

Whooping Crane No nest of the Whooping Crane was located this year. This is hardly to be wondered at, considering the extent of the territory where they might nest and the fact that some birdmen believe that there are now less than fifty of these magnificent birds still in existence. Sight records were reported to the Provincial Museum from settled areas during the spring migration and it seems possible that one pair started to nest on a marsh at Fort a La Corne Forest Reserve in May. This marsh was afterwards badly flooded out and no sign of the birds was seen there later in June. Anyone having any information regarding the Whooping Crane is asked to communicate with Fred Bard, Curator, Provincial Museum, Regina.

1945 BIRD RECORDS OF INTEREST IN BRIEF

Black Duck A male bird showing no sign of molting, banded July 21 by J. H. Wilson at Leech Lake, Yorkton. An adult female banded by Stuart Houston at Rousay Lake, Yorkton, August 10, and a second female, molting and unable to fly, August 22. This is the game duck which largely replaces the mallard in Eastern Canada, not often reported for Saskatchewan. Plumages of both sexes the same. May be recognized as a very dark duck with light wing lining. Deep purple wing patch, no white bars.

Hooded Merganser Female banded at Leech Lake July 12. The smallest species of the "fish-eating" ducks with narrow, saw-like bills. Plumage of female greyish-brown, not in any way spectacular.

Turkey Vulture Many visitors to Madge Lake this year reported seeing large numbers of these huge birds sailing round high up in the sky.

Cooper's Hawk Five nesting records reported this summer in the south part of the province. Several sight records. A young bird discovered in a Yorkton duck trap and banded. Cooper's Hawk is the "chicken hawk" of Eastern Canada and is not common on the prairies, but at long intervals appears in large numbers. 1945 is apparently such a year.

Avocet Three seen on sandbar in Saskatchewan River above Saskatoon by F. Roy, May 13. "Is this not quite a distance north to find these birds?" asked Mr. Roy. W. Niven, Sheho, reports a flock of 20 present on a small alkali slough all summer. The eggs of the colony reported from Leech Lake, Yorkton, last spring, were completely destroyed by crows and only one Avocet was seen around the lake later in the summer.

Kingfisher F. Roy, Tullis, got his first nesting record of the Kingfisher for that district this summer. Nest was situated in a steep clay bank in a coulee near the Saskatchewan River.

Crested Flycatchers J. D. Richie, Wallwort, Tells us he has known this bird as a nesting species for several years.

Tanagers Western Tanager. Nest with four eggs found at Nipawin by M. G. Street. Placed at end of spruce bough about 20 feet from the ground.

Tanagers (continued)

Scarlet Tanager. Reported from Nipawin and the Assiniboine Valley near Togo.

Lark Sparrow Colony found on hills north of the San, Fort Qu'Appelle, by E. M. Callin. This would appear to be the most northerly point reached by this handsome sparrow. Formerly confined to S.W. part of the province, but now rapidly extending its range.

Smith's Longspur Seen Sept. 1, by W. Niven, Sheho. Mr. Niven knows this rarely recorded longspur as a spring and fall migrant on the fields of his farm, six miles out of Sheho.

PLANT AND INSECT NOTES

The late spring of 1945 had, of course, a marked effect on plant life. Wild Roses were flowers of July rather than June, and other flowers of early summer overlapped with the first asters and sun-flowers. Each family of butterflies was also said to have come on the wing about two weeks later than usual. Frosts in early June caught the Saskatoon blossoms in most places. Most abundant fruit in eastern Saskatchewan was the wild raspberry which now seems to have recovered from the effects of the dry years.

It was good to hear of yellow Lady's Slippers appearing in many places in greater abundance than for many seasons. Mrs. E. B. Flock while holidaying at Rocanville reported finding Lady's Slipper plants a foot or more high and bearing huge blossoms growing in clumps of ten or twelve in the tall grass along the railroad right of way. To her surprise she learned that the right of way is burned over every year and yet no harm seems to come to the orchids. "And, best of all, they seem to be safe from overpicking," she wrote.

Two other charming native wild flowers, the Shooting Star, and the Mealy or Bird's-eye Primrose also bloomed in great profusion in many meadows this summer.

In the north country mosquitoes apparently reached an "all time high" for ferocity. We doubted some of the tales seeping out, but when M. G. Street, Nipawin, stated that mosquitoes had even stopped him "birding", we knew they must be really bad!

A Wasp Episode

On the Labour Day week-end, while hunting arrow heads on a sand blow along the Assiniboine, we watched one of the digger wasps hard at work.

When first noted the wasp had just begun to excavate a vertical shaft in the fine loose sand. The insect, black and scarcely half an inch in length, was rapidly digging similar to the manner in which a dog digs for a gopher. Working from one spot, the sand flew from between her front feet and was tossed fully three or four inches behind her, over the edge of the hole. As the incline became more steep and sand tumbled to the bottom of the hole, she would run backwards up the side and begin a new trough about an inch from the rim.