

NOTES ON BIRDS AT WADDY LAKE, SASKATCHEWAN JULY 1977

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During the summer of 1977 funds from the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History and the University of Regina President's NRC fund enabled D. M. Secoy of the Department of Biology, University of Regina, to send a summer research student, Eric Maw, to the Wollaston Lake area of northern Saskatchewan. While there, he collected plant and insect specimens, mapped the plant communities around the Boland Lake base camp, and took notes on the avifauna. The reports on this work are being prepared. He also visited a number of other lakes in the vicinity. On July 18-21, he flew into Waddy Lake (56° 11' N 103° 52' W), approximately 160 km south of Wollaston Lake and 30 km west of Southend. Since this lake is not in the Wollaston area and had 9 of 23 species of birds not noted in the Wollaston area, they are here discussed separately. The birds reported can be compared to other accounts of birds in the northern half of Saskatchewan.^{1 10} None of the areas discussed in these papers are very close to Waddy Lake, but are from the general area of the boreal forest.

Waddy Lake is small, divided into an upper and lower portion by a narrows. The vegetation in the moister areas, such as along the margins of the lake and streams leading into it or in the narrows between the upper and lower portions, have spruce mixed with birch, aspen and alder. The immediate edges of the water are lined with scrub willow. Low, wet areas often have low willow stands in the shallows and *Equisetum* and *Carex* stands in the area of rooted aquatics. Drier areas, such as

the upper slopes of the lake margin, have a greater percentage of spruce, with some birch or alder. The ground is covered with mosses and lichens, with low-growing or prostrate broad-leaved shrubs (blueberry, wild rose, bearberry, Labrador tea, etc.) with grasses and rushes near the water.

Species Accounts

COMMON LOON. A single bird was seen on the lake on July 18.

SPRUCE GROUSE. Two males were seen separately on July 20, in a dense spruce woods.

RUFFED GROUSE. Two females, one feeding on unripe blueberries and one leading four downy chicks, were seen in aspen brush along the east side of the lake.

BLACK TERN. One was skimming insects off the surface of the lake on the afternoon of July 19.

GREAT HORNED OWL. On July 20, one was heard about noon in a spruce-birch-willow woods along a stream valley. Later in the afternoon, one was seen in a dense spruce-alder woods. This bird was chased and harrassed by a pair of Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers.

COMMON NIGHTHAWK. On July 20, these birds were heard over the campsite on the lake edge, from 1800 through the evening.

BELTED KINGFISHER. On July 18, kingfishers were seen several times flying along a stream bordered by spruce, birch and alder, near its entrance into the lake. On July 20, two nest burrows, one active and one



Gray Jay

Wayne Lynch

abandoned, were found about 1 km up this stream in a pile of sand and boulders pushed up during the building of a winter road.

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER. On July 19, a single bird was seen feeding in the taller birches near the narrows between the upper and lower lakes. On July 21, an adult with three immatures were feeding in a birch-spruce grove along a massive rock outcrop along the lake shore. All of the larger birches in the area showed signs of woodpecker feeding activity.

BLACK-BACKED THREE-TOED WOODPECKER. A pair were seen on July 20, in a dense spruce-alder woods, where the female was feeding in live spruce trees. Both were calling continuously, apparently in response to

the presence of a Great Horned Owl, which one of them was later seen chasing.

LEAST FLYCATCHER. Two males were calling from the tops of dead birches in dense birch-alder brush on the east side of the lake.

GRAY JAY. A single bird was seen on July 20, in the top of a sentinel spruce in a willow swamp.

COMMON RAVEN. A single raven flew over the lake near camp on the evening of July 18.

WINTER WREN. A single male sang and gave alarm notes from among the exposed roots of over-turned spruce and birch, the lower branches of willow, and the ground in a closely grown wooded area in a stream valley.

The bird stuck very close to the spot and could be closely approached before moving (to 3 m), apparently indicating a nest nearby.

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET. Three individuals, two females and a male, were seen and heard in separate spruce groves along the lake margins during the afternoon of July 20.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET. Ruby-crowned Kinglets, adult and young, were seen at several places around the lake, always in spruce thickets or woods. One family group of female and four fledged young were seen, as well as a pair and a single male.

TENNESSEE WARBLER. A single male was seen singing from a birch in a birch-spruce woods along a water course.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER. Both adults and young were seen. A pair, the female with sawfly larvae in her mouth and the male with mayfly larvae and geometrid caterpillars, were disturbed in a spruce-alder woods on the slope of the lake margin. Two immatures were seen flycatching in short flights from the willows and birch in a willow swamp. On July 20, a male was seen picking insects off the branches of a black spruce.

COMMON GRACKLE. A single bird was seen flying along the shoreline of the lake early on the morning of July 20.

DARK-EYED JUNCO. Juncos were seen twice. An adult was feeding in a spruce in a spruce-alder woods on the drier portion of the shore of the lake. An immature was seen the next day calling from a dead spruce along the edge of the lake.

CHIPPING SPARROW. A pair were seen in a dense spruce-alder thicket on the afternoon of the 20th.

LINCOLN'S SPARROW. One bird was feeding in the branches of scrub

willows along the margins of an *Equisetum* marsh.

SWAMP SPARROW. An adult and an immature were seen in the alders along the lake margin. Another, single bird was seen later the same day in the willows of a willow marsh.

SONG SPARROW. Single birds were seen feeding in the underbrush along a stream feeding into the lake and in birches along the narrows between the two portions of the lake.

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⁵NERO, R. W. 1963. Birds of the Lake Athabaska region, Saskatchewan. Spec. Pub. 5, Sask. Nat. Hist. Soc., Regina. 143 pp.

⁶NERO, R. W. 1967a. Additional bird notes for Little Gull Lake, Saskatchewan. *Blue Jay* 25(1):11-14.

⁷NERO, R. W. 1967b. The birds of northeastern Saskatchewan. Spec. Pub. 6, Sask. Nat. Hist. Soc., Regina. 96 pp.

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⁹RANDALL, T. E. 1962. Birds of the Kazan Lake region, Saskatchewan. *Blue Jay* 20(2):60-72.

¹⁰SECOY, D. M. In press. Some notes on the birds of North Central Saskatchewan, July, 1976. *Blue Jay*.