

Following day; moose sign was fairly common around this lake and moose dung was also found west of R lake in July 1974.

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AN INTERESTING MERLIN

by DAVID L. SURKAN*

On 8 February, 1975 while walking home from classes at the University of Saskatchewan, I noticed a bird trying to take off from a snowbank in front of the University Hospital. After a short chase, I picked up the bird and identified it as a Merlin. Dr. Stuart Houston and I determined that the tip of its beak was damaged and it was bleeding — in addition, it was wearing a band. It was a Merlin banded as a nestling by Stuart Houston on 25 June, 1974 at a nest described by Lynn Oliphant.²

Merlins have wintered in Saskatoon for at least 20 years, perhaps in response to the large number of small birds which now winter in Saskatchewan cities. The A.O.U. Check-list 1957¹ indicates Wyoming, Colorado and occasionally Nebraska and Iowa as the northern most wintering states for this species. We are not sure whether local Merlins or birds perhaps from further north, winter here. We are not sure which subspecies winters here. The light coloured subspecies, *Falco columbarius richardsonii*, had virtually disappeared as a nesting species from the prairies of Saskatchewan by the 1960's. We strongly suspect, but have no conclusive proof, that it is

pale prairie subspecies that is making a "comeback" in the Saskatoon area.

An adult pair of Merlins was seen early in March, 1975, by Tom Donald re-establishing territory at one of the 1973 nesting sites. We conclude that both adults and their young remain in Saskatchewan the year round. Study of the injured Merlin revealed a very pale plumage of an immature male which is typical of the *richardsonii* subspecies.

The Merlin had a fractured left ulna as shown in x-rays taken by David Pitt-Brooke and Lynn Oliphant, Western College of Veterinary Medicine. The wing was bandaged, and Bob Rafuse undertook to care for the bird until the wing healed. The Merlin will probably be released in June.

I wish to thank Dr. Houston for his assistance in preparing this note.

¹AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGIST'S UNION, 1957. *Check-list of North American birds*. 5th Edition. Port City Press, Baltimore. 691 p.

²OLIPHANT, LYNN W. 1974. *Merlins — the Saskatoon Falcons*. *Blue Jay* 32: 140-147.

REQUEST FOR MERLIN SIGHTINGS

Any information on Saskatchewan merlin (pigeon hawk) nestings or even sightings during the breeding season would be greatly appreciated to supplement a general survey of these birds in the province.

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Merlin on the mend

Bob Raf