

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER AT REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN

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On 13 September, 1978, I sighted a male Prothonotary Warbler in Wascana Park, Regina. I had taken the afternoon off from working at the Museum of Natural History after noticing quite a few migrant warblers and finches around the Museum building. I made my way south through the park from the Museum, patrolling the trees along Albert Street and then turning east, parallel to the north shore of Wascana Lake.

As I approached the Bandshell area, I encountered a loose flock of warblers busily foraging in the trees which were mostly elms. I noticed an unusually bright bird which I initially thought was a Yellow Warbler, as only its head was visible. It then moved into a full side view and kept fairly quiet for about 2 minutes. The bird then flew from me, about 20 feet into another elm, at which time I clearly observed the white tail patches (reminiscent of Magnolia Warbler). I quote from my notes, September 13, 1978, 1:41 p.m.:

"♂ in full breeding plumage, seen in *Ulmus* ("resting", not foraging), and also in flight, when white tail patches seen well. Orange-yellow head and breast, blue-grey wings, back and tail well observed (no eyeline, no wing bars as in *Vermivora pinus*); no other observers, total observation time about 3 minutes."

I watched it for about another minute, then ran back to the Museum so that Fred Lahrman could confirm the sighting. By the time I located him and we got back outside, 10-15 minutes had elapsed, and although we searched the area for about 20

minutes, we could not relocate it. The Prothonotary was associated with a group of foraging warblers, including Tennessee, Yellow, Myrtle, Magnolia and Redstart; however, it was not observed foraging. Observations were made with 7x50 binoculars, initially at a distance of 10-15 feet.

Very strong easterly winds over the previous two days, originating from an intense low pressure system with its attendant counter-clockwise air circulation, could have blown this bird off course. It was accompanied by a wave of migrants that yielded 15 (or 16) species of parulids on the 13th and 10 on the 14th. At different times Bob Luterbach, Frank Brazier and I looked for the bird later on the 13th and again on the 14th without success.

Conditions for viewing on September 13 were good, with heavy overcast, diffused light and no shadows. There was no precipitation when I first saw the bird, but intermittent mist, rain, and drizzle did interfere when Fred Lahrman and I were searching for it.

I have no previous field experience with this species, but am familiar with all the expected species for our area and have little difficulty with "confusing fall warblers". This is a distinctive bird and I am confident of my identification. Differences from the somewhat similar Blue-winged Warbler were seen, as noted above. In addition, it seemed rather big-headed as compared to a *Dendroica* warbler, like the Yellow Warbler, and

had a proportionately heavier bill.

I should note that September 13 is a very late date for this species, particularly at such a northerly latitude. These birds begin their migration southward in July, and are virtually absent from most of their breeding range by mid-August.³ Prothonotary Warblers breed from Minnesota to Texas and eastward.¹

There is only one previous record of this species for Regina and Saskatchewan, a male seen on 17

May, 1969, in the same area of the park, by D. G. Bobbit and Father H. B. Bedard.²

¹BENT, A. C. 1953. Life histories of North American wood warblers. U.S. Nat. Mus. Bull. 203.

²BOBBIT, D. G. 1969. Sighting of a Prothonotary Warbler in Regina. Blue Jay 27(3):149.

³WALKINSHAW, L. H. 1957. Prothonotary Warbler. Pages 46-49 in *The warblers of North America*. Devin-Adair, New York.

CASPIAN TERN NESTS AT LAST MOUNTAIN LAKE, SASKATCHEWAN

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On 21 July, 1978, we inspected Perry's Point (on the east shore of Last Mountain Lake, 10 miles west of Govan) and a small, sand and rock island just off its southern tip. Our objective was to find out whether pelicans and/or cormorants were nesting there since both species are seen on the lake each summer and have nested on Perry's Point in the past. We found no evidence that these species were breeding at either location but did see eggs and young of Common Terns and two Piping Plover chicks on the small island. A large gull colony occupied the tip of Perry's Point.

While on the little island our attention was attracted by two large terns that kept diving at us. These birds had large, red bills, which is a

distinguishing characteristic of the Caspian Tern according to Peterson's Field Guide to Western Birds. By their aggressive behaviour we felt certain that they were nesting. On 24 July, Brian Johns and Bob Godwin (Canadian Wildlife Service, Saskatoon) were able to verify that Caspian Terns were breeding at Last Mountain Lake when they observed the adults offering food to a chick on the small island adjacent to Perry's Point. This breeding record brings to two (the other is Doré Lake) the number of places in Saskatchewan where Caspian Terns have been found nesting.¹ It extends the list of birds recorded at the north end of Last Mountain Lake to 218 and the number of breeding species to 91.

We thank Dr. J. B. Gollop (Canadian Wildlife Service, Saskatoon) for his interest in our sighting of Caspian Terns at Last Mountain Lake that led to verifying the nesting record.

¹HOUSTON, STUART. 1956. The Caspian Tern in Saskatchewan — with first breeding record. Blue Jay 14:116-117.