



White Pelicans

Edith W. Kern

## PLENTY OF PELICANS

On July 1, 1977, four members of the Moose Jaw Natural History Society (Molly Ritchie, Jean Thomson, Ruth Hilling, Edith Kern) drove to the west side of Pelican Lake (north from Mortlach) to the end of the old dam, and were astounded to see a "guestimated" 1500 + White Pelicans! In the old days the Lake got its name from that noble bird. For many years, however, no White Pelicans were seen there. Then, about 6 or 7 years ago, the birds started to return, a few at a time, until the normal sightings were from 25 to 100 in a season. We talked to Del Duffy, who has farmed in that area for years, and he said he cannot recall ever seeing so many Pelicans at one time.

On July 15, Mickey Lane and I went back to check. We went in to the lake north of Besant Regional Park, as we didn't have time to go as far as last time, but you can see up to the dam from there, and we saw about 200-300 birds. Maybe we were lucky to see a peak movement . . . . who knows?  
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## BIRDWATCHER'S PARTY

To-day I had a birdwatcher's party, very unexpected! Wish I'd had some

other birdwatcher to share it with me. About noon my husband finished irrigating his hay in the flat, south of Val Marie. He came home and asked if I wanted to go and see some "orangy" birds that had flown in. I took my bird book and field glasses and away we went. The last strips to be irrigated are next to the highway so we stayed right on the road and looked at around 150 birds; most were gulls. The "orangy" birds turned out to be Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

There were about a dozen Yellow-headed Blackbirds — male and female — so it made me wonder were they not nesting yet? Or were they unmatched pairs and their mate on the nest?

One surprise I got were the gulls. All this time I had thought our most common gull that follows the tract during summerfallowing and shows up during irrigation time was the Herring Gull, but these I looked at were all Ring-billed Gulls. There must have been nearly 100 of them.

The next most abundant was the Franklin's Gull with its black head. There were quite a few of them swooping down for food. The water drives all the bugs and mice out of the ground and these birds were having a hey-day! There must have been a dozen Black Terns also diving down for food.

One beautiful Avocet strutted by himself, knowing he was the prettiest of them all. Two couples of Marbled Godwits were feeding in the shallow water. These can't be nesting yet. If I had seen any of them before I had certainly never identified them. So it was a first for me.

That morning before we left I had seen a Yellow Warbler in the tree by my window. I was glad to see them back. In 1976 I saw not a one. Other years this warbler had been very common.

As we drove up from our birdwatching spree, a Western Kingbird sitting on our fence flew up. They are common in our town but he just wanted to finish the day — May 1, 1977! *Lise Perrault, Val Marie, Saskatchewan.*

## LONGSPUR MEMORIES

One of the many interesting aspects of birdwatching is that one never knows when the unexpected will happen.

It is easy to understand Atlantic storms blowing European birds to North America, and vice versa, but what is one to make of an adult Chestnut-collared Longspur in full breeding plumage doing on a Victoria wharf of course on the sea front on the 1st day of May this year?

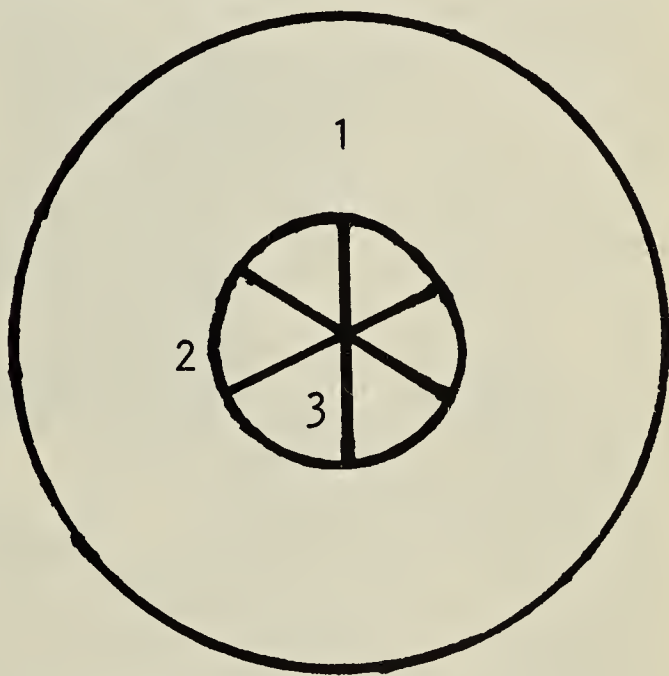
This brought back memories of our first birding trip to the Prairies in an early June. My wife and I were approaching the Saskatchewan border in our car when we heard an unusual song. So we stopped and walked over the virgin prairie, rather hilly as I remember, and found ourselves surrounded by Chestnut-collared and Cowbird's Longspurs, Horned Larks, King Buntings and meadowlarks rising and falling on fluttering wings and singing all the while. The longspurs and buntings were new to us, and we always remember how excited we were to see and hear all these birds in their breeding grounds. *Albert R. Davidson, 2144 Brighton Avenue, Victoria, B.C.*

## SQUIRREL-PROOFING BIRD BOXES

I read with a great deal of interest G. A. Wilde's article in the Blue Jay's June issue "Squirrel Damage to Nest Boxes". We have a summer cottage at Whyteford, on Lake Winnipeg, and during the past three years we have been plagued by red squirrels chewing bird boxes and also damaging nests in trees.

This summer we decided to try an experiment. I am enclosing a diagram of the tin covering which my husband made in order to protect the hole in the bird box. We did this with our two wren houses and found that it worked very well.

Mention was made that it might be the glue in the plywood which attracts the squirrels. This might be the reason but I am doubtful of this. We had the wood of one of our screen windows (in storage all winter in an outhouse) chewed, and the wood was spruce (with no glue). *Mrs. Jean Bancroft, 264 Campbell St., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3N 1B5.*



1. End of juice can — 48 oz.
2. Circle slightly in excess of entrance to bird box.
3. Tin cut into sectors from centre to circumference of circle
4. Sectors pressed back into entrance to bird box, making sure they are flush with the wood or bent back against inside of front wood panel.
5. Bird box has, therefore, an entrance faced with tin.
6. Paint same colour as box.

## RABBITS AND TICKS

When I came West with our family in 1904, there were a great many English and Scotch settlers coming in at the same time. The English settlers in particular were very pleased at being able to procure rabbit so readily, just with a bit of snare wire. Then a few years later, they had to give up eating them because the jack rabbits were so thin and covered with abscesses or blisters. Now that I know more about wood ticks, I wonder if they are not a factor in this cycle of comparative abundance and scarcity of jack rabbits. Has anyone studied

the fluctuations of wood ticks in relation to the rabbit cycles? — *Robertson*, Indian Health Saskatchewan.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. John R. Allen, professor of veterinary parasitology at the University of Saskatchewan made the following comment on the ticks: "Most of the ticks on rabbits in Saskatchewan are *Haemaphysalis leporis-palustris*. Larvae and nymphs of wood ticks *Dermocentor andersoni* (Western Saskatchewan), *variabilis* (Eastern Saskatchewan) do not attach to rabbits, but would be rather small and are rarely noticed by most people. The abscesses/blisters could possibly represent allergic reactions to the feeding ticks, but I wouldn't bet on it."



Snowshoe hare. Note ticks on ears and cheek

Gary W. b