

# BIRDS OF NORTH-CENTRAL MANITOBA, 1973

WAYNE C. WEBER, Department of Zoology, Mississippi State University,  
Mississippi State, Mississippi 39762

The birdlife of northern Manitoba is poorly known, except for the well-studied Churchill area, whose ornithology has been reviewed by Jehl and Smith.<sup>10</sup> Away from Churchill, only a few important publications have appeared, notably those of Copland and Smith<sup>3</sup>, Davis<sup>4</sup>, Godfrey<sup>6</sup>, Johnson<sup>11</sup>, Manning<sup>12</sup>, and Mowat and Lawrie.<sup>13</sup>

During June 1973, accompanied by Chris Schmidt, I visited north-central Manitoba during a study to assess the impact on wildlife of the proposed Churchill-Nelson power project. We were based at Thompson from June 9 to 21, and at Southern Indian Lake from June 22 to 29. We carried out several aerial waterfowl surveys along the Burntwood, Rat and Churchill Rivers and around Southern Indian Lake; we also surveyed parts of the lake by boat.

Although Johnson<sup>11</sup> in 1970 published an account of birds in the Thompson area, I know of no previously published bird observations from Southern Indian Lake. Field work in the latter area revealed the presence of several unexpected bird species, most notably Ring-billed Gulls and Caspian Terns, which bred at the lake.

**Itinerary.** Geographic names used below are those found on the 1:250,000 maps of the National Topographic Series except where otherwise noted (see map).

June 9. Arrived at Thompson.

June 11. Visited Oswagan Lake (55° 35'N, 98° 03'W), 14 miles SW of Thompson.

June 14. Aerial survey of Burntwood River from Split Lake (56° 08'N, 96° 33'W) to Wuskwatim Lake (55° 34'N, 98° 33'W).

June 15. Aerial survey of Burntwood River, Wuskwatim Lake to Threepoint Lake (55° 42'N, 98° 57'W) and Rat River, Threepoint Lake to Issett Lake (56° 37'N, 99° 08'W).

June 17. Aerial survey of upper Rat River and around perimeter of Southern Indian Lake.

June 19. Visited small lake on Wapishtigau Brook, hereafter called "Wapishtigau Lake" (55° 33'N, 98° 11'W), 18 miles SW of Thompson.

June 20. Aerial survey of Churchill River, Missi Falls (57° 22'N, 98° 07'W) to Billard Lake (57° 20'N, 96° 09'W).

June 22. Moved to Manitoba Hydro camp near Missi Falls (57° 20'N, 98° 08'W).

June 23. Boat survey of Southern Indian Lake near Missi Falls.

June 24. Boat survey of small lake on Churchill River below Missi Falls.

June 26. Moved to island in Kame Hills area, Southern Indian Lake (57° 31'N, 98° 33'W). Boat surveys of adjacent areas.

June 27. Boat survey up Muskwesi River to near Moss Lake (57° 39'N, 98° 40'W).

June 28. Boat survey of Sand Island area, Southern Indian Lake.

June 29. Returned to Thompson.

June 30. Left Thompson for Winnipeg.

## **Physiography and vegetation of the area.**

North-central Manitoba is a typical part of the Canadian Shield, with an irregular topography and an abundance of lakes and bogs (Fig. 1). Altitudes are mainly between 600 and 1100 feet.

The area lies within the Nelson River, Northern Coniferous, and



South Indian Lake area in north-central Manitoba.



Figure 1. Aerial view of Missi Falls, where Southern Indian Lake drains into the Churchill River.

Northwestern Transition Sections of the Boreal Forest Region as described by Rowe.<sup>17</sup> Black spruce (*Picea mariana*) is the dominant tree throughout the region, especially on boggy soils (where it is associated with tamarack, *Larix laricina*), but also on the uplands. White spruce (*Picea glauca*) forms good stands in river valleys and around lakes, where soils are better. In the southern part, successional stands of jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*), trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), and white birch (*Betula papyrifera*) cover sizable areas. Balsam poplar (*Populus balsamifera*) and small willows (*Salix* spp.) are also common along rivers. Extensive forest fires in the recent past have left large areas covered only with small aspens and birches or standing, burnt snags. Marshes dominated by bulrushes (*Scirpus* spp.) and sedges (*Carex* spp.) border many lakes and streams; however, productive marshes with cattails (*Typha latifolia*) are rare.

Around the north of Southern Indian Lake, conditions are different. The uplands are covered by a park-like subarctic woodland of black spruce with a thick lichen ground

cover. A dense forest of black spruce, white spruce and white birch prevails near lakes (Fig. 2). Jack pine, trembling aspen, and balsam poplar are scarce and recently-burned areas are few.

The vegetation of the area has been described in detail by Ritchie.<sup>15 16</sup>

**Species account.** Records of the 90 bird species observed are summarized below. Some evidence of breeding was obtained for 14 species, which are indicated with an asterisk; positive breeding records (nests or small young) were obtained for 10 of these. Names of bird species follow the American Ornithologists' Union.<sup>1 2</sup>

**COMMON LOON.** One each at Wuskwatim Lake, June 14 and Fidler Lake (57° 12'N, 96° 56'W), June 20; two on the upper Rat River, June 17. Common on Southern Indian Lake (e.g. four pairs near Missi Falls, June 23; eight birds in the Sand Island area, June 28).

**AMERICAN BITTERN.** One heard on the Muskwezi River near Moss Lake, June 27.

**WHISTLING SWAN.** Two flying down the Burntwood River east of Thompson, June 14; one at the north end of Karsakuwigamak Lake (56° 24'N, 99° 26'W), June 15 and 17. These were undoubtedly post-migratory stragglers.



Figure 2. Mixed spruce-birch forest along lakeshore near Missi Falls.

\*CANADA GOOSE. Three on the Burntwood River below Thompson, June 14, and 13 around Southern Indian Lake, June 17. Common along the Churchill River from Missi Falls to Billard Lake, a well-known Canada Goose breeding ground (50 seen from the air, June 20). A pair with three goslings near Missi Falls Hydro camp, June 25.

\*MALLARD. Fairly common everywhere; maximum count 45 along the lower Muskwezi River, June 27. A female with a brood of 8 near Missi Falls camp, June 25.

BLACK DUCK. One drake identified from the air at the confluence of the Odei and Burntwood Rivers east of Thompson, June 14. Although Black Ducks are not known to breed in north-central Manitoba, they may well do so; breeding has been recorded in southern Manitoba and in the Churchill area.<sup>7 10</sup>

PINTAIL. A few along the upper Rat River and around Southern Indian Lake, with a maximum of 5 along the Muskwezi River, June 27.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL. Three near the Thompson airport, June 20, and a few on the upper Rat River and on Southern Indian Lake (maximum 4 near Missi Falls, June 23).

AMERICAN WIGEON. A few along the upper Rat River and the Churchill River. Commonest dabbling duck around Southern Indian Lake (88 along the Muskwezi River, June 27).

RING-NECKED DUCK. A pair on a lake in the Kame Hills area (57° 27'N, 98° 39'W), June 26.

GREATER SCAUP. Two positive observations: three near the mouth of the Muskwezi River, June 26, and three in the same area June 27. All were males, and were identified by rounded (not peaked) head shape and green (but not violet) iridescence on the head.

\*LESSER SCAUP. Fairly common throughout the area; most scaup which could be identified were this species. On June 28, about 60 were flushed from a small island, supporting a gull and tern colony, near Sand Island on Southern Indian Lake, and two nests (with 9 and 10 eggs) were found in grass clumps.

COMMON GOLDENEYE. Small numbers seen in widespread areas, but common especially near Missi Falls camp, where flocks flew up the river each evening to roost on Southern Indian Lake (maximum 118 on June 23).

BUFFLEHEAD. Two on Karsakuwigamak Lake, June 17.

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER. Flocks of unidentified scoters were seen at Wuskwatim Lake, Wapishtigau Lake, on the Churchill River, and at several points on Southern Indian Lake (90 near Missi Falls, June 17). White-wings were positively identified at Karsakuwigamak Lake (3, June 17); Northern Indian Lake (5, June 20); and around Southern Indian Lake

(maximum 17 just below Missi Falls, June 24).

**SURF SCOTER.** Positively identified only at Southern Indian Lake (maximum 20 just below Missi Falls, June 24).

**COMMON MERGANSER.** Widespread in small numbers, but especially abundant along the Churchill River, where 931 (mostly males) were counted June 20, mainly in four stretches of rapids on the river; 435 were in one stretch below Missi Falls. On June 17, 546 were seen around Southern Indian Lake, including 368 just below Missi Falls.

**GOSHAWK.** One near Loon Narrows, Southern Indian Lake, June 17; one along the Muskwezi River, June 27.

**RED-TAILED HAWK.** One adult near Missi Falls camp, June 24; one in the Kame Hills area, June 26. None seen near Thompson.

\***BALD EAGLE.** Fairly common on larger lakes and rivers. One on a nest on northern Rat Lake (56° 13'N, 99° 37'W), June 15; one on the upper Rat River and 7 (6 adults) around Southern Indian Lake, June 17; and 5 along the Churchill River, June 20. On June 23, a pair of adults circled a nest on Southern Indian Lake near Missi Falls; and on June 24, two nests were seen on an island just below Missi Falls, but no birds were seen there.

Whitfield et al.<sup>20</sup> have recently documented a high breeding density of Bald Eagles in adjacent regions of central Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

**MARSH HAWK.** One female at the south end of Wuskwatim Lake, June 14.

**OSPREY.** One on the upper Rat River and another near the north end of Southern Indian Lake, June 17; two (probably a pair) near the mouth of the Muskwezi River, June 27.

**AMERICAN KESTREL.** Common in the Thompson area; 7 seen June 11 in various localities around the city.

**RUFFED GROUSE.** Two heard drumming June 11 near the Thompson golf course.

**KILLDEER.** A few around Thompson (3 at the airport, June 16) and a pair near Missi Falls camp, June 25.

**COMMON SNIPE.** Fairly common around Thompson (8 heard and seen at the airport, June 16); one heard near Missi Falls camp, June 24.

**SPOTTED SANDPIPER.** Fairly common everywhere; maximum 4 near Missi Falls camp, June 23.



Spotted Sandpiper

Fred Lahrman

**SOLITARY SANDPIPER.** A pair seen on the Burntwood River at Thompson, June 11, and one near the Thompson airport, June 20; heard at Wapishtigau Lake, June 19.

\***LESSER YELLOWLEGS.** One heard at Thompson, June 10. On June 27, at least 8 were seen along the lower Muskwezi River; they were probably nesting, since they circled our boat, calling excitedly.

**PARASITIC JAEGER.** One bird, a typical light-phase adult, was seen June 27 on northwestern Southern Indian Lake. It briefly chased two Caspian Terns, then landed on the water, allowing us to approach within 25 feet before flying off. Presumably this was a non-breeder or straggler from the north.

\***HERRING GULL.** Common on Southern Indian Lake, but less so than the Ring-billed Gull. One colony on a small willow-covered island near Missi Falls (57° 22'N, 98° 10'W), visited June 23, had 32 nests with eggs, one of which also contained a newly-hatched chick. Another nearby colony, found the same day on a rocky reef in the lake (57° 20'N, 98° 11'W), included a few pairs of Herring Gulls together with about 150 pairs of Ring-bills. Two Herring Gull nests in this colony had chicks, which in one nest were about 8 to 10 days old, although none of the Ring-bill eggs had hatched yet. A third Herring Gull colony, visited June 28, was on a small rocky islet near Sand Island, Southern Indian Lake (57° 29'N, 98° 28'W). It included 8 pairs, at least 6 of which had young on that date. Thus it appears that Herring Gulls start nesting earlier than Ring-bills at Southern Indian Lake, as Vermeer has found farther south in Manitoba.<sup>19</sup>



Figure 3. Reef in Southern Indian Lake near Missi Falls. Several pairs of Herring Gulls and about 150 pairs of Ring-billed Gulls nested here.

A few gulls, most of which were believed to be Herring, were seen regularly at Thompson.

\*RING-BILLED GULL. This was the commonest nesting gull on Southern Indian Lake. Two large colonies on the lake near Missi Falls were visited June 23. One, the mixed Herring and Ring-bill colony mentioned above (Fig. 3), had about 150 Ring-bill nests, including 4 with 4 eggs. The second colony, on an islet near the first but closer to shore ( $57^{\circ} 20'N$ ,  $98^{\circ} 09'W$ ), had 353 Ring-bill nests, of which one had 5 eggs (unusual for the species) and 6 had 4 eggs. Only 4 nests had hatched one or more chicks.

A third Ring-bill colony near Sand Island ( $57^{\circ} 32'N$ ,  $98^{\circ} 25'W$ ), which also included Common and Caspian Terns, was checked June 28. It had 158 nests, all with 1 to 3 eggs.

In addition to the five gull colonies on Southern Indian Lake checked on the ground, five others were seen from the air, but the species could not be determined. These were located at  $57^{\circ} 06'N$ ,  $98^{\circ} 20'W$ ;  $57^{\circ} 39'N$ ,  $98^{\circ} 17'W$ ;  $57^{\circ} 40'N$ ,  $98^{\circ} 11'W$ ;  $57^{\circ} 24'N$ ,  $98^{\circ} 29'W$ ; and  $57^{\circ} 26'N$ ,  $98^{\circ} 16'W$ . At least the first two of these also included Common Terns. Even these 10 colonies, however, may represent less than half the colonies on the lake. Another gull colony (about 15 pairs) was seen June 14 on Apussigamasi Lake ( $55^{\circ} 52'N$ ,  $97^{\circ} 34'W$ ), on the Burntwood River below Thompson.

One Ring-bill was seen June 30 at Thompson.

Godfrey lists Moose Lake, near The Pas, as the northern-most Manitoba nesting locality for the Ring-billed Gull.<sup>7</sup> The colonies on Southern Indian Lake represent either a recent range extension of about 250 miles or, more likely, a long-established but previously unknown nesting population.

\*BONAPARTE'S GULL. Widespread but local. Ten birds, and at least 3 nests (in black spruces), June 19 at Wapishtigau Lake; 8 birds along the upper Rat River, June 17; 4 at Billard Lake, June 20; and 12 along the Muskwezi River, June 27.

\*COMMON TERN. Four at Ospwagan Lake, June 11; there appeared to be a colony here on a small rocky island, but the birds on the island were too distant for positive identification. Common Tern colonies were seen from the air on Southern Indian Lake (about  $56^{\circ} 54'N$ ,  $99^{\circ} 00'W$ ) and Fidler Lake ( $57^{\circ} 10'N$ ,  $96^{\circ} 58'W$ ). See Ring-billed Gull for three mixed gull-tern colonies. Only one Common Tern colony was checked on the ground — the mixed gull-tern colony near Sand Island, Southern Indian Lake ( $57^{\circ} 32'N$ ,  $98^{\circ} 25'W$ ), visited June 28. This colony had 92 Common Tern nests with 1 to 3 eggs, plus what appeared to be many empty nests of this species (often hard to tell Common Tern nests from Ring-billed Gull nests without eggs!).



Figure 4. Nest and eggs of Caspian Tern on reef near Sand Island, Southern Indian Lake.

\*CASPIAN TERN. The mixed gull-tern colony on a reef near Sand Island, Southern Indian Lake, had 154 Caspian Tern nests when visited June 28 (Fig. 4). Sixteen nests (10%) contained clutches of 3, compared with only 2% at a colony on Lake Winnipegosis.<sup>5</sup> The Caspian Terns nested on a bare sand flat near the centre of the reef, while the Common Terns and Ring-billed Gulls nested mainly among the rocks and grass clumps on the periphery. Caspian Terns were seen flying and diving for fish at several other points around Southern Indian Lake, and it seems likely that there are more colonies on the lake.

This record extends the breeding range at least 250 miles northward from previously reported colonies on Gods Lake<sup>8</sup> and Moose Lake<sup>18</sup>, Manitoba.

\*BLACK TERN. Several on June 14 and 19 at Wapishtigau Lake near Thompson; 13 (probably a nesting colony) at the south end of Wuskwatim Lake, June 14; 2 at the mouth of the Suwanee River on Rat Lake, June 15; and 7 on the upper Rat River (between Karsakuwigamak and Issett Lakes), June 17.

GREAT HORNED OWL. Two heard hooting near the Thompson golf course, June 11.

COMMON NIGHTHAWK. Common around Thompson; one heard June 22 at Missi Falls camp.

BELTED KINGFISHER. Recorded at Thompson, June 17, 20 and 22; also at Missi Falls camp on June 22 (3 birds), 23 and 24 (one bird each). Missi Falls is well

north of the known breeding range, but the species has also been recorded at Fort Hall Lake in extreme northwestern Manitoba.<sup>13</sup>

\*COMMON (YELLOW-SHAFTED) FLICKER. Fairly common both at Thompson and around Southern Indian Lake. On June 24, a pair was seen entering a nest-hole 20 feet up in a dead birch stub near Missi Falls camp.

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER. One in an aspen grove at Thompson, June 12 and 22.

BLACK-BACKED THREE-TOED WOODPECKER. Two males at Oswagan Lake, June 11.

EASTERN KINGBIRD. One heard at Wapishtigau Lake, June 19, and another at a pond near the Thompson airport, June 20.

YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER. Two heard singing and seen in small spruces near the Thompson cemetery June 10 and June 30.

ALDER FLYCATCHER. Common both around Thompson (10 at Thompson airport, June 20) and around Southern Indian Lake (5 near Missi Falls camp, June 24).

LEAST FLYCATCHER. Common around Thompson (e.g., 15 on June 11); none seen elsewhere. Mainly in aspen groves.

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER. One heard singing at Wapishtigau Lake, June 19, and one near the Thompson airport, June 20.

TREE SWALLOW. Fairly common around Thompson; less so at Southern Indian Lake (3 at Missi Falls camp, June 24).

BANK SWALLOW. One or two recorded at Thompson, June 10, 11 and 16, mostly along the Burntwood River.

BARN SWALLOW. A few around Thompson, mainly at the airport.

CLIFF SWALLOW. Recorded only at Thompson, June 9 and 6 on the 10th.

\*GRAY JAY. Fairly common at both Thompson and Southern Indian Lake. A family group of 5, of which at least 3 were juveniles, was seen June 11 at Thompson.

COMMON RAVEN. Common everywhere; maximum count 40 on June 24 at the garbage dump near Missi Falls camp.

COMMON CROW. Recorded at Thompson (up to 12 birds) and also around Southern Indian Lake (4 at Missi Falls camp, June 24), but much less numerous everywhere than the Raven.

BOREAL CHICKADEE. A pair near Missi Falls camp, June 25.

**BROWN CREEPER.** One heard June 11 at Ospwagan Lake; Johnson also had one record at Thompson.<sup>11</sup>

**AMERICAN ROBIN.** Common at all localities visited.

**HERMIT THRUSH.** Common around Thompson (e.g., 6 on June 11); none seen elsewhere.

**SWAINSON'S THRUSH.** Abundant both at Thompson (15 on June 11) and Southern Indian Lake (15 around Missi Falls camp, June 24).

**RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET.** Fairly common both around Thompson and at Southern Indian Lake.

**CEDAR WAXWING.** One seen at Thompson, June 20, and several June 30.

**\*STARLING.** One seen at the Thompson float-plane base, June 12, 19 and 30. Nesting was suspected, since the bird gave the usual scolding call directed at intruders near a Starling nest but no nest was found. Johnson<sup>11</sup> saw Starling three times at Thompson without evidence of nesting.

**SOLITARY VIREO.** Two heard singing near the Thompson golf course, June 30.

**RED-EYED VIREO.** Fairly common at Thompson; also heard singing at Ospwagan Lake (2, June 11) and South Indian Lake village (1, June 17), but not recorded around the northern part of Southern Indian Lake. Restricted to aspen groves.

**TENNESSEE WARBLER.** Abundant; possibly the commonest bird in the area (10 at the Thompson airport, June 16; 22 around Missi Falls camp, June 24; 7 along the Muskwezi River, June 27).

**YELLOW WARBLER.** Common both at Thompson and at Southern Indian Lake (10 around Missi Falls camp, June 24); found mainly in shrubbery near lakes and streams.

**MAGNOLIA WARBLER.** Fairly common in appropriate habitat (second-growth mixedwoods) around Thompson (8 near golf course, June 11). Also recorded at Ospwagan Lake (1, June 11) and Missi Falls camp (up to 3, June 23 to 25).

**YELLOW-RUMPED (MYRTLE) WARBLER.** Fairly common at both Thompson and Southern Indian Lake (5 around Missi Falls camp, June 24).

**BLACKPOLL WARBLER.** Found only at Missi Falls camp, but common there (8 on June 24), in open spruce forest.

**OVENBIRD.** Heard singing near the Thompson golf course on June 11, 29 and 30 (3 on the 11th); only in deciduous stands.

**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH.** Fairly common along edges of lakes and streams both at Thompson and around Missi Falls camp (3 on June 25).

**WILSON'S WARBLER.** Uncommon around Thompson (one each on June 18 and 30) and Missi Falls camp (one on June 24).

**HOUSE SPARROW.** A flock of about 6 birds was consistently present around the Plaza shopping centre in Thompson. None was seen in residential areas of the city.

**RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD.** Recorded at the Thompson airport, June 16 and 20 (8 on the 20th); the Thompson dump (1, June 17); Wapishtigau Lake (1, June 19); and along the Muskwezi River (at least 10, all males, at scattered points, June 27).

**RUSTY BLACKBIRD.** One along the Muskwezi River, June 27, and 2 probable Rusty Blackbirds along the shore of Southern Indian Lake nearby, June 26.

**COMMON GRACKLE.** Three at Wapishtigau Lake, June 19; 4 at the Thompson airport, June 20; and 1 in Thompson, June 21.

**PINE SISKIN.** One heard June 29 at the Kame Hills camp, Southern Indian Lake, and about 6 seen near Thompson, June 30. Although Southern Indian Lake is far north of the known breeding range, there have been other far northern sightings at Churchill<sup>10</sup> and Lynn Lake, Manitoba<sup>9</sup> and at Reindeer Lake, Saskatchewan.<sup>14</sup>

**RED CROSSBILL.** About 5 heard among flocks of White-winged Crossbills near the Thompson cemetery, June 30.

**WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL.** Several flocks, totalling about 50 birds, seen near Thompson, June 30. White-winged Crossbills, Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins all arrived at once; none were seen around Thompson between June 9 and 22.

**SAVANNAH SPARROW.** A few seen and heard at several points around Thompson, including vacant land within the city.

**VESPER SPARROW.** One heard singing in a vacant lot in Thompson, June 18. Johnson found a nest at Thompson.<sup>11</sup>

**DARK-EYED (SLATE-COLORED) JUNCO.** Common around Thompson, and perhaps even more so at Southern Indian Lake (9 around Missi Falls camp, June 23).

**CHIPPING SPARROW.** One of the commonest birds at all localities visited, especially at Thompson (10 on both June 10 and 11).





Dark-eyed Junco

Doug Gilroy

**CLAY-COLORED SPARROW.** One singing male seen June 18 at Thompson in a small patch of trees and shrubbery surrounded by houses. Johnson did not record this species at Thompson<sup>11</sup> but it has been seen at Churchill<sup>10</sup> and Nero observed a male on territory at Hasbala Lake in extreme northeastern Saskatchewan.<sup>14</sup>

**WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW.** Fairly common in shrubbery at Southern Indian Lake (3 at Missi Falls, June 24). One heard singing at Thompson, June 30.

**WHITE-THROATED SPARROW.** Fairly common at both Thompson and Southern Indian Lake (4 around Missi Falls camp, June 24).

**FOX SPARROW.** One heard singing in lakeside shrubbery at Missi Falls camp on June 23 and one on June 25.

**LINCOLN'S SPARROW.** Fairly common around Thompson and heard singing at Wapishtigau Lake, June 19. Two heard singing near Missi Falls camp, June 24.

**SWAMP SPARROW.** Common in appropriate habitat (swampy willow thickets) at Thompson (10 at Thompson airport, June 20); one heard singing at Missi Falls camp on both June 23 and 24.

**SONG SPARROW.** Fairly common in streamside and lakeside shrubbery at Southern Indian Lake (4 near Missi Falls camp, June 23); uncommon at Thompson.

**Discussion.** Five species of birds at Southern Indian Lake were recorded well north of their previously known breeding ranges in Manitoba. Two of these (Ring-billed Gull and Caspian Tern) definitely nested and two others which were seen frequently or in good numbers (Belted Kingfisher and Red-winged Blackbird) probably did so. The fifth species, Pine Siskin, is an erratic wanderer and may not nest at Southern Indian Lake, although it probably does so at Thompson.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, although each was seen only once, the Black Duck and Clay-colored Sparrow may nest in the Thompson area (which is well to the west and north, respectively, of their currently-recognized breeding ranges as mapped by Godfrey<sup>7</sup>). The record of a Vesper Sparrow at Thompson supports Johnson's nest record,<sup>11</sup> and, together with reports of Vesper Sparrows from Pikwitonei<sup>3</sup> and Lynn Lake<sup>9</sup>, suggests that this species may be a regular breeder farther north than formerly thought.

It is unlikely that any of the records listed above represent recent range extensions (except, perhaps, for the Vesper Sparrow); none of the species involved is known to be increasing its numbers or expanding its range in nearby areas.

Records of several other species which are at or near their northern range limits are also worth noting. These include Ring-necked Duck, Red-tailed Hawk and Magnolia Warbler at Southern Indian Lake; and Black Tern, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Kingbird, Barn Swallow, Brown Creeper, Starling, Solitary and Red-eyed Vireos, Ovenbird and Red Crossbill at Thompson and along the Burntwood River.

My impressions of the abundance of birds around Thompson differ from those of Johnson for several species.<sup>11</sup> I considered Swainson's Thrush and Tennessee Warbler abundant; Alder and Least Flycatchers and Hermit Thrush, common; and Red-eyed Vireo and Magnolia Warbler, fairly common. In contrast, Johnson listed all of these as "uncommon" or "rather uncommon". One reason for this discrepancy may be that Johnson's observations were confined to within a 3-mile radius of Thompson, and he may have been unable to visit as wide a range of habitats as I. Also, the severe late spring snowstorms in 1969 mentioned by Johnson may have drastically reduced numbers of insectivorous birds such as thrushes, vireos and warblers.

There were notable differences in avifauna between Thompson and the northern part of Southern Indian Lake. Several species which probably breed regularly at the former locality were not recorded at the latter. These include Black Tern, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Kingbird, Least Flycatcher, Barn Swallow, Brown Creeper, Starling, Solitary and Red-



Barn Swallow

Fred Lahrman

eyed Vireos, Ovenbird, Common Grackle and Vesper Sparrow. At least three of these (Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Least Flycatcher and Red-eyed Vireo) are closely associated with aspen groves, which were virtually nonexistent around the north end of Southern Indian Lake.

Southern Indian Lake has a distinct subarctic element in its avifauna. At least three species of northern affinities — the Blackpoll Warbler, White-crowned Sparrow and Fox Sparrow — occur and presumably breed around the northern part of the lake, but are absent or rare at Thompson. However, as Nero points out, all three of these species do occur south of the true subarctic zone of spruce-lichen woodland ("Hudsonian Zone" of C. Hart Merriam) in northeastern Saskatchewan.<sup>14</sup> Species which are restricted to the subarctic zone (e.g., Gray-cheeked Thrush, Northern Shrike, Common Redpoll, Tree Sparrow and Harris's Sparrow) were not observed at Southern Indian Lake, although they do occur farther north at Nueltin Lake on the Manitoba-Keewatin boundary.<sup>13</sup>

Thus Southern Indian Lake, judging by its birds, appears to be on the southern edge of the subarctic zone, whereas Thompson has a typical boreal-forest avifauna.

**Acknowledgements.** The observations reported here were made while I was employed by F. F. Slaney & Co. of Vancouver, B.C., on a study to determine the impact on wildlife of the Churchill-Nelson power project of Manitoba Hydro. Chris Schmidt assisted in the field work. We thank the many persons who helped us in Manitoba, especially Garry Dickson and the crew of the Churchill Diversion Archaeological Project, who made us welcome during our stay at their camp in the Kame Hills area. Robert W. Nero offered several helpful suggestions for improving the manuscript.

**Summary.** Observations of 90 species of birds from north-central Manitoba, mainly from Southern Indian Lake and Thompson, are reported. Some breeding evidence was obtained for 14 species, including positive breeding records (nests or small young) for 10 species. Large colonies of Ring-billed Gulls and Caspian Terns were found at Southern Indian Lake, about 250 miles north of previously-known colonies. The Black Duck, Belted Kingfisher, Red-winged Blackbird, Pine Siskin and Clay-colored Sparrow were also found beyond the limits of their currently recognized breeding ranges. Southern Indian Lake, compared with Thompson, has a distinct subarctic element in its avifauna, although it lacks most of the typical subarctic species which occur farther north.

<sup>1</sup>AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION. 1957. *Check-list of North American birds (5th ed.)*. Lord Baltimore Press, Baltimore.

<sup>2</sup>AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION. 1973. *Thirty-second supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union check-list of North American birds*. Auk 90: 411-419.

<sup>3</sup>COPLAND, H. W. R., and G. SMITH. 1963. *The birds of the Pikwitonei area of Manitoba*. Nat. Hist. Soc. Manitoba, Ornithology Section Newsletter, Nos. 3 and 4, pp. 25-28 and 37-40.

<sup>4</sup>DAVIS, W. F. 1953. *Birds observed on a canoe trip in northern Manitoba*. Can. Field-Nat. 67: 148-154.

<sup>5</sup>EVANS, R. M., D. B. KRINDLE and M. E. MATTSON. 1970. *Caspian Terns nesting near Spruce Island, Lake Winnipegosis, Manitoba*. Blue Jay 28: 68-71.

<sup>6</sup>GODFREY, W. E. 1953. *Notes on birds of the area of intergradation between eastern prairie and forest in Canada*. Natl. Mus. Canada, Bull. 128: 189-240.

<sup>7</sup>GODFREY, W. E. 1966. *The birds of Canada*. Natl. Mus. Canada, Bull. 203.

<sup>8</sup>GODFREY, W. E. 1969. *Nesting of the Caspian Tern in central-eastern Manitoba*. Can. Field-Nat. 83: 401.

<sup>9</sup>HOOPER, R. R. 1962. *Birds of Lynn Lake, Manitoba*. Blue Jay 20: 158.

<sup>10</sup>JEHL, J. R., and B. A. SMITH. 1970. *Birds of the Churchill region, Manitoba*. Manitoba Mus. of Man and Nature, Spec. Pub. 1.

<sup>11</sup>JOHNSON, J. W. 1970. *A bird list for Thompson, Manitoba*. Blue Jay 28: 14-19.

<sup>12</sup>MANNING, T. H. 1948. *Notes on the country, birds and mammals west of Hudson Bay between Reindeer and Baker Lakes*. Can. Field-Nat. 62: 1-28.

<sup>13</sup>MOWAT, F. M., and A. H. LAWRIE, 1955. *Bird observations from southern Keewatin and the interior of northern Manitoba*. Can. Field-Nat. 69:93-116.

<sup>14</sup>NERO, R. W. 1967. *The birds of northeastern Saskatchewan*. Saskatchewan Nat. Hist. Soc., Spec. Pub. 6.

<sup>15</sup>RITCHIE, J. C. 1959. *The vegetation of northern Manitoba. III. Studies in the subarctic*. Arctic Inst. N. Amer., Tech. Paper 3.

<sup>16</sup>RITCHIE, J. C. 1962. *A geobotanical survey of northern Manitoba*. Arctic Inst. N. Amer., Tech. Paper 9.

<sup>17</sup>ROWE, J. S. 1972. *Forest regions of Canada*. Canada Dept. Environment, Canadian Forestry Service, Pub. 1300.

<sup>18</sup>VERMEER, K. 1970. *Large colonies of Caspian Terns on Lakes Winnipeg and Winnipegosis*. Blue Jay 28: 117-118.

<sup>19</sup>VERMEER, K. 1973. *Comparison of egg-laying chronology of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls at Kawinaw Lake, Manitoba*. Can. Field-Nat. 87: 306-308.

<sup>20</sup>WHITFIELD, D. W. A., J. M. GERRARD, W. J. MAHER and D. W. DAVIS. 1974. *Bald Eagle nesting habitat, density, and reproduction in central Saskatchewan and Manitoba*. Can. Field-Nat. 88: 399-407.

