

A couple of days later I walked over to the old tractor in the coulee. I could see the adult wren scurrying among the branches of a nearby willow tree. It was continually chattering and scolding. I didn't see it fly over to the tractor but thought this was a good sign. A week or so later another visit to the tractor revealed three or four wrens flitting among the poplar trees. I took this to mean that the parents had found the tractor again after its six-hour absence and successfully nurtured the young birds.

- Brian McArton, Box 73, Dilke, SK. S0G 1C0

A POSSIBLE SIGHTING OF AN ESKIMO CURLEW

On 20 May 1996 near Kipling, Saskatchewan, Boyd Metzler and I flushed a large shorebird from a summer fallow field about 200 m from Kipling Marsh. The bird was instantly recognized as a curlew species from the down-turned bill. It was not a Long-billed Curlew as the bill was too short. I had never seen an Eskimo Curlew or a Whimbrel, but I knew it was one or the other. The bird landed on a spit leading out into the marsh/lake. The conditions for observing the bird were excellent. The sky was clear with a moderate breeze. The bird was about 70 metres away from us and the sun was at our backs when looking at the bird. We observed the bird from 6:30-7:30 p.m. from our vehicle using a 16-36 power spotting scope.

The overall plumage was grayish brown. After the bird landed, it adjusted its wings, lifting them above its body exposing the wing lining. The lining was reddish-brown. The bird had a faint eye line. I had a good view of the crown when the bird

faced us. It was darker than the rest of the body plumage with no discernible stripe down the centre of the head. The bill had a gentle down curve with a slight kink near the end.

I could not estimate the size of the bird, as it was sitting by itself with no other shorebirds near by. The bill seemed thicker and somewhat longer than what our field guides described as an Eskimo Curlew bill. Unfortunately, at the time, I was not aware of other field marks such as markings on the primaries. Boyd felt it was a Whimbrel based on the bill shape and length. However he didn't observe the wing linings or the crown patch.

Unfortunately the bird flew after 30 minutes and neither of us were able to get a second look at the wing lining and primaries. This bird had some characteristics described for an Eskimo Curlew but further study was needed to make a positive identification.

The next day Boyd and I returned to the same location. It was overcast and drizzling. We couldn't see any birds as we drove along the field where we flushed the curlew the previous day. Suddenly from the summer fallow field three curlews took flight. The birds were greyish. I didn't have time to get a good look through my binoculars but I rolled down the truck window and shut off the engine. I heard one of the birds calling "tu, tu, tu, tu, tu" five times. Based on the song I heard and comparison to a tape of bird songs, I concluded that at least one of the birds was a Whimbrel. Since all three birds resembled each other, I assume they were all Whimbrels. The birds flew off northward and disappeared in another marshy area several kilometres away.

This area had other shorebirds. Over the two outings we counted 17 Black-bellied Plovers, 5 Ruddy Turnstones, 176 American Golden-Plovers, 1 Piping Plover, 2 American Avocets, 1 Lesser Yellowlegs, 1 Willet, 3 Spotted Sandpipers, 3 Marbled Godwits, 32 Sanderlings, 16 Semipalmated Sandpipers, 18 Pectoral Sandpipers, 5 Short-billed Dowitchers, 1 Wilson's Phalarope and 17 Red-necked Phalaropes.

- John Pollock, Box 353, Whitewood, SK.
S0G 5C0

WINTERING OF A YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER AT LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA

We have been very fortunate to have observed the wintering of a Yellow-rumped Warbler in our backyard in Lethbridge, Alberta from 16 December 1995 through to early March 1996. The warbler was first observed in the early morning of 16 December near one of our backyard suet feeders. We identified it as a Yellow-rumped Warbler from the pale yellow epaulet, the distinctive yellow patch on the rump of the bird and the throat near white or buff white. At 2:00 p.m. the bird was observed again in the backyard. The unofficial recorded temperature was -23°C.

Following are excerpts from our journal, the temperatures recorded are unofficial.

18 December 1995 we again noticed the warbler near one of the suet feeders in the backyard. We became concerned as to what it might eat. We mixed up some pastry using lots of lard and cooked it so that we could crumble the pastry with some fine ground suet. We sprinkled the pastry crumbs beneath the suet feeder that

the warbler had been visiting. It was not long before we noticed the warbler feeding in the area where we had scattered the pastry and ground suet. We noticed the warbler was usually seen with a small flock of House Sparrows. Recorded temperature was -23°C.

26 December 1995 the warbler was again observed in the backyard, feeding beneath the suet feeder, and in the area where we scattered pastry crumbs and ground suet. The temperature had moderated and we had not seen the warbler for some time.

5 January 1996 the weather turned very cold, we recorded the temperature to be -31°C. The Yellow-rumped Warbler was observed in the backyard feeding on and beneath the suet feeder.

8 January 1996 the weather had moderated some. We noticed the warbler feeding on small bits of suet dropped on the snow from the other birds. We also noticed that the warbler was feeding quite late in the evening after 5:30 p.m. It is usually shortly after 5:00 p.m. that we notice the Downy Woodpecker enter his sleeping cavity but the warbler fed until nearly dark.

14 January 1996 the weather turned cold again, we recorded a temperature of -25°C. The Yellow-rumped Warbler was observed feeding on the sundeck, where we normally have a small suet ball for the flickers to chase around. Small bits of suet had been scattered on the deck surface by the feeding flickers. The warbler would feed on these small pieces of loose suet. The warbler appeared to be becoming less flighty, it would tolerate us moving around in the house while it fed on