

a.m. My first thought, viewing the bird with a pair of 8 X 42 Pentax roof prism binoculars, was a pigeon. The bird resembled a Rock Dove in the grey plumage, but with yellow feet and yellow black-tipped bill. Edging closer, I viewed the bird for about 10 minutes from 10 m, noting the iridescence behind the head down on to the back, white line between iridescence and greyish-purple head, darker wings, grey body and tail with a noticeable darker grey band in the tail. I thought ...B and-tailed Pigeon?

Not sure of the field marks, I hustled back to the cabin where the bird books were waiting. I looked through: *Birds of North America*, National Geographic Society; *Birds of North America* 1st ed. by Robbins *et al.* and *Field Guide to Western Birds* 3rd ed. by Peterson. These all confirmed that what I had seen was a Band-tailed Pigeon, a lifer, a long way from home given the range maps.

I set out again with a camera. Julie and Jeffrey, wife and son, back from a round of golf, also viewed the bird, now sitting sleepily in the shade in a White Birch. They both saw the field marks of yellow bill with a black tip and yellow feet, white stripe on back of head and band in the tail and compared the bird to one of the field guides. My two photographs, with a 50 mm lens at 50 m were disappointing. Several unsuccessful attempts were made to find the Band-tailed Pigeon until 11 August 1995 when we left Marean Lake.

Don Hooper does not list Band-tailed Pigeon in the *Birds of East-Central Saskatchewan*. This sighting adds a new species to the area. There have been ten additional sightings in Saskatchewan as reported in the seventh edition, *Field*

Checklist of Saskatchewan, October 1990. This sighting is the most northeasterly record within Saskatchewan to date.

- Ron Jensen, 849 - 10th Avenue North East, Swift Current, SK. S9H 2T6

PARTIAL ALBINO MAGPIE

The grey and white Black-billed Magpie pictured below became a common visitor in the vicinity of the yard of Alec and Laila Johnson, two miles south of Archerwill throughout the summer and fall of 1995.

- Elaine Hughes, Box 309, Archerwill, SK. S0E 0B0



Partial Albino Magpie Elaine Hughes

FOXES IN SOUTH-CENTRAL SASKATCHEWAN

My father, Knut Jordheim homesteaded some 40 miles north of Swift Current, approximately 2 miles north of the South Saskatchewan River in 1908. I remember him mentioning "kit foxes" that would chew harnesses if left on the ground overnight. I presume these were actually Swift Foxes.

I was born in 1921 and in my early years I spent a lot of time in the nearby river breaks, never seeing or hearing of foxes in the wild. In 1930, a neighbour 1/2 mile south of our farm, started a fox farm with silver foxes and an occasional red fox brought in for crossbreeding to supposedly improve the silver colouring. A good silver fox was black with a generous sprinkling of white hairs over the black and a large white tip on the tail. Many of the progeny were a slate blue-black colour, and so, not a very valuable pelt.

There were reports of a fox escaping once in awhile, but I never saw any and at that time most farmers or their sons ran a trapline for coyotes, so an escaped fox would have a difficult time to survive. The fox farm enterprise came to a sudden end in 1941. During the 1950s a local man, now deceased, told me that he had been trapping foxes in the Kyle area, I assumed that it was north of Kyle.

My first contact with a wild Red Fox came on 17 November 1966 when it ran onto the road in front of my truck, 2 miles north of my present farm. The snow was perhaps 10" deep and the fox chose to stay on the hard track. I showed down to give it a chance to get off, but it would not, so deciding this was a good chance to destroy it, as I raised poultry, I stepped on the gas and drove over it, stopping immediately and picking it up. It was killed instantly and I found it was a female, weighing 10 pounds and measuring 44" in length.

During the 1970s and 1980s foxes became quite plentiful and I remember counting dens beside the road, from my farm in Kyle, a distance of 17 miles. No doubt there were many more that I was not aware of.

During the last few years we have been seeing foxes that are infected with mange and are not as plentiful in this area. During the 1920s and 1930s and into the 1940s there was an abundance of jackrabbits, then in the late 1950s and 1960s a great decline and I wonder if this is not due to the high population of foxes capturing the young rabbits.

- Sig Jordheim, Box 544, Kyle, SK. S0L 1T0

TURKEY VULTURES TO HUMMINGBIRDS: BIODIVERSITY AT SPARC

With 1995, came the 75th anniversary celebration of the Semiarid Prairie Agricultural Research Centre (SPARC), formerly known as the Swift Current Research Station. The number "75" was spelled out in white petunias against a red floral background in the "Horseshoe Garden," a well-known local landmark. The 4th of July festivities were honoured by the presence of Agriculture Minister Ralph Goodale. As the spouse of the current director and an avid birder, I wish to advertise another reason why this piece of government land should be cause for celebration.

I have had the privilege and pleasure to live on the Centre's grounds for the past year. The landscape that surrounds our house and nearby buildings resembles a lush oasis in the heart of pastures and cultivated fields. This is the result of a gradual change from semiarid grassland, 75 years ago, to a mixed region of park and prairie.

This concentration of greenery is also a magnet for birdlife, with an amazing richness of species diversity. I have counted 157 bird species to date, including 17 sparrows, 24 warblers and vireos and six types of