

SASKATCHEWAN BIRD SPECIES — HYPOTHETICAL AND REJECTED

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At the beginning of 1981 there were 339 fully accepted species of birds on the Saskatchewan list. In addition, there were 39 "hypothetical" species, 29 of these being additions since the fifth *Field Check-list of Saskatchewan Birds* in 1969. The following list of the hypothetical species is, we believe, complete to 1 January 1981, using the same cutoff date as we used in the last issue for fully accepted species (*Blue Jay* 39:145-154, September 1981).

The word "hypothetical" in its conventional ornithological usage is quite specific — it means a species claimed to have been seen but for which there is no material evidence, such as a specimen, a recognizable photograph or an unmistakable sound recording. A "hypothetical" species is one that can neither be fully accepted or fully rejected on the evidence available. The following list contains records of varying degrees of validity and credibility, each of which must be judged individually on its merits, bearing in mind the circumstances and the reputation of the observer(s). Some are highly probable for one reason or another, but even if we were to identify a record that we thought had only a 10% chance of being right, this would be rather meaningless. It is something like quoting a 10% mortality rate to a patient, this figure being of little solace when the patient dies. Just as the patient either lives or dies, so is the bird identification either 100% right or 100% wrong. It is just that we do not know for sure which of these possibilities is true, for there is no proof. Nevertheless, the

easier a species is to identify, the better the conditions, the better the observer, the more likely it is to be correct. And when more observers in more places and more times see the same species, the probability becomes very high indeed, even though it is entirely possible for many observers to make the same error at different times.

A "hypothetical" record is not to be confused with a "rejected" record. Records for five "rejected" species and another that we rejected before it got into print, are given at the end of the article. Any "nearly acceptable" category is still arbitrary, but one could defend five well documented sightings by different observers as a minimum for

A panel sitting in judgment on such records might assess probabilities a bit more accurately than any one individual, but, as with an observer, mistakes would be made, and such errors could receive unwarranted credibility. Some of the records judged as valid by such a committee would be in error; some of the records rejected by them would, in fact, have been correct. We admit that errors have been made even with material evidence, but at least the specimen, the photograph or the sound tape are available for reassessment and correction.

We leave the reader to place his or her own valuation on each of the following, but we reiterate that not one of the following records is as yet fully acceptable.

Because the list of references would take more space than the list itself, and because this is more of an index than a review article, we have forsaken tradition and have placed the reference immediately after each sighting or group of sightings. Single birds are involved and all reports are sight records unless otherwise specified. New refers to a species added since the fifth check-list.

1. YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON. NEW. An adult 20 May 1978 at Lebret Marsh by Frank H. Brazier, E. Manley Callin and David Chaskavich (Blue Jay 36:145-146, 1978).

2. GLOSSY IBIS. NEW. Based on detailed field notes by P.M. Browne, on 14 August 1979 about 5 mi north of Courval, noting the differentiating features between the White-faced Ibis and this species. A photograph clearly demonstrates this to be an Ibis, but the photo does not reveal the diagnostic markings (Kreba, Blue Jay, this issue).

3. EUROPEAN WIGEON. NEW. Four sightings: a pair on 7 May 1971 at Cumberland House by D.T. Little (Blue Jay 29:134, 1971); a male 6, 7 and 8 June 1975 at a farm dugout north of Moose Jaw by V.J. Lieffers and D.R.M. Hatch (Qu'Appelle Waterfowl Resource Inventory, Wildlife Tech. Rep. 77-20, 1977, p. 47); an adult male through spotting scope at 100 m on 27 April 1977 at the east end of Cypress Lake by F.M. Brigham and J.D. Lafontaine (Blue Jay 35:170, 1977); 23 May 1977 at Moose Jaw by M.A. Ritchie and R.O. Hilling (Serr, Am. Birds 31:1014, 1977).

4. COMMON POCHARD. NEW. A pair on 11 June 1977 at Stonybeach Lake, 8 mi north of Belle Plaine, by Frank Brazier and Elmer Fox (Blue Jay 36:216-217, 1978).

5. BARROW'S GOLDENEYE. Four records, two before the fifth Check-list in 1969: an adult male 6 April 1956 at Morse by John M. Nelson (Nero, Blue Jay 23:127, 1965) and an adult male shot but not verified at Pasqua Lake on 12 October 1964 by Jamie Young (Nero, Blue Jay 23:127, 1965); a male on 9 November 1975 north of Semans by Wayne C. Harris (Serr, Am. Birds 30:87, 1976); a male through a spotting scope at Eastend on 5 and 6 April 1980 by Jack and Janet Wilkinson (Gollop, Am. Birds 34:788, 1980).

6. SWALLOW-TAILED KITE. All but one of the six sightings were before the first Check-list in 1947: in the 1880's at Fort Qu'Appelle by R.H. Hunter; on 24 May 1890 at Fort Qu'Appelle by George Lang; on 9 June 1898 at Katepwa by George Lang, and near Regina on 20 June 1906 by George Lang (Callin, Birds of the Qu'Appelle 1857-1979, 1980, p. 60); an adult in April 1921, 3.5 mi northwest of Tisdale by Stanley J. Street and Maurice G. Street (Blue Jay 29:224-225, 1971); in spring of 1955 in Regina by E.L. Fox (Belcher, Birds of Regina, 1980, p. 49).

7. RED-SHOULDERED HAWK. NEW. 17 August 1980 at Wolseley by J. Donald Hayward (Harris, Am. Birds 35:195, 1981).

8. MOUNTAIN PLOVER. NEW. Elliott Coues in his survey immediately south of the 49th parallel in 1874, reported: "Its centre of abundance in the region was the vicinity of Frenchman's River, where many specimens, both adult and young, together with a set of three eggs, were secured during the first and second weeks in July." (Coues, Bull U.S. Geol. & Geog. Survey Terr., 4: 1878, p. 634). First Canadian sighting was on 5 June 1939 near Bracken by J.D. Soper (Can. Field-Nat. 55:137, 1941). Eight on 22 September 1977 near Val Marie by Bob Peart and J.G. Woods (Blue Jay 38:41, 1980). An undated sighting by John Shadick about 1959, south of Govenlock has not been published.

9. AMERICAN WOODCOCK. Was on first list and then withdrawn. There are unusually dubious sightings for Woodcock: Portage on the Fond du Lac River by J.B. Tyrrell on 8 August 1892, quoted by Nero (Birds of the Lake Athabasca region, 1963, p. 72), vague reports of possible sightings at Oxbow and Moose Mountain by Mitchell (Birds of Saskatchewan, Canadian Field-Nat. 38:106, 1924), and a sighting in the Qu'Appelle east of Craven by Sylvia Harrison and Pearl Guest in 1960 (Blue Jay 16:160, 1960). Bob Kreba heard one or two on the shore of Little Kenosee Lake, Moose Mt. Provincial Park, on 5 and 6 May 1978 (pers. comm.)

10. ESKIMO CURLEW. First listed in fifth check-list, Godfrey (Birds of Canada, 1966, p. 145) says "it undoubtedly occurred", and Gollop (mss.) concurs. An unnamed companion of Walter Raine gave a tantalizing record of "nearly a hundred" birds in May 1891 (Houston, Blue Jay 39:172, 1981). Although four specimens were collected during the first Franklin expedition, 1819-1821,

all were outside of Saskatchewan. However, Richardson in his reasonably reliable table, giving sight records for Carlton and Cumberland during the two Franklin expedition, says "Of passage, spring." (Fauna Boreali-Americana, II, 1831, pp. xxviii-xxix.).

11. SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER. NEW. Two on 24 May 1980 at Regina by Robert Kreba and Tom Riffel, studied for 25 minutes at 30 feet with a 60x scope. (Gollop, Am. Birds 34:788, 1980; date wrong).

12. WESTERN SANDPIPER. NEW. Five sightings: More than once in spring 1968 at Regina by Bill Eddie (Belcher, Birds of Regina, 1980, p. 68); on 25 July 1974 at Perdue by A.R. & Karen Smith; (Renaud and Renaud, Birds of the Rosetown-Biggarr district, Saskatchewan, 1975, p. 66-67); four at Catherwood Lake near Perdue within 35 ft on 30 May 1977 by G.J. and R.A. Wapple and R. Chulach (Blue Jay 35:158, 1977); two near Biggar on 15 May 1978 (Belcher, Birds of Regina, 1980, p. 68); and on 18 May 1980 at Moose Jaw by J. Thomson (Gollop, Am. Birds, 34:788, 1980).

13. BLACK-NECKED STILT. Was on third and fourth lists, but stricken from fifth. The supposed nest record for 3 June 1894 at Qu'Appelle is not an acceptable record (Godfrey, Auk 86:562-563, 1969). There are three sightings: three birds by Peter McLellan near Arcola on 20 May 1955 (Blue Jay 13(3):21-22), one by D. Renaud near Rosetown on 7 May 1971 (Renaud & Renaud, Birds of the Rosetown-Biggarr dis-

trict, 1975, p. 69-70) and five by Wayne Harris near Willowbunch on 6 August 1980 (Harris, Am. Birds, 35:195, 1981).

14. LONG-TAILED JAEGER. Was on fifth list. Five records: Kazan Lake on 13 June 1942 by T.E. Randall, harrying terns at close range (Blue Jay 20:67, 1962); Lake Athabasca on 1 July 1959 by W. Emblau and two on 25 July 1962 by R.W. Nero (Nero, Birds of the Lake Athabasca region, 1963, p. 80); north of Big Sandy Lake on the Bear River on 14 June 1972 by G. Anweiler, unpubl.; Condie Reservoir on 5 September 1977 by F.W. Lahrman (Belcher, 1980, p. 70).

15. ICELAND GULL. NEW, though on previous list when Thayer's Gull was considered a subspecies of Iceland Gull. Three sightings: two immatures 23-24 September 1977 at Saskatoon by Muriel and Geoff Galloway and six other observers (Serr, Am. Birds 32:222, 1978); 23 December 1979 at Squaw Rapids by Wayne Harris (Blue Jay 38:20, 28-29, 1980), and 24-25 April 1980 at Katepwa Lake by Frank and Margie Brazier E.M. Callin and DRM Hatch (Callin, Birds of the Qu'Appelle, 1857-1979, 1980, p. 159).

16. LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL. NEW. Within 20 ft on 28 May 1977 near Regina by Frank and Margie Brazier (Blue Jay 35:257-258, 1977).

17. LAUGHING GULL. NEW. Two flew over highway near Lake Chaplin on 9 July 1975 seen by D.B.O. and C.E. Savile (Can. Field-Nat. 90:187, 1976).



Adult Thayer's Gull, Pond Inlet, N.W.T.

Wayne Renau

18. IVORY GULL. NEW. Five at Nemieben Lake on 16 September 1976 by F.G. Bard (Lahrman, Blue Jay 35:49, 1977).

19. LEAST TERN. On fifth check-list. On 26 May 1957 by Frank Brazier and Elmer Fox near Regina (Blue Jay 18:162, 1960).

20. BAND-TAILED PIGEON. NEW. Three sightings: 6 August 1970 at Valley Centre near Rosetown by Wayne and Don Renaud (Blue Jay 28:166, 1970); in Saskatoon on 30 September 1970 by Shelagh Aldous (Shadick, Blue Jay 33:167, 1975), and 28-29 June 1980 near Mortlach by B. Forbes (Gollop, Am. Birds 34:905, 1980).

21. YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO. NEW. One sighting on 8 June 1974 near Estevan by T.M. Beveridge (Houston, Am. Birds 28:917, 1974).

22. ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD. NEW. One seen intermittently from 21 June to about 8 August 1971 in garden south of Raymore by Greta Harris (unpublished, pers. comm.).

23. BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD. NEW. Seven feet away on 1 June 1970 at Regina by Jim and Shirley Jowsey (Blue Jay 28:120, 1970).

24. KISKADEE FLYCATCHER. NEW. One seen well on 19 May 1979 in Saskatoon by Pat O'Neil (Saskatoon Field Notes 29:9, 1979). This distinctive bird is not expected north of Texas and is not subject to irruptions, so an escape of a captive bird must be considered.

25. PINYON JAY. On first check-list. One sighting 16 September 1910 near Eastend by Laurence B. Potter (Can. Field-Nat. 57:70, 1943).

26. MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE. On fifth list. One present at feeder 30 November, 3 December, daily from 5 December 1966 through end of March 1967 and on 5 days in April to the 22nd at Skull Creek by S.A. Mann (Blue Jay 27:126, 1969).

27. BRIDLED TITMOUSE. NEW. Seen on 16 May 1978 at feeder from 10 feet at Kenosee by Ruth Carson, a keen Audubon member from Yelm, Washington, and a former college biology teacher. This was reported in Doug Gilroy's "Prairie Wildlife" column in Western Producer, 12 June 1980, and again on 19 February 1981. In a letter to C.S. Houston on 21 March 1981, Mrs. Carson says she saw the crest clearly and

thought first of Tufted Titmouse which she had known in the east, but the distinct face and throat markings were those of a Bridled Titmouse, checked at the time in Robbins, Bruun and Zim's guide. The bird stayed for 3 days. It was also seen by the excited owners of the feeder, Walter and Ruth Dixon. This species should not be closer than Arizona and New Mexico, and an escapee must again be considered — but from where?

28. DIPPER. Since third list, but sightings date from 1917. Twice seen at Ravenscrag including two by Spencer Pearse 22 May 1917, a third sighting there by Bob Friel on 8 February 1941 (Houston, Bard and Nero, Blue Jay 16:65, 1958); Sealy, (Blue Jay 29:187, 1971); on 25 October 1963 on the main street of Maple Creek by R.V. Folker, Hugo Maliepaard and C. Reid (Blue Jay 22:5, 1964); on 6 May 1969 west of Eastend by Elizabeth Cruickshank and Ruth Baker; and on 9 May 1969 in Cypress Hills Park by Sharon Haggerty (Blue Jay 27:154, 1969).

29. CANYON WREN. NEW. One sang and was seen by R.D. Symons for 2 days in June 1941 in the Battle Creek valley of the Cypress Hills. (*Hours and the Birds*, 1967, p. 162).

30. BENDIRE'S THRASHER. NEW. 27 May 1972 west of Hanley by J.B. and M.F. Gollop (Blue Jay 33:167, 1975). This was the first Canadian sight record. The second was by D.R.M. Hatch and nine other observers at Grand Beach, Manitoba on 14 May 1974 (Houston and Shadick, Am. Birds 28:816, 1974).

31. WOOD THRUSH. NEW. There were seven sightings through the end of 1980: 24 May 1973 in Saskatoon by Pat O'Neil and nine others (Blue Jay 32:46, 1974); 5 October 1973 in Regina by E.L. Fox (Blue Jay 32:46, 1974); 27-28-29 April 1974 in Saskatoon by Pat O'Neil (Blue Jay 33:189, 1975); 27 May 1976 at Biggar by G.J. and R.D. Wapple, well studied at 15 feet for 20 minutes (Blue Jay 35:159, 1977); 21 July 1976 by V.B. Scott and 28 September 1976, by Pat O'Neil, both in Saskatoon (Saskatoon Field Notes 20:8, 1976); 21 September 1979 near Colgate by D.G. Bobbitt as close as 10 feet for 10 minutes (Blue Jay 39:112, 1981). (There has since been an authenticated photograph taken on 11 & 12 May, 1981 by Tom Riffel in Regina to place this species on the full Saskatchewan list.)



Cypress Hills.

J. B. Gollop

32. WESTERN BLUEBIRD. NEW. An adult male (with a female bluebird) on 1 September 1969 5 mi south of Saskatoon by J.B. Gollop. Studied at distance of 40 yards with 7x50 binoculars for more than a minute; some red on back as well as on its breast. (Saskatoon Bird Review 4:119, 1969).

33. PROTHONOTARY WARBLER. On fifth list. A male in spring plumage on 17 May 1969 in Regina by D.G. Bobbitt and H.B. Bedard (Blue Jay 27:149,155, 1969), and on 13 September 1978 an adult male singing at Regina, observed by Robert Kreba for several minutes and detailed notes made (Serr, Am. Birds 33:190, 1979).

34. WORM-EATING WARBLER. NEW. 19 May 1979 in Saskatoon by Muriel and Geoff Galloway, Jim Slimmon and Mary Houston; photo taken but not identifiable. (Blue Jay 37:209, 1979).

35. TOWNSEND'S WARBLER. NEW with BREEDING EVIDENCE. Two adults feeding two recently fledged young on 18 July 1979 at Fort Walsh by Wayne C. Harris (Blue Jay 38:92, 1980); also a male on 7 September 1975 in Saskatoon by S.J. & Mary Shadick (Blue Jay 34:102, 1976).

36. YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER. NEW. A pair on 16 May 1970 in Weyburn by Robert Kreba and Farrell Hall was well described (Blue Jay 29:130-131, 1971). An earlier report by Arthur Ward of banding this species in 1949 was probably a misidentification (Blue Jay 7(3):8, 1949).

37. KENTUCKY WARBLER. NEW. On 25 September 1971 at Moose Jaw by John C. Horton and Dorothy Rhodes; studied at close

range for 2 hours (Houston, Am. Birds 26:80 1972).

38. BLUE GROSBEAK. NEW. A pair sighted briefly on 26 May 1974 near Pike Lake by Jim and Thelma Pepper (Blue Jay 33:168, 1975).

39. HOUSE FINCH. NEW. Four reports: a male on 15 October 1959 in Saskatoon by L.G. Saunders (Blue Jay 17:158, 1959); three males feeding on 26 April 1973 at Regina by Fred & Phyllis Bard (Blue Jay 32:48, 1974); a male within 6 feet on 6 February 1976 in Saskatoon by Pat O'Neil (Blue Jay 34:127-128, 1976); one female from 7 m on 29 April 1978 at Fort Qu'Appelle by E.M. Callin and F.H. Brazier (Callin, Birds of the Qu'Appelle, 1857-1979, 1980, p. 144).

40. MCKAY'S BUNTING. NEW. A brief view of an adult male on 2 October 1978 in Regina by F.H. Brazier (Blue Jay 38:36-38 1980).

REJECTED SPECIES

1. AMERICAN FLAMINGO. One was photographed from the air, by R. Kent Brace while conducting an aerial waterfowl census near Lake Lenore on 3 October 1972. It was learned that two bright flamingos had escaped from the Roosevelt Park Zoo at Minot North Dakota, on 25 September 1972, and one of them had been sighted 30 m northwest of Minot on 27 September. The Lenore bird was also bright pink and the best assumption is that it was one of the escapees and thus not a wild bird. For this reason the record has been rejected. Reminiscences of

Helena Janus Pike seeing flamingos near Waseca about 1937 and 1940 carry all the hazards of reminiscences by members of the public. (All three records were discussed, with 1972 photo, in *Blue Jay* 31:167, 1973).

2. BLACK VULTURE. On first list, then withdrawn. L.B. Potter listed it as follows: "Sight record, E.H.M. Knowles, Regina, September 19, 1937" (*Blue Jay* 1:25, 1943). Subsequently Knowles told Houston that the bird, north of Regina, had a black head, but seemed the approximate size of a Turkey Vulture. He had not appreciated that a young Turkey Vulture may have a black head. Rejected.

3. HAMMOND'S FLYCATCHER. In 1980, Fred G. Bard kindly gave Houston a list of specimens collected by the late Charles F. Holmes of Cloverley Farm, 7 miles south of Dollard, Saskatchewan. This list included specimen No. 72, a male Hammond's Flycatcher collected at the farm on 10 October 1933. Correspondence was initiated with his son Paul M. Holmes of Salmon Arm, B.C. and then with Philip H.R. Stepney of the Provincial Museum of Alberta, the institution which had recently acquired Holmes' collection. The specimen label had a different date, 19 October 1933, and had first been identified by Holmes as a Western Wood Pewee. This identification was later changed by Holmes to "*Empidonax hammondii*?". The wing chord of 78.4 mm seemed a little large for a Hammond's Flycatcher but too small for a Western Wood Pewee. The specimen was then sent by Stepney to Henri Ouellet of the National Museum of Canada, who identified it as an immature Western Wood Pewee. Rejected.

4. WESTERN FLYCATCHER. The reported banding of this *Empidonax* by Arthur Ward near Burnham in 1949 is probably in error (*Blue Jay* 7(3):8, 1949). Rejected.

5. PAINTED REDSTART. On 1 September 1972, there was excitement at 1125 Elliott Street, Saskatoon. Pat O'Neil called the Houstons over to see a redstart with a bright orange-red breast. When facing the observers, it looked exactly like the Painted Redstart illustrated in Peterson's *Field Guide to the Western Birds*, opposite p. 262. This would have been considered diagnostic, except that the bird then turned, to show orange not white in its wings and the orange tail flashes of an American Redstart. The regular field guides and texts were of no help with this conundrum, but the explanation was found in Robert Ridgway, *The Birds of North and Middle America* (Bull. USNM No. 50, Part II, 1902, p. 724) where he quoted Mearns (Bull. Nuttall Orn. Club 2:70, 1877) regarding the breast colour in the American Redstart: "Frequently the white portions are tinged with orange-red, especially on sides and flanks; very rarely the white is entirely replaced by orange-red". A careful look and reference to a specialized book thus corrected the initial misidentification.

6. FIELD SPARROW. The late Arthur Ward's claim to have banded a Field Sparrow at Burnham probably between 1949 and 1952 (*Blue Jay* 10(4):13, 1952) was in error, judging from Ward's description of the bird given verbally to Houston at a later date. Rejected.



Near Ravenscrag.

Fred W. Lahrman