

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW AT REGINA

by **Bill Eddie**, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina

On Friday, April 12, 1968, F. W. Lahrman of the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History saw a swallow flying over the Wascana Waterfowl Park and tentatively identified it as a Tree Swallow (*Iridoprocne bicolor*), but he did not have any binoculars at the time so he could not obtain a close view of the bird. F. G. Bard, the Director of the Museum, and I joined him a few minutes later and observed the swallow through 13x60 and 7x50 binoculars. As it flew past in full sunlight, I noticed that it had an oval white patch on either side of the rump and at times it appeared as if the two patches almost joined across the rump forming one patch. I commented that it reminded me slightly of the House Martin of Eurasia, with which I am familiar, but I could also see that its face was unusually white, that its crown was paler than the back, and that the mantle and wing coverts were greenish. This prompted me to think that we were in fact looking at a Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*) and not a Tree Swallow. In view of this, all three of us studied it very closely for the next 10 minutes or so, and both Mr. Bard and Mr. Lahrman, who are familiar with Tree Swallows, were satisfied that the identification was correct.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The Violet-green Swallow is not listed on the *Field check-list of Saskatchewan birds* (Houston, Bard and Nero, 1959), although sight records of swallows believed to be of this species have been reported on a few occasions. For example, I have in my Regina files two such reports from the field notes of the late J. H. Taylor who kept records in the Regina area in the 1930's and 1940's. Taylor and his party reported a Violet-green Swallow seen in a mixed flock with Cliff, Bank,

Tree and Barn swallows on May 27, 1934, and a second sighting on July 1, 1935, both in the vicinity of Boggy Creek.

W. Earl Godfrey (*Birds of Canada*, 1966) lists the Violet-green Swallow as "accidental in Manitoba (Sandilands, April 1945)," but does not give any records for Saskatchewan. Details of the Manitoba records have kindly been supplied to Margaret Belcher by Dr. Robert W. Nero of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, who referred us to the report of the first Manitoba record given by A. G. Lawrence in his "Chickadee Notes" column (#1260) in the *Winnipeg Tribune*, where it was reported that J. H. Inkster had picked up a dead male Violet-green Swallow in the nursery of the Sandilands Forest Reserve on April 30, 1945 and forwarded it to the Manitoba Museum. The Director of the Museum, L. T. S. Norris-Elve, then reported this addition to the list of Manitoba birds to the *Canadian Field-Naturalist* (59:173, Sept.-Oct., 1945). Later, in a second report in "Chickadee Notes" (#1281), A. G. Lawrence told of a sighting by Angus H. Shortt of Winnipeg, who identified a Violet-green Swallow in a gathering of thousands of Tree Swallows in the Netley district, on September 2, 1945.

In commenting on the April 30, 1945 record for Manitoba, Mr. Norris-Elye wrote that "for several days before the bird was found, we had a succession of northwest gales with snow and rain and it is reasonable to suppose that it had been taken downwind for hundreds of miles in a weakened condition." A similar circumstance may account for our Saskatchewan record, for there was an excessively strong southeast wind on the preceding day (April 11), and it is possible that the swallow may have been blown off its usual migration course.