

First Report of the Alberta Bird Record Committee

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The Alberta Bird Record Committee (hereafter the committee) was formed on 20 August 1994 after convocation by Jocelyn Hudon, Curator of Ornithology at the Provincial Museum of Alberta. Subsequent meetings took place on 29 November 1994 in Calgary, 17 May 1995 in Red Deer, 13 December 1995 in Edmonton and on 15 January 1997 in Red Deer.

At these meetings the name, role, constitution and rules of operation of the committee were discussed and eventually established (printed copies of the constitution and rules of adjudication can be obtained from the committee). The committee also began compiling a list of reports of rare bird sightings in the province and to adjudicate records.

Records, accompanied by supporting evidence, are sent by mail from the museum to the different members of the committee for assessment. Their opinions are then compiled and stored. Specimens have also been examined at different meetings.

Records are placed into the following categories, which determine inclusion in the Provincial Bird List or not:

Accepted, Code 1. Records supported by material evidence, i.e. specimens, identifiable body parts, identifiable photographs or sound recordings (whose origin from within the borders of Alberta is in no doubt) that are accompanied by written reports of the circumstances of the observation.

Accepted, Code 2. Sight records (without supporting material evidence) by multiple independent observers that are supported by written descriptions which leave no doubt as to species identity, or multiple occurrences reported on separate occasions by single observers. A Code 1 or Code 2 sighting must receive five favourable votes and no more than one dissenting vote, to be accepted.

Accepted, Code 3. Sight records by single observers that are supported by written descriptions which leave no doubt as to species identity, and which receive six favourable votes and no dissenting vote. A Code 3 is the minimum necessary for inclusion in the official Provincial List.

Accepted, Code 4. Sight records by single observers that receive five favourable votes and no more than one dissenting vote. For record adjudication purposes such a record is acceptable, but it does not pass the more stringent requirements for inclusion in the official Provincial List. A Code 3 or 4 species can easily be upgraded to Code 1 or 2 when (or if) additional observations are made of that species.

Insufficiently documented. Records supported by material evidence or written descriptions that are not detailed enough to eliminate all other possibilities, or to support conclusively the identification of the species as

presented. Placement in this category should in no way be interpreted as a reflection on the quality of the documentation, but should be looked upon as an encouragement to substantiate occurrence of the species in the province.

Error in identification. Records submitted for adjudication that are not supported by the documentation, or that describe another species than that suggested.

Questionable origin. Records that concern species which are of questionable origin (possibly escapees) and whose wild status cannot be determined accurately.

The following are the results of adjudications made to date:

Records accepted, Code 1.

Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) near Suncor Inc. Lease no. 86, Fort McMurray, 6 May 1987 (John R. Gulley); one brief description and three prints.

Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*) Bruce Lake near Calgary, 10-11 May 1983; one brief description (John W. Thompson) and one print (Barry and Howard Giles).

Police Point Park, Medicine Hat, 26 June 1988; two prints (Michael O'Shea).

Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*) near Brooks on Hwy 36 in May 1991 (Joan and Malcolm McDonald); one slide (Peter Sherrington) and one written description (Ross Dickson).
First documented occurrence in the province.

Near Fort McMurray, 29 June 1995 (Gord Kennedy); one print (Fred Korbut).

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) Lost Lake near Vauxhall, 18 August 1992 (Mike Harrison); one print (Lloyd Bennett) and one written description (Ross Dickson).

Found dead at Twin Lake, 25 October 1994 (Norman Ecker); skin at the Provincial Museum.

Pomarine Jaeger (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) accidentally shot near High River, 9 November 1996; skin at the Provincial Museum. **First documented occurrence in the province.** (Descriptions of possibly the same bird at Glenmore Reservoir, Calgary 8-10 October 1996 have been submitted).

Black Guillemot (*Cepphus grylle*) found dead near Hines Creek, 21 November 1988; one print (Ken Lumbis) and skin at the Provincial Museum. **First documented occurrence in the province.**

Marbled Murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) found dead in early stage of decomposition at Saskatoon Lake, 2-3 July 1994 (Gavin Craig); five slides of the bird and skeleton at the Provincial Museum; see Blue Jay 53:229 (1995), 54:39 (1996). **First documented occurrence in the province;** the bird was of the Asiatic subspecies.

Ancient Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*) found dead in Edson; 29 September 1994; skin at the Provincial Museum.

Green Violet-ear (*Colibri thalassinus*) Peter Lougheed Provincial Park; 13 August-18 December 1993; 11 prints by two sets of observers (Bill and Patti Johnson, Ken Spreadbury) and recollections gathered by Peter Sherrington; identified by Kenn Kaufman. **First documented occurrence in the province.**

Costa's Hummingbird (*Calypte costae*) Ponoka; 30 June-25 July 1988; one print (Ethel McLellan). **First documented occurrence in the province.**

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*) near Madden; 18-19 August 1986; several slides (Peter Sherrington) and field notes.

Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila caerulea*) Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary; 23 October-3 November 1987 (Terry Korolyk); one slide (Peter Sherrington) and three written descriptions (Doug Collister, Ross Dickson, Peter Sherrington). **First documented occurrence in the province.**

Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) near Grimshaw; 14-17 June 1996 (George Veidi); one brief description and two prints.

Sage Thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*) Petrified Coulee, 27 km south of Medicine Hat; 8-16 July 1988; three prints (two by Michael O'Shea) and nest at the Provincial Museum (no eggs, late July 1988).

Kentucky Warbler (*Oporornis formosus*) Weaselhead Natural Area, Calgary; 18-19 June 1988 (Terry Korolyk); one print (Peter Sherrington) and three written descriptions (Terry Korolyk, Doug Collister, Ross Dickson). **First documented occurrence in the province.**

Hooded Warbler (*Wilsonia citrina*) Cypress Hills Provincial Park; 24 May 1991 (Sid Watts, Duncan B.C.); one print. **First documented occurrence in the province.**

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*) found dead at St. Paul; 4 July 1995 (H.J.Norris); skin at the Provincial Museum; see Alberta Naturalist 26:47 (1996). **First documented occurrence in the province.**

Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*) near Cavendish; 18 June 1993 (Joan and Malcolm McDonald); one print (Doug Collister) and two brief written descriptions.

Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) near Water Valley; 22-23 May 1987 (Clay Hunt); two prints and one written description. **First documented occurrence in the province.**

Near Monarch; 16 December 1991 (Victor and Marilyn Hafichuk); two prints (Lloyd Bennett, Richard Thomas) and two written descriptions (Ross Dickson, Peter Sherrington).

Centenary Park, Calgary; 30 October 1993-4 February 1994 (W. Allan Kimberley); one slide (R.C.Kibblewhite) and six written descriptions.

Black-throated Sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*) Olds (RR 3, site 7); 28 May-1 June 1994 (Thelma Lissel); one print and accompanying text; see Blue Jay 53:94 (1995). **First documented occurrence in the province.**

Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*) Edson; November 1988-January 1989 (Dorcas D. Kennedy and Sue Wilkinson); two prints (Richard Klauke) and two written descriptions (Dorcas D. Kennedy and Richard W. Quinlan, Ross Dickson). **First documented occurrence in the province.**

Claresholm; 20-21 December 1993 (Jason Attwell); two prints (Peter Sherrington) and two written descriptions (Peter Sherrington, Ray Wershler).

Record accepted, Code 2.

Green-tailed Towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*) Bowmont Park, Calgary; 30 May 1996 (Peter Sherrington); several detailed descriptions, some with drawings. **First documented occurrence in the province.**

Record insufficiently documented.

Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides*) Suncor Inc. Lease no. 86, Fort McMurray; 5-6 July 1986 (John R. Gulley); one brief description and three prints. The committee was not satisfied that Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*) was excluded by the evidence; a minority of members felt that the evidence indicated the small Alaskan race of the latter species.

The committee is currently gathering documentation on first records for the province. If readers have seen any such birds or are aware of such records they are invited to send the particulars to Jocelyn Hudon at the Provincial Museum or to other committee members.

In the near future the committee intends to solicit the opinion of the general birding community on all records it reviews, by posting the records, with supporting evidence, at venues in Edmonton (The Wildbird General Store) and Calgary (Inglewood Bird Sanctuary).

Finally, under the committee's constitution, the current members are due to retire by rotation over the next three years. Persons interested in joining the committee, or in nominating another to do so, should contact Jocelyn Hudon at the Provincial Museum, 12845 - 102 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5N 0M6.

The current committee members are:

- Jocelyn Hudon, Provincial Museum, Chair
- Doug Collister, Calgary
- Richard Klauke, Vilna
- Pat Marklevitz, Edmonton
- Peter Sherrington, Cochrane
- Andrew Slater, Calgary
- Terry Thormin, Edmonton

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