

ADDITIONS TO THE MANITOBA BIRD LIST (1975-1984)

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The Manitoba birds field check-list (revised 1 April 1979) lists 279 species of birds that are believed to occur annually in Manitoba. An additional 32 species that have been seen on five or more occasions since 1900 are listed, while 28 species that have been reported less than five times in that period are not included.² The Manitoba Ornithological Records Committee (MORC) (H.W.R. Copland, Chairman; R.F. Koes, R.W. Nero, S.G. Sealy, W.J. Walley) is currently compiling an updated and complete check-list, which it hopes to publish in the near future

Additions to Manitoba's avifauna that have been made in the past 10 years are reported herein. For most of these species, material evidence in the form of a specimen, photograph or sound recording exists. Also included are well documented sight records made by two or more competent observers. Houston, Houston and Gollop outline the difficulties in evaluating sight records and follow the tradition of considering all sight records as hypothetical.²⁸ Recently, North Americans have started to adopt the practice of Western Europeans of accepting sight records for which independent, convincing reports have been provided by two or more competent observers.^{7 25} I refer readers to a treatise on the topic by Roberson in a recent issue of "American Birds".³⁸ MORC has followed this practice, but I have indicated here for which species material evidence is still lacking

A number of sightings have been made by single observers, or in certain cases adequate details are missing. These sightings must be considered unconfirmed or hypothetical, respectively. It is hoped that observers having additional information

regarding these sightings will report such information to MORC c/o **Herb Copland, Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, 190 Rupert Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0N2**. This will allow us to review the status of those species involved in time for the publication of the aforementioned check-list.

As becomes evident from the information below, birding activity has increased considerably in recent years. This can be attributed to a number of factors. Foremost, is probably the ever increasing coverage of the Churchill area. There appears to be no end to the possibilities at this birder's paradise and no doubt this list will be made obsolete in the near future by other records from that location. Secondly, the formation of the Manitoba Rare Bird Alert in 1976 has brought many of the active birders in contact with each other and this in turn has stimulated an enormous increase in fieldwork, resulting in several additions to the list. Thirdly, we have to be grateful for the growing number of Manitobans who show an interest in their environment and who take time to report unusual observations to their birding friends. The author would appreciate being informed of any missing, incorrect or incomplete information in this list

(Note: an asterisk* indicates that material evidence or adequate written reports confirm the presence of the species in the province and that the species has therefore been accepted on the Manitoba list.)

Yellow-billed Loon

This loon breeds in the high arctic and winters along the west coast. An adult was seen at Churchill on 26 June 1980 by A.

Reille.¹⁴ On 19 June 1981 another adult was observed at the same location by B. Aike, K. Kaufman, D. McRae and others.¹² McRae sent a convincing but incomplete report on the 1981 sighting (pers. comm. 20 October 1984). No other reports have been submitted.

Barnacle Goose

On 3 May 1981 J. and P. Christie spotted a Barnacle Goose in company of feeding Canada Geese near Croll in S.W. Manitoba.¹¹ Although photographs were taken, these were not distinct enough to substantiate the sighting (J. Christie, pers. comm. 10 January 1982). No detailed report has been forwarded to the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature (MMMN) or MORC. The possibility that the bird had escaped from captivity seems likely.

Smew

An adult male was seen at Churchill on 7 November 1983 by K. and J. Wiggers.²³ The report in "American Birds" stated 'The first Smew for the region was a well described male,' but no description of the sighting of this Eurasian merganser has been received by the MMMN or MORC.

***Red-shouldered Hawk**

There are at least three reports of the species occurring in the province in the first half of the century, but the information on these sightings is sketchy (MMMN files). On 1 December 1978 an adult bird was struck by a car near Clearwater. It was taken by R. Dyck to A. Schritt. The bird shortly died of massive internal injuries and was donated to the MMMN. This specimen (#1.2-3488) represents the first confirmed occurrence in the province.⁴¹

The following spring (31 March 1979) several birders saw an adult migrating north along the Red River at St. Adolphe. A recognisable photograph was taken by N. Murdoch (now N. Johnston). What was presumably the same bird was an individual present in Winnipeg from 3 to 11 April 1979, seen by L. DeMarsh, G. Holland, and others.¹⁰ Four birds have been reported

since: 27 March 1981, Spruce Sands, D. Guinan;¹¹ 9 April 1983, one adult, St. Adolphe, R. Koes, I. Ward, et al.;²² 8 May 1983, Churchill, B. Chartier;²² and 7 August 1983, near Shilo, J. Coons and D. Paulson.²³

***Wandering Tattler**

A photograph of this species was printed in "American Birds."¹² The bird had been present at Churchill on 14 and 15 June 1981, and was seen by B. Feltner, D. Wyman, and other observers. Although we have not received details of the sighting, the photograph leaves no doubt about the identity of the bird, which is usually found in the vicinity of the west coast.

***Curlew Sandpiper**

S. Holohan and J. Christie observed this beautiful Eurasian shorebird at Oak Hammock Marsh Wildlife Management Area (WMA) during a routine shorebird census on 1 June 1981.²⁶ Another adult was sighted on 10 June 1983 at Churchill by D. McRae, S. Shadick, R. Tkachuk and others.¹⁷ Written descriptions of both sightings are convincing.

***Laughing Gull**

There are at least three sight records for this species in the province, the most recent one supported by photographic evidence. D. McRae obtained a series of photographs of a bird that was present at Churchill from 25 July to 9 August 1982.²¹ The same bird may already have been present on 9 July, when one was spotted by B. Chartier.¹⁶ The species had previously been recorded at Oak Hammock Marsh WMA by K. Gardner and P. Tully on 23 June 1974, and at Churchill on 9 and 14 August 1979 by C. Cuthbert, et al.⁹ ¹⁹ No written reports on the last two sightings have been received.

***Common Black-headed Gull**

The species was first recorded in the province 23 July 1970, when I. Newton, a visiting birder from Britain familiar with the species, saw one at Churchill. Unfortunately, this sighting was not confirmed by other observers.³⁷ On 11 and 27 July 1980 the

species was again observed at Churchill by D. Finch, B. Chartier, D. Fast et al.¹⁴

This Eurasian gull, which has recently started to colonize the east coast of North America,³⁶ has been seen at least three more times at Churchill: fall 1980, B. Chartier; 15 July 1982, D. McRae and P. Sinclair; and 18 June 1984, 1 adult, R. Koes, G. Grief, R. Tkachuk, A. Blewett, B. Shettler, and G. Walz.^{20 16 13} McRae obtained photographs of the 1982 bird, which we have not seen yet, while a photograph taken by A. Brady, which appeared in "Birding" cannot be considered 100% diagnostic.^{3 4} No details were provided with this picture. I took three photographs in 1984, again not entirely convincing.

Black-legged Kittiwake

Two birds have been reported, both at Churchill. D. Mark and B. Chartier saw the first on 11 June 1980 and a second bird was discovered on 18 July 1982 by B. Chartier¹⁴ ¹⁶ and seen the next day by C. and L. Weseloh. It was also studied at close quarters for half an hour by D. McRae and P. Sinclair. Additional information on these sightings would enable MORC to evaluate the provincial status of this species properly.

***Ross' Gull**

The chance to see Ross' Gulls has lured probably thousands of birders to Churchill since the initial discovery on 20 June 1978 by members of the Linnaean Society.⁴⁰ That gull was present until at least 23 June and seen and photographed by several observers. No Ross' Gulls were reported in 1979, but in 1980 three pairs attempted to nest.⁶ These were the first known nests in mainland North America, far from the traditional breeding grounds in Siberia. The species has been observed yearly since, with as many as 10+ birds present in 1982 and the first known successful nesting in 1983.^{16 17}

***Band-tailed Pigeon**

This species has been recorded three times in the province. On 29 June and 3 July 1981 one was seen at Churchill by L. Augustowich and others.¹² W.J. Walley, unaware of the above record, reported a bird that had been present near Riding Mountain National Park from 15 to 27 April 1982 as the first record for Manitoba. This bird had been discovered by J. Crozier and was seen on 16 April by T. Jenkins, W. Clark and Walley. The latter also obtained photographs. This was the first documented record for the province.⁴⁶



Band-tailed Pigeon

W.J. Walley

R. Knapton and J. Richards made the third sighting for the province when they observed a bird flying over the tundra at Churchill on 2 July 1983 (MORC files).

*Rufous Hummingbird

From early September to 18 October 1979 an adult male frequented the feeder of Mrs. O. Scott in Selkirk. K. Gardner confirmed the sighting on 14 October and the following day many of the Winnipeg area birders also studied the flashy little hummer. D. Fast took a series of fine photographs.¹⁹ Prior to this sighting there had been a number of unconfirmed reports: 27-28 June 1942 and 27 July 1948, one male, Churchill, Mrs. R. Beckett;²⁹ late July 1951, Brandon, Mrs. A. Caldwell;³³ July - 14 August 1951, Winnipeg, Mrs. W. Mackie;³² 3 August 1951, Treesbank, S. Criddle;³¹ and late summer 1978, Pinawa, R. Stiles.⁴³ Since 1979 the species has been recorded at least four more times in the province: 13 September 1982, one adult male, Brandon, H. Watson et al.;²¹ 14 + June 1983, one male, Churchill, D. Hatch et al.;¹⁷ 15 to 21 August 1983, Winnipeg, J. Logan, W. Neily and the author;²³ and 17-19 July 1984, Lyleton, J. Murray.¹³

Red-breasted Sapsucker

Like the previous two species, this bird is usually found in the western Rocky Mountains. Until recently it was considered a race of the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, but in 1983 it was elevated to full species status.¹

The only documented record for the province involves a bird seen on 12 June 1977 just north of Riding Mountain National Park by W. Walley. Unfortunately it was not found again on a subsequent visit and no photographs were obtained (pers. comm. 26 March 1985).

*Willow Flycatcher

The status of the Willow Flycatcher in Manitoba is not clear. Stewart shows it breeding commonly in the Turtle Mountains and Pembina Hills of North Dakota,

just south of the international border.⁴² Positive nesting evidence for the closely related Alder Flycatcher in that state was only obtained as recently as 1981.⁸

R. Knapton heard the "fitz-bew" song of a Willow Flycatcher on 3 June 1978 along Gainsborough Creek, immediately west of the Manitoba - Saskatchewan border.³⁰ Callin (1980)⁵ and Houston et al (1981)²⁸ also discuss the status of the species in Saskatchewan. In Manitoba the Alder Flycatcher is the more common of the two, but there can be little doubt that the Willow Flycatcher occurs more often than the few records seem to indicate. Two specimens in the National Museum at Ottawa (#16881 and #27895) have been identified as '*traillii*,' but only the first bird -- an adult male collected on 8 August 1921 at Oak Lake -- clearly fits the '*traillii*' measurements (W. Neily, pers. comm.)

To our knowledge no Willow Flycatchers were identified in the field until 6 July 1978, when Neily heard one at the Tobacco Creek bridge on his Jordan Breeding Bird Survey. He went back on 15 July and found two males that responded with identical songs to a taperecording which he played. No Willow Flycatchers were found at this location in subsequent years (pers. comm.)

Besides several other single-observer sightings, there are only a few multiple-observer sightings. In these cases identification was based on 'good' songs: 3 June near Delta, C. Cuthbert and staff of Delta Waterfowl Research Station; 14 June 1980, Lunday, G. Holland and I. Ward; and 3-5 June 1982, Oak Hammock Marsh WMA, G. Holland, P. Hamel, E. Carp, the author and others (MORC files).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

Between 8 and 17 November 1977 Mrs. L. Hatch and D. Hatch studied a gnatcatcher at the L. Hatch farm at Oak Lake.^{24 39} D. Fast discovered one near his Kleefeld home on 31 August 1982.²¹ Of all the birders who converged at this latter loca-

tion, only F. Fast and H. Lane managed to see the bird. Persuasive descriptions exist of both sightings, but they are unfortunately not complete enough for confirmation.

***Sage Thrasher**

A. Horn and P. Christie, Department of Zoology, University of Toronto, discovered a Sage Thrasher while studying Western Meadowlarks in the early morning of 10 June 1984 at the T. Peters farm just west of Oakland, near Delta.²⁷ S. Sealy and several birders from the Winnipeg area confirmed the occurrence later that day and the next 2 days. D. Fast and others took photographs of this inhabitant of the western sagebrush plains.

***White-eyed Vireo**

G. Holland, while running near Assiniboine Park in Winnipeg on 3 July 1981, recognized the distinctive song of a White-eyed Vireo. Although the foliage was thick and the traffic heavy in the area, he also managed to see the songster. Other birders alerted did not see it that day, but shortly after daybreak 4 July both W. Neily and D. Hatch saw and heard the vireo.¹² It was not found thereafter. Holland and Neily submitted complete reports to MORC. The species is not normally found north of southern Iowa.

***Green-tailed Towhee**

A Green-tailed Towhee visited a feeder at the rural home of A. and D. Schritt near Altona from 30 November 1981 until 4 January 1982.¹⁵ Birders from across the province and beyond travelled to the Schritt home and saw and photographed the towhee. It was not seen after a severe cold spell and likely succumbed to the weather

This towhee, which is normally found in the Rocky Mountains south of the border, has been recorded on one other occasion. D. Fast discovered an adult at a nursery near his Kleefeld home on 12 May 1984. It was seen by several of the avid birders living in southeastern Manitoba and also photographed. It was last noted on 14 May 1984.¹⁸

Brewer's Sparrow

On 20 June 1982 D. McRae, in company with P. Sinclair and J. Shykoff, carefully studied and identified a Brewer's Sparrow at Churchill.¹⁶ McRae provided MORC with an extremely detailed description, but as he was the only experienced observer of the three, the sighting could not be confirmed.

***Golden-crowned Sparrow**

An adult was reported by C. Crosthwaite at Pinawa on 29 and 30 April 1983. The bird



Sage Thrasher

D. Fast

appeared during an exceptionally heavy sparrow migration. A convincing description was given to P. Taylor.⁴³ The species was confirmed for the province when an adult showed up in the garden of M. Krueger at Altona on 13 and 14 May 1984.¹⁸ Hordes of observers converged at the Krueger home and photographed this western relative of the White-crowned Sparrow.

*Eastern Meadowlark

The characteristic song of an Eastern Meadowlark caught the attention of P. Taylor, while he was driving through agricultural country near River Hills on 13 June 1981. During the next month the bird was seen and heard by numerous observers and sound recordings were made by Taylor. A second bird was seen by G. Holland and D. Hatch. The latter observer noted intense courtship behaviour between the two birds, but apparently the specific identity of the second meadowlark was not determined.⁴³ Taylor recently discussed the possibility that the first bird had some 'Western blood' in its ancestry.⁴⁴

There was one previous, unconfirmed record. N. Foy saw and heard one near Tolstoi in the extreme south of the province 12 June 1975 (MORC files). Considering that the breeding range of the Eastern Meadowlark extends to northern Minnesota and northwestern Ontario, it is surprising that not more records exist.

*Brambling

What became known as the "Siberian Express" was a phenomenon that saw numerous Asiatic strays appear on the North American continent in the fall and winter of 1983, among them several Bramblings.³⁴ M. Siepmann discovered one in his E. St. Paul yard on 22 October 1983, where it remained until 24 October.²³ It was identified by the author and subsequently seen and recorded on film by numerous observers. The finch was believed to be a male, but this was not established with cer-



Brambling

R. Tkachuk

tainty. On 15 May 1984, an adult male turned up in a St. Vital (Winnipeg) yard, about 30 km to the south, where it was seen by J. Miller, W. May, D. Hatch and others.¹⁸ Again, photographs were taken. These two records could possibly have involved the same individual.

Cassin's Finch

G. Grief and G. Holland observed a bird they identified as a female Cassin's Finch with hundreds of Purple Finches at the Grief residence near Oakbank on 19 April 1981.¹¹ Two slides taken by Holland unfortunately cast doubt upon the validity of the identification.

*House Finch

This species has expanded its range so rapidly in recent years that it was only a matter of time before it would be recorded in Manitoba. Originally a western species, it was introduced in the east in the 1940's and spread quickly from there.³⁵ The first one to be recorded here was a female that visited K. Gardner's feeder in Stonewall between 29 March and 9 April 1983.²² Gardner alerted other birders, but the bird was shy and unpredictable and few managed to see it. The author took a series of diagnostic photographs

There have been at least three sightings since: 17 April 1983, one male, Oakbank, G. Grief; 2 May 1983, one male, Stonewall, K. Gardner; and 15-16 May 1984, one male, Altona, H. Wiens, A. and D. Schritt, G. Holland and R. Tkachuk.^{22 18}

Escapees and Others

The following species have been reported during the past decade, but they have not been included in the list, as circumstances surrounding the sightings indicated the birds had probably or certainly escaped from captivity: Mute Swan, Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Red-crested Cardinal and "budgies". Finally an ani was reported on 24 October 1979 near Headingly, but as it was not properly documented to species, it has not been accepted on the list (MORC files). In light of the fact that Minnesota boasts eight records for Groove-billed Ani, the Manitoba sighting does not seem far-fetched.⁴⁵

Acknowledgements

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² ANONYMOUS 1979 Manitoba birds field check-list. Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, Winnipeg.

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⁴ BALCH, L.G. 1983 Answer to August/October photo quiz. *Birding* 15:243-244.

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⁷ DE COMMISSIE VOOR DE NEDERLANDSE AVIFAUNA 1962 Avifauna van Nederland. E.J. Brill, Leiden, Nederland.

⁸ FANNES, C.A. 1981 The nesting season: Northern Great Plains. *Am Birds* 35:952-955.

⁹ GARDNER, K.A. 1974 'Wild Wings' 6 July 1974. *The Winnipeg Tribune*.

¹⁰ GOLLOP, B. 1979 The spring migration: Prairie Provinces region. *Am Birds* 33:781-782.

¹¹ GOLLOP, B. - 1981 The spring migration: Prairie Provinces region. *Am Birds* 35:834-835.

¹² GOLLOP, B. 1981 The nesting season: Prairie Provinces region. *Am Birds* 35:950-952.

¹³ GOLLOP, B. 1984 The nesting season: Prairie Provinces region. *Am Birds* 38:1031-1033.

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²⁰ HARRIS, W.C. 1981 The autumn migration: Prairie Provinces region. *Am Birds* 35:195-196.

²¹ HARRIS, W.C. 1983 The autumn migration: Prairie Provinces region. *Am Birds* 37:192-194.

²² HARRIS, W.C. 1983 The spring migration: Prairie Provinces region. *Am Birds* 37:882-884.

²³ HARRIS, W.C. 1984 The autumn migration: Prairie Provinces region. *Am Birds* 38:214-16

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- ²⁷ HORN, A. and P. CHRISTIE 1985 First Sage Thrasher sighting in Manitoba. Blue Jay 43(3):177-178.
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- ⁴⁰ SERR, E.M. 1978 The nesting season: Northern Great Plains region. Am Birds 32:1175-1178.
- ⁴¹ SERR, E.M. 1979 The winter season: Northern Great Plains region. Am Birds 33:290-292
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CHRISTMAS BIRD AND MAMMAL COUNTS

Count period is from Wednesday, 18 December 1985 to Sunday, 5 January 1986, inclusive. Count area should be a circle 24 km (15 mi.) in diameter. Count forms will be sent to compilers who submitted counts for 1984. Anyone else who wishes to send in a count please write for forms to **Mary I. Houston, 863 University Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 0J8.**

Reports of counts should be sent to Mary Houston as soon as possible after they are taken. To be included in the report in the March 1986 Blue Jay they must reach Mary by 10 January at the very latest.