

ADDITIONS TO "BIRDS OF THE ROSETOWN-BIGGAR DISTRICT, SASKATCHEWAN"

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Shortly after the publication of any local bird list, a number of new or unusual birds are bound to turn up in that locality. "*Birds of the Rosetown-Biggar District, Saskatchewan*" is no exception and, since its publication in August, 1975, a number of interesting observations have been made in the area.

The following records include data on seven new species noted since 1975. All recent observations of rare or unusual birds are also included in this report. Where a species has five or fewer previous records in the Rosetown-Biggar area this has been mentioned in the species account. "Argo Bush" is 10 miles southwest of Biggar.

The number of species of birds definitely identified in the Rosetown-Biggar study area now stands at 243 (as of July 9, 1977). In addition, five species remain on the hypothetical list: Western Sandpiper, Black-necked Stilt, Band-tailed Pigeon, Chimney Swift and Dickcissel. Except where noted, all observations were made by the author.

The author wishes to thank the following people for their help on field trips, bird counts, and observations in the Biggar district: P. de Bussac, R. Chulach, D. Dueker, J. Goring, W. C. Harris, S. M. Lamont, M. L'hoir, A. de Moissac, M. Newton, D. H. and W. E. Renaud and R. A. Wapfle. Special thanks to Wayne Renaud for his encouragement and suggestions on this article.

RED-NECKED GREBE. On May 2, 1976, an adult was swimming with several dozen ducks along the north shore of Middle Van Scoy Lake. There were only two prior records for the area.

WESTERN GREBE. A dead adult was found on a peninsula in the sewage lagoon just south of Biggar on June 14, 1976. A single bird at Castlewood Lake on September 12, 1976 is only the second fall record for the district.

WHITE PELICAN. A. L'hoir found a single bird dead in his field southeast of Whiteshore Lake on August 6, 1975: the author and R. A. Wapfle verified the identification. Twenty-two pelicans were noted flying north, 6 miles east-southeast of Biggar on April 18, 1976.

TURKEY VULTURE. R. A. Wapfle reported an individual soaring south over Biggar on May 14, 1976. This represents the fifth record since 1968.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK. In 1976, this species was seen on May 2 (an adult low over The Van Scoy Lakes) and May 19 (an immature flushed from aspen woods 2 miles south of Duperow).

FERRUGINOUS HAWK. A single bird was soaring high over Biggar on September 6, 1975.

PEREGRINE FALCON. In 1975 this species was recorded on September 18, an immature in a park in Biggar (as close as 20 feet) and September 27, one flying amongst a flock of 50 Lapland Longspurs, three miles northwest of Feudal. Single birds were pursuing House Sparrows in town on April 11 and 12, 1976. Four previous occurrences have been reported.

RING-NECKED PHEASANT. Pheasants appear to have increased in the region recently. Jim Goring reported a male, 6.5 miles west of Biggar in mid-November, 1975. In 1976, a male flushed with eight Sharp-tailed Grouse, 15 miles south of town on March 12; and another male was seen on the west outskirts of Biggar

on March 25 (R. A. and G. J. Wapple). Possible local breeding is indicated with the sighting of a male bird crowing in "Argo Bush" on May 26, 1976. This was reported by Murray Newton, who is familiar with this species, having hunted it in the past. Prior to 1975, three sightings had been made by the Renauds in the area.

VIRGINIA RAIL. Single birds were flushed from a sedge and hummock complex at the east end of Castlewood Lake on June 14 and 15, 1976. On June 15, after flushing the adult bird, a search of the immediate area turned up a broken egg. The egg was quite different in appearance from the Sora's (a nest of the latter was discovered on the same date) and I feel that the broken egg was indeed a Virginia Rail's.

WESTERN SANDPIPER. On May 30, 1977, the writer, R. A. Wapple and R. Chulach studied four Western Sandpipers feeding alone on a mudflat three miles northwest of Catherwood Lake. From distances ranging from 20-35 feet, we noted the rusty-brown crown and back, black legs, quite distinct v-shaped breast markings and fairly long bill with a noticeable droop at the tip. The birds were studied for 10 minutes before they flew off to the northeast. There is but one previous record locally (on July 25, 1974), and only one prior provincial record.

***SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER.** The first confirmed record of this species was on September 8, 1975, when W. E. Renaud, R. A. Wapple and the writer studied one on a mudflat, just southwest of Perdue. We were able to approach within 15 feet of the bird. When it flushed, it gave a three-note call and Renaud, who is familiar with the species in Arctic Canada, confirmed the individual as a Short-billed Dowitcher. Two dowitchers were carefully identified on a mudflat four miles southeast of Keppel on May 12, 1976. These birds also gave a three-note call when flushed and were believed by the writer to be this species.

*New species for the district.

***BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER.** The first local record was a group of three identified by D. H. Renaud and G. J. Wapple one mile west of Catherwood Lake on May 22, 1977. The sandpipers allowed a long study from 20-30 feet as they fed in a wet weedy field.

HUDSONIAN GODWIT. One observed at Catherwood Lake by W. E. Renaud and G. J. Wapple on September 8, 1975. On July 11, 1976 a flock of 18 (with 1 Marbled Godwit) was found at a small pond, north of Duperow.

BONAPARTE'S GULL. There have been two additional records of this distinctive bird. In 1975 an adult was flying amongst 100 Franklin's Gulls south of Biggar on July 17; in 1976, a pair of gulls foraged at the sewage lagoon south of town on April 27. On both occasions the white wing triangle was seen very clearly.

GREAT-CRESTED FLYCATCHER. An adult was flycatching vigorously from dead poplars in a shelterbelt 2 miles north of Duperow on September 6, 1975. The Renauds had recorded four other dates.

SAY'S PHOEBE. On May 19, 1976 one was noted along a fence line in "Argo Bush".

BLUE JAY. R. A. Wapple found a single bird in Biggar on January 3, 1976. Another jay was found 15 miles south of town by R. Chulach, R. A. Wapple and G. J. Wapple on September 26, 1976. This individual was associated with a magpie. During the Biggar Christmas Count on December 24, 1976, W. C. Harris and S. M. Lamont heard a single Blue Jay in "Argo Bush."

***BOREAL CHICKADEE.** On October 16, 1975, R. A. Wapple and the author observed an individual in coniferous trees in a park in Biggar. From distances of 3-10 feet we obtained the following characteristics: rusty sides, brown cap and back and hoarse voice. A direct comparison was made between this bird and the single Black-capped Chickadee with which it was travelling. Both of us are com

pletely familiar with both species, having observed dozens of them in northern Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains. This is the species' first appearance in the Rosetown-Biggar area.

MOCKINGBIRD. A single bird was recorded on June 13, 1976, 1.5 miles east of Duperow by P. de Bussac, A. de Moissac and the writer; and another in Biggar on June 3 (R. A. Wapple) and June 4 (R. A. and G. J. Wapple), 1977. Both birds were singing quite vigorously and were assumed to be males. These observations represent the second and third local sightings, the first being on June 26-28, 1972.

WOOD THRUSH. On May 27, 1976, R. A. and G. J. Wapple studied an adult Wood Thrush in a park in Biggar from about 15 feet away, making a new species for the area, and probably the fourth record for Saskatchewan. In comparing the bird with a Swainson's Thrush, we found that it was slightly larger in size, the back was much rustier, and the breast spots were larger and more numerous. The bird foraged along the ground in a thick shrubline for some 20 minutes, after which we left the area.

HERMIT THRUSH. This species was noted on October 2, 1974 (1) and in 1976 on April 26 (1), September 18 (1), September 25 (2), September 26 (4), a flock in farmstead, 12 miles southwest of Biggar), and October 13 (1), (R. A. Wapple). Except for the record on September 25, all observations were made at the park in Biggar.

EASTERN BLUEBIRD. The first Rosetown-Biggar sighting occurred on September 19, 1975, when I noted a male in a roadside ditch in "Argo Bush." The rusty-orange breast was seen clearly at 15-30 feet. The bluebird fed from a telephone line with a mixed flock of 5 male and 1 female Mountain Bluebirds, 7 Robins, 1 Palm and 10 Yellow-rumped Warblers. It left the area, alone, after about 15 minutes of feeding.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE. Two

solitaires were found in the park in Biggar on April 12, 1976. R. A. Wapple observed two more on the late date of May 29, 1977, as close as 5 feet, just northwest of town. There had been only three previous solitaire records.

NASHVILLE WARBLER. On September 3, 1976, I carefully identified one at the park, with the following field marks: small size (no more than 4 inches), greenish upperparts, yellow underparts, lack of wingbars, and white spectacles around the eyes clearly visible. The Nashville was studied for 10 minutes from 15-20 feet. The Renauds had but one previous record, on September 5, 1973.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER. A close check of flocks of Yellow-rumped Warblers has resulted in an increased number of sightings of this species. All observations have been of female or immature birds, and all were in or near Biggar. 1975: September 7 (3 with 15 Myrtles); September 16 (2 with 10 Myrtles); September 17 (2). 1976: September 24 (5). A male was present in town on May 12, 1977.

CAPE MAY WARBLER. From the park in Biggar come these observations: 1975: September 12 (1 pair), and September 17 (a male in full breeding plumage); 1976: September 12 (a single female). It is perhaps interesting to note that all these records came from the same stand of conifers in the park.

***BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER.** On May 17, 1976, R. A. Wapple and the writer studied a female in deciduous trees at the park in Biggar for 45 minutes. From distances of 6-20 feet, the characteristics were: olive-green back, greenish underparts, distinct white eyeline and the small, white wingspot on the lower primaries (at the base). The warbler was exceedingly tame as she fed in the lower branches of the trees.

BAY-BREASTED WARBLER. A male was seen in the park in town on June 2, 1976 by R. A. Wapple. This was the fourth local record.

CONNECTICUT WARBLER. We located a pair in our yard in Biggar on September 5, 1975, noting the complete white eye-ring. There is but one prior sighting, one bird on August 22 and 23, 1972.

WESTERN TANAGER. Single males in Biggar seen separately by R. A. and G. J. Wapple on May 31, 1976, were likely the same bird. This provides the third record of this species for Rosetown-Biggar.

RED CROSSBILL. Both this and the next species have increased in the area recently, with all records coming from the park in Biggar where there are many coniferous trees. In 1975, Reds were seen on: October 13 (1), 15 (3) and 29 (6); November 2 (1) and 4 (1). In 1976 they were spotted on: May 13 (a pair); October 23 (3), and November 8 (a pair). Prior to this influx, there had been but two records.

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL. Observed in 1975 on November 11 (4), 12 (1), 13 (2), 14 (a pair), and 18 (1). The only record away from Biggar was at a farm southeast of town on December 24, where a male was located by D. H. Renaud and the author during the Biggar Christmas Count. In 1976, sightings were for February 13 (a pair) and 20 (1). Three previous occurrences are listed for the area.

LARK SPARROW. At the park in

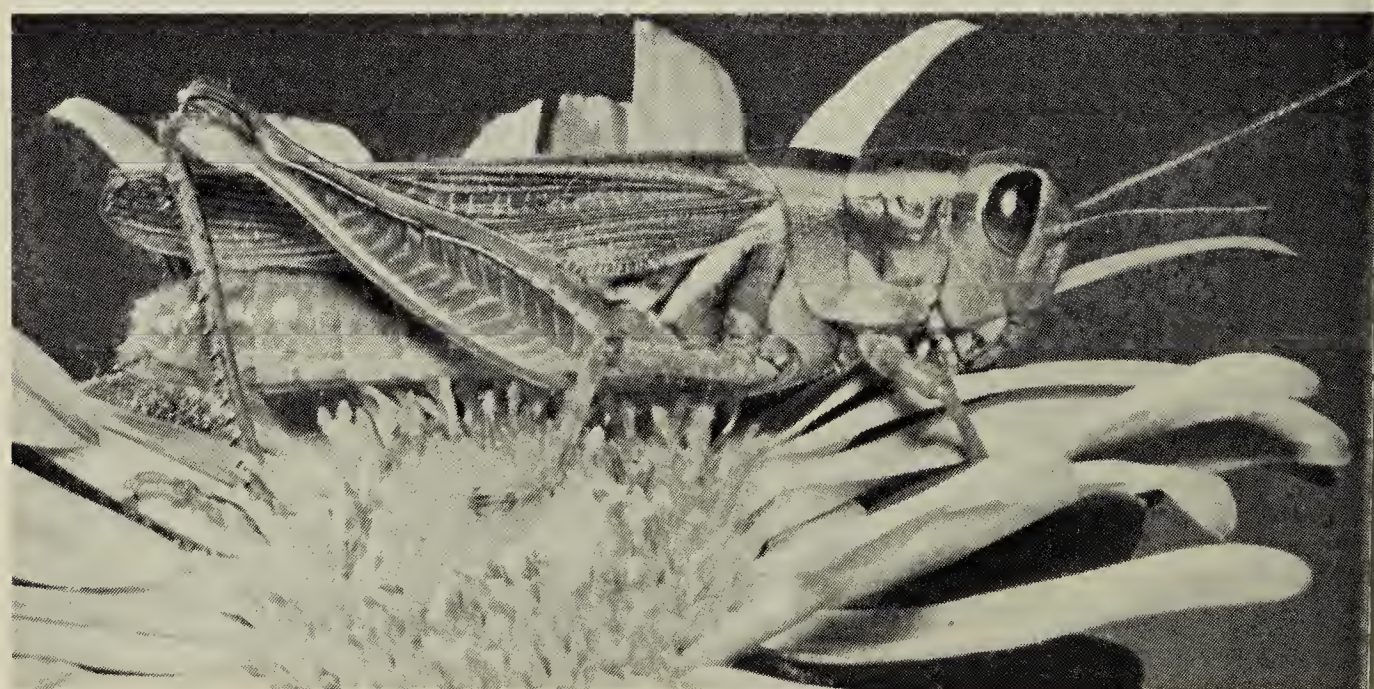
Biggar on May 22, 1976, a single bird was singing. A pair of Lark Sparrow was on territory 2.5 miles south of town on May 23 and June 19, 1977 but we were unable to locate a nest. This handsome sparrow was noted four times before 1976.

SWAMP SPARROW. The fourth local record was registered on May 15, 1977, a single bird in long grass at the park in town.

McCOWN'S LONGSPUR. Another observation of this species from the southern part of the study area came on May 23, 1976, where R. Chulach, R. A. Wapple and the writer found eight males and one female in cultivated stubble 2 miles southeast of Rosetown. A displaying male 7 miles north of Rosetown was noted later that same day.

***SMITH'S LONGSPUR.** The first district observation was on May 15, 1977 when at least 125 Smith's were located (in association with over 375 Lapland Longspurs) in a ploughed slough bottom, just south of Leney. Several distinctive males were seen, along with a much higher number of females, giving calls different from the Lapland's.

¹RENAUD, W. E., and D. H. RENAUD. 1977. Birds of the Rosetown-Biggar District, Saskatchewan. Spec. Pub. 9., Sask. Nat. Hist. Soc., Regina.



Grasshopper

Hans Dommas