

HIGHLIGHTS OF BIRD OBSERVATIONS IN THE CALGARY AREA, ALBERTA, 1971 - 1977

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Sadler and Myres summarized the Alberta bird observations from 1961 - 1970.¹³ Since 1970, there has been a steady increase in the number of birdwatchers in the Calgary area, and as a result, a greater volume of bird observations are being reported each year. Some of the observations have been written up in local bulletins and others are scattered in various journals, but many have not yet been published. The purpose of this article is to catalogue all the rare or unusual sightings made in the Calgary area in the past seven years. The region covered by these observations is an area within a 50-mile radius of the city centre of Calgary. Towns near the borders of the area are Nanton to the south, Gleichen to the east, Olds to the north and Exshaw to the west. (Pinel and Butot, without initials, refer to the authors.)

Yellow-Billed Loon: The first documented sighting for Alberta was a single bird observed on Glenmore Reservoir in Calgary from November 2-5, 1975. It was first seen by P. F. Sherrington¹⁷ and M. S. Lore, and subsequently by D. & P. Allen, Butot, C. Hitchon, Pinel and W. Smith. The second authenticated sighting was made on November 22, 1976, when a bird was found in a roadside ditch near Springbank by G. Sargent, and taken to the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary in Calgary. It was identified and photographed by Pinel, J. R. Riddell, Butot, W. Hall, and P. F. Sherrington. The bird was released on the water at the Sanctuary, where it was last seen

on January 12, 1977.

Arctic Loon: A single bird was seen on the Bow River near Morley on October 8, 1977, by D. & B. Collister. This constitutes the fourth sighting for the area since 1961.

Red-Throated Loon: Three different birds were sighted on October 28, 1973. One was seen at Barrier Lake by P. Scholefield; the other two were observed near Irricana by Butot. Of the latter two birds, one still had vestiges of the red throat patch characteristic of summer plumage.

Double-Crested Cormorant: In 1976, a small colony nested on an island in an unnamed lake southeast of Irricana. On June 12, the adults were seen on the nests by Pinel. This is the first recorded nesting of this species in the area.

Great Egret: A single bird was observed at Frank Lake from June 18-20, 1977, by Butot and J. Skilnick. This is the first sighting for the Calgary area and only the fifth for Alberta.

Snowy Egret: Two birds have been recorded near Irricana. One was seen by D. V. Weseloh and R. Lazerte on May 20, 1971;¹⁸ the other by M. R. Lein on September 2, 1974. A third sighting occurred at Frank Lake on June 19, 1977 — a single bird spotted by Butot and J. Skilnick.

White-Faced Ibis: Two birds were seen at Frank Lake on May 11, 1975, by D. Dickson and J. Skilnick (Salt & Salt 1976).¹⁵ This was the first sighting for the Balgony area.

Trumpeter Swan: An adult and an immature were on the Bow River in Calgary from November 27 to December 22, 1974, after which time only the adult remained until April 13, 1975.² Although the birds were never heard, they were studied and photographed by many local bird-watchers. This was the first reported wintering of this species in Alberta.

European Wigeon: Since 1971, single males have been reported on three occasions for the Calgary area. One was seen near Brant on April 4, 1972, by B. & V. Lang, another on March 18, 1973, in Calgary, by P. F. Sherrington and R. Palindat, and the third on April 12, 1975, by Butot, near Carseland. A pair was observed near Calgary by D. Milliken and C. Dunkley on May 25, 1972.

Greater Scaup: Definite sightings were made of a single female near Cochrane in October, 1974, by S. Johnston, and again on October 8, 1975, by S. Johnston and Butot.³ These birds were seen in the company of Lesser Scaups and further verified by photographs. Somewhat less certain are the following reports: Three females near Calgary on September 22, 1971, by R. Palindat; five males near Namaka on April 3, 1976, by Butot, and a pair near Calgary on June 5, 1976, by A. & D. Stiles.

Oldsquaw: A single bird was seen on the Bow River in Calgary from December 30, 1973, to January 5, 1974, by I. Halladay, B. & V. Lang, Pinel, J. Price and C. Robinson. Further observations include a female in Calgary on October 20, 1974, by R. Clarke, and two females or immatures near Carseland on November 14, 1976, by Butot.

Black Scoter: A possible sighting of one male and two females was reported in Calgary on October 24, 1971, by R. Palindat. The first documented sighting for Alberta was

of two birds photographed near Mile 65 miles southeast of Calgary, on November 12, 1976, by Butot.⁵

Virginia Rail: A slightly injured immature bird was found in Calgary on September 28, 1972, by Pinel and C. Robinson. After a brief recovery period, the bird was released. This is the first record for the area.

Western Sandpiper: The first documented sightings — one and two birds (one collected) — for Alberta occurred near Shepard on August 17, 17, and 18, 1972, as reported by Palindat et al.⁹ Prior to this, a single bird was observed near Strathmore on May 1, 1971, by T. S. & I. Sadler. One was also photographed by Butot near Delacour on July 18, 1976.⁷

Curlew Sandpiper: The first verified record for Alberta was a single bird photographed at Frank Lake on October 9, 1975, by Butot.⁶

Buff-Breasted Sandpiper: Four were seen near Calgary on May 12, 1972, by H. & L. Pinel and nine were reported from Frank Lake on August 27, 1972, by V. & B. Lang.

Black-Necked Stilt: A single bird was observed near Irricana on May 2, 1972, by D. V. Weseloh, C. D. Bird, V. Hall, K. Hodges and W. G. McKay. This was the second sighting for the Calgary area.

Parasitic Jaeger: Definite sightings, all of single birds during August and September are summarized as follows: August 24, 1971, at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary, by D. V. Weseloh; August 25, 1971, at Glenmore Reservoir, Calgary, by R. Palindat; September 22, 1973, at Frank Lake by C. D. Bird; September 22, 1973, at Glenmore Reservoir by B. & V. Lang and C. Robinson; September 19, 20, 21, and 24, 1977, at Frank Lake by Butot and H. & L. Wolowski. The only previous record for the Calgary area was of two birds reported by T.



Caspian tern

Fred W. Lahrman

Sadler on September 24, 1969.¹³

Glaucous Gull: Calgary's first record was of a 2nd year bird observed from March 28 to April 12, 1972, as reported by Weseloh and Owens.¹⁹ Subsequent observations include a first winter bird at Calgary from October 31 to November 9, 1972, by B. & V. Lang, R. Palindat, Pinel, and W. Smith; a 2nd-year bird at Eagle Lake on April 25, 1974, by Pinel and C. Robinson; and a 2nd-year bird at Calgary on November 5-7, 1975, by Pinel.

Glaucous-Winged Gull: An adult bird, observed at Balgony by Weseloh and Lang in 1972 is the first record of this

species in the area.²⁰

Thayer's Gull: Weseloh and Lang reported the second Alberta specimen taken at Balgony on May 19, 1972.²⁰

Black-Legged Kittiwake: On November 16, 1976, Pinel and Riddell identified an immature Black-legged Kittiwake in Calgary.¹¹ This bird represents the first authenticated sighting for Alberta.

Sabine's Gull: An adult bird was observed at Frank Lake by members of the Federation of Alberta Naturalists on October 1, 1972. Another adult was spotted on September 4, 1977, at Frank Lake by C. & R. Hitchon. These are the only sightings for the Calgary area.

Caspian Tern: The only report for the area is an adult bird observed by I. Halladay along the Bow River near Carseland on August 26, 1973.

Band-Tailed Pigeon: The first records of this species for Calgary were of single birds seen at the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary: one on May 28, 1975, by W. Munro, the other on May 3, 1976, by G. Sieb.

Black-Billed Cuckoo: A nest containing two eggs was found by Kondla on July 13, 1974, near Standard.⁸ This is the first nesting record for the Calgary area.

Anna's Hummingbird: An immature male was seen by Pinel and Riddell on October 6, 1976, in Calgary.¹² It was tape-recorded and photographed on October 7 and last seen on October 31. This observation represents the first report of this species for Alberta. Another immature male was observed by B. deWolff from October 13 to November 5, 1977, in Calgary.

Lewis' Woodpecker: An adult was observed by R. Clarke west of Longview on May 8, 1971, and another adult was seen at the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary in Calgary on May 15, 1975, by J. R. Riddell and Pinel.

Steller's Jay: The second observation for the area was made by W. J. and E. M. Gregg on January 18, 1976, when they saw a single bird in the Kananaskis Valley near Evans Thomas Creek.

Eastern Bluebird: Two male birds were observed in southwest Calgary by W. G. McKay and Butot on various days from May 28 to June 12, 1977. The birds were photographed and their songs recorded. These sightings are the first verified records for Alberta. A single male was reported from Millarville by Mrs. J. MacKay from June 8-16, 1977, and August 29, 1977.¹⁶

Purple Martin: The first successful nesting attempted by this species in

Calgary was reported by W. C. MacKay who saw a pair of birds feeding a juvenile near a nest box in southeast Calgary on August 14, 1976.

Black-Throated Blue Warbler: Salt 1973, states that there are five specimen records for Alberta, but no sight records despite this species' distinctive appearance.¹⁴ Since his publication, there are two sight records for Calgary, both of males. The first was recorded by A. Mazurek on September 24, 1973; W. Amos reported the other sighting on October 13 and 14, 1975.

Chestnut-Sided Warbler: The first observation for the area was of a male seen by L. Butot in Calgary on June 4, 1974. Since then, a second Calgary sighting occurred when J. Clarke saw a male on July 3, 1977.

Yellow-Breasted Chat: On June 21, 1974, a single bird was recorded at Bow Valley Provincial Park near Seebe by Pinel, K. Van Tighem, and C. Wershler. This is the westernmost sighting for Alberta and only the third observation of this bird in the area.

House Finch: A male was observed and photographed by Butot from March 10 to April 21, 1973.¹ Subsequent sightings include a male seen from September 29 to October 14, 1973, by Butot, and a female observed by W. Amos, Butot, and R. Jones from April 28 to May 8, 1975. All observations were made in Calgary. Sadler and Myres report a bird seen at Seebe in June, 1966, by M. Powell, the only previous sighting for the area.¹³

Sharp-Tailed Sparrow: During July 1976, three sightings were reported from the Priddis area. J. Duncan and K. St. Clair saw a bird on July 3, and Butot and W. Hall observed an adult on July 24 and 25.

Lark Sparrow: Two birds were observed near Carseland by Pinel on May 30, 1976. This is the third report for the

area, and the only one in recent years.

Golden-Crowned Sparrow: The first record for the area was a bird observed by Pinel and C. J. Robinson on October 12 and 13, 1972, at Calgary.¹⁰ Since then, there have been two other sightings, an adult bird seen in Calgary on September 9, 1973, by R. A. O'Keefe, and one seen near Cochrane on September 19, 1975, by S. Johnston.

Smith's Longspur: An individual bird was observed on April 6, 1971, west of Strathmore by I. Sadler. This is the second observation for the Calgary area.

Additional observations for the 1971-1977 period worth mentioning are: Wood Duck (8 birds/7 dates), Harlequin Duck (20/13), Turkey Vulture (5/5), Gyrfalcon (11/11), Peregrine Falcon (11/11), Piping Plover (7/5)⁷, American Golden Plover (15/3), Ruddy Turnstone (9/6)⁷, Red Knot (8/3), White-rumped Sandpiper (7/3)⁷, Dunlin (13/10)⁷, Hudsonian Godwit (25/6)⁴, Mew Gull (14/12), Black-billed Cuckoo (6/8), Winter Wren (9/8), Canada Warbler (6/5), Black-headed Grosbeak (3/3), Brewer's Sparrow (4/5), and Swamp Sparrow (8/7).

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⁹PALINDAT, R., V. LANG, and D. V. WESELOH. 1973. First authenticated report of the Western Sandpiper for Alberta. *Canadian Field Nat.* 87(3):315-316.

¹⁰PINEL, H. W., and C. J. ROBINSON. 1973. First report of a Golden-crowned Sparrow at Calgary, Alberta. *Blue Jay* 31(1):57-58.

¹¹PINEL, H. W., and J. R. RIDDELL. 1977. First record of Black-legged Kittiwake for Alberta. *Blue Jay* 35(2):89.

¹²PINEL, H. W., and J. R. RIDDELL. 1977. First record of Anna's Hummingbird for Alberta. *Canadian Field Nat.* 91(4):394.

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¹⁴SALT, W. R. 1973. Alberta vireos and wood warblers. Provincial Museum of Alberta. Pub. No. 3 141 pp.

¹⁵SALT, W. R., and J. R. SALT. 1976. Birds of Alberta. Hurtig Publishers, Edmonton. 498 pp.

¹⁶SALT, W. R. 1978. Another record of the Eastern Bluebird in Alberta. *Calgary Field Nat.* 9(7):194.

¹⁷SHERRINGTON, P. F. 1976. Sightings of a Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*) on Glenmore Reservoir. *Calgary Field Nat.* 7(8):220-222.

¹⁸WESELOH, D. V., and R. LAZERTE. 1972. Sight record of a Snowy Egret near Calgary, Alberta. *Blue Jay* 30(1):29

¹⁹WESELOH, D. V., and R. A. OWENS. 1973. Observations on a Glaucous Gull at Calgary, Alberta. *Blue Jay* 31(4):94-96.

²⁰WESELOH, D. V., and V. LANG. 1973. Glaucous-winged and Thayer's Gulls at Calgary, Alberta. *Blue Jay* 31(4):230-232.

¹BUTOT, R. 1973. First verified report of a House Finch in Calgary. *Calgary Field Nat.* 5(1):10-11.

²BUTOT, R. 1975. Trumpeter Swan winters in Calgary. *Calgary Field Nat.* 6(9):303.

³BUTOT, R. 1976. Greater Scaup: Its history in the Calgary area 1966-1976. *Calgary Field Nat.* 8(1):15-16.

⁴BUTOT, R. 1976. Hudsonian Godwit: Its history in the Calgary area 1965-1976. *Calgary Field Nat.* 8(1):16-17.

⁵BUTOT, R. 1977. First substantiated record of the Black Scoter in Alberta. *Calgary Field Nat.* 8(8):201.

⁶BUTOT, R. 1977. Rare Curlew Sandpiper sighting in Alberta — October 9, 1975. *Calgary Field Nat.* 8(8):204-206.