

## NORTHERN BREEDING OF AMERICAN AVOCET

My first sighting of American Avocets in our area was on 23 May 1993. Eight of them were feeding in shallow water beside the road where it crosses a large slough, six miles north and three miles west of Paddockwood, Saskatchewan. I will never forget their grace and beauty, their striking black and white plumage set off by their pinkish tan head and neck and blue legs. While feeding they went from side to side just below the water surface.

I went back a few times to photograph these beauties. Several neighbours stopped when they saw my tripod and some object on it pointed at the birds — but were reassured to find it was my camera and telephoto lens and not a gun. Once, four of the avocets flew close to me, landed on the road and walked towards me, variously jumping over each other,

reminding me of a sandhill crane ritual. I wonder what was their intent? Curiosity?

The highlight of the season was on an evening well into June when we saw an adult bird sitting on a muskrat push-up trying to shield two or three young under its wings. This was the only time we saw the young birds but a breeding record was thereby confirmed, the farthest north for this longitude. Late in the summer we saw about thirty avocets resting on the far side of the slough, presumably gathering for their southward migration. They have not been seen in our area since.

**Acknowledgement** I wish to thank Dr. Stuart Houston for his encouragement and for putting this note on disk.

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*American Avocet*

*John Dinius*