

## Yellow-headed Blackbirds Breeding at Rainy River, Ontario

DURING THE period May 13 to June 9, 1961, male and female Yellow-headed Blackbirds, *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* (Bonaparte), were observed in the regions of the mouth of Rainy River and the shores of Lake of the Woods by members of a Royal Ontario Museum field party excavating an Indian mound some three miles upstream from the mouth of the river. The birds were usually observed in reed islands isolated from the mainland. The reed islands are located south of Quick Island at the northeastern end of Sable Island in Lake of the Woods, within the Inner Passage behind Sable Island leading from Quick Island to Four Mile Bay at the mouth of Rainy River, and upstream in Rainy River on both shores as far as Church Point, Wabanica Creek, Minnesota.

A minimal count of 35 males was made on a boat trip on June 7. Many of the males exhibited territoriality and singing. Only two nests were observed, but the presence of others was suspected from the behavior of a number of females. One male and one nest with four eggs were collected on this trip. These are preserved as specimens in the Royal Ontario Museum, Life Sciences Division, Department of Birds, Numbers 91628 (male skin) and 7544 (nest and eggs). The male obtained was singing near the nest, and was probably the male of the pair, the female of which was put off the nest when it was collected. The four eggs were fertile, the vitelline plexus and blood islands being well developed, as observed upon blowing.

This is the first breeding record of the Yellow-headed Blackbird in Ontario. However, previous reports of nesting and summering are as follows: One unconfirmed nesting report by John D. Jacob, game warden, at Saganagons Lake near Quetico Park, on May 14, 1931 (ROM files); one summer observation by L. Paterson at Quibell on the Cana-

dian National Railway west of Sioux Lookout for which no date is available (L. L. Snyder, Trans. Roy. Can. Inst., 30: 84, 1953); one bird on May 24 and four birds on June 3, 1959, seen at Dryden by Mrs. Laura A. Howe; one on May 5 in the Black Sturgeon area by T. Swift; one on May 24 in Fort William by W. Zaroski and possibly another individual by A. E. Allin (J. M. Speirs, Bull. Fed. Ont. Nat. 85 (3):24, 1959), and one male specimen collected at Macdiarmid on Lake Nipigon on June 20, 1933 (L. L. Snyder, Trans. Roy. Can. Inst., 16: 266, 1928). An additional sight record of a male Yellow-headed Blackbird can be noted from Indian Reserve 35C, on the south shore at the base of the Aulneau Peninsula, Sabaskong Bay, Lake of the Woods, by the author, on May 24, 1961.

CHARLES S. CHURCHER

Department of Zoology  
University of Toronto  
Toronto 5, Ontario  
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## First Record of the Keeled Slug, *Milax gagates* (Drap.), in Nova Scotia\*

THE FIRST OCCURRENCE of the keeled slug, *Milax gagates* (Drap.) in Nova Scotia was authenticated with the collection of a single specimen at Amherst, Nova Scotia, in early May, 1961. It was later identified by Dr. Aurele La Rocque, Department of Geology, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. The original specimen and subsequently several more were collected in the cellar of a house by R. S. Horsburgh of the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Marketing. It was immediately seen to be an unfamiliar species, possibly the great slug of Europe, *Limax maximus* L. The strongly keeled back, elliptical impression on the mantle, and frequently darker colour in *M. gagates* will differentiate it from *L. maximus*. The specimens col-

lected were quite black, and between 60 and 70 mm. long when alive.

In England this species is one of three members of the genus *Milax* that are regarded as very destructive pests especially of root crops and potatoes. They are evidently largely subterranean in habit.

*Milax gagates* was not found during 1960 when rather intensive surveys of the slugs in fields and field margins were conducted in the vicinity of Kentville and Hall's Harbour, Kings County; Digby, Digby County; and Cow Bay, Halifax County. Nor did Ord and Watts (1950, New records for the distribution of certain land Mollusca in Nova Scotia. Proc. N.S. Inst. Sci. 22:16-35) find it in their extensive surveys. La Rocque (1953, Catalogue of the Recent Mollusca of Canada, National Museum of Canada Bulletin No. 129) gives its range in North America as California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Colorado, Pennsylvania, and probably British Columbia.

C. J. S. Fox

Research Station  
Canada Department of Agriculture  
Kentville, Nova Scotia  
6 October 1961

\*Contribution No. 1085, Research Station, Canada Department of Agriculture, Kentville, Nova Scotia.

## An Observation of a Golden Eagle Dominating Coyotes

ON SEPTEMBER 11, 1961, the writers discovered the fresh carcass of a bull elk in the Cascade River Valley of Banff National Park.

On September 15, at a vantage point about 400 yards from the elk carcass, we watched with binoculars as a golden eagle fed on the remains and two coyotes moved about them. On three occasions one of the coyotes rushed forward and each time the eagle drove him away by advancing with a flapping of wings, and then resumed feeding. We watched for several minutes during which time the eagle maintained possession of the kill, the coyotes skulked nearby, and a raven

and three magpies flew from tree to tree over it. No vocal activity of either the eagle or the coyotes could be detected from our observation point.

We returned three hours later to find the eagle still in possession of the kill. When we approached, the eagle and the coyotes departed, and the magpies moved in to pick up scraps. We found that most of the remains had been covered with a light layer of soil and debris scraped from around them, evidently the work of a bear.

DONALD R. FLOOK  
DONALD C. THOMAS

Canadian Wildlife Service  
Edmonton, Alberta  
20 October 1961

## Exceptional Height for *Rhododendron lapponicum*

UNUSUALLY TALL *Rhododendron lapponicum* were collected by me in June 1961 along the Yellowknife Highway, N.W.T., some 66 miles west-northwest of Yellowknife. The specimens were growing in a rich black spruce-feather moss forest. Plants 15 to 24 inches (38 - 61 cm) were frequent. The tallest plant observed was 30 inches (76 cm). In contrast, some manuals that include this species give 5 to 12 cm as its maximum height. Cody (1956, Can. Field Nat. 70: 121) comments upon the "tall stature"—15 to 18 inches (38 - 46 cm)—of certain of his specimens of *R. lapponicum*. Eighteen inches (46 cm) is recorded as the maximum authenticated height of the species by Polunin (1959, *Circumpolar Arctic Flora*), who does, however, suggest that a far greater height may be reached: "*R. lapponicum* . . . is an attractive little bush 4 - 25 (-46) (-100?) cm height."

JOHN W. THIERET  
Chicago Natural History Museum  
Chicago 5, Illinois  
28 September 1961



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