

# ADDITIONAL RECORDS OF BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD EGGS IN NESTS OF SPOTTED SANDPIPER

*Martin K. McNicholl*

105 - 8752 Centaurus Circle, Burnaby, BC V3J 7E7

In his interesting report on the first documented case of a Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) egg in a British Columbia Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*) nest, Chris Siddle (2008) mentioned that the only two previous records of this sandpiper as an inappropriate brood host of cowbirds were both in Minnesota. A vague memory of David R. M. Hatch finding such a nest in Manitoba caused me to check my bibliography of Manitoba birds for such a record (McNicholl 1985), and I was able to confirm that he had found a nest with four Spotted Sandpiper eggs and one cowbird egg on an island in Lake Manitoba in 1970 (Hatch 1971). This record was included in the compilation by Friedmann et al. (1977), along with one record each from Edmonton and Leduc, Alberta in 1960 and 1964, and one each from Ontario and Utah for a total of five records by 1977, two of which were also listed in earlier papers by Friedmann. Robert W. Turner found the Edmonton nest in 1964 (Lister 1964; Sadler and Myres 1976). The Ontario nest, found in June 1965, also contained the usual four sandpiper eggs and one cowbird egg (Peck and James 1983).

Recently, another historical record for British Columbia has been discovered in the field notes of the late John G. Sarles (R.W. Campbell pers. comm., 19 November 2010). In June 1964 (exact date unknown), he found a Spotted Sandpiper nest with three sandpiper eggs and an egg of a Brown-headed Cowbird in a sandy region of Annacis Island in the South Arm of the Fraser River in the municipality of Delta. John reported the observation to Dr. Miklos M. D. F. Udvardy, a professor in the Department of Zoology at the University of British Columbia, who was interested in co-authoring a scientific note. Unfortunately, Udvardy returned to California without writing it up.

As both Minnesota records, Siddle's 1984 Beaton Park record and the Annacis Island record were all more recent than the 1977 compilation, they bring the total to at least nine. Siddle's record is also the northwestern most record published to date.

As shorebirds do not feed their young, they are entirely inappropriate cowbird hosts, with only four species (one plover [Killdeer, *Charadrius vociferous*], one phalarope [Wilson's Phalarope, *Phalaropus tricolor*] and two sandpiper species [Spotted Sandpiper and Upland Sandpiper, *Bartramia longicauda*]) in the most recent compilation of Brown-headed Cowbird hosts that I have seen documented to date (Ortega 1998: Appendix B).

Thanks to R. Wayne Campbell for adding the record of John Sarles and for editing this note.

## *Literature Cited*

**Friedmann, H., L.F. Kiff and S.I. Rothstein.** 1977. A further contribution to knowledge of the host relations of the parasitic cowbirds. Smithsonian Contributions to Zoology No. 235:1-75.

**Hatch, D.R.M.** 1971. Brown-headed Cowbird parasitism on Spotted Sandpiper and Wilson's Phalarope. Blue Jay 29:17-18.

**Lister, R.** 1964. Nesting season June 1-August 15, 1964. Northern Great Plains region. Audubon Field Notes 18:515-519.

**McNicholl, M.K.** 1985. Manitoba bird studies 1744-1983: a bibliography. Manitoba Natural Resources and Manitoba Museum of Man & Nature, Winnipeg, MB. 290 pp.

**Ortega, C.P.** 1998. Cowbirds and other brood parasites. University of Arizona Press, Tucson. 372 pp.

**Peck, G.K. and R.D. James.** 1983. Breeding birds of Ontario nidology and distribution. Volume

1: nonpasserines. Royal Ontario Museum Life Sciences Miscellaneous Publication, Toronto. xiv + 321 pp.

**Sadler, T.S. and M.T. Myres.** 1976. Alberta birds 1961-1970. Provincial Museum of Alberta Natural History Section Occasional Paper No. 1, Edmonton. v + 314 pp.

**Siddle, C.** 2008. British Columbia record of a Brown-headed Cowbird egg in a Spotted Sandpiper nest. *Wildlife Afield* 5:215-216.

#### *About the Author*

Martin's interest in inappropriate hosts of cowbirds was stimulated by finding a cowbird egg in a Mourning Dove nest in Winnipeg's Brookside Cemetery (*Blue Jay* 26:22-23, 1968). His earlier focus on Spotted Sandpipers was on the egg-teeth of their young (*North American Bird Bander* 6:44-45, 1981).