

Y.N.H.S. Notes (continued)

Reason for the large attendance was a "Museum Night" sponsored by the Natural History Society. All material donated to the future Yorkton museum, together with private hobby collections, was placed on display.

Following the showing of four films, dealing with museum work, the audience returned to the council chambers to see the exhibits on display.

Attending this meeting were members of the recently organized "Natural Science Club" from the Yorkton Collegiate Institute and students from a number of the public schools.

If the large attendance was indicative of public interest in museum work, the new venture has assurance of success.

BIRD NOTES

Reports of eagles having been seen, usually during the Fall months, are not uncommon. The majority of these appear to be immature Golden Eagles, that wander eastwards from their breeding range in the mountains of the west. Immature Golden Eagles are dark brownish birds with white tails that are more or less broadly tipped with black. This black band broadens, until, in adult plumage only the base of the tail is white. This largely white tail of the immature Golden often gives rise to their being misidentified as Bald Eagles. Adults of the latter species, however, have a white head in addition to a white tail. The immature Bald Eagle lacks the white head of the adult and has a dark tail, lightening to white at the base. In the hand, the immatures are easily identified; the legs of the Golden being feathered to the toes, while the Bald Eagle has bare tarsi.

C. Stuart Francis, Torch River, writes - "We had an excellent observation of a Bald Eagle on November 7th, as it soared over our house, its white head and tail showing up very plainly." Steve Waycheshen reports having seen his first Bald Eagle, for the High Hill district, on July 31.

Gustave J. Yakie noted a Golden Eagle at Sandwith on October 13, while at Nipawin, also on October 13th, Mr. Henry Grandfield, with the aid of the family dog, killed a small immature Golden that had attacked his domestic chickens. This eagle, while attempting to carry away its prey, was attacked by the dog, which injured the bird's wing, so that after escaping the dog the eagle was forced down a short distance away. Grandfield, again with the help of the dog, caught up with the injured bird and killed it, but only after the eagle had fastened its talons deeply into Mr. Grandfield's leg. Even after death, the eagle retained its hold until Mrs. Grandfield came to her husband's rescue by prying the powerful talons loose with a stick.

The beautiful snow-white Whistling Swan, that is apparently increasing in recent years, is a hardy bird and one of the last species to migrate from its far northern breeding grounds in Fall. Mr. Wm. Niven, Sheho, writes on October 25th: "I have seen a few whistling swans, but not many, as in some Falls. The weather remains fine and the lakes and ponds are still open, but it usually is a sign of freeze-up when the swans come down from the north." Steve Waycheshen, in an excellent "late departure" list, records "Four noted on a lake, at High Hill, November 3rd." From Torch, C. Stuart Francis, writes, "A flock of Whistling Swans were seen migrating southward on November 7th,"

Whistling Swans are generally regarded as being very wary birds, so it was of unusual interest this spring, to see 21 on a flooded pea field, some 20 acres in extent, not over 100 yards from Provincial Highway #35 that skirts and forms the eastern limits of the village of Codette. From the highway, hundreds of interested spectators observed the swans daily from the time they were first noted on May 2. The Swans, apparently attracted by the water-soaked swollen peas, paid little attention to the speeding cars and other traffic. On May 7, their number was increased to 56 by an influx of other migrant Swans, arriving on May 5 and 6. Mr. James McCunn, farmer, living one mile east, reported that several times a day the Swans at Codette left the flooded pea-field to visit another flooded field two miles east of his farm and on one occasion he saw "about 70" in flight at one time. By May 13th the last of the Swans had departed for more northern points.

Great Horned Owl. Mr. Steve Waycheshen, reporting on the present status of the Horned Owl at High Hill, states, "Horned Owls seem to have disappeared, although I will admit there is hardly any food here for them; rabbits are very scarce, except back in the large swamps. Early this Fall the owls were quite evident though." C. Stuart Francis, Torch River, writes, "Great Horned Owls are less plentiful than usual, perhaps due to the present low level of the bush rabbit, but are, nevertheless, much more of a menace to the farmers' poultry. One particular owl depleted poultry to the extent of about twenty-five dollars worth with his attacks on our geese, turkeys and chicken.

Upland Game Birds. It will be interesting to see how our upland game birds will fare this winter, with deep snow being so general throughout the province so early in the season. Reports through the winter months, on the upland game birds from our society members, will be appreciated. After the disastrous blizzards and cold of last winter almost depleted the game birds in some areas, it would seem that most species have made a fairly good comeback. Steve Waycheshen, High Hill, reports that Ruffed Grouse are on the increase in his area and that a slight increase is evident in the number of Sharp-tails, and Hungarian Partridge. Mr. G. Clay, Field-Officer, Dept. Nat. Resources, reports while Ruffed Grouse are still quite scarce in the northern part of the province, Spruce Grouse have made an excellent recovery, being especially common in the region east of Candle Lake. C. Stuart Francis, Torch River, states, "Due to the very heavy crop of wild Rose hips, all the grouse family should be able to winter well this season, as this food should remain above the snow-line, unless we have an exceptionally heavy snowfall. I have seen more Hungarian Partridge recently than altogether during the past 3 or 4 years. Sharp-tails seem to be well distributed all through the Torch River, Love and White Fox areas."

Raven. Ravens have been particularly abundant this fall in the northern areas, and have been reported at some central Saskatchewan points. At Nipawin, Ravens were very numerous by September 1, and a number were seen there by C. C. Shaw and T. Melville-Ness; the birds were soaring at low level above the Saskatchewan River in the face of a stiff breeze. Mr. Shaw also noted a raven in the Mikado district, October 18th. At Sheho, Wm. Niven saw his first Raven in that area, September 23rd. At High Hill, where the Raven is seen intermittently during the summer, Steve Waycheshen noted an increase after September 13th. Although the Raven is nearly twice the bulk of the crow, field comparison is not often possible. The Raven's flight is hawk-like, given to soaring, sometimes at great heights. Its call is not crow-like; it does not caw, but utters a throaty croak. "Crows" seen after the end of September in Saskatchewan should be carefully noted; on close examination they may prove to be Ravens. The latest fall departure date on record for the crow at Nipawin is October 4th; at Yorkton, October 11.

Great Grey Owl. C. Stuart Francis writes: "I have just noted by the Field checking List, distributed by the Y.N.H.S., that to date the occurrence of the Great Grey Owl has not been definitely established in Saskatchewan. I would like to state that I shot and killed one some years ago, probably during the winter of 1939-40. It was sitting in a very dense and dark patch of black spruce and Jackpine, along the valley of the Torch River, and was on a spruce limb about 9 or 10 feet from the ground. I intended to get it mounted, but in those depression years, felt I could not afford the cost. I do not recall having seen one before or since."

Golden-crowned Kinglet. A flock noted at High Hill by Steve Waycheshen, November 1st. Single bird seen Regina, Nov. 14 F. G. Bard

Crested Flycatcher. Twice noted at High Hill, July 29th and August 21st, by Steve Waycheshen.

Pine Siskins. Wm. Niven, Sheho writes: "I note Pine Siskins were reported as quite common over Saskatchewan this past summer. I also have seen several flocks during the summer. They are usually only occasional, but have been seen more often in the past few years." C. C. Shaw noted two flocks of Siskins at Yorkton; a flock of 20, August 25th, and 18 on September 18th. Steve Waycheshen, High Hill, noted them as abundant all summer and were common up until September 19th, and a few noted once in October. Noted to be fairly common in the late summer around Regina - F. G. Bard.

Northern Shrike. Noted as common on and after October 20th, at High Hill. The first individual noted by Mr. Waycheshen was seen returning to a mouse that the bird had previously left impaled on a sharp branch of a willow. Usually seen each year around Regina, about November 10th.

Cooper's Hawk. Steve Waycheshen, in submitting his list of late departure dates for 1947, reports that this species was fairly common until September 22nd, and was last noted on October 19th. There is a mistaken impression that this species is extremely rare in Saskatchewan, (though we now have several authentic nesting records,) and we would appreciate receiving any or all records that our members may have in their notebooks, particularly nesting records, migration dates, and notes on their numbers or relative abundance in each district.

C. Stuart Houston has obtained some interesting information concerning the former status of the Whooping Crane in the Yorkton district, from certain of the "old-timers" who take a keen interest in wild life. R. P. Rooke reports that in the early 1890's, flocks of Whooping Cranes, numbering up to 20 or 30 individuals, flew over Rothbury settlement each spring. Frank Baines saw small flocks of up to 15 birds in migration nearly every year at the turn of the century, and occasionally they rested on the fields near Crescent Marsh. About 1895, Jim Nelson shot a Whooping Crane, with sandy splashes on its neck, near Crescent Lake. The bird was skinned by Frank Baines and sent to E. J. Cousins, a Toronto collector. (The present whereabouts of the specimen are unknown." Robt. Rousay shot four in the field just north of his house on the edge of Rousay Lake, about 1896. They were noted regularly in migration at that time. The late John A. Gunn saw this species only one - a pair in a meadow south of Good Spirit Lake, seen as a young boy when he was out riding horseback in the spring of about 1890. The late W. G. Sharpe shot a Whooping Crane which flew low over his pit while he was hunting geese near Crescent Lake in the fall of 1924.

The only recent record for the Yorkton district, is a lone Whooper noted in the fall of 1942 with a flock of sandhills at Rokeby Marsh, by John Domon.

Even more interesting is the following account written about July 14-15, 1859 in "The Canadian Exploring Expeditions in Rupert's Land" by Henry Youle Hind, M.A., F.R.G.S., in charge of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan expedition. "The white or whooping crane (*Grus americana*) was first seen today. This beautiful bird is common in the Qu'Appelle Valley and in the Touchwood Hill range. It is a dangerous antagonist when wounded, striking with unerring aim and great force with its powerful bill. When the bird is wounded, the best way to avoid its attacks is to present the muzzle of the gun as it approaches, it will fix its bill in the barrel and may then be destroyed without danger. Instances have been known of this bird driving his bill deep into the bowels of a hunter when not successful in warding off its blow."

We would appreciate it if our "old-timer" members would write us concerning the status of the Whooping Crane in their district in the early days.

Review of a Field Guide to the Birds  
by Roger Tory Peterson.

The highest award in the field of ornithology is the Brewster Medal, presented by the American Ornithologists Union to outstanding works on North American birds. The second edition of Roger Tory Peterson's now classic Field Guide to the Birds, won this distinguished award, partly because of its original contribution to the field identification of birds and partly because it had interested more people in birds than any other book in recent years.

Now a third edition is off the press, and where the second edition was good, this one is even better. It is re-written, re-organized and every illustration is new. There are 1,000 illustrations and over 500 in full color. Mr. Peterson is already so well known for his paintings of birds, "especially those reproduced from time to time in "LIFE" that further comment as to the high quality of the illustrations should not be necessary.

We, of the Yorkton Natural History Society, feel that this book is a must for every member, as it is the last word in convenience and easy identification of birds. Peterson's famous system is based on pattern drawings, field marks, and comparisons between species. How many times have we noted a bird, and on being none too certain as to its identity, asked ourselves "What other bird could it have been?" Peterson's will give you the answer, and quickly, as all comparative species are shown on a single page with all identification marks clearly pointed out. It covers too, all species that one is apt to see in Saskatchewan, except for a few stragglers from the Rocky Mountains or beyond.

A feature is the full-color drawings of the Warblers in immature and autumn plumages, some so similar that they have always confused even the experts. The Gulls and Terns, other difficult species, are also remarkably well shown in immature, winter, and breeding plumages.

For the sportsmen, the ducks and geese, due to the fact that they are more easily identified by pattern than by color, are shown in black and white in flight overhead and on the water, as well as in color.