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## FIRST SIGHT RECORD OF THE BAND-TAILED PIGEON IN SASKATCHEWAN

by **Wayne Renaud**, Box 327, Rosetown

On August 6, 1970, at 8:00 a.m. my brother Don glimpsed a strange pigeon as it flushed with a flappy flight from our bird bath near our house in Valley Centre, 18 miles north and seven miles east of Rosetown, Saskatchewan. The bird flew north and alighted in a maple in the neighbouring yard and, although the bird had perched in the green foliage, the head, neck and back were visible. Don immediately obtained 7x50 binoculars and observed the bird from as close as 40 feet in bright, hazy sunlight. The white nape crescent was clearly seen for the pigeon had its back to the observer and light was shining directly on the bird.

The pigeon was then frightened to a grove of poplars about 400 yards to the west where it perched at a height of about 40 feet among dead poplar branches. Again the observer was able to approach to within 60 yards and he noted the dark primaries, the lighter grey back and the dark median line on the square tail. The pigeon was observed intermittently for about 15 minutes before the observer left the area.

No further attempt was made to study the bird until that evening when I took binoculars and searched the trees in Valley Centre. The bird was finally located at 7:40 p.m. as it perched on a dead poplar branch in a grove of poplars and maples by a farm at the north end of town. Here I was able to approach to within 50 yards of the bird, and the neck crescent, square,

banded tail and general stocky, pigeon-like appearance were clearly evident. I studied the bird for 10 minutes; then I left and returned at 8:20 with my brother. By then, the bird had moved to the top of another dying poplar a few dozen yards away from its previous perch and appeared to be resting for the night. Again we approached the bird, this time no closer than within 65 yards. While we watched, a pair of Mourning Doves (*Zenaidura macroura*) came to perch in the same tree as the pigeon; by comparison the pigeon was about twice as broad and slightly longer. The bird was on the same branch when we departed at 8:40.

Although I searched the area thoroughly the following day I could not relocate the pigeon.

All the field marks point to its being a Band-tailed Pigeon (*Columba fasciata*), a species not previously recorded in Saskatchewan. Godfrey (*Birds of Canada*, 1966, p. 206) gives the range of this species as "southwestern British Columbia", thus placing this record some 600 miles out of its normal range. Bent (U.S. Natl. Mus. Bulletin #162) states that "Band-tailed Pigeons are rarely taken outside of their range" and indeed there appear to be only two other Canadian records, both from Alberta, one a specimen secured July 27, 1967 at Leduc, and the other a sight record of a bird observed August 16, 1968 west of Calgary (See *Blue Jay*, 26:181, December, 1968).