

Eighth Report of the Alberta Bird Record Committee

BY JOCELYN HUDON, RICHARD KLAUKE, RICHARD KNAPTON, M. ROSS LEIN, JOHN RIDDELL, BRIAN RITCHIE AND RAY WERSHLER

Year of Remarkable Growth!

It was another year of remarkable growth for The Official List of the Birds of Alberta. With the addition of Whip-poor-will (*Caprimulgus vociferus*), Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*), Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*), Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*) and Pinyon Jay (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*) in this report, the list of species known to have occurred historically in Alberta grows to 413 species, 13 more than only a few years ago (2002) (Hudon 2005). Since the creation of the Alberta Bird Record Committee (ABRC) in 1994, an

average of two new species have been discovered in the province annually, clearly a pace that is not sustainable.

Since publication of the Seventh Report of the ABRC (Hudon et al. 2007), the Alberta Bird Record Committee has reviewed and reached decisions on 95 records, including several sightings of rare loons, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and Northern Parulas from the backlog of un-adjudicated records from the 1980s and 1990s.

The Fork-tailed Flycatcher record is the same sighting that was not accepted in an earlier report

(Slater 1999). It is now accepted based on newly unearthed documentation, as well as an improved knowledge of the species' patterns of vagrancy (Lockwood 1999).

Finally, the provincial list is amended to bring it in line with the 48th supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union's "Checklist of North American Birds" (Banks et al. 2007). This entailed returning the Turkey Vulture to the Falconiformes, and returning the scientific name of the Belted Kingfisher to *Megaceryle alcyon* from *Ceryle alcyon*.

RECORDS ACCEPTED

Garganey (*Anas querquedula*), near Taber; 6 – 26 May 1990; 1 slide (Lloyd Bennett), also photo in *American Birds* 44: 445 (1990) and *Alberta Naturalist* 25(1): 12 (1993). **CODE 1 RECORD**. Photographic documentation was produced, elevating the level of support to Code 1 from Code 2 (Slater and Hudon 2004). Near Taber; 25 July 1991; 1 slide (Lloyd Bennett) and brief description in *Alberta Naturalist* 25(1): 12 (1993). **CODE 1 RECORD**. Photographic documentation was produced, elevating the level of support to Code 1 from Record Insufficiently Documented (Slater and Hudon 2004). Near Taber; 17 May – 7 June 1993; 2 slides (Lloyd Bennett) and brief description in *Alberta Naturalist* 25(1): 12 (1993). **CODE 1 RECORD**. Photographic documentation was produced, elevating the level of support to Code 1 from Code 3 (Slater and Hudon 2004).

Black Scoter (*Melanitta nigra*), English Bay, Cold Lake; 21 – 26 October 2005; image posted on Albertabird Yahoo! photos (Ted Hindmarch). **CODE 1 RECORD**. Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary; 3 November 2006; written report (Ray Wershler). **CODE 3 RECORD**. Two at Carburn Park, Calgary; 5 November 2006; and downstream from Glenmore Bridge; 6 November 2006; written reports (Tanya Barkauskas, Jim H. Davis), the first with an image. Possibly the bird seen a few days earlier. **CODE 1 RECORD**.

Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*), Ghost Reservoir; 27 October 2002; 1 slide (Bill Walker). **CODE 1 RECORD**. Bow River at Morley; 15 – 30 October 2005; written report with 3 images (Joan & Malcolm McDonald). **CODE 1 RECORD**. Two Jack Lake, Banff National Park; 19 September

2006; written description (Jason Rogers). **CODE 3 RECORD**. Clear Lake, near Stavely; 8 – 9 July 2007; brief description posted on Albertabird (Bill Wilson). **CODE 3 RECORD**.

Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*), NE arm of Railway Slough, SE of Irricana; 13 October 1991; written report (Reid Barclay). **CODE 3 RECORD**. Ghost Reservoir; 11 – 13 November 1992; written reports (Ray Wershler, Ross Dickson, Terry Korolyk), the second with sketch. **CODE 2 RECORD**. Rescued from a freezing North Saskatchewan River in Edmonton; 20 December 1992; photo in *American Birds* 47: 485 (1993) and past notes on slide and video material (Jocelyn Hudon). **CODE 1 RECORD**. Bruce Lake; 15 May 1993; written report with drawing (Gwynn Chovel). **CODE 3 RECORD**. Seebe Dam; 11 November 1993;

RECORDS ACCEPTED...continued

written report and notes (Terry Korolyk). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Ghost Reservoir; 12 November 1993; written report (Ray Wershler). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Immature, Cold Lake; 2 November 1996; 2 images posted on Albertabird Yahoo! photos (Richard Klauke). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Glenmore Reservoir, Calgary; 11 November 1998; written report with sketch (Andrew Slater). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Immature, Glenmore Reservoir, Calgary; 29 October – 7 November 2000; 3 slides (Bill Walker). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Lake Wabamun; 13 – 14 November 2004; written reports (Terry Thormin, Kevin Hannah). **CODE 2 RECORD.** Immature, spillway below Dickson Dam, W of Innisfail; 7 December 2004 to at least 5 January 2005; written report with 4 images (Brian Ritchie), 2 images posted on Albertabird Yahoo! photos (Richard Klauke). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*), Vermilion Lakes, Banff, Banff National Park; 21 March 2006; written report (Ross Dougherty). **CODE 3 RECORD.** "Canadian Wilds" section of Calgary Zoo, Calgary; 19 – 29 August 2006; written report (Dwight Knapik). **CODE 3 RECORD.**

Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*), pair in Wild Horse area; 26 April 2006; written descriptions (Dennis Burns, Jason Rogers), 4 digital images of pair at nest in the area (Brian Ritchie). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*), Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary; 28 – 30 March 2006; written report with sketches (Ray Wershler), written reports (Eric Tull, Mike Mulligan), brief descriptions posted on Albertabirds (Bill Wilson, John Bregar). **CODE 2 RECORD.** Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary; 12 – 19 November 2006; two digital images (Bill Walker), five images posted on Albertabird Yahoo! photos (Rob Worona [4], Brian Elder [1]). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Ancient Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*), Lake Minnewanka, Banff National Park; most of August 2007; written report (Jason Rogers and Mike McIvor) and 4 digital images (Michael Shuster), 2 images posted on Albertabird Yahoo! photos (Alan Fishkin). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*), NW Calgary; 27 April 2006; two photographs (Holle Hahn). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Medicine Hat; from late October to about third week of November 2007; several images (Ron Chaykowski). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), found dead south of Coaldale; 2 November 2006; specimen brought to Alberta Birds of Prey Centre in Coaldale and donated to The Royal Alberta Museum (accession number Z06.1.14). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Found dead at farm W of High River; 8 November 2006; specimen donated to The Royal Alberta Museum by Don and Joyce Moore (accession Z08.8.4). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Common Poorwill (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*), Cypress Hills Provincial Park (E of Reesor Lake, above Battle Creek); 17 June 1987; written report (Ray Wershler). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Cypress Hills Provincial Park (E of Reesor Lake); 17 June 2001; written report (Ray Wershler). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Near Purple Springs; 10 July 2005; written report (Lloyd Bennett). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Cypress Hills Provincial Park (along Reesor Lake Road); 8 August 2006; written report (Dwight Knapik). **CODE 3 RECORD.**

Whip-poor-will (*Caprimulgus vociferus*), picked up in downtown Calgary; 6 October 2006; turned in to the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation in Madden; 3 images (Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation). **CODE 1 RECORD.** *First documented occurrence in the province.*

Black-chinned Hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*), Brule (hamlet); 21 June 2007; written report (Linda Morgan) and 8 digital images (Beth MacCallum). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*), Lake Minnewanka, Banff National Park; 16 – 18 June 1985; 2 images (Diane McIvor). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Lake Louise (hamlet); 14 and 15 June 1994; images and transcription of field notes (Mike Potter). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Carburn Park, Calgary; 9 – 14 August 1996; 1 slide (Bill Walker) and written report with sketch (J.B. Steeves). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Police Point Park, Medicine Hat; from mid-February to late Fall 1996; written report (Ben Velnor *vide* Dennis Baresco). **CODE 2 RECORD.** About 75 km north of Hinton; 10 June 1997; brief description in Schaffer (1997). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Wardlow; 4 June 2004; written report and 2 images (Jerry Pilny). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Onefour; 4 June 2004; 3 digital images (Jason Duxbury). **CODE 1 RECORD.** N of Jenner; 1 July 2004; written

report (Dwight Knapik). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Near Etzikom; 16 July 2004; written report with 2 images (Joan & Malcolm McDonald). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Near Crowfoot Ferry on the Bow River; 26 June 2007; 8 digital images (Tim Schowalter). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*), near Sundre; about 1 – 9 July 2006; 14 digital images (Gerrit Wyna). **CODE 1 RECORD.** *First documented occurrence in the province.*

Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*), Ponoka; from 1 October 2007 to about 15 April 2008; several photographs (Judy Boyd [2], Murray Mackay [6]). **CODE 1 RECORD.** *First documented occurrence in the province.*

Red-breasted Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus ruber*), Pyramid Corrals, Jasper, Jasper National Park; from 14 May 2007 to about 15 June 2007; two written reports and several images (Anne Williams [4], Karen Metz [1]), brief description (Jason Rogers). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*), near Fairview; 26 May 1998; brief description (Ken Dies). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Near Water Valley; 10 and 11 June 2000; written report (Doug Collister) with 9 images (Peter Sherrington). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Kinbrook Island Provincial Park; 30 May 2004; written report (Yousif Attia). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Edmonton; 18 May 2006; written description posted on Albertabird (Thomas J. Simonsen). **CODE 3 RECORD.** Access road to Dinosaur Provincial Park; 20 – 21 May 2007; written report and 2 images (Milton Spitzer); video on web [http://www.webfoundations.com/webfx/RareBirds/Scissor-tailed%20Flycatcher.wmv] (Brooke Clibbon). **CODE 1 RECORD.** Pakowki Lake, along SR 885 south of Etzikom; 8 – 9 June 2007; written report with 3 images (Joan and Malcolm McDonald). **CODE 1 RECORD.**

Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*), Drumheller; 1 June 1988; written description (Jim Wedgwood) and articles in *Alberta Bird Record* 6(4): 118–119 (1988) and *Blue Jay* 47(2): 113–117 (1989). **CODE 3 RECORD.** *First documented occurrence in the province.* New information elevates the level of support to Code 3 from Record Insufficiently Documented (Slater 1999).

RECORDS ACCEPTED...continued

Pinyon Jay (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*), Mountain View; 11 – 12 October 2007; written report and 4 digital images (Nancy West). **CODE 1 RECORD**. *First documented occurrence in the province.*

Chestnut-backed Chickadee (*Poecile rufescens*), Jasper, Jasper National Park; from late November 2006 to at least 9 March 2007; 4 digital images (Doug Faulder), written report (Jim H. Davis). **CODE 1 RECORD**.

Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*), Lethbridge; 14 September 2006; written report with 3 images (Doug and Teresa Dolman). **CODE 1 RECORD**. Claresholm; 22 – 25 May 2007; written report (Jason Attwell). **CODE 3 RECORD**.

Sage Thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*) near Clifford E. Lee Nature Sanctuary, SW of Edmonton; 24 May 2004; written report and 3 images captured from video (Michelle and Curtis Manly). **CODE 1 RECORD**. E of Wild Horse; between 25 June and 25 July 2006; written report with images of adults, eggs in nest, nestlings and fledglings (Geoff Holroyd). Two unhatched [unfertilized] eggs donated to The Royal Alberta Museum (accession

Z06.5.1). **CODE 1 RECORD**. Near Rolling Hills; 23 May 2007; brief description posted on Albertabird (Bill Wilson). **CODE 3 RECORD**.

Northern Parula (*Parula americana*), Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park; 23 May 1985; written description (Doug Collister). **CODE 3 RECORD**. Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary; 15 August 1995; written report (Olga Droppo). **CODE 3 RECORD**. Park Lake Provincial Park; 25 August 1998; written report with field notes (Doug and Teresa Dolman). **CODE 3 RECORD**. Cominco Natural Area, SE Calgary; 8 September 2000; written report with 6 images (Ross Dickson). **CODE 1 RECORD**. Sandy Beach, NW of Edmonton; 28 October 2000; window kill donated to The Royal Alberta Museum by Marilyn Shinyei (accession Z00.27.1). **CODE 1 RECORD**.

Kentucky Warbler (*Oporornis formosus*), Weaselhead area of Glenmore Park, Calgary; 8 September 2007; written report (Richard Clarke). **CODE 3 RECORD**.

Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*), Airdrie; 22 and 25 May 2007; several images and video sequences (Jeffrey Casey [7 + 3]; Sheelagh Schulze [9]). **CODE 1 RECORD**.

Green-tailed Towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*), Warner Stables, Banff National Park; 21 May 2007; brief description (Reno Sommerhalder). **CODE 3 RECORD**.

Black-throated Sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*), near Picture Butte; 1 May 2006; 2 digital images (Marianne Klok). **CODE 1 RECORD**. NW Calgary; 28 – 29 May 2006; two images (Terry Korolyk). **CODE 1 RECORD**. W Lethbridge; 26 May – 1 June 2007; written report, copy of field notes and 4 images (Teresa and Doug Dolman). **CODE 1 RECORD**.

Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*), Bashaw; 4 May 2006; one digital image (Ron King); another image posted in *Edmonton Journal* on May 9, 2006 ("Painted Bunting pays visit to Bashaw" by Scott Hornby). **CODE 1 RECORD**.

Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*), W of Rocky Mountain House; from 28 May to at least 6 June 2004; written report and 5 photographs (Melvin & Carol Kraft). **CODE 1 RECORD**.

RECORDS INSUFFICIENTLY DOCUMENTED

Garganey (*Anas querquedula*), near Ponoka; 18 April 2006; brief written description (Murray Mackay).

Rock Ptarmigan (*Lagopus mutus*), female collected in what is now probably Jasper National Park in the spring or summer of 1826 by Thomas Drummond; illustration and text in *Fauna Boreali-Americana* (Swainson and Richardson 1831) and supporting documentation (Jason Rogers). Unfortunately, many uncertainties about this record prevent its acceptance. In Adolph Meadows, Jasper National Park; 23 January 1958; copy of Jasper National Park Wildlife Card #994.22.13.03 (A. Burstrom).

Greater Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*), two females and 5 young of the year along "Chain Lakes Road", about 18 km N of Hanna; 25 September 2006; written report (Anne Williams and Gord Ruddy). This would be an exceptional record, considering that the species is not believed to have bred in the province since at least the 1930s. (Houston 2002).

Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*), Lesser Slave Lake across from the Bird Observatory; 5 July 1997; brief description (Jason Rogers).

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), Scotch Meadows, Banff National Park; 25 – 28 June 1996; written report (Brian Parker).

Common Poorwill (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*), along Tyrrell Creek Trail, Banff National Park; 1 June 1991; brief description (Mike Potter *vide* Jason Rogers).

Black-chinned Hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*), Priddis Greens; 26 – 27 July 1995; written report (Lorraine Smith). Near Pine Coulee Dam in Willow Creek valley; between 25 May and 4 June 2007; written report (Bill Moore). Redwood Meadows; 31 May 2007; written report (Katherine Corkery and Hermann Teichtmeister). Redwood Meadows; 3 June 2007; written report (Katherine Corkery and Mimi Hurt).

Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*), SW Edmonton; 3 and 9 September 2007; written report (Marlene Kirwin) and correspondence with Jocelyn Hudon.

Pinyon Jay (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*), three on Bald Hills, Maligne Lake, Jasper National Park; 18 July 2006; written report (Hugh Dorrington).

Pygmy Nuthatch (*Sitta pygmaea*), Patricia Lake, Jasper, Jasper National Park; 2 September 2007; brief description (Dave Elphinstone).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila caerulea*), Banff Recreation Grounds, Banff National Park; early June 1993; brief description (Alan McDonald).

Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*), Vermilion Lakes, Banff National Park; 30 August 1970; very brief description (Michael Perrone *vide* Jason Rogers).

ERROR IN IDENTIFICATION

Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*), near Yaha Tinda Ranch, W of Sundre; 2 September 1991; brief description (Ernie Ewaschuk). The species should not exhibit a red plumage at this time of year.

References

Banks, R.C., R. T. Chesser, C. Cicero, J.L. Dunn, A.W. Kratter, I.J. Lovette, P.C. Rasmussen, J.V. Remsen, Jr., J.D. Rising, and D.F. Stotz. 2007. Forty-eighth supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds. *Auk* 124:1109-1115.

Houston, S. 2002. Spread and disappearance of the Greater Prairie-Chicken, *Tympanuchus cupido*, on the Canadian Prairies and adjacent areas. *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 116:1-21.

QUESTIONABLE ORIGIN

Smew (*Mergellus albellus*), wetland along Hwy 5 just E of Mountain View; 7 April 2007; 8 images and written report (Gary Kurtz).

Hudon, J. 2005. The Official List of the Birds of Alberta: now 400 species and counting... *Nature Alberta* 35(1):10-18.

Hudon, J., R. Klauke, R. Knapton, M.R. Lein, J. Riddell, B. Ritchie and R. Wershler. 2007. Seventh Report of the Alberta Bird Record Committee. *Nature Alberta* 37(2):31-33.

Lockwood, M. W. 1999. Possible anywhere: Fork-tailed Flycatcher. *Birding* 31:126-139.

Swainson, W. and J. Richardson. 1831. *Fauna Boreali-Americana, or the Zoology of the Northern Parts of British America. Part Second: The Birds.* London: John Murray.

The authors are members of the Alberta Bird Record Committee, chaired by Jocelyn Hudon, Curator of Ornithology, The Royal Alberta Museum.

Ponderables

"If a man would move the world, he must first move himself."

-- SOCRATES

Schaffer, W. 1997. Red headed Woodpecker sighting north of Hinton, Alberta. *Alberta Naturalist* 27:69.

Slater, A. 1999. Second Report of the Alberta Bird Record Committee. *Alberta Naturalist* 29(2):30-31.

Slater, A., and J. Hudon. 2004. Fifth Report of the Alberta Bird Record Committee. *Nature Alberta* 34(1):15-18.

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.

Ponderables

"I'll say it a dozen times, people have to remember that the Oil Sands are owned by the people, they're not owned by the oil companies."

PETER LOUGHEED, PREMIER OF ALBERTA 1971-1985