

Seventh Report of the Alberta Bird Record Committee

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Exciting Year!

2006 proved an exciting one for Alberta birders, with a score of unusual bird sightings, including provincial firsts. With the addition of American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*), Ivory Gull (*Pagophila eburnea*), Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*) and Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*) in the present report, the provincial list now stands at 408 species. [Note: Unfortunately, the Hooded Crow (*Corvus cornix*) which graced a backyard in Whitecourt in both

2005 and 2006 was deemed of questionable origin, and will not appear in the main list.]

Since publication of the Sixth Report of the ABRC (Hudon et al. 2006), the Alberta Bird Record Committee reviewed and reached a decision on 69 records, including several sightings of egrets and Scarlet Tanagers from the back-log of unadjudicated records from the 1980s and 1990s.

In addition, the provincial list is amended to bring it in line with

the latest (47th) supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union's "Checklist of North American Birds" (Banks et al. 2006). This entailed changing the common name of *Dendragapus obscurus* from Blue Grouse to Dusky Grouse, as a result of a taxonomic split, the merging of *Catoptrophorus* and *Heteroscelus* into *Tringa*, the resurrection of *Hydroprocne* within *Sterna*, and a rearrangement of taxa in the latter two groups.

RECORDS ACCEPTED

King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*), Lake Minnewanka, Banff Natl Park; 17 - 25 December 2005; written descriptions (Reno Sommerhalder, Jason Rogers, Royce Howland), one with sketch (Jason Rogers), another with 4 images (Royce Howland); also 3 images of partly-eaten carcass (Doug & Donna McKown). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*), N end of Pine Coulee Reservoir, W of Stavely; 20 November 2005; written description with sketch and 2 images (Teresa & Doug Dolman). This bird appears to be of the eastern group of subspecies based on pattern of feathering on the side of the bill. **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Great Egret (*Ardea alba*), E side of Beaverhill Lake; 16 May 1981; mentioned in Dekker (1998); 1 slide (Bob Gehlert). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Buffalo Bay, Lesser Slave Lake; July 1987; 1 slide (Lorna Allen). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Eagle Lake Park; 17 October 1993; written description (Andrew Slater).

CODE 3 RECORD. Near Airdrie; 12 August 1994; written description (Olga Droppo). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Edmonton; 27 June - 1 July 1997; brief description and image in Gosche (1997). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Ghostpines Springs Sanctuary, S of Pine Lake; summer 2000; apparently its fifth year there; seen again in 2001; brief description and account of occurrence (Wayne Roberts); 2 slides (Randal Hoscheit). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Lethbridge; 6 August 2001; short description posted on "Albertabird" discussion group (Graeme Greenlee). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Coal Lake; 22 April 2003; written description (George and Sandra Garden). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Dugout in SE corner of 160 St / 306 Ave SE junction, and N end of Blizzard Lake, E of Okotoks; 25 May 2003; written description (Ian Halladay). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Clear Lakes area, NE of Claresholm; 4 May 2004; written description, field notes, 4 photographs (Ray I. Woods). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Scope Lake, S of Hays and E of Vauxhall; 30 May 2004; written description

(Lloyd Bennett). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Fincastle Lake, E of Taber; 15 - 19 September, 2004; brief written description posted on "Albertabird", written description (Lloyd Bennett). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Active nest with 4 young, Big Lake, St. Albert; from about 9 June 2005 to at least 26 October 2005; several images (Gerald Romanchuk). **CODE 1 RECORD.** First documented breeding in the province. Pocahontas Ponds, Jasper National Park; 13 - 16 August 2005; images (Doug Faulder [4], Luke DeCicco [3]). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*), Pakowki Lake; 18 June 1987; brief written description and 2 images (Ray Wershler). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Glenmore Reservoir; 21 May 1989; written descriptions (Richard F. Clark, Andrew Slater). **CODE 2 RECORD.** Edcon Block Plant at intersection of 170 St / 137 Ave, Edmonton; 15 May 1999; 1 slide (Bob Gehlert). **CODE 1 RECORD.** N arm of Pakowki Lake; 3 May 2000; written description (Joe Parsons and Paul Thibault).

RECORDS ACCEPTED...continued

CODE 3 RECORD. Irricana sloughs area; 13 May 2000; written description (M. Ross Lein and Valerie A. Haines). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Echo Dale Regional Park, Medicine Hat; 21 May 2001; written description (Milt Spitzer). **CODE 3 RECORD.** At least two at Frank Lake; from 24 July to 13 August 2003, also isolated sighting on 14 September 2003, probably of one of these individuals; images (Bill Walker [2], Al MacKeigan [3]), written description (Andrew Slater), brief description posted on "Albertabird" (Mike Mulligan). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*), Jessie Lake, Bonnyville; 30 October 1994; 2 images in Boston (1994), where species misidentified as Snowy Egret. **CODE 1 RECORD.** Feed terminal parking lot at junction of Hwy 13 and Hwy 21 in Camrose; from 14 August until at least 30 August 1997; photographs (Betty Fisher [1], courtesy of WildBird General Store, Edmonton; Shiela Hardy [1]; R.E. Gehlert [1], courtesy of WildBird General Store; Randal Hoscheit [3 slides]). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Fincastle Lake, near Taber; 31 August 2000; brief description posted on "Albertabird" (Lloyd Bennett). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Indus area, W of Carseland, SE of Calgary; 22 September - 1 October 2003; written descriptions (Mike Mulligan, Bill Wilson, Andrew Slater), the latter with sketch. **CODE 2 RECORD.**

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (*Calidris acuminata*), juvenile at Cucumber Lake, N of Willingdon; 20 September 2003; brief description with 6 images captured from video (Richard Klauke). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Juvenile at Langdon Reservoir; 26 September to at least 6 October 2004; written description (Brian Ritchie). **CODE 3 RECORD.**

American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*), along Boundary Road near Redcliff; 7 April 2006; digital image (Brad Thickson). **CODE 1 RECORD.** First documented occurrence in the province.

Little Gull (*Larus minutus*), Tyrrell Lake; 9 October 2005; written description with 5 images, copy of field notes, with sketch (Teresa & Doug Dolman). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*), Grande Prairie sewage lagoon; 28 March 2005; 5 digital images (Jeanne Smith) and 26 slides (Joan Kerr). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Ivory Gull (*Pagophila eburnea*), near Brazeau Forestry Tower, NW of Rocky Mountain House;

22 April 1961; brief description, also Dekker (2005). **CODE 3 RECORD.** First documented occurrence in the province. Fort McMurray dump; December 1986; digitised photograph (Neil Lennie). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Three adults at Kimiwan Lake, McLennan; 12 June 2004; written description (Florence Woodward, Albert Miller, Emily Lamont). **CODE 3 RECORD.**

Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*), Policeman's Flats, S of Calgary; 4 July 2006; two written descriptions (Nimali Seneviratne, John Thompson) and 3 digital images (Ann Elliott). **CODE 1 RECORD.** First documented occurrence in the province.

Long-billed Murrelet (*Brachyramphus perdix*), picked up along Hwy 16 between Hinton and Jasper Natl Park E gate; 7 August 2005; one digital image (Jim Mamalis). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), W Lethbridge; 20 November to at least early December 2004; written description (Teresa and Doug Dolman). **CODE 3 RECORD.**

White-winged Dove (*Zenaidra asiatica*), Blackfalds; 6 - 13 August 2005; 4 digital images (Tammy and Allan White), forwarded by Geoffrey A. Williamson, IL. **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*), N end of Gull Lake; 26 September - 23 October 2005; written description (Joan and Joanne Susut) and photographs (Joanne Susut [2], Judy Boyd [1]). **CODE 1 RECORD.** High River; 9 - 18 November 2005; written descriptions (Malcolm and Joan McDonald, Greg Wagner and Kent Russell; John Bregar; Brian Ritchie) and several images (Malcolm and Joan McDonald [5], Shannon Slade [4], Bill Wilson [4], Allan Cole [7, on web], Kirk Davis [31]). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*), juvenile, initially in company of an adult, in Red Deer; 27 - 30 November 2004; 2 photographs (Judy Boyd), brief description (Fred Whiley, Dorothy Hazlett, Glenda Leach). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Red-breasted Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus ruber*), Harvest Hills, N Calgary; 11 April 2005; brief written description (Claire Mohr and John McCallum). **CODE 3 RECORD.**

Gray Flycatcher (*Empidonax wrightii*), "Hay Meadow", Mount Lorette; 6 - 7 July (possibly as late as 19 July); written descriptions (Peter Sherrington, William J.F. Wilson), 8 digital images (Cliff Hansen). **CODE 3 RECORD.**

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila caerulea*), Whitemud Creek, Edmonton; 12 October 1964; written description and sketch (Philip S. Taylor). **CODE 3 RECORD.** This becomes the first documented occurrence in the province.

Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*), Beaverhill Lake; 19 May 1998; 2 slides (Edgar T. Jones); mentioned in Flockhart (2001). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Sage Thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*), two near Ralston; 5 May 2003; written description (Tim Cowley). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Near Taber; 21 April 2004; written description (Lloyd Bennett). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Near Enchant; 3 May 2005; written description and 4 photographs (Robin and Cedric Hitchon). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*), at 63 Discovery Ridge Point in Calgary; 9 - 10 September 2006; digital images (Robert A. Heidemann [3], Ken Havard [2]) and written description (Bob Heidemann). **CODE 1 RECORD.** First documented occurrence in the province.

Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*), Edworthy Park, Calgary; 23 May 1981; brief description (M. Rogers). **CODE 3 RECORD.** NW Calgary; 13 November 1987; written description (Steven Kassai). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Big Hill Springs Provincial Park; 21 June 1999; written description (Milt Spitzer). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Turner Valley; 6 June 2002; Royal Alberta Museum specimen Z02.13.1, window kill (Virginia Miller). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Eastern Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*), Writing-on-Stone Prov. Park; 9 June 1998; brief written description (Liis Veelma). **CODE 3 RECORD.**

Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*), Exshaw; 4 - 8 June 2005; two written descriptions (Mike Mulligan, M. Ross Lein), digital images (W.H. Walker [2], Cliff Hansen [1], M. Ross Lein [5]). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

RECORDS INSUFFICIENTLY DOCUMENTED

Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*), S of Grotto Pond, NW of Exshaw; 26 - 28 September 2005; written description and copy of observer log (Cliff Hansen).

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*), Devonian Conservation and Research Centre, E of Dunbow Road; 15 October 1992; about 5 km E of Priddis on 23 October 1992, probably the same individual; brief written descriptions (Allan Shoults, Ruth Deans fide Ross Dickson).

Pinyon Jay (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*), near Frog Lake; 24 June 2005; brief written description with sketch (Judy Shaw).

Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*), Banff, Banff Natl Park; 8 September 1996; brief description (Joel Hagen fide Jason Rogers).

Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*) at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary; 12 August 1984; brief description (Dave Elphinstone). Along Pembina River, north

of Cherrill; 18 May 1985; brief description (Gordon Welsh). Edworthy Park, Calgary; 30 May 1985; brief description (Dorothy Hazlett). Weaselhead, Calgary; 8 June 1988; written description (Pauline Rusnack).

Black-throated Sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*), near gate C along southern boundary of CFB Suffield; 18 April 2005; written description (Jamie Fenneman).

ERROR IN IDENTIFICATION

Wandering Tattler (*Tringa incana*), Bow Lake, Banff Natl Park; 8 June 1992; brief description (Roland Wauer). Evidence, particularly call description, points to Greater Yellowlegs.

QUESTIONABLE ORIGIN

Hooded Crow (*Corvus cornix*), Whitecourt; 31 March 2006 to at least 9 October, 2006; apparently in 2005 also; videos on internet (www.dropshots.com/jusjus and www.dropshots.com/spectateswamp; Doug Pederson; www.webfoundations.com/temp_photos/Hooded_Crow.wmv; Brooke Clibbon), photo on Yahoo! Albertabird

website (Ken Havard); photo at www.dropshots.com/spectateswamp and story in "Edmonton Journal" 20 August 2006 (Kevin Hannah).

European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*), bird feeder in Fort McMurray; 21 August 2005; written description and 3 digital images (Colin Russell).

References

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The authors are members of the Alberta Bird Record Committee, chaired by Jocelyn Hudon

THE CODE DEFINITIONS REPORTED ARE:

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 observers that are supported by written descriptions that leave no doubt as to the species identity. A Code 1 or 2 sighting must receive four favourable votes and no more than one dissenting vote to be accepted.

ACCEPTED, CODE 3. Sight records by single observers that are supported by a written description that

leaves no doubt as to species identity, and which receive five favourable votes and no dissenting vote. A Code 3 is the minimum for inclusion in the official provincial list.

ACCEPTED, CODE 4. Sight records by single observers that receive four favourable votes and no more than one dissenting vote. For record adjudication purposes, such a record is acceptable, but does not pass the more stringent requirements for inclusion on the official provincial list. A list of species that have no higher than a Code 4 record may be published as an appendix to the official list.

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 veracity of the observation, but should be looked upon as an encouragement to substantiate occurrence of the species in the province more fully.

ERROR IN IDENTIFICATION. Records that are not supported by the documentation available to the committee, or that describe another species from that suggested.

QUESTIONABLE ORIGIN. Records that concern species that are of questionable origin, possibly escapees, and whose wild status cannot be determined accurately.