

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK AT PIERSON, MANITOBA

by RICHARD W. KNAPTON*

On the evening of July 31, 1974, a Black-headed Grosbeak was mist-netted on the Pierson Wildlife Management Area, some 7 miles southwest of Pierson, Manitoba. The bird was examined in the hand by Dave Duncan of Winnipeg and by myself, and was then shown to Ralph J. Wang of Pierson, after which it was released.

The bird was distinguished from the Rose-breasted Grosbeak by its decidedly yellowish-brown underparts with very few streakings, and by its bright lemon-yellow wing-linings. It was most likely a female but could have been a first-year male, particularly as the underparts were so brightly coloured.

McNichol recently summarized known records of the Black-headed Grosbeak in Manitoba and listed only 5 records, covering some 12 birds to 1965.^{4 5} No records from 1965 to 1974 have been uncovered. In Saskatchewan, the species has been recorded as far east as Estevan but is a decidedly scarce bird over much of the province, breeding sparingly in the Cypress Hills with a breeding record from Last Mountain Lake.^{6 2 7} Indeed, the closest area to the Pierson Wildlife Management Area in which the Black-headed Grosbeak regularly occurs is along the Missouri River in North Dakota, some 150 miles southwest.¹ However, interestingly enough, hybrids between Black-headed and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks have been found only 60 miles south along the Missouri River, 16 miles southeast of Minot³, thereby providing a greater potential for pure Black-headed Grosbeaks or hybrids to occur in the extreme southwest, as opposed to other areas, of Manitoba.

I should like to thank R. W. Nero for information supplied to me for this article.

- ¹AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION. 1957. *Checklist of North American Birds*. Fifth ed. Baltimore.
- ²GODFREY, W. E. 1950. *Birds of the Cypress Hills and Flotten Lake regions, Saskatchewan*. Nat'l. Mus. Can. Bull. 120. Ottawa. 96 p.
- ³KROODSMA, R. L. 1974. *Species-recognition behavior of territorial male Black-headed and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (Pheucticus)*. Auk. 91:54-64.
- ⁴McNICHOLL, M. 1965. *A possible sight record of the Black-headed Grosbeak in Manitoba*. Blue Jay 23:77-78.
- ⁵McNICHOLL, M. 1966. *Further note on the Black-headed Grosbeak in Manitoba*. Blue Jay 24:70.
- ⁶MITCHELL, H. N. 1924. *Birds of Saskatchewan*. Can. Field-Nat. 38:101-118.
- ⁷SYMONS, R. D., and R. W. NERO. 1965. *Black-headed Grosbeak breeding record for southcentral Saskatchewan*. Blue Jay 23:72-76.

PROBABLE CINNAMON TEAL - BLUE-WINGED TEAL CROSS

by S. L. and J. A. WEDGWOOD*

As waterfowl were returning in numbers, we drove west of Saskatoon on Sunday, April 27, 1975, paying special attention to the water bodies. On a slough (W1/2-18-36-8-W3) about a mile northwest of Rice Lake there was one duck unlike any we had seen before. Following half an hour of observation, debate and the consulting of field guides, we concluded this male bird was most likely a cross between a Cinnamon Teal and a Blue-winged Teal.

Our first impression was that we had come upon a Cinnamon Teal, a bird with which we were familiar, having seen it a number of times on the West Coast — but there were two differences. The body, breast and head were Cinnamon Teal: plain dark rusty red,

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the pate being darker, the tail black. However, there was a light flank patch which the Cinnamon does not have. On the Blue-winged Teal this patch is white; on the bird seen it was a light creamy-yellow or off-white depending on the observer. The second difference was on the face. The Cinnamon Teal's face is unmarked, whereas the bird we saw had a small white patch. This patch was less than a quarter the extent of the white crescent-shaped marking on the face of a Blue-winged Teal and was more frontally placed and not as sharply delineated as that crescent. Seen head on, both patches showed on the front of the face in line with the upper portion of the upper mandible, that is, in the region of the lores.

Wing markings were those of the two teals, which on flying birds are not separable in any event.

The bird was accompanying a female which was typical of the similar appearing Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teal females. While we were observing them, they were swimming, skip-flying and preening, movements which gave us many good views of the male.

Observing conditions were: 30-50 yards, mid-day, overcast; 10X and 7X binoculars.

Dr. J. B. Gollop, Canadian Wildlife Service, later informed us that there are records of crossing between the two species. One that he drew to our attention was a hybrid male taken in Utah, on June 9, 1947.² The description of the specimen is the same as for the Rice Lake bird with two exceptions: a white rather than an off-white flank patch and a full crescent face patch rather than a vestigial patch.

In the *Blue Jay*, 1971, Fred W. Lahrman¹ reported on a hybrid Cinnamon Teal-Blue-winged Teal he had photographed near Regina in 1970. We examined the transparencies on file in the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History. The only marked difference was in the colour pattern of the body, the bird we observed being closer to the Cinnamon colouration than was the one in the Lahrman photograph. That is, the Rice Lake

bird's body was a deeper chestnut. It also lacked the Blue-winged Teal's dark spots, marks present on the Regina bird.

¹LAHRMAN, FRED W. 1971. *Hybrid Cinnamon Teal X Blue-winged Teal at Regina. Blue Jay* 29: 28.

²WILSON, V. T. and J. B. VAN DENAKKER. 1948. *A hybrid Cinnamon Teal-Blue-winged Teal at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, Utah. Auk* 65: 316.

TRAGEDY IN A WREN HOUSE

By C. G. RILEY*

A pair of wrens seemed to be well on the way to success in raising a family in our nest house. Both adults had been busily carrying food in. The young were becoming vociferous, and their grotesque little heads could be seen inside the 1-inch entrance hole.

Then the male (?) abruptly disappeared. During the next 4 days the female (?) continued to feed the young and then she too disappeared.

After a day of enforced listening to the incessant hungry clamour, we broke down and began what we knew must be an ultimately futile program of feeding the cluster of noisy open mouths. Several times a day, flies, dewinged moths, pieces of garden worm, bits of ground beef, were hungrily snatched from forceps until appetites were seemingly satisfied for the time being. Two busy days of this culminated with the cool night (4 deg. F.) of June 30. The next morning all was quiet.

One young bird had fallen out of the nest house the day before, and we believed we had been feeding the three remaining ones. But when we opened the nest house we found *five* little corpses, for a total brood of six. All appeared equally developed, we

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