

# WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKER FOUND IN SOUTHEASTERN SASKATCHEWAN

by **Robert W. Nero**, Regina

A twelfth species of woodpecker was added to the Saskatchewan checklist when a Williamson's Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*) was found and collected on May 30, 1965 at Kenosee Lake in the Moose Mountain Provincial Park in extreme southeastern Saskatchewan. Both a male and a female of this species were sighted on May 29 by Spencer Sealy, but they were extremely wary and were soon lost to sight. On the next day Mrs. Richard Sanderson and, independently, Miss Marty Cook, found the female in mid-afternoon, feeding quietly and slowly in a mature grove of introduced yellow pines on the north shore of the lake. In late afternoon, in the same place, they were able to find it again and point it out to Robert R. Taylor, who recognized it as a Williamson's Sapsucker. An adjacent cabin served as headquarters for a field party conducting a survey of the birds of the area, and shortly after Ross Lein was summoned to collect the bird. The specimen is now in the collections of the University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus. The male was briefly seen again by Sealy on June 2 in the same general area.

The male Williamson's Sapsucker, which is in the same genus as our

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, is a strikingly-marked woodpecker with a black crown and black back and long white shoulder patch. The female is quite different, having a brown head and back with narrow white stripes on the back and sides, making it appear, as Roger Tory Peterson says, "zebra-backed." This woodpecker is an inhabitant of coniferous forests in the high mountains of western America, from "southern British Columbia south in mountains through central and eastern Washington, Oregon . . . western Montana . . . to southern California . . . and northern New Mexico" according to the A.O.U. *Check-list of North American birds* (1957).

Salt and Wilk in *The Birds of Alberta* (1958) list the species as hypothetical for Alberta, but so far as we can determine there are no other records for Canada outside of British Columbia, nor has it been listed for the states beyond the mountain ranges (with the exception of a record for Nebraska). Thus, although the species has been recorded for this province, it must be recognized as an accidental visitor. No doubt this record will cause us all to inspect sapsuckers with a little more care than formerly.

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## BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER — A SASKATCHEWAN FIRST

by **Frank H. Brazier**, Regina

Recently I found myself in southwestern Oregon staring at a "lifer"—a fine Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) which was flycatching, sailing out from the spire of a tall dead pine and returning. I was thus engrossed when I heard a strange buzzy song nearby and, turning, noticed a movement in a densely foliated tree. A head popped up, then neck and throat were revealed as the bird craned to get a better look at me, giving me a better look at him. He then flew off, but not before I was satisfied I was seeing a Black-throated

Gray Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*). This was only the second time that I had seen this warbler, but this second sighting, in the bird's normal breeding range, was not nearly so exciting as my first view of it.

On May 3, 1965 as I entered the lane leading to Rotary Park in Regina shortly after noon I noticed a small bird moving vigorously on a foodhunt in a tree about 100 feet away. My first thought was that it was a Myrtle Warbler but as I got closer I could see no rump patch when it flew. Then the pronounced white in the facial



area made me think of a chickadee, until I stopped within a few feet and noticed the black bar across the face, throat and crown. This was a stranger to me. I thought of the Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) but close examination revealed no trace of gold in the plumage, although the face was similar; by this time I was examining it through 8x40 binoculars. I gave up and walked home; there I checked Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds* and found nothing, but his *Field Guide to Western Birds* solved it — a male Black-throated Gray Warbler, Saskatchewan's first record of this species!

I telephoned both Elmer Fox and Ruth Tempel, hoping for confirming sightings, then drove to the University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus, where I was fortunate in locating Dr. Robert W. Nero, Robert Taylor, Spencer Sealy and Richard Sanderson, who converged on the area. By this time it was nearly 1:00 p.m. At 1:15 p.m. the bird was discovered and my identification confirmed. After I left to go back to work the warbler was collected, thus adding this species to the official Saskatchewan Check-list, as a straggler.

The Black-throated Gray Warbler is native to Canada only in south-western coastal British Columbia (except Vancouver Island), according to the A.O.U. *Check-list of North American birds* (1957). Its breeding range continues south to include western Washington, central Oregon, southwestern Idaho, northern Utah, southwestern Wyoming and north-western and central Colorado, south in the mountains to northern Baja California, northwestern, central and southeastern Arizona, and eastern and southern New Mexico.

The Regina record appears to be the fourth for Canada outside of British Columbia, according to Dr. W. Earl Godfrey, Curator of Ornithology for the National Museum of Canada. The other records he cites are: (1) J. B. Foster recorded the first for eastern Canada in the Don Valley, Toronto, from December 7 to 17, 1952, and photographed it (*Wilson Bulletin*, 66:222); (2) Dr. Donald R. Gunn photographed one in Lorne Park, Ontario, May 5, 1962; (3) J. L. Baillie mentions one seen on September 11, 1955 at Point Pelee, Ontario, by Willard Schaefer and Horace

Dahmer (*Ontario Field Biologist*, 11: 1-3).

The Zoology Department of the North Dakota State University at Fargo, North Dakota, advise they have no record of this bird in that state.

The A.O.U. *Check-list* does not mention any Montana occurrences, and Dr. C. V. Davis, Professor of Zoology, Montana State College at Bozeman, Montana, advises that they have no records of this warbler in Montana. A letter to me from Mrs. Carol L. Boyd, of Stevensville, Montana, dated June 12, 1965 is therefore most interesting. Mrs. Boyd writes:

"I haven't seen a Black-throated Gray Warbler in western Montana (yet), but have three records from our ranch north of Two Dot [Stevensville is in the Bitterroot Valley in extreme western Montana, while Two Dot is in central Montana.].

"June 22, 1955 — a pair was carrying food to a nest in a Mountain Maple a short distance from a small mountain stream.

"May 6, 1957 — several Black-throated Gray Warblers were calling their zzzzz's in the fir trees on the west slope. They were searching for insects on the trees, constantly moving. As I lay in the shade one flew to the ground within a few feet of me.

"Sept. 14, 1957 — saw a Black-throated Gray Warbler near the willows."

Peterson (1947) notes this bird as accidental in Massachusetts, South Carolina and Florida. It is on the hypothetical list for Alberta (Salt and Wilk, 1958). Ron Huber, of St. Paul, Minnesota (pers. corres.) informs me that a specimen was taken in 1956 along that state's western boundary, and mentions several South Dakota occurrences. He added that it has occurred east of its regular range often enough, according to the literature, to give the impression of fairly regular periodic irruptions, but being small and drab it may be easily overlooked.

#### LITERATURE CITED

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