

only Manitoba record of which I am aware is of one seen at Churchill in July of 1970.⁹ No records appear to exist for either Alberta or North Dakota.^{10 12}

¹BAILLIE, J. L. 1963. *Three bird immigrants from the Old World*. Trans. of the Royal Canadian Inst. 34(part 2): 95-105.

²ENNIS, T. 1969. *Field-characters of immature Little Gulls and Kittiwakes*. British Birds 62: 234-237.

³GODFREY, W. E. 1966. *The birds of Canada*. Natl. Mus. of Canada Bull. 203, Ottawa. 428 pp.

⁴HOUSTON, C. S. 1958. *An evaluation of the distribution records for Saskatchewan birds in the revised edition of the A.O.U. check-list*. Blue Jay 16: 44-47.

⁵NERO, R. W. 1962. *Birds of the Lake Athabasca region, Saskatchewan*. Spec. Publ. No. 5, Sask. Nat. Hist. Soc., Regina. 143 pp.

⁶NORTON, A. H. 1910. *The Little Gull Larus minutus Pall. in Maine, with remarks on its distribution and occurrence in America*. Auk. 27: 447-450.

⁷PETERSON, R. T., G. MOUNTFORD and P. A. D. HOLLAM. 1966. *A field guide to the birds of Britain and Europe* (revised edition). Collins, London. xxxv + 344 pp.

⁸PITTAWAY, R., and R. W. NERO. 1971. *Recent bird notes of interest for Churchill, Manitoba*. Blue Jay 29: 60-63.

⁹SALT, W. R., and A. L. WILK. 1966. *The birds of Alberta* (second ed.). Dept. of Industry and Devel., Alberta Government. 511 pp.

¹⁰SCOTT, G. A. 1963. *First nesting of the Little Gull (Larus minutus) in Ontario and in the New World*. Auk 80: 548-549.

¹¹STEWART, R. E. 1971. *Check list of birds in North Dakota*. Prairie Nat. 3: 3-12.

¹²SWITZER, F. 1974. *Little Gull visits Regina*. Blue Jay 32: 46-48.

MORE GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHERS AND SHORT-BILLED MARSH WRENS IN ALBERTA

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On the morning of June 15, 1972, I observed a Great Crested Flycatcher near the Administration Office in Elk Island National Park, Alberta, about 25 miles east of Edmonton. After initially identifying the bird, I left and returned shortly with Marg Reine, then Acting Park Naturalist, and Ken Richards, Seasonal Park Naturalist. The three of us watched the bird for

about 10 minutes. During this time, I recorded in my field notes that the bird was about the size of an Eastern Kingbird, with an ashy-gray throat and upper breast and a pale yellow lower breast and abdomen. The head and upperparts were a medium brown colour and the tail was rufous, with a suggestion of rufous in the wings as well. The calls were noted as an up-slurred "wheep!" and a rolling "breer! breer!". The bird was not seen again in 1972, despite almost daily visits to this locality.

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On July 2, 1972, I saw another Great Crested Flycatcher just west of St. Paul, Alberta, about 1 mile south of Provincial Highway 28 on the Lac Bellevue-Lafond road. This individual was first seen briefly at a range of about 50 feet at 6:00 p.m., and it (or another bird) was seen again nearby under similar circumstances from 6:30 to 6:45. It was not observed closely, but the yellow belly and reddish tail were distinctly noted, and the "wheep" call was given repeatedly. The bird was judged to be about kingbird size or a little smaller.

A third Crested Flycatcher sighting was made on the morning of July 6, 1974, in Elk Island National Park at the home of W. Jack Schick, Park Naturalist. It was seen perched on a fence, at a distance of about 15 feet, by Mr. Schick, my wife, Wendy, and me. All field marks were observed on this bird, including the slightly crested appearance of the head, but it gave no calls. This locality is only a few hundred feet from the site of the 1972 sighting in the park.

I am thoroughly familiar with the Great Crested Flycatcher, having studied birds in southern Ontario where the species is common.

The first record of this species in Alberta is apparently that of R. D. Ussher⁷, who reported hearing one on July 16, 1939, and subsequent dates at Astotin Lake in Elk Island Park and seeing a single bird twice on July 23 on Long Island in the lake. This record is also referred to by Soper⁶. Although Ussher, as was usual in those days, did not describe the bird in detail, the two recent sightings in Elk Island Park indicate that his identification may indeed have been correct.

The second sighting was made by Edgar T. Jones, who saw a pair on June 26, 1963, at the Ministik Lake provincial campsite on Highway 14

just east of Cooking Lake, Alberta. Mr. Jones writes (letter of September 13, 1974): "I observed for some 20 minutes a pair which I initially thought would be nesting but observation at the time and later (a check) revealed no evidence even though there were many suitable nesting holes in the area. The birds had been reported to me the day previously by a couple of young lads (unfortunately, I cannot recall their names) and since their description seemed accurate, I took the time to investigate. There was no question about their identity . . . Both birds were feeding off high spruce well back from the highway and made no sounds during the observation."

According to W. Ray Salt (pers. comm.), the records of Ussher and Jones formed the basis for the inclusion of the Great Crested Flycatcher on the hypothetical list for Alberta by Salt and Wilk.⁵

Greenlee lists numerous sightings of the Great Crested Flycatcher in the Two Hills region of Alberta in 1971 and 1972.^{2 3} Dr. Salt has also informed me that there are other records of the species in Alberta, which are currently under review by the Alberta Ornithological Records Committee. The recent increase in sightings may have resulted either from a true increase in numbers or merely increased observation; however, an apparent increase in numbers in Saskatchewan recently⁴ favours the first explanation. I suspect that Great Crested Flycatchers have long been present but have been overlooked in east-central Alberta, but have indeed increased in the last few years. (It seems hard to miss such a noisy bird!) It still remains, however, for the first Alberta photograph, specimen, or nest record of the species to be obtained.

Another unusual bird I observed in 1972 was a Short-billed Marsh Wren seen on July 3 near Bonnyville, Alta.



Short-billed Marsh Wren at Madge Lake, Saskatchewan.

Fred Lahrman

The bird was first heard singing at about 7:30 a.m. while I was carrying out a Breeding Bird Survey and I was able to see it when I returned to the locality between 12:00 and 12:30. It was seen from the side for about half a minute and was also glimpsed momentarily on several other occasions. The

bird, which was about the size of a Long-billed Marsh Wren, had a light stripe over the eye but not nearly as obvious as in the Long-billed. The sides were very buffy and there were light-coloured dots on the wings. However, the top of the crown and the under-tail coverts — the two best

field marks — could not be seen clearly. The identification was clinched, nevertheless, by the voice, which I described in my notebook as “a series of short notes, running into a trill; repetitive, unlike Long-billed Marsh Wren”. The call-note was a low trebled “chut-chut-chut”. The habitat was a dry sedge meadow with scattered clumps of willows — typical for this species but entirely inappropriate for a Long-billed Marsh Wren. I am familiar with the Long-billed Marsh Wren and have heard and seen the Short-billed previously in Ontario.

A second Short-billed Marsh Wren was heard singing later the same day in similar habitat just over the line in Saskatchewan — about 6 miles west of Pierceland — but it could not be seen.

The breeding range of the Short-billed Marsh Wren is known to extend west only to central Saskatchewan¹; however, C. Stuart Houston (pers. comm.) tells me that there have been several sight records in central-western Saskatchewan, where nesting has not yet been proven. Salt and Wilk⁵ list records from five localities in Alberta, including breeding-season records from Glenevis. Bonnyville may be only the second Alberta locality where the species has been seen during the breeding season and no nest has yet been found in the province.

Recently, the Alberta Ornithological Records Committee has been established for the purpose of reviewing sight records of bird species unusual in the province (*Blue Jay* 32: 114, 1974). While none of the sightings mentioned here has yet been officially accepted by the Committee, I wish to place them on record in order that the Committee and other interested persons will have a basis on which to assess their validity. The work of the Committee should do

much to upgrade the standards of field observation in general, and particularly to encourage observers to record details *in the field* whenever they see an unusual bird.

All of the sightings reported above, with the exception of the 1974 Crested Flycatcher sighting, were made while I was employed as a Seasonal Park Naturalist at Elk Island National Park. I would also like to point out that the two Short-billed Marsh Wren records, the St. Paul record of the Great Crested Flycatcher and the initial discovery of Great Crested Flycatchers near Two Hills by Graeme Greenlee, were all made while the observers were participating in the Co-operative Breeding Bird Survey, sponsored by the U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries & Wildlife and the Canadian Wildlife Service, or while the observers were birding near survey routes. This emphasizes the value of the Breeding Bird Survey in one of its major purposes, that of accurately mapping the breeding ranges of North American birds.

I am grateful to Edgar T. Jones for permission to quote his previously unpublished Great Crested Flycatcher sighting. I would also like to thank C. Stuart Houston and W. Ray Salt for helpful comments and advice.

¹GODFREY, W. E. 1966. *The birds of Canada*. Nat. Mus. Can., Bull. No. 203.

²GREENLESS, G. M. 1972. *Great Crested Flycatcher again observed in Alberta*. *Blue Jay* 30: 86-87.

³GREENLEE, G. M. 1973. *Alberta Great Crested Flycatcher sightings, 1972*. *Blue Jay* 31: 97.

⁴HOUSTON, C. S. 1972. *Northern Great Plains Region*. *American Birds* 26: 871.

⁵SALT, W. R., and A. L. WILK. 1966. *The birds of Alberta*. 2nd ed. Queen's Printer, Edmonton.

⁶SOPER, J. D. 1951. *The birds of Elk Island National Park, Alberta, Canada*. Canadian Wildlife Service, Wildl. Mgt. Bull. Series 2, No. 3.

⁷USSHER, R. D. 1940. *The Crested Flycatcher in Alberta*. *Can. Field-Nat.* 54: 74-75.