

MALE VARIED THRUSH AT MORSE, SK.

JOEL PRIEBE, Morse, SK.

I photographed a male Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) at Morse, Saskatchewan on April 22, 2012, at 5:20pm. This is a shy member of the Thrush family that strays off course during migration in small numbers every year within SK. It also over winters in many larger cities and small towns in SK as well. (See inside front cover for colour photo)



Male Varied Thrush

-Joel Priebe

A WINTER SIGHTING OF CINNAMON TEAL IN ALBERTA

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The purpose of this note is to report on an unseasonable sighting of a male cinnamon teal (*Anas cyanoptera*) during the winter months in Calgary, Alberta.

Cinnamon teal breed in S British Columbia, S Alberta and SW Saskatchewan. They winter from central California, S Nevada, central Utah, SE Arizona, S New Mexico and central Texas, southward through Middle America to Colombia, N Venezuela and N Ecuador.¹

In 2005, a flood severely eroded the banks of the Bow River within Calgary, AB. To protect the shoreline from further erosion, metre square-sized boulders were deposited along a 200 m stretch on the E side of the river in the Hull's Woods section of Fish Creek Provincial Park (FCPP), which is wholly located within the city limits.

The morning of Monday 9 January 2012, was a calm, sunny, day, with temperatures

of 1 - 10°C. While conducting a birding class along the W side of the river in FCPP, my assistant, Andrew Stiles, noted a male cinnamon teal in full breeding plumage on the opposite side.

The teal appeared to be frantically searching for food amidst the shoreline boulders. He swam amongst them, rapidly pecking along their sides at the waterline. He would disappear behind one and then only seconds later, reappear often some 5 to 10 m further along. At times, he was in such a hurry that he would actually run over a boulder to get to its opposite side.

The next day, 10 January 2012, was cloudy with a NW wind of 20 kph and the air temperature of -3°C. We again saw the bird at the same site, behaving in the same apparently frantic feeding manner.

No visit was made on 11 January 2012. However, a sudden drop in temperature

left a ledge of ice jutting into the river for one meter or more. We returned again on Thursday 12 January 2012, when it was cloudy, calm, and a cold -11°C. On this day, however, there was no sign of the teal.

It was subsequently learned that two local amateur birders, walking along the river about 2 km south of Hull's Woods, in the Lafarge Meadows area of FCPP on Christmas Day 2011, met an unidentified observer who reported that he had just seen a male cinnamon teal. Since they were unaware of its rarity during the winter months, there was no follow up until after our report became public. It is likely that this was the same bird that we subsequently observed.

There had been one previous winter report of a cinnamon teal in Calgary - some 52 years earlier. Ian Halladay, the dean of Calgary birders, supplied the

following details. "As I recall, the male Cinnamon Teal was found wounded in a ditch west of Calgary in the autumn of 1959. The bird was taken to the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary and released into the lagoon where it remained into the new year. The observers who covered Inglewood on the Christmas Bird Count that year, 03 January 1960, were Paul Anderson and myself. The teal was in relatively good shape as it was with the Mallards that were being fed regularly by the members of the Sarcee Fish and Game Association. The CBC compiler was Derek Beacham and his inquiries with the National Audubon Society resulted in us being able to count the teal."

1. The American Ornithologists Union (1998) Check-list of North American Birds. 7th Edition, American Ornithologists Union, Washington, DC.



Winter sighting of a cinnamon teal in Calgary, Alberta

Photo by John Anderson