

ALBERTA
GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER
SIGHTINGS, 1972

GRAEME M. GREENLEE*

As recorded in the June 1972 *Blue Jay*, Great Crested Flycatchers were first seen by my wife and me near Two Hills, Alberta, in the summer of 1971.¹ Since this species, which is hypothetical for Alberta, has only been sighted on two previous occasions, we wish to report its occurrence again in the summer of 1972.

Single birds were seen on two successive mornings of May 24, 25 and 26. These three sightings were all in different locations. Although the birds were seen in the same general vicinity of Two Hills as in 1971, all three locations were different from those of 1971. Later sightings were in the same general location as those in 1971: single birds on June 28 and July 18, and three on one time on July 19.

Although we are now convinced that these birds are resident here in summer, we have been unable to find any indications of nesting.

GREENLEE, G. M. 1972. *Great Crested Flycatcher again observed in Alberta*. *Blue Jay* 30: 86-87.

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ATTEMPTED NEST BUILDING
BY TREE SWALLOWS

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I would like to relate an occurrence which was reported to me by the manageress of Gateway Aviation on the Martin, Uranium City, in late June, 1971. She reported, as if it were a well-known phenomenon, that a little earlier that season swallows often entered the nacelles of moored float planes through a circular aperture, carrying in sticks as nest material which they deposited somewhere within, generally some part of the engine. If undetected such nests, partial or completed,

would probably ignite when the engine started and heated up. I concluded that the pilots had always noticed what was going on and removed the material brought in by the birds, since the observer did not mention that fires due to this cause had actually occurred.

I noticed a circular hole on the nacelle of a "Beaver" aircraft which, it seemed to me, might well look to a tree swallow like the hole in a nest box. Though my informant did not identify the species of swallows involved, there can be little doubt that they were Tree Swallows. The only other swallows I saw about Uranium City were Barn Swallows, though Bank Swallows have been recorded in the area. The nesting habits of these latter two species do not fit the description that I was given of the nest material.

I can find no reference to this sort of behaviour in the recent Canadian Wildlife Service Report (No. 4) *Studies of Bird Hazards to Aircraft*, 1971.

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PIED-BILLED GREBE
NESTING OBSERVATIONS

by MAMIE McCOWAN*

Some 5 miles from Brandon, Manitoba, where a seldom-used road allowance runs between two ponds, I made the following casual observations of two easily seen Pied-billed Grebe nests.

On the morning of June 25 1972, near some cattails in the pond to the north of the road two Pied-billed Grebes were carrying muddy vegetation and setting it in place to form a nest. One of the grebes got on the structure and appeared to be trying it out for size. Rather foolishly I got out of the car to get nearer to take a picture and the grebes disappeared; I did not again see grebes at this location.

On the afternoon of the same day in the pond to the south of the road a Pied-

billed Grebe was sitting on a solid hummock of earth sticking above the water and at least 25 feet from the nearest protective cover. On visits made July 1, 3 and 4, the grebe was sitting on the hummock; on the latter day it slipped off into the water followed by three tiny young ones. On July 6 I observed an adult grebe with a young one on its back, which it left at the nest site with the other adult and young; it then swam off and came back with food. It swam quite fast to and from the feeding area; then hesitated before offering the food. On one trip it swam around the hummock before giving up the food. This was the last time that I saw the two adult grebes together. On July 20 one adult and five young grebes were seen together making cheeping sounds.

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PELICANS RETURN TO LAST MOUNTAIN LAKE

by JOHN P. HATFIELD*

Throughout the summer of 1972 several hundred White Pelicans remained at the north end of Last Mountain Lake. With this many pelicans around I was sure they were nesting on one of the many islands found at the north end of the lake. Finally on June 30 while checking the islands for other nesting birds, I found 18 young pelicans on one of the smaller islands. Gary Anweiler reported that pelicans bred in this part of the lake until 1954.¹ These birds constitute the first young I have seen since I moved to the area in 1968.

Nesting pelicans are vulnerable to human disturbance, so I recommend that anyone visiting pelican colonies treat them with respect — better still, stay away from them. Young pelicans hatch naked and remain so for about 2 weeks before a light down appears; as a result, any prolonged exposure to sun, to cool, rainy weather or to gulls can result in their deaths. They are dependent on adult pelicans for protection

and feeding in their early life. This period generally occurs around the middle of May to the end of June in central Saskatchewan, depending on their hatching dates. Hopefully, this nesting colony of pelicans will increase at the north end of Last Mountain Lake in the future.

¹ANWEILER, G. G. 1970. *The Birds of the Last Mountain Lake Wildlife Area, Saskatchewan*. Blue Jay 28: 74-83.

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GREAT GRAY OWLS RAISE TWO YOUNG SOUTHEAST OF EDMONTON, ALBERTA

by NORBERT G. KONDLA*

Few nests of the Great Gray Owl have been found in the Prairie Province. Only three nestings have been reported for Manitoba, two of which were in the same nest.⁷ The only published report for Saskatchewan is a 1949 nest.⁶ The following is a hitherto unreported nesting at Carlton. On June 19, 1900 George McCraig shot the female owl, the nest and collected the two eggs that proved to be advanced in incubation. The nest was 30 feet up in a "fir" tree and composed of twigs, sticks and clumps of moss. It was lined with dead leaves and contained feathers of small birds and part of a squirrel. The eggs from this nest are in the collections of the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, Los Angeles, California, from whence this data was obtained.

By far the greatest number of nestings are reported from Alberta where the Great Gray Owl is a scarce inhabitant in northern and western Alberta. It is known to breed at Rocky Mountain House, Edson, Jasper, Belvedere, Whitemud Lake and Fort Chipewyan. W. R. Salt (pers. comm.) also reports active nests at Athabasca and Flatbus. The Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology has a clutch taken by A. Twomey on May 7, 1930, near Fawcett, 50 feet up in a poplar (a nest referred to by A. C. Bent, though without an ex-