

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER NEST IN RIPARIAN HABITAT NEAR THE BATTLE RIVER, SASKATCHEWAN

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Most nests of the White-winged Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*) observed in Saskatchewan have been described as well hidden in shrubbery on large islands in large bodies of fresh water¹⁻², particularly at Redberry Lake, Saskatchewan.²⁻⁴ Fewer nests have been reported in riparian habitats, therefore, I document one placed amid Pussy Willow (*Salix discolor*), interspersed with Manitoba Maple (*Acer negundo*), about 30 m from the north shore of the Battle River (52°43'N, 108°17'W), 1.5 km south of Battleford, Saskatchewan.

The exposed, unattended nest contained seven eggs (Figure 1) when discovered on 27 June 1961. The female flushed from seven eggs the following day, but the nest had been depredated by the time I inspected it again three days later. All eggs were gone, so I could not determine the approximate stage of incubation. Although the final clutch size was not confirmed, seven eggs were within the range of clutch sizes (5-17 eggs; mean, 9 eggs) reported for the White-winged Scoter in Saskatchewan.³⁻⁵ A nest recorded far to the west along the Battle River near Camrose, Alberta, contained nine eggs on 28 June 1927.⁶

This was the only nest of White-winged Scoter I recorded for the Battleford area during extensive

observations made while I lived in Battleford (July 1958 through September 1961 and early May to mid-September 1962), and during occasional visits through 2016. I did, however, obtain three other records of White-winged Scoter: (1) one shot by Laurie B. Sealy on 17 October 1959 during the waterfowl hunting season at "Johnson's" Lake, 8 km south of Battleford; (2) an adult male observed circling a small, deep body of water, 7 km west of Battleford, on 5 August 1962; and (3) a freshly dead, adult female (not preserved) on a country road, 11 km southwest of Battleford, on 3 August 2005. About three decades earlier, 15 species of waterfowl were recorded in the Battlefords area during a six-week field camp held by the Provincial Museum, but the White-winged Scoter was not recorded.⁷



FIGURE 1. White-winged Scoter nest in riparian habitat along the Battle River, Saskatchewan, 27 June 1962. Photo credit: S.G. Sealy.

1. Godfrey WE (1950) Birds of the Cypress Hills and Flotten Lake regions, Saskatchewan. *National Museum of Canada Bulletin*, No. 120, Biological Series No. 40.
2. Houston CS (1955) White-winged Scoter banding. *Blue Jay* 13(4):28.
3. Brown PW, Brown MA (1981) Nesting biology of the White-winged Scoter. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 45:38-45.
4. Alisaukis RT (2019) White-winged Scoter. Pages 103-104 in *Birds of Saskatchewan* (Smith AR, Houston CS, Roy JF, editors). Nature Saskatchewan, Regina.
5. Brown PW, and Frederickson LH (1989) White-winged Scoter, *Melanitta fusca*, population and nesting on Redberry Lake, Saskatchewan. *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 103:240-247.
6. Farley FL (1932) Birds of the Battle River region of central Alberta. Institute of Applied Art, Edmonton, AB.
7. Belcher M (1972) An early Provincial Museum field camp in the Battleford area. *Blue Jay* 30:8-17. 