

BREEDING RECORDS

Of 19 Species Of Birds In Southern Alberta

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Salt and Wilk state "... there are large gaps in our present knowledge and large areas of the province still to be explored ornithologically."⁴ The purpose of this article is to provide additional information on the breeding status of certain birds in southern Alberta, especially the area near Calgary. Table 1 provides details of nesting observations. The letters CFNS refer to observation forms of the Calgary Field Naturalists Society and the letters PNRS refer to cards on file with the Prairie Nest Records Scheme. We extend our sincere thanks to observers who have filed data with these organizations. Special thanks go to H. W. R. Copland for providing the opportunity to use the files of the Prairie Nest Records Scheme and to R. W. Fyfe and R. W. Nero for their valuable criticisms of the paper.

Red-necked Grebe. The breeding range as outlined by Salt and Wilk does not include southwestern Alberta in the vicinity of Calgary, although they did list a breeding record for Vermilion Lakes near Banff.⁴ Table 1 documents nesting sites at Boggy Lake, Irricana Lake, Chestermere Lake, Conrich, Norman Lake, Kangienos Lake, Calgary, Jasper, Madden, and Strathmore. Birds have also been seen during the breeding season at Bruce Lakes, Cochrane Lake, Boggy Lake and Bragg Creek. Based on his observations, Cowan feels that there is a very good possibility that this species nests at Talbot Lake, Jasper National Park.¹ Smith and Wershler mentioned breeding at Turner Valley.⁵

Western Grebe. There are no references in the literature to nesting in southwestern Alberta. Table 1 contains nesting records for two sites in southwestern Alberta, Namaka Lake and

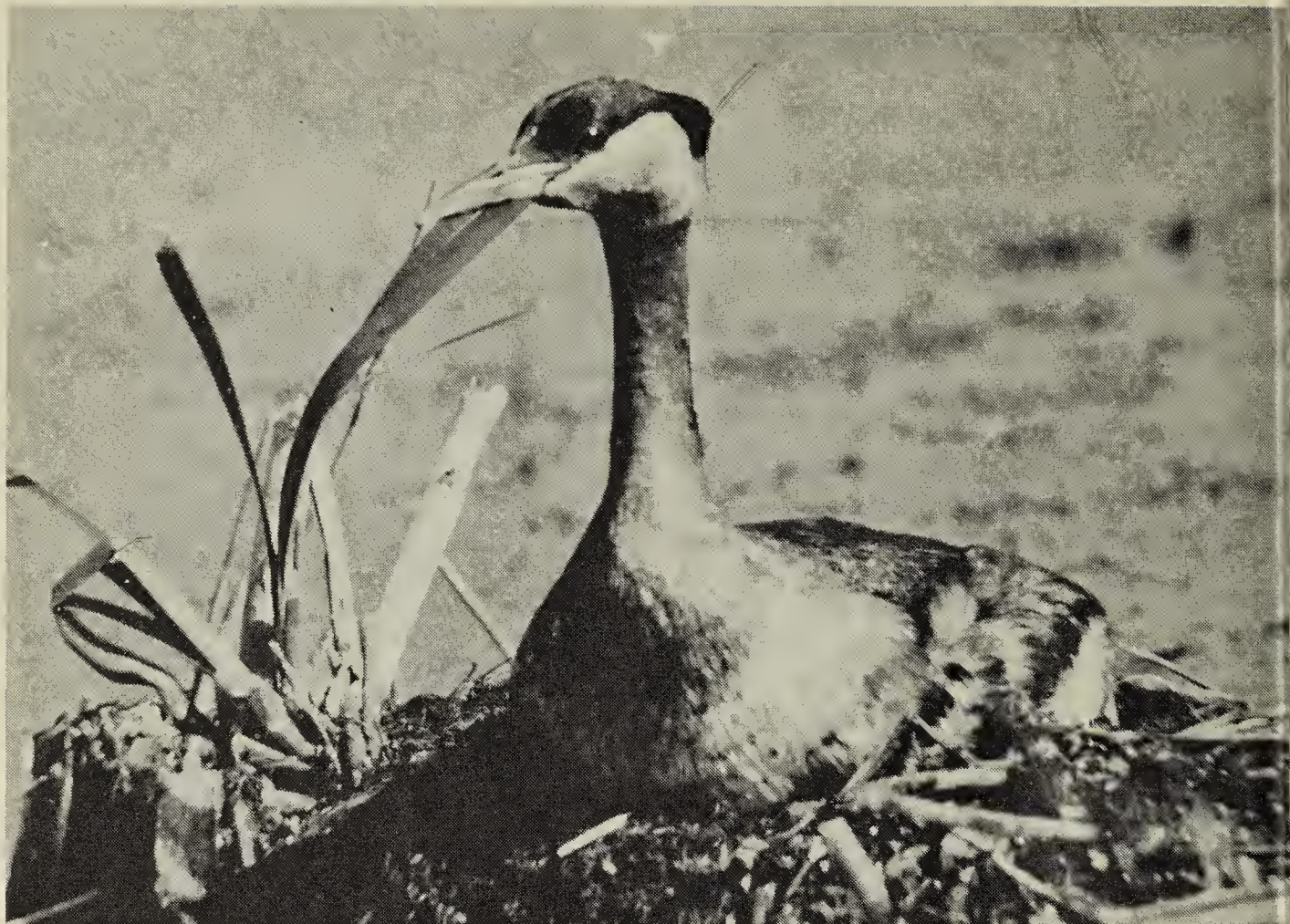
Frank Lake. The Namaka Lake colony has been active since at least 1965.

Pied-billed Grebe. Until recently this bird was unknown as a breeding species in southwestern Alberta. Since 1965, nesting has been documented at Dewinton, Kangienos Lake, Standard, Norman Lake, 20 miles west of Calgary, 8 miles east of Airdrie, Cochrane, and Reesor Lake (Cypress Hills). Birds have also been seen during the breeding season at Elkwater Lake (Cypress Hills), near Chestermere Lake, Priddis, near Ghost Lake, Calgary, and Conrich. Smith and Wershler reported breeding at Vermilion Lakes and near Turner Valley.⁵

Double-crested Cormorant. A new colony was established on an island at Little Bow Lake in 1966. On July 31, 1966, the colony consisted of two nests, one was vacant, the other contained two deserted eggs. On May 18, 1968, one nest contained three eggs, the others (not counted) were empty. Three nests with eggs in 1969 and six nests with eggs in 1970 were noted. On June 20, 1970, 19 young were seen on the island and on August 1, 1970, 23 young were seen in nests and along the shore. No observations were made in 1971. On May 21, 1972, 12 birds were seen on nests in willows on a different island. At this time all the islands were under water as a result of exceptionally high water levels.

Redhead. Published nesting records for southern Alberta include only the Brooks region. Recent observations indicate that Redheads nest widely and regularly in southern Alberta. Nesting has been documented at Standard, Langdon, Little Bow Lake, Chestermere Lake, Stobart Lake, Eagle Lake and Strathmore. In addition, birds have been seen during the nesting season in suitable habitat at Boggy Lake, Vermilion Lakes, Calgary, Woodhouse,

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Red-necked Grebe

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Priddis, Chain Lakes, Chestermere Lake, Cochrane, Irricana, Deadhorse Lake, Parkland, Frank Lake, Kathryn, 10 miles north of Hussar and Bassano.

Ring-necked Duck. The known nesting area has been confined to the northern half of Alberta. Recently, however, nesting has been confirmed at Pine Lake, Norman Lake, west of Nanton, and Scott Lake. Smith and Wershler report nesting for Turner Valley.⁵ Sight records during the nesting season have been made at Waiparous Creek, Sylvan Lake, Rocky Mountain House, Chain Lakes, Bragg Creek, Conrich, Priddis, Irricana, Millarville and Crossfield.

Canvasback. This bird is not listed as a widespread nesting species in southern Alberta.⁴ However, there are recent records from Conrich, Delacour, Baintree, Eagle Lake, Consort, Calgary, Strathmore, Standard and Langdon. Canvasbacks have also been seen in suitable habitat during the nesting season at Big Hill Springs Park, Vermilion Lakes, Stavely, Irricana, Parkland, Frank Lake, Deadhorse Lake,

Blizzard Lake and 10 miles north of Hussar.

Common Goldeneye. In Alberta, this bird has previously not been known to nest on the prairies or in the mountains. Kondla observed a female with a brood of downy young on June 14, 1971, on a small reservoir near Dinosaur Provincial Park and a moulting adult in the park on July 22, 1971. Smith and Wershler (CFNS) report a pair with eight immatures at Elkwater in the Cypress Hills on July 23, 1967. It has also been seen during the breeding season at Strathmore, Bruce Lakes, Boggy Lake, Cremona and Calgary.

Ruddy Duck. A nest found by Pinel on June 18, 1970, at Norman Lake contained seven eggs and appears to be the westernmost nesting record in southern Alberta.

Common Merganser. According to Salt and Wilk, accurate nesting records away from the mountains are few.⁴ Two adults and four downy young were seen by Pinel on June 16, 1970, at Calgary on the Bow River. On June 29, 1972, a female with 14 flightless young was ob-

served by Pinel in the same area. W. Smith (PNRS) found a nest containing nine eggs on May 11, 1968, at Priddis. R. Fyfe and R. Semeniuk observed a brood of young with adults on July 4, 1971, approximately 12 miles northeast of Medicine Hat along the South Saskatchewan River (R. Fyfe, pers. comm.). These observations appear to constitute the easternmost nesting records for this species to date in southern Alberta.

Piping Plover. Salt and Wilk list six known nesting sites in central Alberta.⁴ In addition, it has been found nesting at Dowling Lake,⁷ and at Goosequill Lake on June 15, 1972, when Kondla and W. Smith found a nest containing four eggs on an island with a small colony of American Avocets.

Solitary Sandpiper. An extension of the breeding range is indicated by the discovery of two nests, one on May 30, 1967, and the other on June 6, 1968, near Bragg Creek by Kondla. Both nests contained four eggs, and, in each case, an old Robin's nest in a spruce tree was utilized.

Greater Yellowlegs. M. Christman, H. Rucastle and N. Winnick found a nest with four eggs on July 13, 1964, at Boggy Lake (PNRS). M. Christman and H. Rucastle also found two young on July 14, 1964, at Water Valley. We have seen it regularly at Kangienos Lake, Norman Lake and Bragg Creek. Previously, this bird was not known to nest in the foothills west of Calgary.⁴

Lesser Yellowlegs. Although we know of no nests having been found in the foothills west of Calgary, we have found this species defending territories during May and June at Kangienos Lake, Norman Lake and Bragg Creek.

Black Tern. Salt and Wilk report no nesting records west of Calgary in southern Alberta.⁴ Actually, they are fairly common, but local, in the foothills. A nesting colony was found at Norman Lake in the foothills by Pinel. On June 22, 1969, three nests in the colony each contained three eggs.

Saw-whet Owl. On April 17, 1968, the authors found a nest 4 miles north of Beynon containing six eggs in an old Flicker hole 9 feet high in a stump. This



Saw-whet Owl

R. E. Gehlert

nesting record is extralimital based on the known breeding range in Alberta.

Pileated Woodpecker. Storer and Wilson report a sighting during the breeding season at Bleriot Ferry.⁶ We observed this species near Beynon on May 8, 1965, in the vicinity of large holes in power poles. Another Pileated Woodpecker hole was found on April 17, 1968, in a large balsam poplar stump in a coulee north of Beynon. Kondla and Smith saw this species regularly at Tolman Ferry and in Dry Island Buffalo Jump Park in May, 1972. These observations suggest that it nests in the wooded portions of the Red Deer River valley south to the Drumheller region.

Blue Jay. This bird was recorded throughout 1959 at Beynon.² In 1959 a pair nested at Janet in a spruce tree in a windbreak around a farm.³ Since 1965, eight observations have been made during the breeding season near Calgary and Drumheller. These observations suggest that Blue Jays nest in small numbers in the foothills west of Calgary and in the wooded coulees adjoining the Red Deer River as far south as the Drumheller area.

TABLE 1 — Extralimital Nesting Records of Certain Bird Species in Southern Alberta. (Note: Records without either PNRS* or CFNS* after them refer to observations made by the authors and not on file.)

Locality	Date	Comments	Observer
Red-necked Grebe			
N.E. corner of 3rd Vermilion Lake	May 26, 1965	5 eggs	T. Sadler (PNRS)
12 mi. S. 1/2 mi. W. Strathmore	June 22, 1965	nest 40' from N. shore	G. Freeman (PNRS)
10 mi. E. Calgary	May 13, 1966	1+ eggs	T. Sadler (PNRS)
Pond near Kangienos Lake	June 12, 1966	4 eggs	N. Kondla, J. Shier, A. Shoults (PNRS)
Madden	June 22, 1969	3 eggs	I. Halliday, W. G. McKay (PNRS)
Madden	June 22, 1969	1 egg	I. Halliday, W. G. McKay (PNRS)
Jasper	June 27, 1969	incubating eggs	C. W. Morehen (PNRS)
2 mi. E. Irricana Lake	May 27, 1970	3 birds, nest with 2 eggs	B. Jones, M. T. Myres, D. V. Weseloh (CFNS)
Norman Lake	June 18, 1970	adult bird on nest	H. Pinel
15 mi. N.W. Calgary	July 13, 1970	5 nests where incubating occurring	B. Baker (PNRS)
Chestermere Lake	June 23, 1971	2 females on nests	B. and V. Lang (CFNS)
Slough near Conrich	June 1, 1972	1 bird on nest	V. Lang (CFNS)
Western Grebe			
Namaka Lake	June 30, 1965	3 eggs (about 30 pairs nesting)	N. Kondla, J. Shier (PNRS)
Namaka Lake	July 6, 1967	2 nests, 1/e and 2/e	W. E. McKay (CFNS)
Namaka Lake	June 8, 1968	many birds, 1 nest with 4 eggs	N. Kondla
Frank Lake	July 15, 1972	4 adults, 3 downy young	V. Lang, R. Palindat (CFNS)
Pied-billed Grebe			
20 mi. W. Calgary	June 14, 1965	8 eggs	J. Shier (PNRS)
Kangienos Lake	June 11, 1966	7 eggs	N. Kondla
Cochrane	June 12, 1966	4 eggs	A. Shoults (PNRS)
8 mi. E. Airdrie	June 13, 1966	9 eggs	A. Shoults (PNRS)
Standard	June 9, 1968	1 egg	N. Kondla
Reesor Lake	Aug. 21, 1969	1 young	R. and S. Cannings (PNRS)
Norman Lake	June 18, 1970	5 eggs	H. Pinel
Slough near Dewinton	July 15, 1972	1 adult, 4 large downy young	V. Lang, R. Palindat (CFNS)
Redhead			
Slough near Stobart Lake	June 24, 1965	9 eggs	J. Shier (PNRS)
Eagle Lake	May 27, 1966	10 eggs	A. Shoults (PNRS)
Chestermere Lake	June 3, 1966	14 eggs	A. Shoults (PNRS)
Chestermere Lake	June 20, 1966	17 eggs	A. Shoults (PNRS)
Chestermere Lake	June 20, 1966	7 eggs	A. Shoults (PNRS)
2 mi. N.E. Standard	June 2, 1968	10 eggs	N. Kondla
2 mi. S.S.E. Langdon	May 31, 1969	13 eggs	H. Pinel (PNRS)
2 mi. S.S.E. Langdon	May 31, 1969	22 eggs	H. Pinel (PNRS)
2 mi. S.S.E. Langdon	May 31, 1969	11 eggs	H. Pinel (PNRS)
2 mi. S.S.E. Langdon	May 31, 1969	12 eggs	H. Pinel (PNRS)
2 mi. S.S.E. Langdon	May 31, 1969	10 eggs	H. Pinel (PNRS)
2 mi. S.S.E. Langdon	May 24, 1970	10 eggs	H. Pinel
Little Bow Lake	May 28, 1970	11 eggs	N. Kondla (PNRS)
2 mi. S.S.E. Langdon	May 31, 1970	14 eggs	H. Pinel
Little Bow Lake	June 6, 1970	8 eggs	H. Pinel
2 mi. S.S.E. Langdon	June 21, 1970	8 eggs	H. Pinel
2 mi. S.S.E. Langdon	June 21, 1970	10 eggs	H. Pinel

Table 1 (Continued)

Locality	Date	Comments	Observer
Ring-necked Duck			
Pine Lake	June 5, 1966	11 eggs	N. Kondla, A. Shoults (PNRS)
20 mi. W. Nanton	June 13, 1966	fully formed egg in dead female	T. Sadler (CFNS)
Slough near Scott Lake	July, 1968	female with 7 chicks	T. Sadler (CFNS)
Norman Lake	July 22, 1969	8 eggs	N. Kondla, H. Pinel
Norman Lake	June 24, 1970	7 eggs	H. Pinel
Canvasback			
5 mi. W. 1 mi. N. Strathmore	May 15, 1964	11 eggs	T. Sadler (PNRS)
5 mi. W. 1 mi. N. Strathmore	May 15, 1964	1 egg	T. Sadler (PNRS)
Calgary	June 2, 1964	10 eggs	H. Pinel
Eagle Lake	June 12, 1964	5 eggs	J. Shier (PNRS)
15-1/2 mi. S.E. Consort	July 10, 1966	4 young	J. Eisenhower (PNRS)
2 mi. N.E. Standard	June 2, 1968	2 nests; 1/8e, 1/9 e	N. Kondla
2 mi. S.S.E. Langdon	May 31, 1970	1 egg	H. Pinel
1/4 mi. N. Baintree	May 22, 1971	8 eggs	H. Pinel, C. Wallis (PNRS)
3 mi. N.W. Conrich	June 17, 1972	female with 8 newly hatched young	B. and V. Lang (CFNS)
5 mi. E. Conrich	June 18, 1972	female with 5 newly hatched young	V. Lang (CFNS)
6-1/2 mi. S. Delacour	July 10, 1972	female with 6 young female with 7 young	V. Lang (CFNS)

*PNRS: Prairie Nest Records Scheme; CFNS: Calgary Field Naturalists Society observation forms.

Long-billed Marsh Wren. There are no nesting records in Alberta south of the city of Red Deer except for Lake Newell near Brooks. However, in June of 1970 and 1971, birds were heard singing at Namaka Lake and near Langdon. Pinel found two nests near Langdon, one on June 15, 1970, and the other on June 21, 1970. The nests contained five and seven eggs, respectively.

¹COWAN, I. T. 1955. *Birds of Jasper National Park, Alberta, Canada*. Wildlife Management Bulletin, Series 2 No. 8. Queen's Printer, Ottawa.

²EDMONTON AND CALGARY BIRD CLUBS. 1959. *Alberta Bird Report*.

³EDMONTON AND CALGARY BIRD CLUBS. 1960. *Alberta Bird Report*.

⁴SALT, W. R., and A. L. WILK. 1966. *The birds of Alberta*. Govt. of Alberta, Dept. of Ind. and Devel. Queen's Printer, Edmonton.

⁵SMITH, W., and C. WERSHLER. 1969. *Some 1968 southern Alberta bird observations*. *Blue Jay*, 27, 88-92.

⁶STORER, J. E., and M. WILSON. 1972. *Pileated Woodpeckers near Drumheller, Alberta*. *Blue Jay*, 30: 97.

⁷VERMEER, K. 1971. *Large American Avocet clutches at Dowling Lake, Alberta*. *Blue Jay*, 29: 88.