

FIRST RECORD OF A SUMMER Tanager IN SASKATCHEWAN

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beginners' luck seems to have been
ork when my wife, Janet, and I
rved and photographed a
mer Tanager in 1976 at Frontier,
tchewan. We had been bird
ning for about 4 years at the time
so, were relatively inexperienced.
We soon determined that we had
ty on our hands and knew that
ographs were our only chance of
g the sighting verified.

ring spring migration, I habitual-
eck the village park. It was on a
y May 7th at about 1600 that I
ed a red tanager. A check
ugh Godfrey's "The Birds of
da", Peterson's "A Field Guide
estern Birds" and Robbins *et al*'s
s of North America" showed
the only possibilities were the
mer or Hepatic Tanager since
was no black on the wings. We
t the next few hours until dusk
ning the bird with binoculars and
tting scope and taking pictures.

r notes made at the time includ-
ese observations which seem
to be the most pertinent. The
ral colouration was rosy red with
y grey or grey-brown present in
rimaries, secondaries, and tail.
were brownish grey. No ear
was present. The bill was dark,
sh, rimmed with yellowish on
mandibles. Except for the
ness of the bill, the bird appeared
very respect to be a Summer
ger.

r next task was to find someone
would examine the pictures and,
hoped, could make a positive
ification. We were fortunate that
N.H.S. summer meet was held at
y Cypress Hills Provincial Park in
That gave us the opportunity to
some people, particularly Jim
gwood who suggested sending
ides to Bernie Gollop in Saska-



Summer Tanager

Jack Wilkinson

Dr. Gollop examined the slides and forwarded them to Earl Godfrey, then Chief, Vertebrate Zoology Division, Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa (now retired). The following is part of his reply of July 15, 1976:

"I have received the 24 Jack Wilkinson slides. I am always wary of identifying birds pictured in slides because cameras do lie, often with disarmingly cunning subtlety.

"However, there is really no problem in this case. Among the 24 slides there are two or three that leave no doubt in my mind that the bird shown is a Summer Tanager.



Summer Tanager

Jack Wilk

Most important, one or two slides clearly show that the bird has absolutely no cheek patch whatever, thus eliminating the Hepatic Tanager.

"The colour of the Summer Tanager's bill is definitely lighter than average in both Robbins *et al* and Peterson. John Crosby's bird in "The Birds of Canada" is better. Some Summer Tanagers have decidedly darker bills than those shown in the book illustrations. Your bird's bill, as shown in some of the slides where light is adequate, is within the range of individual variation for the Summer Tanager. Your slides show, depending on light, a bill varying from black to dark yellowish.

"One or two of the slides show cutting edge of the bill in enough detail to indicate that there was 'tooth' of Hepatic Tanager proportions. In one slide the apparent projection of the cutting edge of the bill is shown under the microscope as only insect food being eaten by the bird. . ."

EDITOR'S NOTE: The letter concludes with "We owe Jack Wilk our thanks for going to the trouble of providing satisfactory documentation to permit identification of the bird. . ."