
LETTERS

SANDHILL CRANES NEAR BEAVERHILL LAKE, ALBERTA

I have recently made a sighting of migrating sandhill cranes that may be of interest.

On 26 April 1981 while at N 53° 27' and W 112° 42' (between Beaverhill and Cooking Lakes) I observed a large wave of migrating sandhill cranes. The initial wave was arriving from the south, circled down several hundred feet from out of the clouds and continued migrating in a north northwest direction. I counted 19,000 birds in this initial wave between 1515 and 1600 h but it is likely that I missed some flocks. Between 1515 and 1530 three flocks totalling 600 birds passed, and then for the period 1530 to 1600 h, flocks flew over me almost continuously at an estimated altitude of approximately 1000 ft. Flock sizes varied from 15 to 2000 birds but if my memory was accurate most of the birds were in flocks of 500-800 birds which made the counting relatively easy. After a period of about a half an hour during which I heard 5 or 6 flocks calling from above the clouds, I heard another wave passing between approximately 1630 and 1700 h. These birds stayed above the clouds so that I could not see them but the noise and duration of the flight seemed to suggest numbers of birds similar to the first flight.

I would be interested in knowing of any similar flights through Alberta during the spring. — *William R. Koski*, LGL Limited, 10110 - 124th Street, Edmonton, Alberta. T5N 1P6

BAT LEGEND

From time to time interesting old country legends about animals are heard. These are rarely written down and so are lost to the history of science.

My mother has recently recounted a story about bats. She heard the story from her grandmother before World War I at Sifton, Manitoba. Grandmother Zabinski came from an area of the Ukraine for a while dominated by the Austro-Hungarian Empire which collapsed in 1918.

The belief is that bats come from mice. In country places a bat is called a flying mouse. In order for a mouse to develop into a bat, it must live for seven years without hearing the sound of a church bell. The comparative rarity of bats is explained by the fact that mice are short lived naturally. The presence of cats would thus tend indirectly to diminish the number of bats. The one helps explain the other. However, the event is so rare that it has never been witnessed.

It is rather curious as to the path taken in the evolution of legend. It seems to begin with observation, tends to comparison and finally flounders due to the lack of a fact or two. But it is self saving in that it leaves the door open for ultimate verification. In this case, it is implied that someone may in the future actually witness the event of a mouse changing into a bat. — *Walter Krivda*, P.O. Box 864, The Pas, Manitoba. R9A 1K8