

he witnessed were without provocation that he could discover, two, one for each species, were when pursued by a Sparrowhawk.

Thus, although frequently performed as play and a way of exercising, erratic flights can be used as a means of escaping pursuit by a predator. I describe erratic flight in a yearling American Crow in my recent book, *THE AMERICAN CROW AND THE COMMON RAVEN* (1989, Texas A&M University Press), p.151.

The erratic flight I witnessed could be that of a highly-strung individual's reaction to a stressful situation as suggested by Dr. Nero; my Downy may have been more exposed to attack than the other two woodpeckers (if a Merlin was present) so they did not perform as she did. Other causes might be those mentioned by Dr. Kilham, i.e., play or exercise.

I am most grateful for the consideration given to my inquiries by Drs. Houston, Kilham and Nero.



*Downy Woodpecker*  
Juhachi Asai

## HOODED MERGANSER IN EAST-CENTRAL SASKATCHEWAN

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The Hooded Merganser has been considered a rare species in east-central Saskatchewan. Maurice Street reported one bird for 1948 and one for 1953 in the Nipawin area.<sup>3</sup> Wayne Harris saw six birds on McBride Lake 18 September 1976 (*pers. comm.*). Ronald Hooper and I have only four sight records with a total

of about 11 individuals seen in the Somme area between 1951 and May 1987. That is why we were surprised to find the species fairly common at Greenwater and Marean lakes in Greenwater Provincial Park while we were doing a survey of waterfowl departure dates during the fall migrations of 1987 and 1988.

The greatest number of birds seen in one day was 150 at Greenwater Lake on 28 October 1988. Because we have not made a late fall study on waterfowl of the park before, we do not know if this species is regular there every year. It is likely, however, that Hooded Mergansers find the woodland lakes in the park a very suitable place for a stopover and that they do this consistently in fall migration.

In five areas surveyed, the largest number of sightings occurred between 18 October and 1 November:

**Greenwater L:** 23/9/88 - 3; 10/10/87 - 2; 25/10/88 - 30; 28/10/87 - 5; 28/10/88 - 150; 31/10/88 - 4; 6/11/87 - 6; 8/11/87 - 6; 12/11/87 - 5; 14/11/87 - 9.

**Bjork L:** 7/10/88 - 2; 18/10/88 - 12

**Big Piwei L:** 23/10/88 - 15

**Marean L:** 31/10/88 - 30; 1/11/88 - 10; 4/11/88 - 4; 7/11/88 - 3; 12/11/87 - 1; 14/11/87 - 8; 16/11/87 - 1

**Weekes-Red Deer R:** 10/10/88 - 2

Our early spring arrival date is 28 April 1984 (Bertwell) and departure is 12 May 1987 (Somme). The earliest fall arrival, three males probably in migration, is 23 September 1988 (Greenwater Lake); the latest fall departure is 16 November 1987 (Marean Lake).

Prior to 1988 there was only one summer record for the area, which was one pair seen on the Red Deer River north of Weekes in late June 1951 (R. Hooper, D. Hooper).<sup>2</sup> With three breeding records added in 1988, one might call this "the year of the Hooded Merganser!"

On 2 June 1988, while watching Blue-winged Teals and Mallards on a beaver pond in the mixed forest 2 mi. south of Somme, I was surprised to see a female Hooded Merganser, very distinct with her crest and narrow bill. She was there again on 27 June; this time she had some newly hatched young swimming with her. It was hard to make out the ducklings among the floating debris and duckweed that covered the surface of

the water. As the mother swam deeper into the shadows I counted six little balls of fluff following her and there could have been more. Then I noticed a little movement beside a floating log and I could see that it was the male. He was very inconspicuous as he kept his showy crest flattened.

Further evidence of breeding was obtained on 11 July. While Carl and Joyce Mohr and I were boating near the east shore of Marean Lake we saw a female Hooded Merganser with nine young. They were swimming in the open water about 6 feet from the bulrushes and sedges. Having a good look at the mother bird with binoculars, I again saw the distinctive crest and narrow bill. The ducklings looked about 2-3 weeks old.

A third breeding record was reported by Herman Duerksen, who lives at Greenwater Lake. In the last few years he has become a keen birdwatcher and feeds birds year round. Herman often goes canoeing along the lakeshore with field guide and binoculars. In late June he saw a pair of Hooded Mergansers with five young.

In 1986 W. E. Godfrey listed Brightwater Reservoir, Big Quill Lake and Tobin Lake as breeding localities for Hooded Merganser in Saskatchewan.<sup>1</sup> Although we have added three more breeding records, this species is still a rare summer resident in our area. The number of birds seen in Greenwater Provincial Park in fall migration indicates that most of them nest elsewhere.

<sup>1</sup> GODFREY, W.E. 1986. The birds of Canada. Rev. ed. Nat. Mus. of Canada, Ottawa. 595 pp.

<sup>2</sup> HOOPER, R. and D. HOOPER. 1954. A preliminary list of the birds of the Somme district. Contribution No. 3, Yorkton Nat. Hist. Soc.

<sup>3</sup> HOUSTON, C.S. and M.G. STREET. 1959. The birds of the Saskatchewan River - Carlton to Cumberland. Spec. Pub. No. 2, Sask. Nat. Hist. Soc. 205 pp.



Hooded Merganser

Wayne Lynch

## A FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER AT DRUMHELLER, ALBERTA

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The "Golden Eagles," senior citizens from the Saskatoon Natural History Society, visited Drumheller, Alberta, on 1 June 1988 and in the evening a few members briefly birded the McMullen Island Picnic Area. There, F. Hartley Fredeen, Thelma V. Pepper and I observed a Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*), a rare vagrant from South America.<sup>17</sup>

As the species was not on documented, confirmed or hypothetical lists for any of the western provinces, the bird was the first recorded in the West.<sup>11 3</sup> It was Canada's sixth record.<sup>7</sup>

The site, by the McMullen Island access road in Midland Provincial Park, was about 400 m from the junction with North Dinosaur Trail. It was beside the Red Deer River about 50 m south of a maintenance shed. Vegetation was shrub willows along the shore, mixed scrub thickets above the bank, and riverine cottonwoods and poplars; across the narrow river were sagebrush flats and arid hillsides.

Hearing unfamiliar calls upon arrival, the group started to track down this first mystery bird (eventually found to be a