

SNOWY EGRET AT CROOKED LAKE, SASKATCHEWAN

DON WEIDL, Box 435, Broadview,
Saskatchewan, S0G 0K0.

Over the past five years people in the Crooked Lake area have reported egrets to me along the Qu'Appelle River near Sunset Beach resort. However, I have never followed up these reports until this year.

On 5 May 1978, Milton Criddle of Broadview told me that he had seen an egret on the Qu'Appelle. At 0900 on 7 May, George Anderson and I were travelling along Highway No. 47 when we spotted an egret near the Qu'Appelle River approximately 1.0 km east of Sunset Beach on Crooked Lake. We walked down to the river to get a better look and to try to photograph the bird. We pushed it several times, getting good views through 8x40 binoculars and several pictures with a 35mm camera and telephoto lens. It was not until the bird flew that I was satisfied that this was a Snowy Egret.

The white body, black bill and legs, yellow feet and closed "S" of the neck when flying were the identifying features.³ We then canoed down the Qu'Appelle to try getting closer to the egret and take more pictures. By slowly drifting with the current we were able to get within 50 m of the bird getting excellent views.

There have been a few other sightings of the Snowy Egret in Saskatchewan, but to my knowledge no photographs were obtained. Joyce Gunn saw a Snowy Egret at Spirit Lake, 23-29 May 1956.¹ Mr. E. Cox and Mr. A. Swanston saw Snowy Egrets east of Craven on 9 July 1956.⁵ Wayne Weber saw a Snowy Egret on 19 June 1970 at the Cypress

Lake dam, south of Maple Creek, Saskatchewan.⁵ On 15 May 1977 and 3-4 June 1978, J. B. Gollop and others studied single adults near Saskatoon.^{2 4}

¹ ANAKA, W. 1956. The Snowy Egret. *Blue Jay* 14:89-90.

² O'NEIL, D. P. 1978. Saskatoon birds, May 30-July 26, 1978. *Saskatoon Field Notes* 7(2):1-10.

³ ROBBINS, C. S., B. BRUUN and H. S. ZIM. 1966. *Birds of North America*. Golden Press, New York.

⁴ SERR, E. M. 1977. Northern Great Plains Region, *American Birds* 31:1013-1016.

⁵ WEBER, W. C. 1971. Sight record of a Snowy Egret at Cypress Lake, Saskatchewan. *Blue Jay* 29:134-135.

FURTHER NOTES ON THE ARRIVAL OF THE HOUSE SPARROW

C. STUART HOUSTON, 863 University Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 0J8.

My article on the spread of the House Sparrow² overlooked two important early reports, from Carberry, Manitoba and Carnduff, Saskatchewan.

Ernest Thompson Seton³ reported that the House Sparrow "first appeared at Carberry in 1892, but was not found in numbers until 1894." This antedates Macoun's 1894 Winnipeg report by two years. By early 1909, Seton said this new arrival was "found in all the settled portions of Manitoba, and at every farmhouse and in all the towns of the North-west as far as Athabaska Landing, Alberta."

In his history of Saskatchewan, John Hawkes had the following account: "We cannot say when the pugnacious and voracious English sparrow first made his appearance in the Territories. We first saw him in May, 1900. We were sitting outside the hotel at Carnduff on the American boundary, and opposite were four grain elevators. Noticing some birds I said to a fellow loafer, 'Those look to me like English sparrows.' 'They are,' he said, 'they came here last fall and took possession of that elevator, and turned the grey birds out. They go into all the other elevators, but they won't let any grey bird come into theirs. They go from town to town but I think this is as far as they have got on this line yet'."¹

¹HAWKES, J. 1924. Wildlife (Vol. 2, Chapter 91, pp. 899-907) in: The Story of Saskatchewan and its People. S. J. Clark Publishing Co., Regina.

²HOUSTON, C. S. 1978. Arrival of the House Sparrow on the prairies. *Blue Jay* 36:99-102.

³SETON, E.T. 1909. Fauna of Manitoba — Mammals and Birds (pp. 183-227) in: A Handbook to Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba. Prepared for the 79th annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Winnipeg.

MERLINS BREEDING AT BRANDON, MANITOBA

MAMIE McCOWAN, 1415 - 8th Street, Brandon, Manitoba, R7A 3Z6.

In the March 1978 issue of *Blue Jay* (vol. 36, no. 1) there is an article entitled "Merlins Wintering and Breeding at Brandon, Manitoba".

This report included a 1977 nesting in Brandon Fair Grounds.

In 1978 a pair of Merlins nested in the Brandon Fair Grounds and raised five young. The first report in 1978 from a qualified observer, was of two Merlins seen in February in the 1977 nest area, and they were observed there in following months by several people.

On 1 July, Hazel Patmore spotted the nest in a tall spruce tree, about a metre from the tip. At that time she and I saw three fluffy young birds, one in the nest and two on branches near the nest. The parent birds seemed to keep watch from cottonwood trees to the west and one would sometimes fly over our heads screaming when we were near the nest tree. Earlier that day Hazel had seen a Merlin in a cottonwood with a small bird, which it was plucking. On 3 July, she saw four young birds in the nest tree. Observations on 10 July were of young Merlins in nearby trees. On 13 July, I saw five Merlins that I took to be young birds. They were flying low over an open grassy area southwest of the nest site, from crossbars of power poles, and would often fly up into trees in an adjacent park. They did not appear to be excited by my presence, unlike the usual behavior of a parent bird. I have a note of two of the young Merlins perching close together and picking at each other. My last summer record is of two birds seen on 23 July.

On 15 September, I heard a Merlin in the Fair Grounds, and have the following subsequent reports of a Merlin being seen and/or heard in the Fair Grounds or in Brandon Cemetery, which is approximately half a kilometre south: 22 September, 6 October, 3 November, 15, 24 (a female), and 25 December.