

and central Montana (Missoula, Bozeman, Fort Custer). Salt and Wilk (1958) describe it as breeding in Alberta in the Rocky Mountains from the international boundary to north of Jasper, appearing on the prairies "only as an accidental straggler well off its usual migration route." It is noted that in fall it may not leave the Banff area until early October, and that it is during migration periods that Varied Thrushes are occasionally seen east of their usual mountain haunts. Bent (1949) gives some late dates of fall departure that compare interestingly with our recent Regina record: "Alberta—Edberg, October 10. Montana—Fortine, October 24. Idaho—Priest River, November 8."

The Varied Thrush migration is a matter of a downward, as well as a southward, movement—which further complicates the pattern. It moves for the winter from the mountains to the lower valleys. Its appearance in Regina reminds one of the Townsend's Solitaire, another species which appears in migration far east of its breeding range in the mountain forests, and for which there are a number of Regina records.

Bent refers to migrant Varied Thrushes found east of their normal range being "usually in company with robins"; we noted on the afternoon on which we saw the thrush a little flock of Robins in the Legislative Grounds where the local robins had been conspicuously scarce for some days.

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## NORTHERN RECORDS FOR CINNAMON TEAL

by Herb C. Moulding, Regina

On Saturday morning, June 6th, accompanied by Bill Hooey and Tom Sterling of Ducks Unlimited, we were inspecting Scentgrass Lake north of Battleford. As we were driving along the road at the west end of the lake, having just crossed the outlet, we observed a male Cinnamon Teal in the road ditch. This same teal was in the same location when we returned from inspecting the lake (which incidentally harbored approximately 1,200 Canvasback, mostly drakes, at the east end of the marsh). The teal was reluctant to fly which would indicate that there could have been a pair in the vicinity.

It is only periodically that Cinnamon Teal are observed in Saskatchewan. How far north these birds have been observed is not known, but the above report is being submitted to verify the fact that they were observed fifteen miles north of Battleford in June, 1964.

## A TREE-PERCHING SORA

by John B. Millar,

Canadian Wildlife Service, Saskatoon

On June 4, 1963, I flushed an adult Sora (*Porzana carolina*) from a small slough near Swift Current, Saskatchewan. Instead of dropping back into the vegetation in the usual fashion after a short flight, it flew perhaps a hundred feet and landed five feet up in an isolated eight-foot willow tree (*Salix* sp.) at the water's edge. When I attempted to flush it from the tree the Sora merely hopped from branch to branch to the far side. As I moved around toward the bird it worked its way back through the branches to its former position. This procedure was repeated five or six times before the bird finally left the willow and flew back across the slough. This Sora's behaviour was particularly interesting in that it appeared to be quite at ease among the branches and moved about in the manner of a small fringillid.

Baird, Brewer and Ridgway (In Bent, Life Histories of North American

Marsh Birds, 1926, p. 311) have previously reported the perching of a Sora on a tree limb and consider this behaviour to be most unusual for this species.

**Ed. Note:** See also the report by T. E. Randall (*Blue Jay*, 20:116) of a Sora nest in a willow bush.

## QUERY RE: RECORD OF WESTERN TANAGERS AT LITTLE MANITOU LAKE, AUGUST 14, 1963

The Editors are grateful to vigilant *Blue Jay* readers who read published records carefully and help to evaluate them in the light of their personal experience. We thank Mr. R. D. Symons, with his long association with Saskatchewan birds, for asking us to review the record of a flock of Western Tanagers at Little Manitou Lake, August 15, 1964, which we printed in a recent issue of the *Blue Jay* (22:53, June, 1964). Mr. Symons feels that these birds might have been Red Crossbills, and offers the following reasons:

"1. Between August 5 and September 1, 1963, we had a flock of five Red Crossbills on the lakeshore at Sifton. They fed in poplars in exactly the same way and *on the same beetles*. They also visited our sunflowers at the end of August.

"2. Red Crossbills are in the habit of occurring in flock of from a few individuals to several family groups at almost any season of the year, and in the most unexpected places. For example, from my records: "In poplars at Cut Knife, Sask., August, 1933 (White-winged Crossbills)"; "in poplars at Wood Creek, Renown, July, 1924 (Red Crossbills)". Now, Renown, Watrous (Little Manitou Lake) and Sifton are in the same general area, and exactly similar habitat.

"3. The difference in size between the species is not really noticeable without some basis for comparison.

"4. The difference in bill, except at a few yards, is not easy to see. At 20 feet with field glasses, and at six feet without, my wife had difficulty in seeing the crossed bill. Her eyes are not

trained, it is true; but she looks at birds a lot.

"5. In coloration (except at height of breeding season) the differences, again, are not great. The general greenish to yellowish plumage of the females is somewhat similar. Either species might show, in adult males, more or less red at that time of year. There is the matter of wing bars. These might or might not be quite noticeable. They occur on the Tanager, but not on the Red Crossbill, and are fairly plain on the White-winged Crossbill (see the above occurrence at Cut Knife).

"6. *General habits*. Generally speaking, both species feed quite silently. In spring the male tanager, of course, utters his simple chirruped song. Both species are fairly sluggish in movements.

"7. I have been fairly familiar with the Western Tanager in the Peace River parkland and east to Meadow Lake. Taverner's description of (all but spring male) Western Tanager as "a dull, greenish, sparrow-like bird" is good, but could also be applied to (all but a spring male) either of the crossbills.

"8. I know the Watrous area to be within the normal (if not regular) range of the crossbill. I think it is rather far out for Tanagers, and I have never personally seen tanagers in such a "flock" as described.

"9. *Habitat*. I would not expect to see tanagers in such meagre woodland as at Little Manitou. I have always found them in heavy poplar or mixed woods with trees averaging at least 60-75 feet in height."

Reviewing the note on Western Tanagers at Little Manitou Lake gives the Editors an opportunity to make another comment. The article called attention to the range of dates for previous documented records of the Western Tanager in southern Saskatchewan as extending from May 13 to May 28. A recently published record of a spring male at Tullis on May 22, 1940, also falls within these dates (see J. Frank Roy, *An Introduction to the birds of the Elbow*, Regina, Saskatchewan Natural History Society, 1964).