

Figure 1. Vulture wing tags (6) sighted outside Saskatchewan, but omitting two sighted in Venezuela. Nest of origin is a square; the number within the circle indicates the number of years elapsed before the sighting at that point. The dotted line is diagrammatic and does not represent the route of travel during the elapsed year(s). The vulture sighted in Montana at 2 years had returned to within 36 km of its nest of origin at 3 years.

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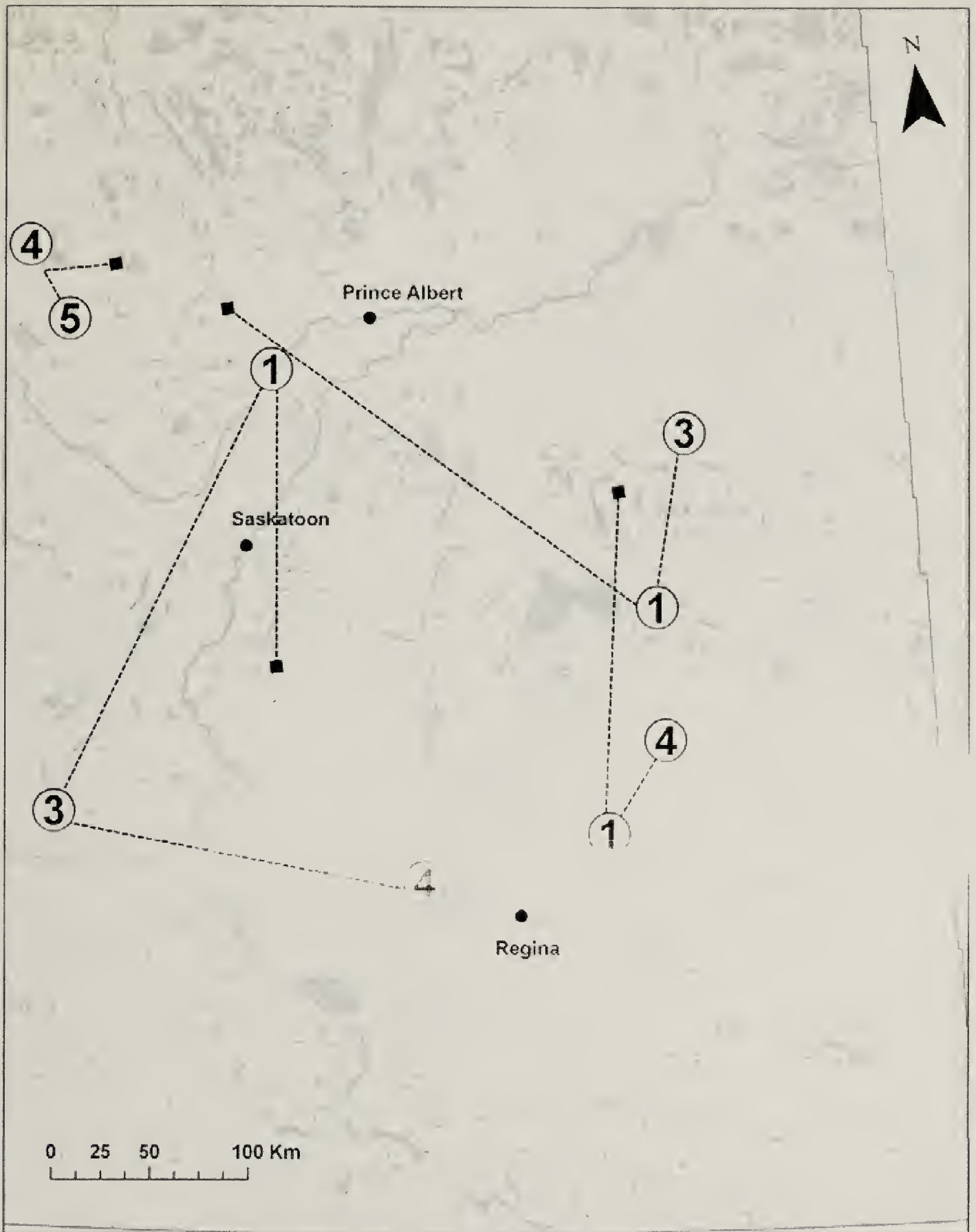


Figure 2. Vulture wing-tags (4) sighted >1 year, more than once.

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Saskatchewan. Of these, three were encountered two times: from a nest at Bapaume to Cater at 4 years and Robinhood at 5 years; from Mont Nebo to Fishing Lake at 1 year and Chelan at 3 years; and from Archerwill to Fort Qu'Appelle at 1 year and Ituna at 4 years. The fourth was encountered

three times, from a nest at Hanley north to Shellbrook at 1 year, south to Kyle at 3 years, and east to Buffalo Pound Lake at 4 years (Fig. 2). On 12 occasions, 12 different vultures were encountered once each at 5, 4, and 3 years; three at 2 years, and six at 1 year (Fig. 3).

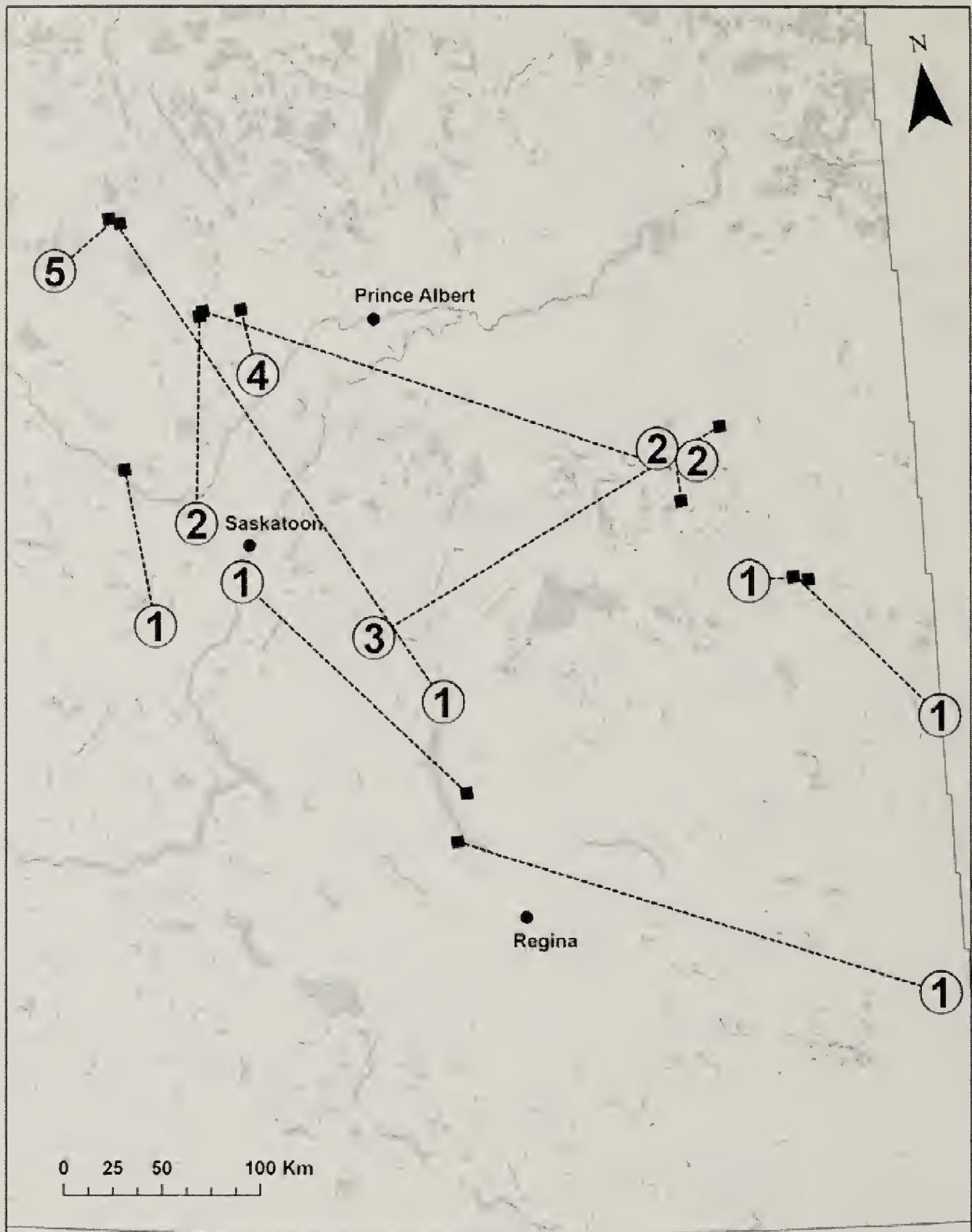


Figure 3. Vulture wing-tags (12) sighted >1 year, only once.

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The percentage of encounters increased with years elapsed since tagging (Table 1), which is opposite to other studies of marked birds, where sighting numbers typically are halved each consecutive year after marking (e.g., Great Horned Owls¹). To explain sightings increasing in frequency with age, one might postulate that many

vultures, 1 and 2 years after tagging, do not return to or near Saskatchewan, where the public is more likely to be aware of vulture tagging and to whom to report. Tagged vultures sighted at 1 year were an average of 267 km from their nest of origin (n=12). This distance declined to 210 km (n=5) in the second year, 207 km (n=5) in the

third year, 147 km (n=5) in the fourth year, and 37 km (n=3) in the fifth year. In Wisconsin, a 10-year (1983–1993) study of wing-tagged vultures showed that “if a fledgling eventually returns ... it typically makes its reappearance during its third year” (Michael J. Mossman, pers. comm.).

Readers should be on the watch for tagged vultures, as tagged examples of these long-lived birds increase in numbers each year. We will watch closely in 2009 and 2010 for evidence that this species can begin breeding as early as 6 or 7 years; the only breeding Turkey Vulture of known age in North America to date was 11 years old.³ That vulture, LeftGreen-11, probably hatched in late May 1986, was tagged in July, and fledged in August 1986. It did not return until 15 April 1989, just short of 3 years of age. On 2

June 1997, this vulture was an adult on two eggs in a different outcrop nest, only 1.2 km from its natal site, at or near 11 years of age (Michael J. Mossman, pers. comm.)

Acknowledgements

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1. HOUSTON, C.S. 1978. Recoveries of Saskatchewan-banded Great Horned Owls. *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 92:61-66.
2. HOUSTON, C.S., G.L. HOLROYD, B. TERRY, M. BLOM, and M.J. STOFFEL. 2007. Tracking Saskatchewan nestling Turkey Vultures. *Blue Jay* 65:201-207.
3. KIRK, D.A. and M.J. MOSSMAN. 1998. Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*). *Birds of North America* #339.



SPRING

April has its way
does what it will with spring—
blustery cold its wind
a sullen overcast its skies
and dabs of dirty crusted snow
patched on a greasy field

Two sharp-tailed grouse
in buffs of browns—crested, sedate, alert—
step mincingly about
the hummocky stubble plowed last fall
toe the mud and snow and bleached and matted straw
for food, here better fare
than winter's sparse lean peckings

Two meadowlarks
arrivals from the south
drop in, all unannounced
at once assume they're fellow grouse
or quail-like cousins
stride and weave among the larger birds
their tails a-flick, their knowing beaks
poking likely spots for seeds or bugs
their striking yellow breasts a sign of spring
a sudden warm world's welcome to the season

-Victor C. Friesen