



LETTERS

MARKED WHOOPING CRANES

Whooping cranes have been colour-banded on their breeding grounds in Wood Buffalo National Park, N.W.T., for the second consecutive year. On August 8, 1978, eight juvenile Whooping Cranes were captured by the Canadian Wildlife Service, fitted with 88 mm (3½") tall brightly coloured plastic leg bands and released. Each of the 1978 crop of young whoopers has a single red band with white horizontal stripe. The second colour band (if the bird has one) will be white, blue or orange. The colour bands will be highly visible if the bird is observed under good light conditions.

The purpose of marking Whooping Cranes is to learn their age at sexual maturity, to learn about permanency of the pair bonds after the birds mate, the fidelity to nest sites, longevity, importance of migration stopovers and to learn other biological information about this endangered species.

In 1977 nine young whoopers were banded and seven of them were accounted for during aerial surveys this summer. It marked the first time that known-age yearling Whooping Cranes were located on their summering range.

Anyone observing colour banded whooping cranes is urged to contact E. Kuyt, Canadian Wildlife Service, 9942 - 108 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 2J5 (phone 425-6860 or 425-5480).

1978 SASKATCHEWAN MAMMAL COUNT

Reports of mammals seen during the Christmas Bird Counts will be compiled again this year. When making your Christmas Bird Count, please note the number of each species of mammals seen, and the species of tracks that you can positively identify.

Send the list with your Bird Count by January 12, 1979, at the latest, to: Mrs. Mary I. Houston, 863 University Drive, Saskatoon, Sask. S7N 0J8.

BIRD NOTES FROM YEARS GONE BY

EDITOR'S NOTE: Some time ago the *Blue Jay* received a letter written in 1923 by Allen C. Atkinson to his sister in Ontario from Wynot, Saskatchewan, where he was teaching. The letter was dated July 26, the season of school holidays and of picnics which he was attending.

"... The best thing at the last picnic, strange to say, was an item not on the program, and consisted of the slow and stately evolutions of a flock of about 60 pelicans at a height of only about 75 feet or so and almost directly overhead. The exhibition lasted several minutes and was distinctly worthwhile. I had often seen them threading the maze of these perfectly timed movements at a distance of a mile or so, and with a brightly shining sun the effect is somewhat startling. You see spots of

glittering white for a few moments and then you see absolutely nothing for a similar period of time, but by watching closely you will see the white points reappear just as quickly and simultaneously as they had disappeared — the rhythm is perfect. They are most ungainly and awkward-looking on the ground, but when mounted they are far from that.

“Another very interesting thing to watch is the gathering of the “prairie chicken”-pintail grouse, on a knoll. It always reminds me of a French minuet — only it is far from quiet, or an initiation service of the K.K.K. Anyway, they advance towards each other with feathers ruffled and head held near the ground, and when their beaks almost touch, one scurries away with short mincing steps and whirring wings to the next one, and so all around. The peculiar thing about it is the fact that they seem to advance and retreat by zig-zag straight lines and everything seems to “go off” as smoothly and with as much gusto as the best ordered dance — and all the time, the din is terrific.”

PHOTOGRAPHER WANTS INFORMATION

I would like to appeal to readers of the *Blue Jay* for assistance in locating sites where mammals may readily be photographed in a natural setting. For example, at this time of year, one might find hibernating bats, winter burrows or nests of mammals, a frozen carcass being visited regularly by carnivores, and so on.

I would be interested in any such situation where the animal can be found with some degree of dependability, particularly at locations within 100 miles or so of Saskatoon. If anyone could help out in this regard, please telephone me at 374-

1392 or write. — Arthur D. Savage, 350 Carleton Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7H 4C1.

LIKES BLUE JAY

I am glad to see the *Blue Jay* hasn't changed much from when my grandfather introduced me to the journal while I was still in grade school. How eagerly I awaited each issue, reading it from cover to cover.

I think it a credit to its editor that we still have a journal scientifically worthy yet very readable. — Ron Jensen, 1027 King Crescent, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 0N9.

ENJOYED JUNE ISSUE

I enjoy the *Blue Jay* very much, especially “Birds of Dinosaur Provincial Park, Alberta”. In regard to the Song Sparrow in the Annotated List, could it possibly be the Dakota Song Sparrow? I thank Mr. Norbert G. Kondla for his bird article.

The photography is excellent, especially F. W. Lahrman's “A June Thunderstorm”. Colour would have given the photograph a more realistic look, especially since lightning comes in shades from pink, yellow, blue, green, off-white, plus solid reds and yellows. Many bolts travel horizontally across the sky. — Mrs. Marie C. Peronne, 10013 Greiner Road, Clarence, New York 14031.

ERRATA

In the March 1978 issue (Vol. 36 No. 1), on page 44, the authors of “Calgary Bluebird Trail — 1977” should be Harold W. Pinel and John R. Riddell.

In the June 1978 issue (Vol. 36 No. 2), on page 44, Wing-billed Gull should read Ring-billed Gull.