

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-

locality¹), and a clutch collected by P. Pope on April 9, 1915, from a previously unreported nesting near Dunvegan in an old Goshawk nest, 55 feet up in a "pine." There are two recent nests in "central Alberta."⁵

On May 4, 1972, I found an active nest at Miquelon Lake Provincial Park, about 30 miles southeast of Edmonton. This is approximately 100 miles south and east of the breeding range as shown in *The Birds of Alberta*.¹⁰ The park is in the Buffalo Lake moraine and has characteristic knob and kettle topography.² The nest site was revisited on May 5 with A. Langevin, P. Ridgway, G. Robbins, G. Rushton, W. Smith, C. Wallis, B. Watt, and C. Verschler.

Vegetation near the nest site was mixed deciduous forest with occasional small stands of White Spruce. Low wet areas contained typical aquatic flora. The nest tree was in a relatively open stand of woods composed of Balsam Poplar, Quaking Aspen, Saskatoon or Alderleaf Juneberry, Red-osier Dogwood and *Prunus* spp. The nest was 50-60 feet up in a Balsam Poplar growing near the bottom of a 40-foot deep, circular depression (kettle). The level bottom of the kettle was covered by sedges and grasses.

W. Smith climbed to the nest and reported that the nest contained three eggs which, judging from their soiled and glossy appearance, were advanced incubation. The nest was 2 1/2 feet high and 2 1/2 feet wide. Although the general appearance was that of a Red-tailed Hawk nest, the presence of a crepit mud cup indicated that it was possibly an old Black-billed Magpie nest. The eggs lay on dead poplar leaves, a small down feather and fine strips of poplar bark.

Both adult birds were constantly present and seemed quite unafraid of the job of observers. They frequently landed on branches within 10 feet of W. Smith at the nest and G. Rushton in a nearby tree. R. W. Nero and the few others that have studied Great Gray Owls at nests have alluded to the exceptionally quiet and tame behaviour of the

birds.⁸⁻⁹ Despite the large number of observers on May 5 and many subsequent visits by other observers, the owls managed to raise two young (G. Rushton, pers. comm.).

Both the situation of the nest and nesting habitat agree favorably with previous observations. Nine nests found by A. D. Henderson at Belvedere, NW of Edmonton, were 30 to 50 feet up in aspen and Balsam Poplars in deciduous woodland.³⁻⁴ The collections at the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology contain two clutches taken by Henderson in 1925 near Belvedere, 45 feet up in aspens.

An interesting feature of the Miquelon Lake nesting is its location within a mile of one of the most heavily used public beaches in central Alberta. This startling fact and the large amount of disturbance by observers suggests the species may be relatively immune to the presence of people. Since human presence in owl habitat is an increasing phenomenon, this tolerance could be a strong point in favor of continued survival of the species.

I feel that a case can be made for this not being an extralimital nesting. The Buffalo Lake moraine provides a considerable area of suitable breeding habitat that extends southward from the known northern breeding area. The moraine is not suitable for agriculture and thus provided habitat not available in immediately surrounding areas. Further, the Great Gray Owl is an inconspicuous species despite its size. Nero made a particularly important statement in this regard: "Our birds were seldom seen more than a half mile from the nest tree and if the nest site had been only a mile back from the road, they would not have been observed."⁸ Keeping this in mind, along with the dearth of competent observers in the large tracts of potential owl habitat, it is not surprising that the species may appear to be rare. In fact there seems to be little information available as a basis for statements concerning the numbers or range of the Great Gray Owl during the breeding season.

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¹BENT, A. C. 1938. *Life histories of North American birds of prey*. U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 170 (Dover Edition, 1961).

²BRETZ, J. H. 1943. *Keewatin end moraines in Alberta, Canada*. Bulletin of the Geological Society of America, 54: 31-52.

³HENDERSON, A. D. 1915. *Nesting of the Great Gray Owl in central Alberta*. Oologist, 32: 2-6.

⁴HENDERSON, A. D. 1923. *Further notes on the nesting of the Great Gray Owl*. Oologist, 40: 126-127.

⁵HOUSTON, C. S. 1971. *Northern Great Plain region*. American Birds, 25: 869-872.

⁶LAW, C. 1960. *The Great Gray Owl of the woodlands*. Blue Jay, 18: 14-16.

⁷NERO, R. W. 1969. *The status of the Great Gray Owl in Manitoba, with special reference to the 1968-1969 influx*. Blue Jay, 27: 191-209.

⁸NERO, R. W. 1970a. *Great Gray Owls nesting near Roseau*. Loon, 42: 88-93.

⁹NERO, R. W. 1970b. *A visit to a Great Gray Owl nest*. Ontario Naturalist, 8: 4-7.

¹⁰SALT, W. R., and A. L. WILK. 1966. *The bird of Alberta*. The Queens Printer, Edmonton. 51 pp.

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Evidence of COUGARS

Near Nipawin, Saskatchewan

by STANLEY D. RIOME*

"I believe you" are comforting words to a person who has had the supreme fortune of seeing a cougar and then, rather than knowing the excitement of reliving the experience again and again by telling others about it, has been forced through ridicule, to suppress his feelings and, worse still, to possibly doubt his own credulity! Over the past years it has been my good fortune to meet a number of people who, in my judgement, by the manner in which they related their stories, were completely reliable.

Tom White has written two well documented articles on the cougar (*Blue Jay*, 25: 84-89; 31: 42-43) which have firmly placed the cougar on the list of mammals occurring in Saskatchewan. The following accounts of 13 sightings and reports (each numbered to correspond with the distribution map Fig. 1) will serve to supplement Mr. White's previous data. The observations are generally in chronological order, from 1934 to 1973.

Mr. Ellis Hamilton has been a farmer

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and trapper continuously for over 40 years in the Ravendale district, 18 miles east and 18 miles northeast of Nipawin. In March, 1934, he noticed his dog team become extremely excited as they were picked up and bounded off along an animal trail which he followed for 10 miles northwest of the present site of the Squaw Rapids Power Dam. Mr. Hamilton, a highly skilled and respected woodsman and naturalist, knew at that time that the animal was not a wolf, as the track was round rather than elongated, the trail was curved rather than straight and the dogs were excited rather than subdued. He was not aware that cougars were present in the area until later years when he became aware that the animal had been a cougar. (No. 1 on map)

Bill Weighill, son-in-law of Ellis Hamilton, saw "an animal with a tail as long as itself, which did not move like a wolf, but loped." This sighting was made near Pas Trail, 14 miles east and 10 miles north of Nipawin in 1961. (2)

Mr. William Kotyk is a man who has spent his lifetime working in the bus