

# FLAMINGO

## PHOTOGRAPHED IN THE WILD IN SASKATCHEWAN

by R. KENT BRACE\*

While conducting an aerial waterfowl census on Lenore Lake, Saskatchewan (lat. N. 52°24'; Long. W. 105°00') on October 3, 1972, Mr. John Rogers, Athabasca Airways, and the author sighted and photographed a Flamingo. The Flamingo was with a flock of Canada Geese that left the northeast shore and flew towards the centre of Lenore Lake as the aircraft proceeded northward along the east side of the lake. Initially, the bird was thought to be a dyed Whistling Swan or Snow Goose; however, as the aircraft flew above the bird, its long, trailing legs, uniform bright pink colouration, large bulbous head, black recurved bill, and black-tipped primary and secondary feathers became apparent.

When we finished the waterfowl census, the Flamingo was relocated on a mudflat at the northeast end of the lake where it had been first sighted approximately one hour earlier. The bird flew towards the centre of the lake when the aircraft approached it on the second occasion, and was photographed. The observations were made between 2:00 and 3:30 p.m.

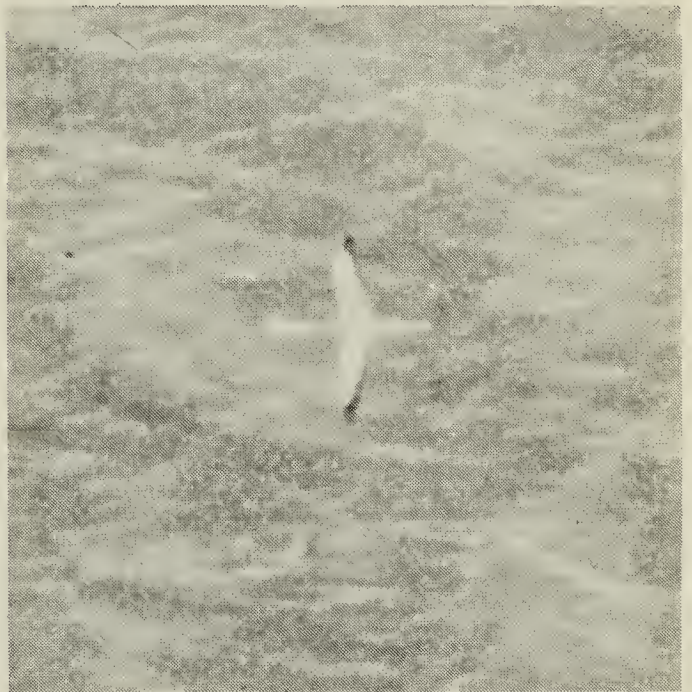
Mr. M. K. Baker, Director of the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina, has indicated that the Lenore Lake observation was the first authenticated Flamingo sighting for Saskatchewan. Other sightings have been reported, however, and Miss Christina Pike, Waseca, Saskatchewan, has forwarded the following:

"Helena Pike (nee Janus) spent her childhood and girlhood in the Battle River Hills south of Waseca. She puts her sighting at 1940, when a flamingo spent several days on a slough near the house.

My oldest brother (Ronald Pike) and my late father sighted three on our home

quarter (SE-9-49-24) about 1937. They stalked them and had ample time to view them, as did Helena".

In the wild, Flamingos are bright pink in colour; however, in captivity their plumage generally fades.<sup>1</sup> Since the Lenore Lake sighting was the first authenticated record in Saskatchewan, and the Flamingo was bright in colour, an effort was made to determine whether the bird had escaped from a zoo or had strayed from the normal range. The current breeding distribution and area of post breeding dispersal is the southern tip of Florida, the West Indies, the east coast of Mexico and the northeast coast of South America. Records for elsewhere in Florida, Louisiana and Texas are suspected of being escapees.<sup>1</sup>



Dr. J. B. Gollop, Canadian Wildlife Service, Saskatoon, wrote 22 zoos in western Canada and the northern United States west of the Mississippi River and learned that two bright pink Flamingos had escaped from the Roosevelt Park Zoo, Minot, North Dakota, on September 25, 1972. One of the Minot escapees was sighted at Lake Darling, 30 miles northwest of Minot on September 27. It was concluded that the Flamingo observed at Lenore Lake was one of the two that escaped from the Roosevelt Park Zoo.

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<sup>1</sup>PALMER, R. S. 1962. *Handbook of North American Birds*. Yale University Press, New Haven. 567 p.