

I have observed these nocturnal birds returning singly in the early morning to their roosting area. At 7:45 on a February morning in 1952 when the temperature was twenty-five degrees F., I observed two herons flying with retracted legs toward the trees in which they spend the day.—MALCOLM DAVIS, *The National Zoological Park, Washington, D. C.*

**Notes on Western Grebe in British Columbia.**—In 1941, information on the Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) in British Columbia was published by J. A. Munro (Occ. Papers B. C. Prov. Mus. No. 3). Some recent observations of migration and records of breeding are reported here.

The only records of autumn migration given by Munro (*op. cit.*) are for the Okanagan Valley and points near or on coastal waters. Johnstone (Occ. Papers B. C. Prov. Mus. No. 7, 1949) gives a number of records of records of autumn migration of Western Grebes in the southern Kootenay area. Six records between October 18 and November 12 of various years involve seven birds or fewer, whereas on October 13, 1948, he recorded 51 Western Grebes on Crow's Nest Lake.

During early October, 1951, I counted considerable numbers of Western Grebes at various points in the Kootenay region. Some of the records follow: Moyie Lake, October 2, 210; Spillimacheen, October 3, 250; Golden, October 4, 300; Kinbasket Lake, October 6, 1400; and Columbia River near Boat Encampment, October 6, 21. At the point where the latter observation was made, the Columbia River is a rough and rapid stream flowing through a narrow rocky channel, a habitat hitherto considered most unattractive to aquatic birds. All the points mentioned are adjacent to the western slope of the Rocky Mountains and presumably are the first resting points encountered by Western Grebes on their westward movement from the prairies. It seems apparent from a comparison of the above records with those given by Johnstone (1949) that the Western Grebe migration is at its peak in early October.

Only one nesting colony, that at Williams Lake in the Cariboo region, has previously been recorded in British Columbia (Munro, 1941). An isolated breeding record mentions downy young found at Swan Lake, in the Okanagan Valley, in 1933 (J. A. Munro, *Condor*, 37: 178, 1935).

On June 7, 1950, I visited Swan Lake with J. A. Munro. Two groups of Western Grebe nests were found in round-stem bulrush (*Scirpus acutus*) marsh on the east side of the lake. Seventeen nests were located: of these, five nests contained two eggs, ten contained three eggs, and two contained four eggs. There were approximately 85 adult Western Grebes on the lake at this time.

On June 7, 1951, we again visited Swan Lake but did not search the marsh area for Western Grebe nests. One nest and one newly hatched young were seen during the course of a circuit of the lake. Approximately 75 adult Western Grebes were observed.—DAVID A. MUNRO, *Canadian Wildlife Service, 150 Wellington St., Ottawa, Canada.*

**Prairie Falcon "Playing."**—On August 2, 1951, while conducting a waterfowl survey of rangeland sloughs in the Nicola area some 40 miles south of Kamloops, British Columbia, my attention was drawn by the behavior of a Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*). The bird was first noted soaring upward against a moderate wind; several times it rose to a height of about 70 feet and then swooped down to within four or five feet of the ground. After a moment it became apparent that the falcon held an object in its talons; soon the bird dropped to the ground with the object, and I approached it in order to identify its prey. As I drew close to the falcon it took wing, but since I was carefully marking the object it had previously

dropped I did not notice whether or not it was then carrying anything with it. The object with which the falcon had previously been engaged was a piece of dried cow manure about the size of a robin. Again turning my attention to the bird, I saw it some 50 feet above ground with another piece of cow manure in its talons. Several times after that the falcon dropped the piece of manure in mid-air and immediately swooped down and seized it before it had fallen more than about 25 feet. Then the bird alighted on an almost bare patch of ground and commenced to toss the piece of manure several feet ahead of it and then flutter after it and pounce on it. This was done repeatedly. The final, distinct routine noted involved the falcon rising several feet from the ground, flinging the piece of manure ahead and above it, and attempting to catch it while still in the air. The tossing was done with both talons. The falcon was not consistently successful in recapturing the piece of manure in this manner.

The episodes described above took place in about 20 minutes. At the end of this period the falcon flew away and eventually disappeared over a low hill.

To attempt objective interpretation of the observed behavior is difficult. One cannot help but be reminded of the play of young cats with simulated prey objects. While it seems reasonable to assume that such play develops skill in capturing and handling of prey objects, one wonders about the nature of the stimulus giving rise to such action involving an inanimate and unpalatable object.—DAVID A. MUNRO, *Canadian Wildlife Service, 150 Wellington St., Ottawa, Canada.*