

NORTHERN WHEATEARS SIGHTED IN DUCK MOUNTAIN PROVINCIAL PARK, MANITOBA

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On 9 September 1986 in an abandoned gravel pit 4 miles west of Childs Lake in Duck Mountain Provincial Park, Manitoba, two unusual birds were sighted. The birds looked like they were searching for insects as they were poking around in the gravel and flitting from rock to rock. At a distance of 50 feet from the birds they could be seen quite well without binoculars; they were also studied with 8x binoculars.

The two birds were thrush-like both in bill and body shape and in general size and stance. In colour, they were soft grey on their dorsal surface with darker wings, black legs and bill and white underparts with no streaks or barring. Their most

distinctive feature, however, was a black line from the bill through the eye. From their size, shape, behavior and especially coloration, I concluded that they were Northern Wheatears. The only other birds in this area that have grey, black and white plumage are: Loggerhead and Northern shrikes, Gray Jay, Dark-eyed Junco, and Black-capped Chickadee. The two birds I saw definitely were not any of these species.

At first I was not overly surprised to see wheatears here because only a month earlier I had seen Northern Wheatears while I was working in the northern Yukon. Since it was autumn, I assumed that these arctic birds must be migrating.



When I found out that wheatears do not usually migrate through this part of the country I realized the significance of this observation.

According to Robert Kreba, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, there are no Saskatchewan records of Northern Wheatear. In Manitoba there are three published sightings of wheatears at Churchill, all for fall 1968;¹ the only record of a Northern Wheatear south of Churchill is one sighted at Oak Hammock Marsh on 14 April 1982 by L. Gesell, R. Maksymchuk, and K. Stadnek.²

Acknowledgements

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¹ JEHL, J.R., Jr. and B.A. SMITH 1970. Birds of the Churchill region, Manitoba. Special Publ. No. 1, Man. Mus. of Man and Nature, Winnipeg.

² WEDGWOOD, J. 1982. Prairie Provinces Region. [Spring migration -1982]. *American Birds* 36(5):864-866.

BOREAL CHICKADEES FEEDING WITH THREE-TOED WOODPECKERS

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On 30 November 1987 I went south of Somme to photograph Three-toed Woodpeckers in a bluff of flooded spruce trees at a Beaver dam. I soon found five Three-toed Woodpeckers (Northern Three-toed Woodpeckers) chipping off the spruce bark and feeding on insect larvae.

There were two Boreal Chickadees feeding among the piles of scaly bark on the snow at the bottom of the spruce trees. One bird frequently landed on the tree trunks and picked in the same places as the woodpeckers had. It stayed just a few inches below and fed on the small par-

ticles of insect larvae that were missed by the larger bird. As the woodpecker flew to another tree the chickadee followed it and continued feeding as before.

I returned to the same area of flooded spruce on 18 December and saw a Boreal Chickadee following the Three-toed Woodpeckers and feeding right behind them. I am sure that this was the same individual bird that I had seen in November who has developed this unique habit of feeding with the woodpeckers in a strange dependent relationship.