ment is generally laid by the longer winged bird. This can be made out by taking the wing lengths from Ridgway, when it will be found that the more heavily marked eggs alluded to above are laid by the longer winged. But in most cases no measurements are necessary; for the southerly and southwesterly birds we have been dealing with are so much shorter winged that they can be distinguished at a glance. The wing is of the rounded form which indicates a bird of inferior power of flight. The members of the vireo family and of the finch family that are confined to the southwest are of this round winged form. So, too, we can mark the long wing of the falcon and of the nighthawk and be sure these birds have pigmented eggs in a more marked degree than their fellows.

Bridgeport, Connecticut, February 23, 1924.

THE COMMON LOON IN ALBERTA
(WITH TWO PHOTOS)

By A. D. HENDERSON

THE Common Loon *(Gavia immer)* is a rather common summer resident on the numerous small lakes in the vicinity of Belvedere, Alberta. It is a solitary species, one pair of birds only breeding on the small lake chosen for the site of the nest. A pair of Loons will return year after year to the same lake to nest, even though its eggs are repeatedly taken. On other lakes in the vicinity, apparently quite as suitable, they appear during the breeding season only as visitors.
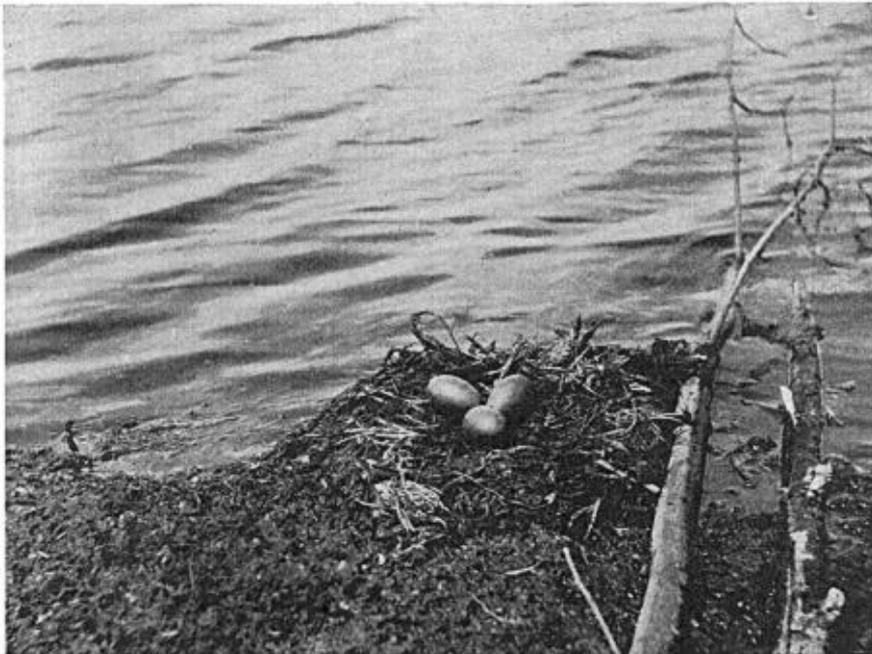

Fig. 43. NEST OF COMMON LOON NEAR BELVEDERE, ALBERTA, MAY 28, 1923.

The number of eggs laid is one, two or three, two being the usual number. Of nineteen nests examined by me in Alberta, only one nest contained one egg, sixteen nests contained two eggs, and two nests contained three eggs. There appears to be a doubt in the minds of some writers as to whether the Loon ever lays three eggs. In Macoun's Catalogue of Canadan Birds he states that "All members of the Geological Survey who have found Loons' nests agree with Macfarlane that they lay two eggs and no nest is built." Audubon, on the contrary, stated that three eggs was the usual number laid by this bird.

The first nest of the Loon containing three eggs, observed by me, was on June 8, 1920. It was on a small lake near Belvedere where a pair of loons breed regularly every year. The nest was situated in coarse marsh grass, in water about six inches deep. It was a large, well-built structure, of dry and green coarse grasses, rushes, goose grass, a small fine water weed, and three pieces of waterlogged wood.

Fig. 44. IMMATURE COMMON LOON ON THE ICE;
PEACE RIVER DISTRICT, ALBERTA, NOVEMBER, 1915.

Another nest of three eggs, which is the one illustrated herewith, was found on May 28, 1923, by Mr. R. C. Harlow and myself. This nest also was on a small lake near Belvedere. A Loon's nest is usually very easily found, as it is quite conspicuous. It is also often located by a tell-tale ripple as the bird leaves the nest in a long dive, coming to the surface some distance out in the lake. On this occasion, however, Mr. Harlow and I both passed the nest twice, although we were looking specially for it.

I happened to discover it in a backward glance, situated at the edge of a stretch of mud between the grass-grown shore and the water, a most unusual situation, as the nests are usually well within the growth of coarse grass, reeds or rushes along the shore. The lake was at a very low level this season, which probably accounted for the unusual position of this nest.

The Loon shows preference for a nesting site on some point or small island consisting of a few clumps of grass tussocks; but it also breeds at other places along the shore.

All the nests I have seen were in the water or beside it, so that the bird could dive off the nest into the water. In North American Diving Birds, Mr. Bent states, "I believe they prefer to occupy the same nest every year and they probably add to it a little every year." I have never found this to be the case. Even when a second set is laid the same year, a new nest is built, only one exception to this rule being observed. On May 29, 1923, Mr. R. C. Harlow and myself took a set of two Loon's eggs from a nest on another small lake, and on July 2 a second set of two was found in the same nest.

All nests of the Loon which I have seen in Alberta were large, well made structures; but some were bulkier and of more elaborate build than others. Four out of the nineteen were on old muskrat houses. When built on a muskrat house it is either a partly demolished one almost level with the water or on the submerged side of one still standing.

In early November, 1915, I found a young Loon on the ice at Island Lake in the Peace River country. It was unable to fly and was bravely walking south. On my approach it advanced gallantly to the attack, pecking at my legs. It had not a chance in the world for its life, as it would soon have starved or been picked up by a hungry coyote. I admired its bravery and would like to have saved it, but thought it best to put it out of misery.

The Loon has several calls, but they are difficult to express on paper. One, uttered on the water, is a long mournful wail, *wah-lay-oo;* another, heard when a bird is flying overhead, is *wah-wullah-wullah-wuh;* another, uttered on the water, is *ah-week-weeul,* with variations. On April 29, 1923, I observed a pair of Loons on Lac La Nonne giving this call with both wings extended; then after swimming around each other and taking very short dives, each took a long dive out in the lake. This apparently was part of their courtship.

The following are a few dates for the arrival of the Loon at Belvedere: April 28, 1899; April 28, 1901; April 21, 1902; May 6, 1920; April 26, 1921; May 2, 1922; and April 28, 1923. Last seen in 1923 on October 28.

My earliest nesting date is May 24, and fresh eggs can be found through the first week in June. In two instances the time between the taking of the first set and the building of a new nest and laying of the second set was fourteen and fifteen days, respectively. It may have been a shorter period, as the nesting places were not examined between dates.

Belvedere, Alberta, February 21, 1924.