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# NOTES AND LETTERS

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## NORTHERN GOSHAWKS MOVE BACK SOUTH

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A Northern Goshawk nest, a rare find in Saskatchewan, is both a thrill and a challenge. North of Shellbrook, about 1991, a pair was known to swoop down at dogs and people if they walked near the foot of the nest tree. Usually, a bander climbing to the nest suffers a number of forceful hits, either while ascending, at the nest, or only during the descent.

Probably the first goshawk banded and certainly the first recovered in North America was #202 406, banded by Harry L. Felt, at Findlater, Saskatchewan, on 4 August 1922. It was killed at Bostwick, Nebraska, 26 April 1926. The next six were banded in 1934-35; Bird Banding Notes 2(13):204 and 207, 1935, made the incorrect claim that the goshawk banded at Waukesha, Wisconsin, when it flew against the backdrop of a tennis court in hot pursuit of a Blue Jay, was the first ever banded in North America.

Most goshawk nests in Canada are, as Frank L. Beebe relates, restricted to coniferous or mixed forest.<sup>2</sup> The following sites are depicted as proven nest records in Alan R. Smith's *Atlas of Saskatchewan Birds*<sup>5</sup>. I have banded at three nests found near Elaine Lake by Rick Miller, Al Melnychuk and Wayne C. Harris in 1978: one with 3 young and a second with one young, both on 14 June, and another with 2 young on 23 June. The latter nest had a young dead on the ground, apparently blown out of the nest and killed on the ground by a

coyote. In 1979 Merv Syroteuk and Brian Johns took us to a nest with three young, 45 feet above ground in a black poplar, north of Canwood, on 3 July. On 1 July 1992, Muriel Carlson and Lois Wooding directed us to a nest with one young 43 feet above ground in a jackpine, along the ski trail northeast of Duck Lake. All of these nests were in mixed forest in keeping with Beebe's predictions. The same holds for a nest found by Stan Shadick on 22 May 1971 on the Papikwan River near Smokey Burn in the Pasquia Hills. This nest was revisited the next year by Lynn Oliphant on 20 May and had only one downy young, about ten days old, present when Bob Rafuse visited on 24 June.

Before the days of white settlement, two oologists found Goshawk nests when they visited the parkland area of the territory of Assiniboia, within what is now eastern Saskatchewan, far south of any natural conifers. Walter Raine took a set of two eggs while visiting the Baines family at Crescent Lake, west of Saltcoats, on 24 May 1890.<sup>4</sup> The size and description of the eggs exclude any possibility of a Cooper's Hawk nest having been misidentified. Edward Arnold was shown a nest with two eggs, 8 feet above ground in a willow, near Fort Qu'Appelle on 28 May 1895.<sup>1</sup> At the time, the Common Raven was more common than the American Crow.

As patches of aspen forest were cleared and land was broken, the gos-

hawks and ravens appear to have retreated north to their expected habitat in the mixed forest. The remaining goshawk nests have been located farther south in pure aspen habitat, with no conifers near, contrary to Beebe's predictions. I first learned of recent nesting, in pure aspen stands in parkland, in 1981. Conservation Officer Bob Finley found a nest 30 feet above ground, in an aspen, on the farm of Clayton Robertson, just outside of the north boundary of the Red Pheasant Indian Reserve 10 miles west and one mile south of Baljennie. Two young were banded on 13 June. In 1982, goshawks built a nest in thick aspen forest five miles west and 1.5 miles south of Sonningdale; when visited by Bob Finley and me on 23 June it contained only an addled egg. Near Raymore, in 1985, a pair remained throughout summer, though no nest was located by Wayne Harris.<sup>3</sup> On 6 July 1984, Ken De Smet found a nest with 3 large young, ready to fledge, on the Canadian Wildlife Service quarter 3.5 miles south and 3.5 miles east of Rosthern.

In 1992, Muriel Carlson told me of a nest found by Tom and Margaret Terpstra in aspen bush near Edam. When Marc Bechard, Martin Gerard and I visited it on 18 June, Martin banded the three young and also the adult female, caught with a net as she swooped at him.

The first goshawk nest in the Yorkton area was found by Bev McLaren, in an aspen 11 miles west of Bredenbury and one mile north of Highway 15. Three young were out of the nest and learning to fly on 11 and 12 July 1992. After being told of the record by Warren Hjertaas, I viewed McLaren's videotapes; the eye-stripe made identification unmistakable.

Barry Usselman located a goshawk nest about 26 feet above ground in an aspen 9.5 miles west of Sonningdale in 1996. Martin Stoffel informed me on 5 July 1997 that the pair had returned. Barry took us the next day. We knew the young were large and ready to fledge, so we took a crew of spotters and Dylan von Kuster as climber. While Dylan went up the tree, Barry, Pat Bulman, Sandra von Kuster and I, together with Martin and Regina Stoffel and their three children, spread out widely around the nest to observe where the young might fly. The older of the two male nestlings taxed Martin's powers of observation and his running speed through bush as the hawk took three consecutive flights of 250, 150 and 200 yards, before crouching inconspicuously on the ground in a power line clearing. The other flew a shorter distance and was easy to keep in sight. Both were banded and restored to the nest by Dylan. Barry Usselman tells of the 1996 nest chronology in the previous article (see *Blue Jay* 56:125-126).

1. ARNOLD, E. 1895. An outing in Assiniboia. *Oologist* 12:151.
2. BEEBE, F.L. 1974. Field studies of the Falconiformes of British Columbia. British Columbia Provincial Museum Occasional Paper # 17.
3. GOLLOP, J.B. 1985. Prairie province region. *American Birds* 39:315-317.
4. RAINE, W. 1892. Bird-nesting in North-west Canada. Hunter Rose, Toronto, p. 172.
5. SMITH, A.R. 1996. Atlas of Saskatchewan Birds. Saskatchewan Natural History Society Special Publication 22.