

J. A. GUNN,
SPIRIT LAKE, P.O. SASK

THE

BULLETIN - JANUARY

Official Bulletin
Of The
YORKTON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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OBJECTS:

To foster an active interest in every branch of nature study, and to promote the conservation of all wild life; also to act as a connecting link between nature lovers in Saskatchewan.

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Freeze-up took place earlier than usual last Fall. After several weeks of mild sunny days the weather suddenly turned cold on Tuesday, October 20, and by the following week-end all the smaller sloughs and ponds were frozen over. All that week a heavy migration of ducks and geese was in progress as the birds hurriedly made a "get-away" before winter gripped the northern lakes. Since then the weather has been fairly cold with no great extremes of temperature up to Christmas. Some observers have reported a larger number of winter birds around than were noted last year. In November and early December, Snowy Owls were unusually plentiful all through this part of the country, but the majority seem to have moved on elsewhere now. The question whether the "ten year decrease" in prairie chicken has started is discussed in another part of this bulletin.

Before the next number of the "Blue Jay" appears many of the first spring migrants will have already winged their way back to the prairies, in fact less than six weeks from now the tinkling song of the Horned Lark should be ringing over the open fields. Some species of birds, when they come north, advance rapidly and reach widely distant points on almost the same day, while others move more leisurely and take their time. We should like to get as many migration dates as possible sent in from different localities and, in this way, we should gradually be able to build up a picture of the manner in which the migrant birds spread across the province. The Christmas Census shows how much of interest can be learnt regarding the distribution of different species through reports collected from various corners of the province.

It is a very great pleasure to announce that our Society now numbers well over one hundred members, some forty of these are in Yorkton and the others are from all over the province. We are most grateful for many encouraging and friendly letters received after the appearance of the first issue of the "Blue Jay," and have great hopes that, with everybody's help, we can make it a worthwhile clearing house for nature records in Saskatchewan. Will every member try to bring the "Blue Jay" to at least one other nature lover?

And one thing more, we realize that some may feel too much attention is paid to birds, but birds seem the subject in which there is the greatest interest taken and it was as a bird club that the Yorkton Natural History Society started. However we want to hear from the botanists and entomologists and hope to give more space to them in the future. Incidentally we chose the name "Blue Jay" for our little paper because it was "Sammy" Blue Jay, in the Burgess Bedtime Stories, who always carried the news round to the "Little People of the Green Forest and the Green Meadows", and "Sammy" has long been a very real personage to some of us.

Isabel M. Priestly,
President,
Yorkton Natural History Society.

LOCAL NOTES

For several years Mrs. J. Meekma, Tupper Ave., has offered hospitality to a number of Purple Martins in a "house" made from a large cheese box set up on a pole in her garden. This last spring she decided to offer her tenants better accommodation in the form of a brand new martin house, Spanish bungalow style, based on a design from a popular handicraft magazine. After some hesitation the martins, when they came back in May, finally took up residence in their new mansion but, as so often happens, the new home was not as satisfactory as the old one. The chief drawback was that owing to a shelf at the front the young birds were tempted to creep out on this platform before they were ready to fly, and as a result, two or more fell to the ground and met an untimely death. Once the young ones had fallen into the garden the parent birds took no more notice of them and feeding these insect-eaters by hand was out of the question.

Incidentally, after watching her martin guests very closely, Mrs. Meekma is convinced that it is quite a common occurrence for a male bird to have more than one mate.

An early and sudden freeze-up this Fall probably overtook some of the birds which lingered till the last minute on the larger northern lakes. On October 26 a lone Pelican was circling low down over the town about six o'clock in the evening, apparently looking for open water. On one particular street, some of the most youthful members of the community were just a little scared at the sight of "a simply enormous bird" flying round right over their heads! On the following morning a mallard was discovered resting in the center of Broadway but managed to get away when an attempt was made to capture it.

An open meeting of the Yorkton Natural History Society was held in the Council Chambers, December 4, when films of the Yukon and Canadian north-west were shown by Constable Cross, R. C. M. P.

These films, all in technicolor and taken by Constable Cross himself brought home to a most appreciative audience the wonderful beauty and grandeur of Canada's northern scenery. An added note of interest was the fact that many of the places shown in the films are now traversed by the new Alaska Highway.

From F. Baines, of Saltcoats, comes an interesting bit of Indian lore. We were asking Mr. Baines if he often saw Goshawks around his farm, and he related how, a few weeks ago, he happened to shoot one when Peepeach - an Indian - was standing nearby. The latter immediately asked for the dead Goshawk saying "Dat's berry strong bird so I eat him to make me strong."

CORRESPONDENCE

We were delighted to get a long letter from Pvt. J. Culver, United States Army Air Force, thanking us for the first issue of the "Blue Jay." Jack is in California and, after describing a long hike he took over the mountains near San Francisco on Thanksgiving Day, remarks that "On the whole this corner of the world has much less to offer in the way of wild life than Saskatchewan." Well, Pvt. Culver ought to know, for he certainly scoured the country round Yorkton thoroughly enough a few years ago. Best of luck, Jack.

INFORMATION PLEASE

We should like to have any information about the distribution and nesting habits of the Great Blue Heron in Saskatchewan. This picturesque and stately bird is not often seen in the Yorkton area and, so far, we know of no local breeding colony. This past summer Leroy Simmons discovered a "hercnry" on the North Saskatchewan River, about ten miles from Maymont. "There were thirteen nests," he states, "all in one large tree, a black poplar some eighty feet high and over three feet thick at the butt." After skinning his shins severely in several unsuccessful attempts to climb the tree, Mr. Simmons finally managed it and was rewarded by a good view of nests containing eggs, newly hatched young or half-grown birds. "The eggs," he says, "are the most beautiful shade of blue, and the young birds look like pin-feathered gargoyles."

In districts where there are no trees the Blue Heron will nest on the ground. In Mitchell's 1924 Catalogue of Saskatchewan Birds the Blue Heron is recorded as "nesting in low willows at Quill Lake and on the ground at Lake Johnston." Are these colonies still in existence?

In the nature column of an English newspaper, received recently, there was an account of the Great Spotted Woodpecker (close relative of the American Hairy) making a new hole to serve as a winter shelter. Has anyone seen either our own Hairy or Downy excavating a new hole in the fall of the year? Very little, in fact, is known of where birds pass the long cold nights of winter. Chickadees will all pile into one small cavity, but where does "Sammy" Blue Jay spend the hours of darkness? Has anyone ever come across a roost of Bohemian Waxwings?

Has a heavy migration of Snowy Owls been noticed in the southern part of the province? These birds were unusually numerous in the Yorkton district during November and early December but the Christmas Bird Census failed to discover a single Snowy Owl within seven miles of town.

We were frankly disappointed not to receive an answer to our query in the first issue of the "Blue Jay" re the different kinds of bats to be found in Saskatchewan. Meanwhile we read with interest an account in "Time", Dec. 7, of some research work carried out by scientists in the eastern United States, who banded several hundreds of bats hibernating in caves for the winter. As a result of these experiments it was discovered that bats always return to the same cave for their winter's sleep, and to the very same spot in that cave. Even bats which were carried off and released many hundred miles away, were found back in the same cave the following winter. This led us to wonder if a hibernating bat had ever been found in a barn or similar building on the prairies where caves are certainly at a premium. Or are all the bats of Western Canada migratory?

In answer to our question in the last issue of the "Blue Jay" regarding nesting colonies of Purple Martins "in the wild," W. Niven, of Sheho, writes that a few pairs nest in old flicker holes in a bluff behind his farmyard and he has also noticed them in other places in the surrounding country. J. R. Foreman reports that he has come across Purple Martins nesting in old flicker holes in telephone poles along the highways.

For many years I have never been without a wild bird pet. Scores of dead and injured birds are brought to me, usually by school children. For three years I kept a Cedar Waxwing, brought to me while quite young, with a slight deformity of one wing. It ate out of my hand and perched on my finger as I carried it around and let it pick flies off the verandah screens. Its main diet was currants but it was very fond of ant eggs and bread soaked in milk. The appearance of the milk bottle always brought a flutter of wings and the bird twittered in great excitement. I found however, that too much of this diet ruined the birds' plumage and had to disregard his daily clamor for it.

Late in the fall of 1940, while out shooting, I picked up a young female Song Sparrow that had one wing somewhat awry. This bird was tame from the start and lived in perfect health on a diet of weed seeds. One day the following summer I noticed its water dish was dry and filled it. In a few minutes the little fellow fell on its back with wings fluttering and died in a few minutes. I never could figure that out.

A Mourning Dove is now enjoying his third year as my guest and it looks as though he would be my pensioner for life. He came to me late in the year with a slightly injured wing. When I tried to let him go the following spring, he flew head first into a tree and I found that he could only fly in a small circle and returned him to his cage. I cannot detect anything wrong with his wings and have no idea why he has never been able to fly properly. Screenings are entirely to his taste and all spring and summer his mournful song can be heard around the place.

This summer for six weeks, I doctored a Yellow-headed Blackbird which had a bad scalp wound and flesh torn off the shoulder of one wing. He ate wheat, oats and bread crumbs but never showed any disposition to be friendly. When I let him go, he soared several hundred feet into the air and flew away entirely ungrateful for my ministrations.

On April last, two girls brought me a beautiful male Purple Finch. As far as I could see, he was uninjured but thoroughly exhausted. They had picked him up with wings lying outstretched on the road. He proved so tame from the start that I have kept him ever since and not once has he shown any desire to leave his cage. A seed and fruit eating bird, he is easily fed. Canary Bird Seed forms his main diet, supplemented by figs, apples, dates and grapes. I tried him with all sorts of green stuff from the garden but he would have none of it, until I offered him chickweed which proved much to his taste. He has a beautiful wine-colored head, breast, and rump with a general overwash of the same color.

Birds sing very little after the nesting season, but this Finch, his normal conduct changed by cage life, sings almost all day long. Any unusual noise will set him going and he often breaks into song in the middle of the night if anyone stirs. He has a loud challenging song which is something like that of a Warbling Vireo, but for long periods he will warble a soft meditative refrain as though he were trying over a new tune. His loud song is always uttered standing up, head held high, but when he gives himself over to softer melody, he sits low on the perch, a picture of complete contentment.

The secret of keeping wild birds successfully is to give them the sort of food they would eat in the wild state. Old birds are usually extremely hard to tame but young ones quickly lose all fear of human beings.

ROUSAY - YORK LAKES

At the completion of the Rousay Lakes water restoration project, referred to in the last issue of the "Blue Jay," a banquet was tendered to the officials of Ducks Unlimited in the Yorkton Hotel on Friday, Nov. 20, by the Yorkton and District Board of Trade and the Yorkton Fish & Game League. During the speeches which followed the dinner, B.W. Cartwright, Chief Naturalist for Ducks Unlimited pointed out how fortunate Yorkton was to have a water area so close to the city as the Rousay-York Lake chain. Few places have anything like it. He suggested the Fish and Game League and the Yorkton Natural History Society combine to form a "Wild Life Management Committee" to look after wild life interests in the area. The creation of such a committee is now under consideration and Mr. Cartwright has promised to come up early next spring to start us off. Mr. Cartwright had previously written to the secretary of the Natural History Society suggesting that it would be an interesting piece of work for the society to record the changes in wild life brought about by the restoration of the water level at the Rousay Lakes.

JUNIOR AUDUBON SOCIETIES

We would like to draw to the attention of teachers and others interested in fostering a love of nature in the younger generation, to the advantages of forming an Audubon Junior Club. (The Audubon Society is the nation-wide bird organization in the United States). "Canadian Nature," 177 Jarvis St., Toronto, Ont. now receives registration for clubs in Canada. To form a Junior Audubon Society it is necessary to enroll ten or more members. Club dues are ten cents per member. In return each member receives a button, six leaflets describing a bird common to the geographic location of the club and six colored plates of these birds. In addition the adult advisor of each club receives the club paper "News on the Wing" and a special leaflet "Things To Do" containing many practical suggestions for these activities.

There are already several Junior Audubon Clubs organized in Saskatchewan. We should like to hear from them all and we might perhaps devote a page of the "Blue Jay" to the activities of these groups.

OBITUARY

It was with great regret that Saskatchewan naturalists heard of the death of Reuben Lloyd on Oct. 16, 1942 at the age of seventy-one. The late Mr. Lloyd had made several important contributions to the wild life records of the province and for many years the bird sanctuary on his farm near Davidson had attracted, not only hundreds of birds, but also hosts of interested visitors. In a Leader Post editorial it was stated "Mr. Lloyd will long be remembered by sportsmen of the province for his good work as a member of the fish and game advisory committee and as a man whose hospitality and capacity for friendship was unlimited." To the family and close friends of the late Mr. Lloyd the Yorkton Natural History Society tenders its sincere sympathy.

CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUSES

Nipawin, Sask. (through spruce muskegs and jackpine ridges on both sides of Saskatchewan River within a radius of 4 miles of Nipawin).- Dec. 26; Bright and sunny; temp. around zero. Goshawk, 1; Spruce Grouse, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 2; Willow Ptarmigan, 9; Great Horned Owl, 3; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 3; Canada Jay, 7; Blue Jay, 11; Magpie, 4; Black-capped Chickadee, 23; Hudsonian Chickadee, 9; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 5 (no details-ED.); Bohemian Waxwing, 28; English Sparrow, 43; Evening Grosbeak, 14; Pine Grosbeak, 8; Redpoll, 271. Total, 18 species, 444 individuals.-M. G. STREET.

Saltcoats, Sask. (noted from home in country 6 mls. W. of Saltcoats). Dec. 26. Hungarian Partridge, 10; Snowy Owl, 1; Snow Bunting, 150 (est.). Total, (excluding English Sparrows) 3 species, approximately 161 individuals.-FRANK BAINES.

Saltcoats, Sask. (farm 3 miles E. of Saltcoats). Dec. 31; 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. Calm; slightly overcast. One observer, 3 miles, 2 hours. Ruffed Grouse, 2; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 6; Saw-whet Owl, 1 (Specimen shot for positive identity; it is now being stuffed); Black-capped Chickadee, 1; English Sparrow, 15; Magpie, 1; Snow Bunting, 50 (est.). Total, 7 species, approximately 176 individuals.-JIM ROGERSON.

Scott, Sask. (open prairie country some 30 miles south of the park belt). Jan. 1. Hungarian Partridge, 9; English Sparrow, numerous; Bohemian Waxwing, 11. Total, 3 species, over 20 individuals. Several Snowy Owls and a Great Horned Owl seen during December. Prairie Chickens have not been seen since summer of 1940.-F. ROUSE.

Sheho, Sask. (farm 6 miles N. of Sheho). Day between Dec. 25 and Jan. 1. Ruffed Grouse, 1; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 5; Hungarian Partridge, 9; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; American Magpie, 2; Black-capped Chickadee, 5; English Sparrow, numerous; Pine Grosbeak, 5; Redpoll, 30; Snow Bunting, 44. Total, 10 species, over 102 individuals. Other birds noted in December: Goshawk, Great Horned Owl, Snowy Owl, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Shrike, Bohemian Waxwings. A Western Meadowlark has been wintering on the farm of a neighbor.-WM. NIVEN.

Skull Creek, Sask. (near Piapot, Sask.). Census of bird life seen during Xmas week, 1942, while going about farm work. Amounts listed for each species are the most individuals seen during one day. Golden Eagle, 1; Prairie Falcon, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 2; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 11; Hungarian Partridge, 9; Great Horned Owl, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Western Horned Lark, 16; American Magpie, 15; Black-capped Chickadee, 3; Bohemian Waxwing, 6; Northern Shrike, 1; English Sparrow, 27; Pine Grosbeak, 4; Redpoll, 22; Western Tree Sparrow, 2; Snow Bunting, 450 (est.). Total, 17 species, 574 individuals.-STEVE A. MANN.

Tullis, Sask. (Fields $\frac{1}{2}$ mile E., $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles N., $\frac{1}{4}$ mile W., $\frac{1}{4}$ mile S. of and including the hamlet of Tullis). Dec. 27; 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Overcast; about 8 in. snow, with drifts as deep as 30". Wind, light E. at first, by 1:00 p.m. moderate S.E.; temp. 25° at start, 29° at return. One observer afoot. Total hours afield, $6\frac{1}{2}$; 6 miles covered. Goshawk, 2; Pin-tailed Grouse (Sharp-tailed or Pinnated?-ED.), 5; Hungarian Partridge, 24; Snowy Owl, 1; Short-eared Owl, 1; Northern Shrike, 1; English Sparrow, 175 (est.); Western Meadowlark, 1; (this is a winter resident, seen nearly every day around the yard since Dec. 12) Redpoll, 5; Snow Bunting, 25 (est.). Total, 10 species, 240 individuals.-J. FRANCIS ROY.

CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUSES (continued)

Yorkton, Sask. (area 15 miles in diameter with Yorkton as center).-Dec. 27; 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Clear, bright day; strong wind from the south-east; only a thin covering of snow on the fields, abnormally light for this time of year; temp. -5° at start, 5° at 2:00 p.m., and -10° at finish. 9 observers in 7 groups. Total party hours afield, 11 (4 by car and 7 on foot); total party miles, $77\frac{1}{2}$ (64 by car, $13\frac{1}{2}$ on foot). Sharp-tailed Grouse, 22; Hungarian Partridge, 15; Great Horned Owl, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 2; American Magpie, 2; Black-capped Chickadee, 19; Bohemian Waxwing, 43; English Sparrow, 188 (est.); Redpoll, 35 (est.); Snow Bunting, 426 (est.). Total, 10 species, approximately 753 individuals. No Grosbeaks noted so far this winter. Snowy Owls have been common for the past two months, but they have now left this district. Snow Buntings were probably so abundant due to the scarcity of snow, leaving a good food supply available. - VERNON BARNES, BROTHER CLARENCE, DR. C.J. HOUSTON, DR. S. C. HOUSTON, C. STUART HOUSTON, ETHEL LLOYD, MRS. I.M. PRIESTLY, MICHAEL PRIESTLY, JIM ROGERSON. (Members Yorkton Natural History Society).

BOOKS TO BUY

Two books published in 1942 which should be in the possession of every out-of-door enthusiast in Saskatchewan, are "Wild Flowers of the Prairie Provinces," by Elizabeth Burnett Flock, well-known naturalist of Regina, and "The Stone Age on the Prairies" by W.G. Orchard, First President, Saskatchewan Archaeological Society.

Mrs. Flock's book includes all the more common flowers of the West, listed alphabetically under their popular names. Each flower is vividly described in a few telling sentences and illustrated by a characteristic pen and ink drawing by the author's husband, J.H. Flock. In addition the book contains several chapters of general botanical interest and some beautiful photographs taken by Dick Bird. The price is seventy-five cents. Mrs. Flock's book has already received a warm welcome from nature lovers.

"The Stone Age on the Prairies," which appeared more recently, is just the book that many of us have been wanting on this subject. It gives valuable and interesting information regarding the ancient tools to be found on the western plains and seventy full page plates of hundreds of "Indian" relics from Mr. Orchard's own personal collection and other sources. In it Mr. Orchard also correlates what is known of the Stone Age on this continent, with the same long period of human history in other parts of the world. The Bibliography at the end of this small volume will be most useful to those who wish to do more extensive reading or study. "The Stone Age on the Prairies" sells for \$1.25 and, like Mrs. Flock's flower book, is published by School Aids Publishing Company, Regina.

CONSERVATION STAMPS

The first set in a series of Conservation Stamps to be brought out by the Science Association, University of Alberta, to raise funds for the investigation of problems of wild life, are now on sale. In a letter received from Prof. Wm. Rowan, of Edmonton, he points out that huge sums of money have been raised in the United States through the sale of such stamps and that, although the present moment does not seem a very auspicious time to launch this scheme in Canada, many wild life problems which have a direct bearing on our economic life have, due to the war, assumed a new importance. The first set depicts five common game birds and it is planned to bring out new sets annually, so that in time a complete set of attractive pictures of Canadian game birds and animals will be offered. The stamps sell for twenty-five cents each or one dollar for the set of five, and it is hoped all interested in the conservation of our wild life will support this project.

PROVINCIAL NOTES

J.R. Garden reports that winter birds have been scarce in the Wolseley district. He says, "So far this year at our feeding station in the garden we have only had visits from our old friends the Chickadees, the Downy Woodpecker, and one Magpie. I really should have shot the latter but did not do so. Last week, while watching the Chickadees feeding off a lump of suet, I suddenly saw them all look up in the air in a very startled manner and an instant later down flew a Northern Shrike, apparently bent on killing one of them. However the Chickadees all got away safely into a pile of scrub. This was the first time I had seen a Shrike try to kill birds."

The problem of how the young of tree-nesting ducks reach water has long been a fascinating question to naturalists, as it is a performance very rarely witnessed. Some apparently reliable observers have reported seeing the mother duck carry the young in her bill, or between her feet, flying from the nesting hole to water. However the most common method seems to be for the young birds to scramble out of the nest of their own accord and topple down quite unharmed. This, at anyrate, was what happened in a case reported by F. Baines.

While hunting deer near Tisdale last November Mr. Baines was shown a disused chimney where eight little ducks were hatched in the early summer. The nest was about three feet down, placed on a narrow ledge. (See Birds of Canada for the Golden-eye Duck's habit of nesting in chimneys.) The owner of the property, Frank Pearce of Leacross, kept a close watch on the nest and one day noticed the mother bird down on the ground below, doing a lot of quacking. Presently all eight little ducks burst out over the top of the chimney, fell on the roof, and bounced onto the ground without injury. The old duck then led them off to a nearby creek but, unfortunately, a crow grabbed one of them before they all got safely to water. Mr. Baines was wondering how it was ever possible for the ducklings to get up the sides of the chimney. But according to authorities, the young of tree-nesting ducks, when first hatched, are endowed with sharp pointed toe-nails, by means of which they are able to climb to the entrance of the nesting hole.

Also when in the Tisdale district, Mr. Baines got a close-up view of an Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker (the solidly black-backed woodpecker with yellow crown patch), and the much larger Pileated Woodpecker, sometimes known as the "Cock-of-the-woods." Both these woodpeckers are characteristic birds of the northern forests and only rarely seen in the southern part of the province.

From Arthur Ward of Burnham we received a snapshot of a colony of Cliff Swallows' nests on one of the towers of the Highfield Dam spillway. Most of the nests were fully finished structures with the downward sloping funnel entrance. For some reason the Cliff, or Eave Swallow as it is sometimes known, once so common in the West, has greatly decreased in numbers in recent years. Several reasons have been suggested to account for this - the ravages of the English Sparrow, the destruction of the nests by farmers, the inability of these birds to attach their nests to the smooth surface of painted barns and houses in contrast to the unfinished buildings of early settlement - but whatever the cause, the Cliff Swallow is not as common around western homes as it once was, so it is good to see a photo of a thriving new colony such as the one at Highfield. Mr. Ward also tells us that the Lazuli Bunting, a rare visitor from the west, nested in his garden in 1942.

M. G. Street of Nipawin has sent in a most comprehensive list of the birds of the Nipawin district, (with breeding records). We hope to publish Mr. Street's list in the next issue of the "Blue Jay."

PROVINCIAL NOTES (continued)

More and more it is being realized that the so-called "predatory" birds and animals are often far more beneficial than they are harmful. The value of many hawks is now generally recognized but we are still a long way from realizing the value of animal predators in the scheme of nature. In this connection some observations of H.M. Rayner, of Ituna, on the Long-tailed Weasels are of special interest.

Mr. Rayner's letter runs, "While driving in the country last week (October 22) I noticed a white object near the side of the road. It turned out to be a fine specimen of the large Long-tailed Weasel. He was nearly white, having only one small patch of brown and stood facing us boldly, his head held high and a fully grown mouse in his mouth. He had it by the back like a terrier and his eyes seemed to blaze with defiance, as if he were proclaiming, "Behold me the killer of killers, am I not the very picture of wild ferocity?"

"Weasels," states Mr. Rayner, "seem to be increasing in numbers in the Ituna district which, in my opinion, is a matter for satisfaction. They have, in the recent past, been relentlessly trapped. The good done by weasels, in keeping down destructive rodents, entitles them to careful protection and conservation. In nearly forty years experience not a single case of weasels killing chickens has come to my notice. The same cannot be said of the ground squirrels and rats which the weasel tirelessly hunts."

Mr. S.A. Mann has loaned us his very complete volume of spring migration dates for the Piapot district for the past 16 years. Records such as these are a valuable addition to Saskatchewan bird-lore.

The Christmas Bird Censuses show 30 species recorded for the province. Many of us will agree with Mr. Street's observation, "This is the first time I have ever taken a Xmas Bird Census, and I was quite surprised at the number of species and individuals seen when all totalled up." No Crossbills were reported and Evening Grosbeaks only once, otherwise all the likely winter birds seem to have been observed.

STATUS OF THE SHARP-TAILED GROUSE

There have been conflicting reports this last Fall regarding the number of prairie chicken (more correctly Sharp-tailed Grouse) around the country. In some places they have become so scarce that sportsmen are convinced that the "ten year" decline has set in while at other points there seems to be no apparent decrease in the number of birds present.

In the Yorkton district a shortage of prairie chicken was noted during the shooting season. W. Niven writing from Sheho reports that where there were hundreds of chicken in 1941, this season there were only a few flocks. And then, in contrast, from Ituna, not so many miles south of Sheho, H.M. Rayner writes, "In the district tributary to Ituna, no lessening in the number of Sharp-tails has been noted, nor has any diseased condition of any grouse or partridge come to my notice." Plenty of chicken were also noted in the Tisdale district further north.

Our Yorkton Xmas Bird Census revealed about the same number of prairie chicken as last year. In the Wolseley area J.R. Garden says that they are very scarce, and that one day he drove for 150 miles over country roads and only saw three of these birds. However chicken are plentiful at the Indian Reserve at Muscow, according to Frank Booth, Supervisor of the Reserve.

So it will be of interest to see if the decrease in the number of prairie chicken will have become general all over the province by next fall.

