

CATTLE EGRET NEST RECORD FOR SASKATCHEWAN

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During an aerial survey of Old Wives Lake (ca. 40 km southwest of Moose Jaw) on 9 June 1981 aerial photos were taken of the White Pelican and Double-crested Cormorant colony and the adjacent Great Blue Heron and Black-crowned Night Heron colony. Later examination of the photos showed that a white bird was present within the heronry.

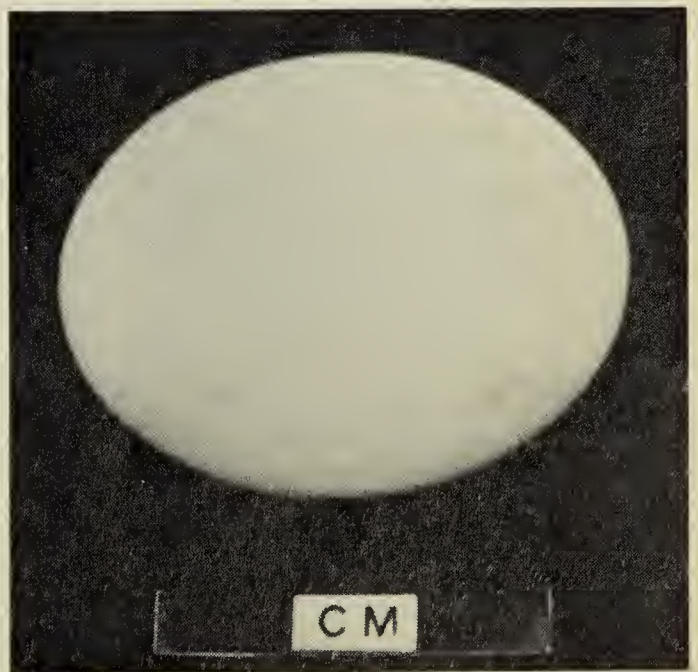
On 30 June, Bill Russon and I collected food samples from the young pelicans and cormorants on that island. While there, we visited the heronry to check on the white bird that was evident in the photos. The heronry was in a small clump of aspen trees. When we approached the aspen grove a white heron-like bird flushed and circled overhead. It had buff patches on its head, breast, and back, yellowish bill and legs and a relatively small body size. These characteristics identified it as a Cattle Egret. We entered the heronry, occupied by nesting Great Blue and Black-crowned Night Herons, and spotted another egret sitting on a nest. The nest of sticks and twigs was placed ca. 5.5 m (18') above ground in an aspen. As we neared, the egret stood up on the nest's edge and then flew. I climbed the tree. The nest contained three very pale blue (almost white), unmarked eggs. They were short-oval to almost elliptical in shape and had a smooth, dull finish.

To further verify the find, one egg was taken from the nest and subsequently photographed and measured. The measurements were 43.5 mm x 34.0 mm (see accompanying photo). The egg has been incorporated into the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural

History's egg collection (Acc. No. 4049).

On subsequent visits to the island in connection with the food study (up to and including 14 July), the egrets were observed either flying around the island or sitting on the nest.

The cattle egret, indigenous to the Old World, was first recorded in Canada off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland in the fall of 1952.² The first nest record for Canada was on 4 June 1962 at Luther Marsh, Wellington County, Ontario.¹ On 14-17 June 1974, Hugh Hedger reported the first sightings of Cattle Egrets in Saskatchewan at the Nis'ku Goose Project near Eyebrow.⁴ By 1978, there were six reported sightings of the Cattle Egret in Saskatchewan.³ The nest record reported here is the first for Saskatchewan. With its apparent continuing range extension, more nest records will undoubtedly be found for the province in the near future.



Cattle Egret egg.

Keith Roney

¹ BUERKLE, UDO, and W. DAN MANSELL. 1963. First nesting record of the Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) in Canada. *Auk* 80(3): 378-379.

² GODFREY, W. EARL. 1954. The Cattle Egret at sea off Newfoundland. *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 68(3): 139-140.

³ HJERTAAS, DALE. 1979. The Cattle Egret arrives in Saskatchewan. *Blue Jay* 37(2): 104-107.

⁴ HOUSTON, C. S., and M. I. HOUSTON. 1974. The nesting season: June 1, 1974 - July 31, 1974, Northern Great Plains. *American Birds* 28(5): 915-918.

THE GREAT GRAY OWLS THAT WEREN'T

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On 22 July 1982 at 2200 Houston received a phone call from Doug Sadler reporting three or four hornless, earless, large owls sitting on poles near his farm home 10 mi. south of Saskatoon. Sadler had earlier seen one of these owls in daylight and noted the yellow eyes that excluded the possibility of Barred Owls, for which there is only one nest record in Saskatchewan. Instead, Sadler felt these must be juvenile Great Gray Owls, for which there are only two, possibly three, documented nest records for the province. Since even at this latitude it was already pitch dark, we arranged to meet at Sadler's farm the following evening at 2000. By that time Marc Bechard would have arrived from Huntington, West Virginia, for a weekend of Swainson's Hawk banding.

On 23 July, joined by Bechard, Mary Houston, Kelly Wylie, and Chris Escott, Sadler and the five of us searched the small aspen "bluffs" where the owls had been seen the previous evening. After two hours without success, just before 2200, we heard the plaintive calls of the hungry young owls. Their call was, to our ears, exactly the same as the call of

the young Great Gray Owl on Roger Tory Peterson's *Field Guide to the Western Birds* song album to which we had listened at supper time. We followed the calls for a quarter mile and obtained good silhouettes against the night sky of very large owls with smooth hornless heads. We weren't sure the heads were large enough for Great Gray



Young Great Horned Owl.

Chris Escott