



PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT

Evaluation of Migratory Bird Sanctuaries in Saskatchewan

D. J. Nieman

Canadian Wildlife Service

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

December, 1971.

PROJECT SHEET

TITLE: Evaluation of Migratory Bird Sanctuaries in Saskatchewan.

AGENCY: Canadian Wildlife Service.

PROJECT LEADER: D. J. Nieman.

COOPERATING AGENCIES (Personnel): Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources.

YEARS (est.): 1971 - 1972

FIELD SEASON: July-September.

LOCATION: Saskatchewan.

OBJECTIVES:

- (1) To assess the Migratory Bird Sanctuaries in Saskatchewan and determine whether or not they conform to the basic requirements of a sanctuary.
- (2) To determine the current status and value of the sanctuaries regarding enforcement of regulations and migratory bird and public utilization.
- (3) To make recommendations concerning either the dropping of sanctuaries from the federal responsibility or proposals for the continued or improved maintenance of such areas by the C.W.S.

TECHNIQUES (list only):

- (1) Investigate the past histories of the sanctuaries, their reasons for establishment, and federal and provincial involvement, especially where the areas are also provincial game preserves.
- (2) Visit each sanctuary in the summer and fall. Assess each regarding enforcement, posting, public and migratory bird use. Conduct interviews with the public, local R.C.M.P. and Conservation Officers.
- (3) Recommend the desirable role of the Canadian Wildlife Service regarding each sanctuary.

RESULTS OR SPECIAL PROBLEMS (to Nov. 1.71):

- (1) The Migratory Bird Sanctuaries in Saskatchewan have been neglected by the Canadian Wildlife Service in recent years, and the role of CWS in these areas questioned. These sanctuaries should be evaluated, then either properly maintained or dropped from the list.
- (2) The initiation of this project in the summer of 1971 involved visits to six sanctuaries in Saskatchewan. In general they are poorly maintained; however, the value of several is questionable and several should no longer be retained as federal sanctuaries.

PROGRESS TO DECEMBER, 1971.

1. Field assessment of sanctuaries

Migratory bird sanctuaries in Canada have been established according to the following criteria:

- (a) The need to protect migratory birds from being hunted.
- (b) The need to have some control over use of land in order to preserve habitat required by migratory birds.
- (c) The suitability of the area for public use in observing and studying birds.

In the summer of 1971, a study was initiated to evaluate the 15 migratory bird sanctuaries in Saskatchewan (Fig. 1) to determine whether or not each of these areas conforms to the basic requirements of a sanctuary as outlined in the above criteria. Investigations were carried out to determine the amount of enforcement that each sanctuary does and should receive, and the degree of utilization by the public and migratory birds.

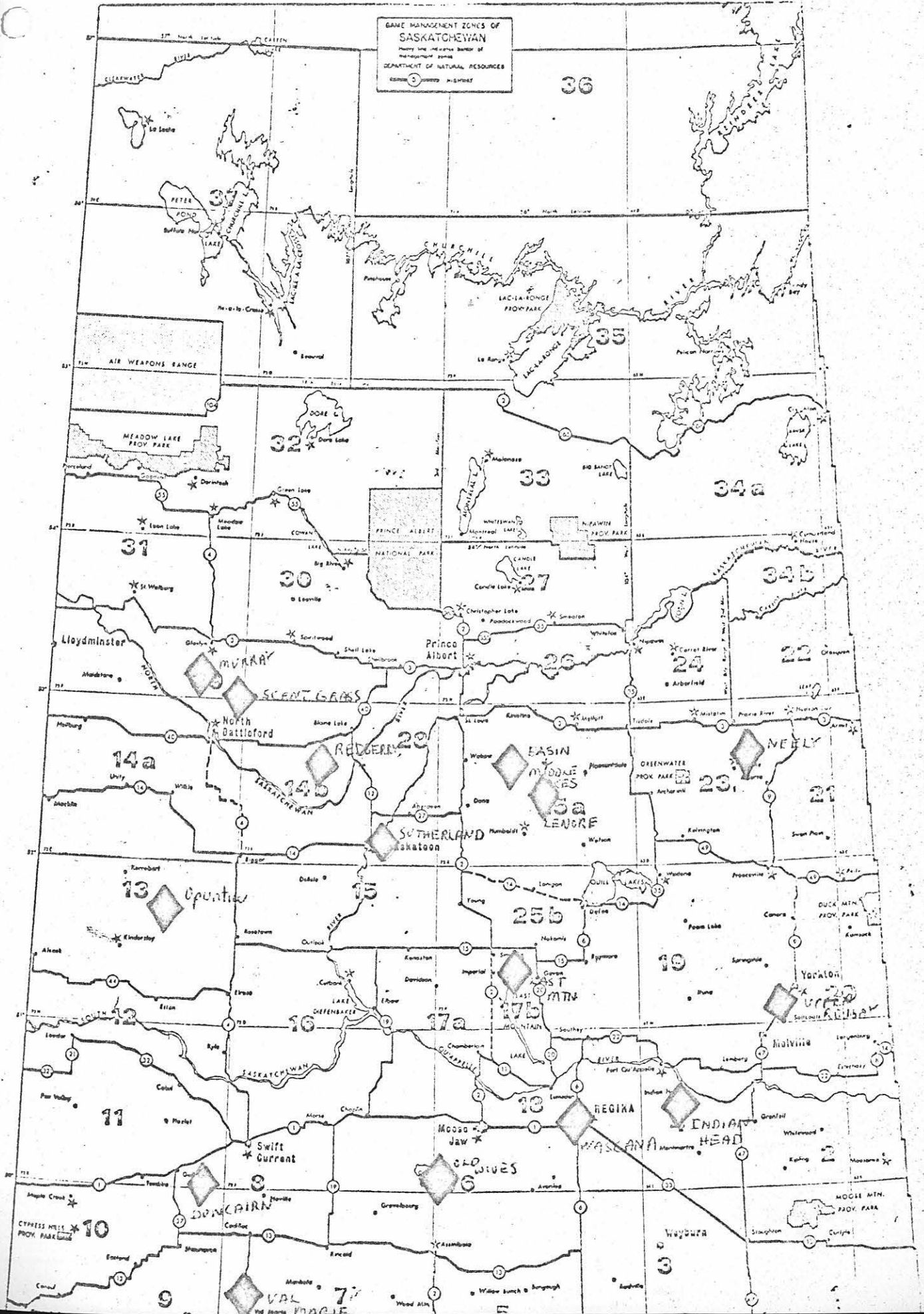
Six sanctuaries were visited from 5-27 August, 1971. Habitat photographs in conjunction with investigations of migratory bird and public utilization of each area. Interviews with the local landowners, members of the local detachments of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and provincial Department of Natural Resources personnel were carried out as well.

Preliminary results are as follows:

(a) Sutherland Bird Sanctuary

Visited on 5 August, 1971. This sanctuary (half a square mile) is located within the city limits of Saskatoon and is used as a picnic area,

5.1 MIGRATORY BIRD SANCTUARIES (SASKATCHEWAN)



has a variety of tree and shrub plantings and a small zoo. The actual water area in question is an unmaintained dugout of no value to migratory birds. Waterfowl use is nil in this area, and posting the area as a federal sanctuary has not been done and is believed unnecessary considering the location of the sanctuary. Any protection warranted by this area is received from city personnel.

(b) Redberry Lake Bird Sanctuary

Visited on 9 August, 1971. This sanctuary is located 40 miles northwest of Saskatoon and includes the 27 square miles of water area in addition to the lake's numerous islands. These latter land areas are important as breeding areas for several colonial bird species such as pelicans, cormorants and gulls. A large marshy area on the south end of Redberry Lake is utilized as nesting habitat by ducks and a few Canada geese. This lake is an important moulting and fall staging area for ducks and geese. There is one commercial beach and many natural beaches on the lake and public use has been rapidly increasing in recent years. This area is not heavily posted as a sanctuary (4 Canadian Wildlife Service sanctuary signs observed) but receives adequate enforcement from the R.C.M.P. (Hafford detachment).

(c) Murray Lake Bird Sanctuary

Visited on 10 August, 1971. This sanctuary is located in parkland 25 miles north of North Battleford and includes all of Murray Lake (4.5 square miles of water). The lake is an important fall staging area for ducks and a few geese. There is some excellent waterfowl habitat, particularly on the south end, but Murray Lake is heavily utilized by the public for fishing, boating and swimming. Recreational facilities are

plentiful. The lake is poorly posted (only one "sanctuary" sign located) and most people in the area appear unaware that it is a federal bird sanctuary.

(d) Scent Grass Lake Bird Sanctuary

Visited on 10 August, 1971. Scent Grass Lake is located 17 miles north of North Battleford and the protected area includes the entire lake - 3 square miles of water. This lake is apparently a good fall staging area for migratory waterfowl. There are large marshy areas on the west and northwest shores of the lake and this excellent waterfowl habitat is well utilized. No recreational facilities are available and Scent Grass Lake was well posted as a provincial game preserve (no federal sanctuary signs were located).

(e) Last Mountain Lake Bird Sanctuary

Visited on 11 August, 1971. This sanctuary is located in grassland 60 miles northwest of Regina and includes 12 square miles of water and islands on Last Mountain Lake. This sanctuary is important for the breeding, moulting and fall staging activities of large numbers of ducks. Sandhill cranes and geese depend on the area during fall migration and whooping cranes are usually reported in this area during each migration period. Colonial birds (gulls and pelicans) nest on the islands. Recreational facilities are available and the public is aware that the area is a sanctuary.

(f) Opuntia Lake Bird Sanctuary

Visited on 27 August, 1971. The Opuntia Lake bird sanctuary is located in grassland 80 miles west of Saskatoon. The protected area includes the entire lake (6 square miles). Opuntia Lake is heavily

utilized in the fall as a staging area for ducks and geese but is unimportant as a breeding area. Waterfowl breeding habitat is at a minimum - it is a large, open, alkaline lake with a deep shoreline. This lake appeared to have some potential as a recreational area at one time, but has been poorly utilized in recent years. Opuntia Lake is poorly posted but there is a 500 yard shooting restriction on the area and the public are generally aware of the lake's protected status.

2. Collection of background information

Interviews with people associated with the federal sanctuaries in Saskatchewan are being continued during the winter of 1971-72. Background and historical data on these areas is being collected. As several migratory bird sanctuaries are also provincial game preserves, the status of such preserves in the province is being investigated. The attitudes of the public as well as Canadian Wildlife Service, Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources, and Royal Canadian Mounted Police personnel towards these areas is being studied.

OBJECTIVES OF THE 1972 FIELD SEASON

This study will be continued and completed during the 1972 field season, during which time the other nine migratory bird sanctuaries in Saskatchewan will be visited. A complete and comprehensive report on this project will be submitted to R. H. Mackay, Canadian Wildlife Service, in late 1972. The report will present a complete review of the sanctuaries and include:

(a) The past histories of the sanctuaries, their reasons for establishment and the federal and provincial responsibility to each area in question.

(b) The physical characteristics of the protected and surrounding area. Habitat photographs and information pertaining to the water area, depth, shoreline-type, emergent and submergent vegetational cover and number of islands will be presented.

(c) The amount and type of signs posted and existing enforcement.

(d) The attitudes of the public, and C.W.S., R.C.M.P., and D.N.R. personnel regarding the areas in question.

(e) The utilization of the sanctuaries by migratory birds.

(f) The recreational utilization and facilities available.

(g) Recommendations concerning the dropping of some areas as federal migratory bird sanctuaries or proposals for retention of same. If it is suggested that some sanctuaries be retained, recommendations for their maintenance will be presented.

D. J. Nieman