
NOTES AND LETTERS

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO RECORD FOR SASKATCHEWAN

At about 14:40 h on 18 September 2010, I noticed a medium-sized bird with an unusually long tail as it flew into a chokecherry tree in our back yard in Saskatoon, SK. Observed through binoculars, the bird displayed a basic grey-brown over white colouration with rufous primaries, distinct white spots on a black undertail, yellow eye-ring, and yellow lower mandible. I was joined by my son, Andy, who brought along a field guide and a camera. Based on our observations, we identified the bird as a yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*; Fig. 1 and see inside back cover, top).

We watched and photographed the bird for approximately 15 minutes. While appearing calm, the cuckoo lived up to its shy reputation as it slowly but deliberately moved higher into the overhanging branches of our neighbour's Manitoba maple, always placing itself in the best position so as not to be seen by us. The cuckoo then flew higher into a nearby

poplar tree and was eventually lost from sight. The area was searched by others but the cuckoo was not found again.

The normal range of the yellow-billed cuckoo includes most of the central and eastern United States and southern regions of eastern Canada from Ontario to New Brunswick.¹ The bird is considered an irregular summer visitor to Saskatchewan.

Previous sighting and/or auditory records for Saskatchewan include: Weyburn, summer 1966 (R. Kreba, pers. comm.); Estevan, 8 June 1974;² Battle Creek, summer 1979 (W.C. Harris, pers. comm.); Bromhead, 15 August 1982 and 12 June 1983;³ Regina, 28 May and 6 July 1987;⁴ Roche Percée, 22 Jul 1988;⁵ and Arcola, June 2007.

Our sighting in Saskatoon is the latest and northernmost to date in the province. The photographs provide the documentary evidence required to move the species from the hypothetical to the confirmed Saskatchewan list of birds.



Figure 1. Yellow-billed cuckoo. Craig D.C. Salisbury

1. National Geographic Society (2006) *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Washington, DC.

2. Houston CS, Houston MI (1974) Northern Great Plains (Summer 1974). *American Birds* 28:915-918.

3. Bjorklund CF (1990) Bromhead rare bird records. *Blue Jay* 48:212-217.

4. Brazier FH (1993) Yellow-billed cuckoo sighting in Regina. *Blue Jay* 51:34-35.

5. Gollop JB (1988) Prairie Provinces Region (Summer 1988). *American Birds* 42:1304-1305.

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