or animals. Chapman proposed that instead of slaughter, the birds be observed and the record be published in the first "Christmas Bird Census". Information as to weather, distance travelled, and hours in the field was requested, much as it is for Audubon counts today, although there were no restrictions as to minimum time.

In this paper we review Christmas Counts in the Prairie Provinces from 1906 through 1941. The year 1942 marked a new era in Christmas Counts, with Mrs. Priestly's announcement in the very first issue of the *Blue Jay*, soliciting entries to be published in the March issue. Sure enough, Volume 1, Number 2 con-

tained eight counts — by Maurice G. Street of Nipawin, Frank Baines, southwest of Saltcoats, Jim Rogerson, visiting east of Saltcoats, F. Rouse of Scott, William Niven of Sheho, Steve Mann of Skull Creek, J. Francis Roy of Tullis and 5 adults and 4 juniors at Yorkton.

In the February, 1901, issue of *Bird Lore*, 25 counts were published. Two were from Canada; Fannie Jones saw four species in 5 hours in Toronto and William H. Moore saw nine species in 1 hour at Scotch Lake, New Brunswick. There were no counts from Canada for Christmas, 1901. There were counts from Charlottetown, P.E.I. in 1902; Queenston, Ontario in 1903; Reaboro and Queenston in 1904 and Millsbrook, Reaboro and Queenston, Ontario in 1905. The first published count from the Prairie Provinces was taken by Sidney S. S. Stansell in Edmonton in 1906 — 11 species in 8 hours.



Black-billed Magpie

Fred Lahrman

Alberta. Between 1906 and 1941, a total of 26 Alberta counts was published, 13 in *Bird Lore* and 18 in the *Canadian Field Naturalist*, with five Camrose counts appearing in both publications. Edmonton counts appeared again in 1907 (6 species in 5-3/4 hours by J. A. Fyfe and John M. Schreck) and in 1909 (four species in 5 hours by Glenn Chadwick and Sidney S. S. Stansell). The only other Edmonton count in 36 years appeared in 1937 when Albert L. Wilk and Harman Burpee reported 11 species.

The most consistent locality on the Canadian prairies was Camrose, with 13 Christmas counts taken in 1920, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1939 and 1941. Frank L. Farley was the mainstay of the Camrose counters, missing only two of 13 counts, while Arthur Twomey participated regularly from 1925 to 1932. The maximum number of participants in any early Alberta count was seven at Camrose in 1931. Both in 1931 and 1935, the Camrose Bird Club had a commendable total of 17 species.

F. and G. Pegg did even better at Glenevis in 1928, with 20 species reported, and T. E. Randall at Sullivan Lake in 1925 turned in an impressive one-man total of 18 species.

Other Alberta counts came from Stoney Plain (1908, six species, S. S. S. Stansell); Noyes Crossing near Onoway, (1910, 14 species, S. S. S. Stansell); Calgary (1919, 14 species, Percy L. Custance); Red Deer (1933 and 1935, 8 and 12 species, M. P. Cole); Glenevis (1927, 15 species, Fred H. Pegg); and Government Hay Camp. Wood Buffalo National Park (1932, 3 species plus 12 additional within 1 week, Mr. and Mrs. J. Dewey Soper).

SASKATCHEWAN. The first Saskatchewan Christmas count was taken in 1913 by S. W. Calvert of Lashburn, who stayed out for 7 hours and counted 7 species. The most consistent observer was Laurence B. Potter of Eastend who took nine counts, of which two were published in *Bird Lore* and seven in the *Canadian Field-Naturalist*. In 1927, E. M. and J. E. Callin recorded in the *Field-Naturalist* their 5-hour walk through marshes and woods at Whitewood.

Inspired by his uncle, Frank L. Farley of Camrose, young Farley Mowat and his school chum, Bruce Billings, took counts at Saskatoon in 1935 and 1936, with respectable totals of 8 and 11 species. Both counts were printed in *Bird Lore* and the second in the *Field-Naturalist* as well. The first

Yorkton count by four observers in 1941 was rejected by *Bird Lore* because of insufficient duration, when a blizzard cut the count short at noon. Full data on these 14 Saskatchewan counts are given in Table 1.

MANITOBA. The only early Manitoba count to appear in *Bird Lore* was in 1908 from Minnedosa, where John Woodcock saw 10 species in 4 hours. Subsequently there was a 1932 Winnipeg count which appeared only in *Bird Lore*, three counts which appeared in both publications, and 22 Manitoba counts in the *Canadian Field-Naturalist*.

The Manitoba Natural History Society fielded from 11 to 25 observers in Winnipeg in 8 different years, beginning in 1925. They observed a record 23 species in both 1932 and 1935. Edward Robinson took five counts at East Bay on the east side of Lake Dauphin in 1926, 1927, 1928, 1931 and 1935, with 12 species as his best total. Stuart Criddle at Aweme, northeast of Wawanesa, took interesting counts in 1933 and 1934 with 13 and 15 species. Single counts were taken at McCreary (1926, eight species, Vernon Harper); Ninette (1926, seven species, R. C. Scott); Mountainside, north of Turtle Mountain (1927, eight species, observer's name not given); St. Martin (1927, 12 species, Victor Woyna); La Riviere (1935, seven species, Clarence Wightman); Souris (1935, five species, S. H. Forrest); Vivian (1935, eight species, G. Rutherford, C. Hall, B. MacFarlane, J. Mackie, A. M. Mackie); and Brandon (1937, 11 species, Miss G. I. Todd).

RESULTS. What can we learn from these 64 counts concerning winter bird distribution on the prairies from 35 to 70 years ago?

In all three provinces the most regularly observed species was the Black-capped Chickadee, noted in 25 of 26 Alberta counts and in all 14 Saskatchewan and 24 Manitoba counts. In Alberta, the Common Redpoll and Pine Grosbeak came next, both observed in 21 counts, with Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay and Black-billed Magpie seen in 19 counts,

Snow Buntings in 18, Hairy Woodpeckers in 16, and both Sharp-tailed and Ruffed Grouse in 15 counts.

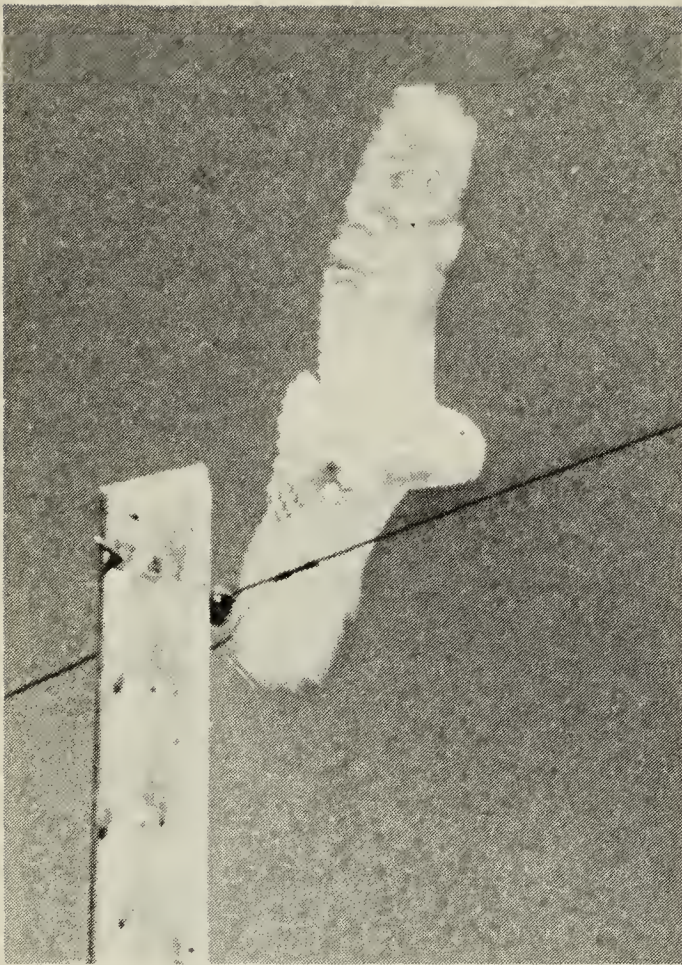
Nine of Saskatchewan's 14 counts were from the extreme southwest, but Common Redpolls and Sharp-tailed Grouse were seen on 13 counts, Black-billed Magpies on 12 and Snow Buntings on 11.

In Manitoba, the Blue Jay surprisingly came in second, from 20 of 24 counts with Snow Buntings in 19, Pine Grosbeak, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers from 18 counts and Sharp-tailed Grouse and White-breasted Nuthatch from 17 each.

Since Saskatchewan results are being given in full in Table 1, and since Alberta and Manitoba counts were more numerous and representative, we shall restrict our discussion mainly to the interesting observations of these two provinces, and the changes that appear to have occurred.

Before open water became common at larger power plants, there were fewer waterfowl remaining over the Christmas season. There were 2 Mallards and 11 Common Goldeneyes at Calgary in 1919, and 4 Mallards and 1 Goldeneye at Winnipeg in 1932. One and 2 Lesser Scaup were reported from Winnipeg in 1926 and 1935. Calgary had 6 Common Mergansers in 1919, while Winnipeg had a Canvasback in 1926 and a Green-winged Teal in 1928.

The Goshawk was then the commonest winter raptor, almost certainly more regularly seen than it is today, with reports from 6 Alberta and 10 Manitoba counts. There were three Common Rough-legged Hawks (from Stony Plain in 1907 and Camrose in 1925 and 1935). A Ferruginous Hawk and a Golden Eagle were seen at Edmonton in 1906, with single Golden Eagles noted at Winnipeg in 1928, La Riviere in 1935 and two at Aweme, Manitoba, in 1934. A Prairie Falcon in 1932 and a Marsh Hawk in 1936 were both Winnipeg records. The only Merlin reported from the entire prairies in winter was one outside of count period at Camrose, December 17, 1925.



Snowy Owl in flight.

Adam Schmidt

Ruffed Grouse were then proportionately more regular, for they were noted from 15 Alberta counts, equal in this respect to Sharp-tailed Grouse, and from 10 Manitoba counts. The report of 38 Greater Prairie Chicken or Pinnated Grouse from Sullivan Lake in Alberta in 1926 rings true, since T. E. Randall counted 63 Sharp-tailed Grouse the same day. The count of 59 Pinnated Grouse from Winnipeg in 1928 is equally plausible, except that no Sharptails were noted that year. Many observers of that time followed the consistent use of all prairie dwellers, and of Ernest Thompson Seton, by referring to the sharp-tail as "prairie chicken". For consistency with scientific usage, an editor might well have changed an entry from "Prairie Chicken" to "Pinnated Grouse". In 1935, Winnipeg observers saw a single Pinnated Grouse and 12 Sharp-tailed Grouse.

Gray Partridge appeared in 11 Alberta counts, beginning with 17 at Calgary in 1919 and 67 at Sullivan Lake in 1925, the year that Potter noted 27 at Eastend, Saskatchewan.

Ring-necked Pheasants were reported from three Alberta and four Manitoba counts, beginning with single birds at Winnipeg in 1931 and Red Deer in 1935. Two Common Snipe from Calgary in 1919 were most unusual.

Snowy Owls appeared in only five Alberta and five Manitoba counts, suggesting that their numbers were no greater earlier in the century than now. Great Horned Owls similarly were seen in seven Alberta and five Manitoba counts. There were seven Hawk Owls at Edmonton in 1906, and one each at Sullivan Lake in 1925, Glenevis in 1925, and Winnipeg in 1926 and 1935. Manitoba had Screech Owls twice (Winnipeg in 1928 and Aweme in 1933), a Barred Owl at Vivian in 1935, a Boreal Owl at Aweme in 1935 and a Saw-whet Owl outside count day at Minnedosa in 1908. Short-eared Owls were perhaps less common, for the only Manitoba record was one outside count day at East Bay in 1928, although there were 8 at Sullivan Lake in 1925 and 12 at Camrose in 1931, as well as a single at Camrose in 1935.

A Red-headed Woodpecker in a hollow telephone pole in Winnipeg in 1931 was a first winter record for that city. Black-backed three-toed Woodpeckers were reported from six Alberta counts, while the Northern three-toed was listed from three.

It appears that Horned Larks then regularly wintered only in the extreme south-western corner of Saskatchewan, for the five at Sullivan Lake, Alberta, in 1925, one at Lashburn, Saskatchewan, in 1913, and three at Winnipeg in 1936, were the only other records. Today they find the gravel shoulders of built-up highways particularly attractive.

Gray Jays were perhaps more common then, with records from eight Alberta and 10 Manitoba counts. Black-billed Magpies never lost their foothold in the ranching country of the foothills and southwestern Saskatchewan, but were absent from the early counts elsewhere. Excluding Eastend, the first counts were of a remarkable

109 from Calgary in 1919 and 7 at Camrose in 1926, while the only magpie from 24 Manitoba counts was a single bird at Aweme in 1934.

Ravens were reported from Edmonton, Stony Plain and Noyes Crossing in Alberta and three were seen outside of count day at Minnedosa in 1908. Crows were seen twice in Alberta and once in Manitoba.

Red-breasted Nuthatches were then decidedly scarce or absent, with a single record of two at Winnipeg in 1935. Boreal Chickadees were seen in 10 Alberta counts, and there were two in Winnipeg in 1935. While the White-breasted Nuthatch was the eighth most commonly reported bird in Manitoba during this period, there were no Alberta winter records. Brown Creepers, if anything, were more regular then than now, with reports from 10 Alberta and three Manitoba counts.

Single wintering Robins were noted once in Brandon and three times in Winnipeg. Winnipeg also had a Common Grackle in 1925, a Purple Finch in 1927, one slate-colored Junco in 1926 and 1936, and a White-throated Sparrow in 1935, while a Tree Sparrow stayed at Red Deer, Alberta in 1935. Thus the list of "holdovers" of summer species was somewhat shorter then, especially in Alberta.

Bohemian Waxwings were then decidedly fewer in number, for fruit-bearing trees were then less common in the towns and farmyards; waxwings were listed only from three Alberta and eight Manitoba counts. The highest numbers were 100 at Ninette, Manitoba in 1926 and 93 at Winnipeg in both 1925 and 1936. Cedar Waxwings were not known to winter and appeared in none of the 64 counts.

Golden-crowned Kinglets were represented only by two at Glenevis in 1928, two at Camrose in 1931, their first winter record, and one at Winnipeg in 1936. Northern Shrikes were seen twice in Alberta and in five Manitoba counts. The only record of Starlings was of six that appeared in Winnipeg in 1935.

Pine Grosbeaks then outnumbered Bohemian Waxwings and Evening Grosbeaks by a considerable margin, being tied for second place among all winter species in Alberta and fourth in Manitoba. The highest totals were more comparable, however, with 103 in Winnipeg in 1932 and 100 at Camrose in both 1929 and 1930. Evening Grosbeaks were less common then, with reports from only four Alberta and twelve Manitoba counts. Winnipeg reported 73 in 1936 but the second highest total was 22 in 1925, while the highest Alberta total was 11 Evening Grosbeaks at Edmonton in 1937.

Hoary Redpolls were reported twice from Alberta and three times from Manitoba, while White-winged Crossbills were seen three and two times, respectively. There was a single report of a Red Crossbill from Winnipeg in 1932.

Snow Buntings and Redpolls provided the highest numbers for individual species: there were 3,000 Snow Buntings at Camrose in 1929 and 897 at Winnipeg in 1935, and 1,000 Common Redpolls at Camrose in 1929.

Since 1942, Saskatchewan Christmas count coverage has been more thorough and hence more reliable, documenting a new tendency for some "summer species" such as the Cedar Waxwing, Horned Lark and even the American Robin, to stay into or through the winter. Local open water areas near larger power plants are utilized by more waterfowl. Bohemian Waxwings and Evening Grosbeaks come in larger numbers and stay longer. The merlin has become a regular wintering species and Red-breasted Nuthatches have increased. Whereas one might search all day in the 1940's to find one or two Black-billed Magpies, they are now one of the commonest winter birds.

Christmas counts will no doubt continue to monitor the changing patterns of winter bird distribution through the next 35-year period.

