

FIRST REPORTS OF EASTERN WOOD PEWEE FOR SASKATCHEWAN

by E. Manley Callin, Fort San

About 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, June 22, 1968 at Fort San, I sat on the edge of my bed and prepared to dress for the day. Suddenly, through the open window, I heard the notes of a pewee. However, it was not the short, plaintive and husky "peeyee" of the Western Wood Pewee with which I am familiar. Instead, it was much longer, drawn out in the three syllables of "pee - a - wee", and was clear and sweet compared to our usual pewee. I realized immediately that I was listening to the Eastern Wood Pewee. I quickly put on my dressing gown and slippers, grabbed my binoculars and hurried in the direction of the sound. The bird was still calling and was easily found about 200 yards north of our house in a grove of poplars in a small coulee. It was off to the right of the pathway and perched on the tip of a dead branch about halfway up in one of the poplars. It was then about 25 yards from me with no obstruction of the view and, even with the naked eye, it was obvious that the size, colour and posture of the bird was right for a pewee. I raised my binoculars but had no opportunity to examine the plumage details before it flew after a passing insect, then settled on the uppermost tip of a dead poplar a little farther away; here it called once, then flew off to the south and disappeared from view.

During this elapsed time, probably about 10 minutes, I had heard the bird call at least 15 times and at no time did it have the husky or harsh quality of the Western. On two or three occasions it uttered a shorter "pee-ur" call but these notes were also clear and sweet like the longer call. Upon returning to the house I played Peterson's "Guide to Western Bird Songs", which served to confirm my conviction as to identity. Actually, I was struck by the fact that the calls

of the Fort San bird were even more distinctive than those on the recording as they were more drawn out and the syllables were therefore more clearly separated.

I thought that the bird had left the area but about 10:30 a.m. I was outside and heard the calls coming faintly from heavier, mixed woods to the south. During the next 15 minutes I heard the calls about 10 times but was not successful in finding the bird again. It seemed to be moving about considerably and eventually the calls ceased. The bird evidently moved on as it was not seen or heard again after that day.

No specimen or recording of the Eastern Wood Pewee has ever been taken in Saskatchewan and, prior to 1968, there are apparently no reports of the species in the province. Therefore, the species does not appear on the official list of Saskatchewan birds. According to Godfrey (*Birds of Canada*, 1966), the regular range of the Eastern extends only to south-central Manitoba where there is some overlapping of the ranges of the two species (of eight specimens recently taken at the south end of Lake Winnipeg, seven were of the Eastern and one was of the Western species). In view of the proximity of the range of the Eastern, it is surprising that it has not yet been established as occurring in adjacent parts of Saskatchewan. It seems rather likely that a few Eastern Wood Pewee occasionally wander into southeastern Saskatchewan but are missed by observers through lack of familiarity with the difference in calls of the two species.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In view of Mr. Callin's observation of an Eastern Wood Pewee at Fort San in the Qu'Appelle Valley, it is interesting to note the record of this species, seen and heard giving its distinctive call, in the Flying Creek Valley in the Regina May Bird Census, May 11, 1968, by Al and Betty Binnie (see page 131).