

were so close to one another. There was no doubt whatsoever that I was being visited by a male House Finch — a bird almost as large as a House Sparrow but sleeker. The male is brownish with strong narrow stripes on the flanks and belly. He resembles a Purple Finch, of which there have been many in our yard. This specimen seemed to be in perfect condition and so brilliantly coloured. How he arrived in our part of the country — particularly at this time of year is a mystery but he seemed happy and content with his lot in life. I sincerely hope he made it through the rest of the winter. — *Pat O'Neil*, 1125 Elliott Street, Saskatoon, Sask. S7N 0V4.

Editor's Note: The following excerpt is from Breeding Bird Survey Newsletter Number 4 (April 20, 1976): "The most spectacular changes continue to be the increase in the House Finch east of the Mississippi River (mean annual increase of 30%). . ."



PROBABLE MELANISTIC WREN AT KATEPWA

While in Katepwa at Salter's Beach in early August, 1975 my brother Eric and I observed a completely dark wren singing madly in the dense brush by the lake. We were obviously near the nest, for it was frantic in its attempts to distract us, and its song was more of an incessant babble to distract or drive us away than anything else.

Since the different species of wrens do not adhere to strict areas in which they sing, that aspect did not help in identification; although one bush that was approached always brought forth the wren to drive us away. My brother observed a normal wren, its mate, seen with it. This wren did not have the plumage of either species of marsh wren but was more like a House or Winter Wren. Eric indicates that it seemed smaller, slightly darker and had a shorter tail than the House

Wren, like a Winter Wren, which is not likely because their occurrence in Saskatchewan is not common. — *Tony Lang*, 65 Bobolink Bay, Regina, Sask.



30 Years Ago

The following excerpts are from the 16-page mimeographed *Blue Jay* of April-June, 1946, the last issue Mrs. Priestly edited before her death.

"An effort is being made to have April 10, the late Jack Miner's birthday, set aside as *National Bird Day* . . .". A questionnaire about the status of the Red Lily revealed that the flower was decreasing in most of the 200 communities replying. In 13 it had been extirpated and in 17 it was increasing . . . There were notes by L. T. McKim, Ralph Stueck and Steve Mann on ground squirrels and a jumping mouse hibernating in straw stacks . . . Stuart Houston had an article about J. H. Wilson of Indian Head who had banded 6,927 birds of 23 species, mostly ducks. A Marbled Godwit, banded at Yorkton, was found dead near Los Angeles. A Blue-winged Teal, also banded at Yorkton, was shot the next day 563 miles away in Minnesota . . . J. D. Ritchie wrote about a wasp that had caught and carried 11 flies to its subterranean nest . . . Maurice G. Street sent in the following: "A Canada Jay's nest found half completed March 18; this is rather later than the average. While hunting for other Canada Jay nests in a spruce bluff yesterday (24th), David Wright and I saw a pair of Black-capped Chickadees take a bath, almost at our feet, in a little pool of water which had formed at the base of a stump. The temperature was only just above freezing. Later we saw them catching tiny moths that were flying in some numbers." The last three pages were devoted to information on Whooping Cranes and a request that any sightings be sent to Fred Bard.

