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## THE BIRDS OF SHOAL LAKE, MANITOBA.

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46. \*AMERICAN BITTERN, *Botaurus lentiginos*.

In 1901, Seton found it abundant and breeding. He says: "A conspicuous feature of the landscape—hard at work night and day pumping out the bog". We found it in no such numbers. May 19 to 21, 1917, one was heard each night in a marshy spot behind camp. The next day one was taken but we did not hear the species thereafter. This bird was a male with the skin of the throat greatly thickened with a tough gelatinous tissue inside that I have met with a number of times before in spring males of this species, but have never seen referred to in print nor found ornithologists generally familiar with it. The tissue is very much like that behind the throat puffs of the courting Prairie Chicken and, judging from the dried specimens of breeding spring Pectoral Sandpipers in our collection, probably similar to conditions found in the inflatable sac of that species. As the Bittern inflates its throat while courting or booming it is likely that this deposit is of similar origin in each of these species. It lines the inside of the skin perhaps one-eighth of an inch thick and is soft and rubbery, firmly attached to the skin, and sliding away under the knife in a manner that makes its removal very difficult. In 1918, Young saw occasional birds in May, June and August.

47. GREAT BLUE HERON, *Ardea herodias*.

The Ward brothers say that this species was rare on the lakes even in time of high water and extensive marsh. They rarely observed over one or two each year. In 1918, Young reports seeing two birds on July 10 at the Narrows.

48. BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON, *Nycticorax nycticorax*.

Reported by Chapman as breeding on the ground in reeds two to three inches above water, the record is accompanied by photographs of nests in "Camps and Cruises". It is said by the Ward brothers to have nested in large colonies on the floating debris where the drift of the lake came in at the edge of

the marshes. Only a few migrants have been seen of late years. Seton describes a night herony where "scores, probably hundreds of nests, were in the tall quill-reeds; but none at all to the trees". He quotes a resident farmer, G. H. Meacham, as authority for the statement that three years previous (to 1901) there were but twenty pairs present, but remarks that their rapid increase was marvelous, stating, "No doubt this is one of the species whose number fluctuate with the rise and fall of the lake", thus forecasting their present disappearance again.

49. WHOOPING CRANE, *Grus americana*.

We were informed by the Ward brothers that Whooping Cranes used to breed and be fairly plentiful. About 1901 they saw thirty birds together. They have grown much scarcer of late years, but still a few are seen each season. In 1916, three were seen by Frank Ward, and even in 1917, about a week before my return visit, two passed immediately over him flying very low.

50. SAND-HILL CRANE, *Grus mexicana* or *canadensis*.

In 1917, we saw no cranes but a nearby farmer had heard them a few days previous to our questioning. We looked for them but found their old haunts dried up and encroached upon by settlers. The Ward brothers say that, until very recently a few still bred on nearby muskegs and in late summer and early autumn they visit the grain fields in large flocks, but are decreasing. A few days previous to my return visit in the autumn, William Ward saw several, but regarded this as a late date. In 1918, a number were observed shortly before Young's arrival, and he noted one April 25. Small flocks of from three to eight were seen later from August 15 to Sept. 6, usually high in the air. The Ward brothers think they recognized two sizes in the cranes commonly seen, which would indicate that both the Sandhill and Little Brown Crane occur; in which case the former would likely be the breeding form, and the latter a migrant.