

## BIRD NOTES

Eastern Bluebirds, the darker Bluebirds with the chestnut-red breast, are less familiar in Saskatchewan than Mountain Bluebirds, so it was of interest to hear of two nesting records this year. One came from the farm of John Hubbard, Jr., Grenfell. Towards the end of June a pair of these birds were noticed investigating a granary in the yard, so Mr. Hubbard promptly fixed a cardboard box on the inside wall over a hole made by woodpeckers the previous winter. In the cardboard box the Bluebirds raised their family. Mrs. Hubbard states that "they were very unobtrusive visitors and if they had not been right in the yard we probably should not have even seen them. We never saw their family - we watched the parent birds frantically carrying food to the hole for two weeks and then presto, all were gone."

The other nest, also a late one, was reported by Mrs. Marion Nixon, Wauchope, in her nature column in the Saskatchewan Farmer. This nest was placed about a foot down in a hollow post and was open to the sky, which is unusual. The cavity was about five inches in diameter. Mrs. Nixon makes the interesting observation that when the young were but a week old they would open gaping mouths when they heard her at the hole, but that at two weeks they kept their beaks closed and looked at her inquiringly with wide clear eyes.

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Dick Bird, well-known nature photographer of Regina, is of the opinion that the Cowbird might well be called a predator. This past summer Mr. Bird specialized in getting pictures of birds' nests and was amazed at the number of nests he came across which contained one or more Cowbird eggs - particularly nests of the Brown Thrasher... In Yorkton, Boy Scouts came across a Thrasher's nest which had been victimised by a Cowbird, and we were shown an unfinished nest (probably that of a Least Flycatcher) in which, rather curiously, a Cowbird's egg had been deposited. (Refer to Birds of Canada for some comments on the status of the Cowbird.-Editor)

And, while on the subject of Cowbirds, are they specially apt to exhibit unusual friendliness? We heard of one cowbird which last year stayed close around a garden for several days and even, on one occasion, came right into the kitchen! And Mrs. W. Roach, Okla, relates that while her husband was haying a Cowbird, which had been feeding on the spots where the hay had been lifted, fluttered around and came so near that Mr. Roach put out his arm and immediately the bird alighted on his hand. Mr. Roach could not resist the temptation to try and catch it but just as his fingers were closing, it slipped out and perched on the fork handle. The bird then made several trips to and from the haystack, perched on the rack, and when evening came, accompanied the cart right into the barnyard, staying close by while the horses were watered. However after supper it had vanished.

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We were told another nice bird story by Mrs. D. Williams, Yorkton. For several years a pair of Phoebes have nested at the Williams' cottage at Crystal Lake. Last summer the female bird was accidentally killed and all summer long the broken-hearted male kept up a continuous mournful lament of "Phoebe, Phoebe." This spring, when the Williams paid their first return visit to their cottage, their little friend was back but there was a different tone to his call. "He has found another mate," said someone, and sure enough, at that very moment, the little lady appeared in sight and it almost seemed as if their old friend was actually wanting to show her off to them!"

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Mrs. J. Meekma, Yorkton, had an unusual problem on her hands this summer. A neighbor's bees acquired the habit of congregating during the hot weather on the sides of her bird bath, even completely covering the stones in the middle as well. Her regular visitors - orioles, yellow warblers and so on, scolded long and loud so that she was obliged to place other shallow pans of water out on the grass for them.

BIRD RECORDS OF INTEREST IN BRIEF FOR 1944.

Great Blue Heron. An apparently new colony of two nests located in a dead poplar at Leech Lake. When visited by Y.N.H.S. members July 25, one nest had crashed to the ground and three young birds still unable to fly were around in the underbrush. In the other nest, at the top of the tree, were four young birds, three standing up. While we were there one took flight and became entangled in a nearby tree. This bird was banded by Stuart Houston as was one of the other family.

Black-crowned Night Heron. A colony of some thirty nests in a bluff on an island on the west side of Upper Rousay's Lake. The nests were in young balsam poplars at a height of six to twelve feet from the ground. A more detailed account of this colony will be given in a later issue of the "Blue Jay." 31 young birds were banded by Stuart Houston.

Black Duck. Seen at Candle Lake by M.G. Street July 31. Two male birds approached the shore where he was standing and not until they were almost "in" did they see him and veer to the right, so an excellent close-up view was obtained. The Black Duck, a dark duck with brown plumage and a purple speculum is a popular game duck in Eastern Canada. It may breed more often than is suspected in northern Manitoba and north-eastern Saskatchewan.

Cinnamon Teal. Male bird banded by J.H. Wilson at Leech Lake June 16. A teal of south-western British Columbia, occasionally reported in the prairie provinces. Head, neck, breast and flanks of male bird rich cinnamon, wings like Blue-winged Teal. In the Leech Lake trap at the same time were two birds which Mr. Wilson took to be two female Blue-winged Teal. However, as it is almost impossible to tell the females of these two species apart, possibly one of these birds was the female Cinnamon.

White-winged Scoter. Three pairs seen at York Lake July 5. First record of these birds at York Lake since water level was restored by Ducks Unlimited last year. Have breeding records of this species from Saltcoats.

Avocet. J. Francis Roy, Tullis, reports that, for the first time in four years, avocets nested at Luck Lake this past summer. He counted no less than 15 pairs of "these wonderful birds," along the lakeshore and remarked on "their relative tameness."

Upland Plover. Several records for Yorkton district this year. One chick banded at Rousay Lake July 11. It appears the Upland Plover is making a successful "come back."

Ring-billed Gull. Two nests found on a flat stony island in Leech Lake. These are the large white-headed gulls frequently seen at York Lake and mistakenly called "Herring Gulls."

Raven. Seen regularly for three weeks in August at Leech Lake by J.H. Wilson. Noted early in the morning feeding on carrion, such as dead shorebirds.

Lark Bunting. Male bird noted at Melville, May 28, by L.T. McKim, K.C. Apparently Melville must be about the northern limit of this prairie songster as this is only the third record for this species that Mr. McKim had got in over twenty years. We have never seen a Lark Bunting in Yorkton, only twenty miles further north.

Baird's Sparrow. One picked up dead east of Yorkton Aug. 17. Our first definite record for this unobtrusive and little known sparrow of grassy flats.