

RECENT SCOTER BROOD OBSERVATIONS AT CHURCHILL, MANITOBA

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Godfrey stated that "actual breeding data are few" for the Surf Scoter in Canada.⁴ In this paper, I report my observations of White-winged and Surf Scoter broods near Churchill, Manitoba, in 1980, and subsequent 1981 observations.

On 25 July 1980, I found a female White-winged Scoter with a brood of five ducklings in a muskeg wetland adjacent to Goose Creek at the Hydro Road crossing, about 11 km south of Churchill. That same day, I observed a female Surf Scoter with a brood of four ducklings on a large tundra wetland about 20 km east of Churchill near the National Research Council Launch Site. This was the first known brood record for the Surf Scoter in northeastern Manitoba.

Godfrey described the White-winged Scoter as the "commonest" scoter in most areas of northern Canada.⁴ Nero found White-winged Scoters widely distributed in the boreal forest region of northeastern Saskatchewan.⁸ Mowat and Lawrie reported a female accompanying a brood of seven of Nuelin Lake on the Manitoba-Keewatin border in 1947.⁷ At Churchill, the White-winged Scoter is a regular and fairly common summer visitor.^{6,9} This scoter occurs primarily in flocks of males during late June and early July at Cape Churchill.³ Although frequently observed, and regularly in large flocks, only one previous nest record has been published for White-winged Scoters at Churchill.¹

The breeding range of the Surf Scoter is similar to that of the White-winged Scoter, but apparently more discontinuous in eastern and central Canada.²

Harper reported nesting season observations from northeastern Saskatchewan, and numerous, large, post-breeding flocks occurred in that region.⁵ Surf Scoters are apparently much rarer at Churchill. Taverner and Sutton considered this species an irregularly common transient.⁹ Cooke et al. found them the rarest of the scoters at Cape Churchill, where they occurred mainly in offshore flocks of 100 or more.³ Jehl and Smith also reported this species as the rarest scoter at Churchill.⁶ They provided no evidence of nesting, although a pair on a stream near Goose Creek in mid-June was mentioned.

My observations of scoters at Churchill during 24-26 July 1980 differed from most earlier accounts. On 24 July, I encountered a mixed-species flock including 139 Surf, 12 Black, and one White-winged Scoter on Bird Cove, about 18 km east of Churchill. I returned to Churchill during 7-11 July 1981, and found the number of all three scoters to be different from 1980. Searching the same areas investigated the previous year revealed no scoters in muskeg wetlands along the Hydro Road, and none on the tundra wetlands near the Launch Site. On 9 July, one flock made up of 116 Black, 7 White-winged and 3 Surf Scoters was found in the surf near Fort Churchill. During the evening of 7 July, one flock of 6 male White-winged Scoters was seen flying up the Churchill River, about 18 km south of the townsite. No evidence of nesting was obtained at Churchill during my 1981 visit.

¹ALLEN, A. A. 1945. Some changes in the bird life of Churchill, Manitoba. *Auk* 62:129-134.

- ²BELLROSE, F. C. Jr. 1976. Ducks, geese and swans of North America. Stackpole Books, Harrisburg, Pa. 543 pp.
- ³COOKE, F., R. K. ROSS, R. K. SCHMIDT and A. J. PAKULAK. 1975. Birds of the tundra biome at Cape Churchill and La Perouse Bay. *Can. Field-Nat.* 89:413-422.
- ⁴GODFREY, W. E. 1966. The birds of Canada. *Nat. Mus. Canada, Bull.* 203. 428 pp.
- ⁵HARPER, F. 1953. Birds of the Nueltin Lake expedition, Keewatin, 1947. *Am. Midl. Nat.* 49:1-116.
- ⁶JEHL, J. R., Jr., and B. A. SMITH. 1970. Birds of the Churchill region, Manitoba. *Manitoba Mus. Man and Nature, Spec. Publ.* 1. 87 pp.
- ⁷MOWAT, F. M. and A. H. LAWRIE. 1955. Bird observations from southern Keewatin and the interior of northern Manitoba. *Can. Field-Nat.* 69:93-116.
- ⁸NERO, R. W. 1967. The birds of north-eastern Saskatchewan. *Saskatchewan Nat. Hist. Soc., Spec. Publ.* 6. 96 pp.
- ⁹TAVERNER, P. A. and G. M. SUTTON. 1934. The birds of Churchill, Manitoba. *Annals Carnegie Mus.* 23:1-83.

PRINCE ALBERT BLUEBIRD TRAIL REPORT — 1981

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This report contains the results of the 1981 season for the Prince Albert Bluebird Trail. In all, 106 nest boxes were checked between 22 July and 27 July.

This year, we found one Tree Swallow nest that contained nine young, the most we have ever had in a single box. Prior to this, we had only occasionally found boxes that contained eight young.

House Sparrows have been only a minor annoyance in the past. However, this year they burgeoned to 23 of 106 boxes from only 5 of 108 boxes last year.

Among the six empty boxes, three that were adjacent to poplar bluffs contained a loose aggregation of twigs, likely House Wrens' attempts at preventing an intrusion into their territory.

Occupancy of 106 boxes

Tree Swallow	76
House Sparrow	23
Mountain Bluebird	1
Empty	6

Success

<i>Young fledged</i>	<i>Young died</i>
410	11
77 (all destroyed)	1
7	0

Tree Swallow Mortality — 2.6%

Tree Swallow Average Clutch Size — 5.7

Tree Swallow Average Fledged 5.4