

BIRD NOTES

by

F.G. Bard, Provincial Museum

While some may feel casual records have not a great deal of scientific value, it is generally agreed many are interested in "what is new" in the way of "Birding". To assist in a general way in having the "Blue Jay" continued to be acceptable to all, we would like to add a few notes that may be of interest.

W.M. Rutherford and Capt. Timm of Moose Jaw, Sask., on Oct. 16th 1946 saw three ravens. Two of these were shot and are now in the Provincial Museum. It is interesting to note these birds had been eating nothing but grasshoppers.

On October 22nd., just outside the Normal School, a single Canada Jay was recorded. Another day while photographing a Red-breasted Nuthatch, the last picture was taken at two feet; putting the camera down, I was interested to know how close I could get to this beautiful bird. With a finger I touched it, causing the Nuthatch to scold and move on, intent on its search in the bark crevices. Again I tried cupping my hands on either side to close in and capture the Nuthatch, but suddenly it burst into a scolding pincushion of feathers; on its release it returned to the former search, and there I left it.

We have had the usual visit of Hairy Woodpeckers, Bohemian Waxwings, Redpolls accompanied at weed patches by House Sparrows, Snowy Owls, a few came earlier than usual.

This year, early winter and heavy snowfall will no doubt have a bad effect on ground feeding game birds. It was a surprise to see 2 male Red-winged Blackbirds here on Dec. 8th.

From Mr. J.H. Taylor, and Mr. and Mrs. P. McIntock, nee Ruth Houston of Regina, comes notes for December 7th, about the grounds of the Legislative Buildings. They noted two species quite out of place, first the Hudsonian Chickadee and two Canada Jays; ordinarily these two species would be looked for 200 miles north, or generally in Spruce forests. Other birds seen on the same day were Pine and Evening Grosbeaks White-winged Crossbills, Long-tailed Chickadees (black-capped) and Golden-crowned Kinglets.

WHOOPING CRANE SURVEY 1946

by

F.G. Bard, Curator, Provincial Museum

The National Audubon Society of New York and the Fish and Wildlife Service of Washington D.C. for the past two years have been working together in an effort to save the Whooping Crane from extinction.

The Audubon Society have in each year placed a man in the field to check on likely reports, in an effort to locate nesting sites of these birds.

It has been part of the work of the Flyway Biologists who field check waterfowl nesting grounds, to also check likely areas for Whooping Crane nesting sites. These Biologists are on the staff of the Fish and Wildlife Service with the United States Government.

During the past two years, the Saskatchewan Provincial Government has co-operated in the Whooping Crane survey through their Museum at Regina. As a result, all material for distribution, publicity, and the gathering together of sight records for field checking, has been handled through this office.

During this past season, printed material was distributed to 600 schools, Municipal Offices, Mounted Police, Ducks Unlimited, Postmasters, Church Organizations, Fish and Game League districts, and field men in the service of the four Western Provincial Governments. Fourteen radio stations carried spot broadcasts; of these five carried these broadcasts several times a day for a period of two weeks. These broadcasts gave the status of the Whooping Crane, their description, and asking any one seeing these birds to report the occurrence immediately.

Newspaper reporters, writers for weeklies and other publications, ran feature articles covering the whole survey. The Saskatchewan Fish and Game League had a picture and story in their year-book. The Provincial Government Correspondence School used the survey material for a nature science lesson to Grades V and VI. This Whooping Crane survey material was also included in Vol. 4 No.3 of "The Blue Jay".

WHOOPING CRANE SURVEY (CONTINUED)

I would like to say here, that all this splendid co-operation from the public has been carried on very willingly, without this support it would be impossible to carry on such a campaign. I know these Institutions who are making every effort to save our wildlife, would like to express their deep appreciation to everyone who has assisted in any way, and that if we are successful in preventing the extinction of this magnificent creature, then we will have experienced the greatest tribute that can be paid to mankind, in that of saving a form of life fast disappearing from this earth.

Dr. Olin S. Pettingill of Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota, carried on the field work during this past summer with aeroplane coverage. Mr. R.H. Smith, Flyway Biologist for the Fish and Wildlife service, pilots an L 5 on his field work, and at times it is possible for the writer to accompany Mr. Smith on these aerial surveys.

Several authentic reports were received for both the spring and fall migrations, but unhappily none for the summer nesting period. Maurice Street of Nipawin, in 1945 almost succeeded, however his birds were forced out with flood conditions and an unusual spring.

Mr. R.P. Allen who recently published "The Roseate Spoonbill" is at present on the Whooping Crane wintering grounds to see how the birds compare with Dr. Pettingill's winter findings in the same area for 1945-46.

At present it doesn't appear likely that any publicity campaign will be carried on during 1947, other than to intensify our search for likely nesting areas already plotted from our past two seasons records. We will, however, at the Museum in Regina be happy to receive word of the occurrence of Whooping Cranes at any time. Let me again thank those who so willingly gave of their time to this important work.

BIRD BANDING NOTES

Black Ducks are gradually increasing their range westwards, and stragglers are not now so uncommon in Saskatchewan. For this reason, it was interesting to learn that of two Black Ducks banded at Yorkton in 1945 by Stuart Houston, both were shot the same fall. One, an adult female, banded Aug. 10, was shot at Wallaceburg, Ont., on Nov. 3. The other, also an adult female, banded Aug. 22, was shot at Grand Island Lodge, Bath, Illinois, sometime during November. This latter bird, believe it or not, was in full moult and totally flightless when banded, and so obviously was not just passing through in migration, though it is admittedly very doubtful that she nested west of Ontario.

On October 3, a White-throated Sparrow, wearing band number 44-102440, entered one of the traps belonging to Maurice G. Street, Nipawin bird bander. It turned out that this bird had been banded by Rev. J.W. Baechle at Collegeville, Indiana, on May 3, 1946. Since April 1941, Rev. Baechle had banded over 2400 of this specie, but until he was notified of the bird trapped by Mr. Street, was still waiting for his first return or recovery. Because the White-throat nests north of civilization, and is small and rather inconspicuous, recoveries from dead birds are necessarily of rare occurrence. However, because only such a minute percentage of our feathered friends have been banded, the trapping by a bander of a bird banded elsewhere provides a thrill comparable to that of a golfer who scores a hole-in-one.

Stuart Houston has received word of another group of more than one hundred waterfowl, which were shot during the fall of 1945. A Baldpate, banded Sept. 16/44, was shot Dec. 25/45, near Barahoha, Dominican Republic. Another Baldpate, banded June 19/45, was shot Dec. 17/45 at Santa Clara, Cuba. A Bufflehead, banded June 19/45 was shot Jan. 24/46 near La Boguila, Chihuahua, Mexico. A Pintail, banded Sept. 3/45 was found on May 5/46 at St. Michael, Alaska. This latter bird was an adult female when banded, and therefore (if it was not an exception to the general principle that females return to the same locality each year), must have been on its southward migration when banded at Yorkton on Sept. 3.