



Piping Plover

R. E. Gehlert

PIPING PLOVER NESTING AT DIEFENBAKER LAKE, SASKATCHEWAN

by PAUL C. RUMP*

I was most interested to read Wayne Renaud's report on nesting records for the Piping Plover in Saskatchewan, which was published in the September issue of *Blue Jay*.

I would like to add Lake Diefenbaker as another breeding locality for this species. One of my favourite camping spots is on the west side of the Qu'Appelle Arm of Lake Diefenbaker. In 1974 we visited this sand dune area on the weekend of June 15 and 16. On the 16th, while on a shoreline walk with my family, we discovered two nests of the Piping Plover. The nests, which were about 1/2 mile apart, were located about 2 miles southeast of the former rail point of Aiktow. The nests were within pebble patches on the otherwise sandy beach. Each nest contained four eggs. The eggs were very well camouflaged amongst the pebbles

*3320 Angus Street,
Regina, Saskatchewan.
S4S 1P8

and we had to wait patiently at a distance for the birds to return to the nest before we eventually pinpointed and found them. At the second nest site, the adult bird went through an elaborate broken wing display to try to lure us from the nest. This, the camouflaged eggs, and the simple nest were ideal learning experiences for my young children.

SHRIKE CAPTURES BLACKBIRD

by S. O. JORDHEIM*

During the fall and winter months we are visited occasionally by the Northern Shrike which preys on House Sparrows around the yard. On October 30, 1974. I was surprised to see one ignore the sparrows which were circling in a dense group and give chase to a Rusty Blackbird.

At first the blackbird kept a healthy lead and did not seem perturbed about its pursuer, but the shrike kept doggedly on and, when getting close would try to grasp the blackbird which would then put on a burst of speed and get a lead of 20 to 30 feet. The chase continued around the yard and pastured several times at a height of 25 to 40 feet and, I would estimate, a distance of 2.5 to 3 miles. The blackbird was tiring but the shrike seemed to get stronger making more frequent attempts to capture his victim. Finally the shrike grasped it in the air and both birds plunged to the ground.

I was surprised to see the shrike attempt to capture an apparently healthy bird of this size. At no time did the blackbird attempt to get into trees or bushes as the sparrows do.

On another occasion a shrike captured a House Sparrow about 20 feet from where I was standing. It very quickly killed it by biting it in the throat area and then, seeing me, hastily flew away carrying its prey with its feet, the same as a hawk does.

*White Bear, Saskatchewan.