

## Fourth Report of the Alberta Bird Record Committee

by Andrew Slater and Jocelyn Hudon

The Alberta Bird Record Committee (ABRC; hereafter the Committee) continues to adjudicate records of rare birds in the province. For the last several years the Committee has endeavoured to address a back-log of the first few records of extreme rarities in Alberta, particularly species new to the province. This has occasionally meant unearthing documentation of species thought to have occurred, but for which the Committee lacked evidence.

This report, the fourth of the Committee, marks the completion of the evaluation of new species for the province of which we currently have documentation (with Vaux's Swift still eluding us; see below). The Committee hopes soon to publish an Official List of the Birds of Alberta. A provisional list of the birds of the province can be found on the web at [www.pma.edmonton.ab.ca/natural/birds/birdlist/taxon.htm](http://www.pma.edmonton.ab.ca/natural/birds/birdlist/taxon.htm). Those possessing documentation of first occurrences for the province are asked to kindly forward that information to the ABRC.

Previous reports of the ABRC were published in the Alberta Naturalist: the first in AN 27(2) 40-41, the second 29(2) 30-31 and the third 31(1) 4-6. The official version of the report is published in the Alberta Naturalist, but additional copies may be published in other provincial and national magazines. An explanation of the codes used in this report can be found in the earlier reports.

Since publication of the last report of the Alberta Bird Record Committee, the Committee has met twice and come to a decision on the following records. Please note that the rejection of a record by the Committee does not necessarily imply that the species did not occur at that time and place, only that the documentation, or circumstances of the observation, were not judged adequate for the Committee to endorse occurrence in the province.

### Records accepted:

- Cattle Egret (Bubulcus ibis) in Jasper National Park; November 2001; specimen in the Provincial Museum: Z02.6.2 (Greg Slater). Code 1 record.
- \_ near Wabasca; 14 November 2001; specimen in the Provincial Museum: Z02.6.1 (Jim Hamilton). Code 1 record.
- Eurasian Green-winged Teal. (Anas crecca crecca) near Innisfail; 15 April 1999; description with sketches (Dorothy Dickson). Code 3 record.
- Wandering Tattler (Heteroscelus incanus) at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary; 3-4 September 1996; two descriptions with sketches (Michael Harrison, John Steeves), brief description (Harold Pinel). Code 2 record.
- Iceland Gull (Larus glaucooides) at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary; 11 May 1986; Three descriptions (Bob Storms, Ray Wershler, Andrew Slater). Code 2 record.
- Slaty-backed Gull (Larus schistisagus) in Calgary; 30 September-4 October 2000; two descriptions (Bob Storms and Francois Grenon, Brian Ritchie) and several photographs (Francois Grenon). First documented occurrence in the province. Code 1 record.

- Lesser Black-backed Gull (Larus fuscus) at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary; 27 April 2000; photographs with description (Gerry Pilny), description (Brian Ritchie). Code 1 record.
- \_ at Shepard Landfill, Calgary; 21 October 2000; description with sketch (Terry Korolyk). Code 3 record.
- Black-legged Kittiwake (Rissa tridactyla) near Shepard; 11 August 1999; specimen in the Provincial Museum: Z00. 3. 1. (A. Cole). Code 1 record.
- \_ in Elk Island National Park; 22-23 October 1999; several photographs (Bob Carroll), description (Richard Thomas). Code 1 record.
- Ancient Murrelet (Synthliboramphus antiquus) at Glenmore Reservoir, Calgary; 17-20 October 1982; article with photograph in the Alberta Naturalist 13(2) 49-50 (Allen Wisely), several descriptions, some with sketches (Victor Maltby, John Steeves, Stuart Johnson, Doug Collister, Andrew Slater). Code 1 record.
- \_ at Beaverhill Lake; 2 October 1983; article in Alberta Naturalist 14 (3) 98 (Dick Dekker). Code 3 record.
- \_ at Cold Lake Provincial Park; 18 September 1988; several photographs and description (Richard Klauke). Code 1 record.
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo (Coccyzus americanus) at Elk Island Provincial Park; 12 July 1987; Two photographs and brief description (Bob Carroll). Code 1 record.
- \_ found frozen in Edmonton (P. Bidwell); April 2000; photographs of specimen and skeleton in the Provincial Museum Z01.3.1. Code 1 record.
- \_ at Pincher Creek; 25 November 2001; several photographs with brief description (Carita Bergman). Code 1 record.
- Barn Owl (Tyto alba) in the Cypress Hills; 22 July 1967; article in Blue Jay 25(4) 187 (Wayne Smith). This becomes the first documented occurrence in the province. Code 3 record.
- Flammulated Owl (Otus flammeolus) found dead in Edmonton (Al Gartke); late fall 2000; photograph of specimen in the Provincial Museum Z01.7.1. First documented occurrence in the province. Code 1 record.
- White-throated Swift (Aeronautes saxatalis) in Dinosaur Provincial Park; 25 May -22 June 1999; two descriptions, one with sketches (Cedric Hitchon, Bob Parsons and Nikolas Romaniuk). Code 2 record.
- Red-breasted Sapsucker (Sphyrapicus ruber) in the Porcupine Hills; 7 June 1997; description (R.W.Storms). Code 3 record.
- \_ near Bottrell; 15 April 2000; one photograph and report (Olga Droppo). Code 1 record.
- Blue-winged Warbler (Vermivora pinus) near Vegreville; 28 May 2000; description (Robert Hughes, Carl Grosfield). Code 3 record.
- Golden-winged Warbler (Vermivora chrysoptera) in Police Point Park, Medicine Hat; 28 September 1985; Article in Alberta Bird Record 4(1) 1-2 (Phil Horch). Code 3 record.
- Black-throated Gray Warbler (Dendroica nigrescens) near Jenner; 18 May 2001; video tape and description (Richard Klauke). First documented occurrence in the province. Code 1 record.
- Hooded Warbler (Wilsonia citrina) at the Cave and Basin Historic Site, Banff National Park; Autumn 2000; Several photographs and description (Andrew Chen and Heidi Mass),

descriptions with sketch (John Riddell, Ray Wershler). Code 1 record.

- \_ in Police Point Park, Medicine Hat; 5 October 2001; description (Dennis Baresco). Code 3 record.
  - \_ in Edmonton; 4-25 November 2001; photograph (Roger Brown) and three descriptions (Roger Brown, Bryan Kulba, Terry Thormin). Specimen now in the Provincial Museum: Zo2.8.4. Code 1 record.
- Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*) near Priddis; 8 June 2001; description (Colin Young and Linda Bailey). Code 3 record.

**Records insufficiently documented:**

- Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*) at Sterling Lake on various dates; sketches (Joe Parsons). The Committee felt that the amount of yellow on the bills of individuals of this species varies so much that firm identification of the sketched birds to sub-species was not possible.
- Wandering Tattler (*Heteroscelus incanus*) at Dalemead (now Langdon) Reservoir; 8 August 1988; description (Terry Korolyk). The Committee felt that the documentation did not eliminate other species.
- Three Curlew Sandpipers (*Calidris ferruginea*) at Wolf Lake near Hussar; 23 September 1994; brief description (Olga Droppo). The Committee felt that more common species were not eliminated by the evidence.
- Pomarine Jaeger (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) at Langdon Reservoir; 20 October 1998; description with sketch (Terry Korolyk). The Committee felt that the evidence was insufficient to eliminate other species, taking into account the brief duration of the observation and the high degree of difficulty in identifying members of this genus.
- Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides*) at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary; 26 March 1988; description with sketch (Richard Thomas). The Committee felt that a *barrovianus* Glaucous Gull was not eliminated by the evidence.
- \_ at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary; 13 April 1992; description (Ray Wershler). The committee felt that a *barrovianus* Glaucous Gull was not eliminated by the evidence.
- Chimney Swifts (*Chaetura pelagica*) at Sylvan Lake; 23 June 1960; article in Blue Jay December 1960 (Helge Abrahamson). The committee felt that other species were not eliminated by the evidence.
- Red-breasted Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus ruber*) in Waterton Lakes National Park; 2 August 1983; brief description (D. Elphinstone). The committee felt that, though it is very possible, or even likely, that the bird observed was a Red-breasted Sapsucker, the description as given was not detailed enough to eliminate other species.
- Pygmy Nuthatch (*Sitta pygmaea*) in Banff; 19-28 December 1976; second hand description (Geoff Holroyd). The committee felt that other species were not eliminated by the evidence.
- Canyon Wren (*Catherpes mexicanus*) in the Milk River Valley; 5 July 1971; article in Blue Jay March 1972 (Wayne Smith). The committee felt that it was not able to accept a sound-only record without a tape recording, due to the difficulties in describing bird songs.
- Hutton's Vireo (*Vireo huttoni*) in Waterton Lakes National Park; 11 June 1998; description of song (Cleve Wershler). The committee felt that it was not able to accept a sound-only record without a tape recording, due to the difficulties in describing bird songs.

**Records of questionable origin.**

Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) near Irricana; 19 April 1999; photograph (Bill Walker). The committee felt that, since (1) there are no accepted records in North America apart from a few in the Aleutians, (2) this species is widely bred in captivity and (3) the behaviour of this individual was typical of an escaped bird, it could not accept this record as that of a wild bird.

In addition to reaching the above decisions, the committee has, on several occasions, discussed the identity of the swifts that are being seen in most years in Waterton Lakes National Park, are known to have nested at the Prince of Wales Hotel and which are assumed to be Vaux's Swifts. A fledgling specimen from this location (University of Alberta Museum of Zoology #7831) has been examined, but the committee was unable to establish its identity beyond doubt. No other definitive evidence has been presented, so these birds remain indeterminate at the present time. The committee would be very pleased to receive clear evidence of the specific identity of these swifts, such as recordings of the birds' vocalizations.

Since the third report was published, Terry Thormin has left the Committee and Bob Carroll has been appointed to it.

The current committee members are: Jocelyn Hudon (Provincial Museum), Bob Carroll (Fort Saskatchewan), Richard Klauke (Vilna), M. Ross Lein (Calgary), John Riddell (Calgary), Brian Ritchie (Calgary), Andrew Slater (Calgary).

Andrew Slater is Secretary of the A.B.R.C.; Jocelyn Hudon, Chairman.

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