

Christmas has come and gone, spring's supposedly just around the corner, North America's annual Christmas bird count has just been tabulated. Although this fascinating international census is now entering its 72nd year West-Man's involvement with it is of shorter duration.

The concept of taking a continental bird count in mid-winter originated in 1900 with the late Dr. Frank M. Chapman of American Museum of Natural History, editor of Bird Lore, now Audubon Magazine. That year 25 counts were made with 27 persons participating. By 1968 some 853 groups from every state and province carried out observations in their home districts while the latest Christmas count included 903 reports.

Manitoba first got into the act in 1925 with 16 Winnipegers and three rural residents taking bird counts in their areas. The sole West-Man recorder then was R.D. Bird of Birtle. The Natural History Society of Manitoba supervised censuses from 1925 to 1936; after a lapse of 10 years these resumed in 1947 and have continued since. H.W.R. (Herb) Copland of that society is Manitoba's chief compiler while Riding Mountain National Park's naturalist Rob Walker assists with organizing western Manitoba. My own involvement has been on minor scale having participated only in the 1969 and 1971 counts.

Of the 25 Manitoba sample survey areas in the 1971 bird census 12 were located in West-Man. These were: Brandon, Deleau, Douglas, Glenora, Hartney, Laurier, Lyleton, Minnedosa, Oak Lake, Reston, Riding Mountain Park, Souris. Often a local organization interested in nature and wildlife assists with the count. For example, Minnedosa's 1969 count was undertaken by the local Horticultural Society with out-going provincial president Stan Gugin in charge.

Briefly, a count procedure consists of dividing up the sample area--ours was a circle of 15-mile diameter with Minnedosa as hub--among roving counters, and selecting stationary bird feeder observers throughout this area. A single day is selected between Dec. 25 and Jan. 2 (same day for everyone of a particular sample area) and as many birds as possible counted, identified, recorded that day. Weather conditions, snow depth, etc. are all carefully noted and the Natural History Society estimates winter bird populations from this. The Minnedosa group recorded 4,554 birds of 26 species.

Aside from numerous house sparrows the 12 most common West-Man winter birds this year were evening and pine grosbeaks, snow buntings, common redpolls, ruffed and sharp-tailed grouse, gray (Hungarian) partridges, hairy and downy woodpeckers, blue-jays, magpies, chickadees.

Three particularly large groups of observers helped with the Manitoba bird census this winter: Winnipeg with 36, Minnedosa with 25, Pinawa with 21. Aside from the little woman (she is literally that) and me Minnedosa's census takers were: B. Baker, K. Bruce, S. Cummins, C., S. and F. Gugin, C. and T. Harrison, I. Hagenson, B. Hooper, E. Horner, B. Kingdon, the D.A. McNabbs, M. McNabb, E. and M. Macdonald, M. McDonald, L. McMillan, A. McNabb, H. Oman, M. Steingard, D. Wishart.

An unusual Minnedosa recording was that of four American goldfinches seen by the D.A. McNabbs. As this Cameron district farm couple had also identified some several years ago and met with considerable skepticism (Who expects wild canaries in Manitoba at Christmas?), I asked Mr. Copland's opinion of this phenomenon and he wrote: "It is unusual to find American goldfinches present during the winter. Last year a group of 14 were seen almost daily at a farm about 10 miles west of Brandon. Mrs. Barbara Robinson of Brandon saw them on three occasions in January. On March 11, David Hatch of Oak Lake also saw the group." As for me, I'm going right out to plant a banana tree.

Eighteen of Minnedosa Wildlife Association's wild turkeys were sighted on our count day. Mr. Copland's comment to this was: "I am aware wild turkeys have been introduced to a number of areas in Manitoba. About three years ago I saw a few in the Turtle Mountains, south of Boissevain. On Dec. 22, David Hatch and I saw six about three miles west of Miami."

A single bird recorded here not seen by any other Manitoba observers was a screech owl while other unusual ones for this particular winter's count were a goshawk, spruce grouse, northern shrike, snowy owl, great horned owl. The Souris group saw two Canada geese and a mallard on an open portion of river below the dam while 14 Canada geese and 18 mallards were seen at Delta.

### 37. TOWN PLANNING SCHEMES

REFLECTIONS editorial column, Minnedosa Tribune, Mar. 9/72

Last week I attended a public meeting in Lorndale Community Hall where Minnedosa District Planning Scheme 1971 was explained as it applies to Odanah. Outlining the plan were provincial co-ordinator Allan Shier and Reeve Anderson while councillors East, Calen, Johnson and planning commission representatives Fred Charles and By Crawford helped answer questions. It was obvious the 50 persons present hadn't come out of idle curiosity.