

DISTRIBUTION OF THE YELLOW-BELLIED MARMOT IN ALBERTA

DAVID SCHOWALTER, Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division, O.S. Longman Laboratory, P.O. Box 8070, Stn. F, Edmonton, Alberta, T6H 4P2.

The yellow-bellied marmot (*Marmota flaviventris*) was first recorded in Alberta by Moore from north and east along the Milk River as far as Verdegris Coulee.¹ Soper indicated their occurrence along all of the Milk River and in the Waterton Region as well as an extralimital record at Lake Newell.² Johnston noted the species' occurrence along the St. Mary River to near Lethbridge and predicted its continued spread along the Oldman and South Saskatchewan Rivers.³

Phil Currie, of the Provincial Museum of Alberta, and myself encountered droppings and burrows characteristic of yellow-bellied marmots under a sandstone layer at the top of a river cutbank approximately 0.5 km east of the Hays Bridge on the Bow River (E $\frac{1}{2}$ 31-13-13 W4) on 9 June 1980. I returned to the location on 22 June and observed two yellow-bellied marmots through a spotting scope. This location is approximately 100 km from the nearest published record on the St. Mary River, however, only 36 km from the record at Lake Newell.

I have frequently encountered yellow-bellied marmots while collecting bats and skunks in southern Alberta in the past few years. Within the area of distribution known in 1970 the species is relatively common, occurring on most cutbanks along the rivers and along coulees draining into these.³ They are particularly numerous where there are

alfalfa planting and cause considerable damage to these. Away from banks they utilize rock piles and occasionally buildings. A solitary marmot lives under a building and adjacent haystack at NE 26-4-9-W4, and another nearby building also appears to be used by marmots. Al Norris of Warner, Alberta, also told me of a group of marmots living under an old house near his home.

Yellow-bellied marmots now occur also on the Oldman River; in a quick check on 27 June 1980 I found marmots near Kipp, in the city of Lethbridge, and near Diamond City. They appeared to be in small numbers at these locations compared to several locations on the Milk and St. Mary Rivers. The record at the Hays Bridge indicates that the species doubtlessly occurs further east along the Oldman River.

¹MOORE, J. E. 1952. Notes on three additions to the rodent fauna of Alberta. Canadian Field-Naturalist 66:142-143.

²SOPER, J. D. 1964. The Mammals of Alberta. Hamly Press, Edmonton. 410 pp.

³JOHNSTON, A. 1970. Distribution of golden-mantled marmot in Alberta. Canadian Field-Naturalist 84:180-181.