

## BIRD NOTES

Reports of our two earliest nesting birds came in true to form. A Horned Owl's nest with one egg was found at Crescent Lake, south of Yorkton on March 6 by J. Hagel, while M.G. Street discovered a fully completed Canada Jay's nest at Nipawin on Feb. 26.

It is rather interesting to note that where the Canada Jay builds a deep thick-walled nest to protect its eggs and young, the Horned Owl usually makes use of an old hawk or crow's nest so that often only the closest brooding by the mother bird can keep the eggs from freezing during late storms. Mr. Street reports that this particular Canada Jay's nest "was in a very exposed situation in a spruce tree along by the C.P.R. Tracks only a quarter of a mile from the nearest buildings."

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Summer birds which remain on for the winter always create interest. This past season we have heard of a Flicker at Indian Head; a Meadowlark near Grenfell; a Robin at Nipawin and a Red-winged Blackbird at Yorkton. Provided an ample supply of food is available these summer "left behinds" often manage to survive surprisingly low temperatures.

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A Christmas Bird Census taken by Dick Beddoes at Daysland, Alberta, failed to reach us in time to appear in the last "Blue Jay." On Dec. 28, Mr. Beddoes got a list of 14 different species and 90 individuals. Included in his count, and not recorded by any of the Saskatchewan observers were - Red-breasted Nuthatch (5); Slate-colored Junco (4) and Flicker (2). He remarks that the Sharp-tailed Grouse is down in numbers and that, for the first time since he has been making Christmas Censuses, he did not see a single true Prairie Chicken (the Pinnated or Square-tailed Grouse). Magpies, he states, have "scrounged" the area and Great Horned Owls have greatly increased the last two years - this increase probably being linked up with the present abundance of mice and rabbits. The Nuthatches and Juncos were regular visitors to his feeding station.

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To most of us, Black-capped Chickadees are familiar winter-time friends but when they move out to the woods and bluffs in spring, we more or less lose sight of them for the summer. Last year, Mrs. W. Roach, Okla, noticed a Chickadee carrying "huge beakfulls of fuzzy caterpillars" and, by standing perfectly still, she saw him fly down low among some trees at the bottom of her garden. There in an old stub, about a foot from the ground, she discovered the entrance hole and, with the aid of a flashlight, she was able to see the brood of young ones down inside but was not able to count them. (Note. One of Dick Bird's most delightful colour "movie shots" is of a Chickadee carrying food to its nesting hole in a tree trunk).

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A.G. Lawrence has pointed out, in his bird column in the Winnipeg Free Press, that "a handy contrivance to examine high nests is a pocket mirror attached at an angle to a long stick (or extension curtain rod) so that the reflection of the nest's contents may be seen from below."

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A new bird was reported for the province last Fall when A.J. Matheson, Neilburg, informed Ducks Unlimited that the Tule Geese frequently stop over in migration at Little Manitou Lake. The Tule Goose is a very large variety of the common White-fronted Goose, which is often mistakenly called "Brant." The Tule Goose weighs up to nine pounds, as compared with four or five pounds of the Common White-front. It winters in the Upper Sacramento Valley of California and the discovery of its breeding grounds in the far north was an ornithological highlight of 1941. Although it had been suspected that these big geese passed in migration across western Canada, up till now no record had been obtained.

## BIRD NOTES (continued)

From H.H. Pittman, Wauchope, we received a most unusual record of Kingbirds taking over the nests of Orioles in his garden last summer. He writes - "We generally have three pairs of Orioles near the house every year. In 1944 two pairs arrived about the usual time and stayed long enough to build their nests. Then they disappeared.

"Shortly after this I noticed a Kingbird perched beside one of the oriole nests and found that another Kingbird was actually inside the nest. There were, however, no eggs in this nest. A few days later we saw the Kingbirds at the other nest and found it contained four eggs. These were hatched in due course and I was able to get a series of pictures of the Eastern or Common Kingbird feeding its young in the nest of the Baltimore Oriole.

"I might add that I have found a Kingbird sitting on eggs in the nest of a robin from which children had taken the original robin's eggs."

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We received more letters re Hairy Woodpeckers damaging the walls of granaries. The Martinovsky Brothers, Gerald, are of the opinion that such woodpeckers are not mainly looking for grain but rather for insects hibernating in the grooves of the boards, especially as they generally attack older buildings which have not been painted. And, in this connection, they also point out that "robins, catbirds and brown thrashers may be seen eating soft plump wheat at the granary after an early spring thaw, while insects are still scarce and birds are plenty and hungry. But one could not say that they like it!"

Mrs. W. Roach, Okla, states that there was meat stored in one granary where she noted woodpeckers had opened long cracks between the boards. And M.G. Street, Nipawin, tells us "...I once noticed a Hairy Woodpecker working on the loose boards in a granary. After one or two pecks it would stop and listen carefully, so I decided to experiment. Tapping the same board with my finger tip I discovered that there was a remarkable likeness between the sound made by the few kernels of wheat so dislodged and the sound made by large black wood-ants when disturbed in a heavily infested tree."

One point no correspondent has made quite clear is whether Hairy Woodpeckers attack granaries in preference to other farm buildings of similar construction and if it is solely the Hairy Woodpecker which has this destructive habit?

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Some members have been confused with regard to the Red-headed Woodpecker about which we made enquiries last summer. The Red-headed Woodpecker has an all scarlet head and boldly marked black and white plumage. It is a common bird in parts of Ontario and occurs in the southern section of the prairie provinces. The Flicker, or Highhole, has a red PATCH on its head, as have also male Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, but the Red-headed is our only woodpecker with brilliant all-red head. It is a familiar bird in Winnipeg.

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W. Niven, Sheho, believes Mourning Doves must be highly beneficial birds to the farmer. Last August he picked up an injured Dove in his yard. Since it was badly hurt and its crop split open, he killed it and found that the crop was full of wild mustard and wild buckwheat seeds - two bad weeds.

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Concerning the marked increase of crows and magpies, Judge A.E. Bence, Battleford, writes - "When I came to Manitoba, fifty years ago, there were few crows and no magpies. The crows have unfortunately multiplied to such an extent that there are now literally thousands, where there were formerly only tens. My first observation of the Magpie was at Saskatoon around 1918. Now they are everywhere and are particularly plentiful at Meadow Lake and other places where there is bush and water."