

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER IN REGINA

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Prothonotary Warbler

Carol Bjorklund

On 9 May 1988 at approximately 9:20 a.m. in the hedge south of the Wascana Park lookout opposite Willow Island, I saw through my binoculars the back view of a warbler-size yellow bird with bluish-gray wings blending in with the tail. When the bird moved giving me a front view, I saw no markings but a bird with a yellow head, which was a deeper yellow than the body. It had a very dark eye. The morning was sunny with good lighting for viewing the bird. My field guide, *Birds of North America* (Robbins, Bruun, Zim and others), which I carried, confirmed to me that this was a male Prothonotary Warbler, recorded as having a golden-yellow head and plain blue-gray wings. When other birders arrived later that morning to see the Prothonotary, they were unable to see him.

After hoping and praying that the Prothonotary Warbler would still be there so others could see him, I saw him the next day at 9:25 a.m. about 10 feet south from where he had been the previous day. By telephone I contacted Carol Bjorklund, who alerted other birders. When I returned to the lookout area, Carol had already photographed the bird. A number of us viewed him in the dull morning light, as he moved south in the upper part of the hedge, which had only begun to leaf, providing a good view from many angles. I could now see the white under his tail, which I had previously not noticed. There was some conversation among the birders, but this did not seem to disturb him. Once the Prothonotary even sang his repetitious song, a series of loud ringing "zweet" notes as noted on

page 354 of *The National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America* (Second Edition 1987, Scott).

Other birders who saw the Prothonotary on 10 May included Paule Hjertaas, Paule's father Dr. Jean Brochu of Quebec City, Karen and Trevor Herriot, Frank Brazier, Ron Myers and Tom Riffel. Trevor Herriot had views of the warbler from as close as 10 feet, near the shore among willows and caraganas, at 12:30 p.m. when it also sang, and at 6:00 p.m. At 8:45 p.m. he discovered it settled for the night with its bill tucked into its back feathers in a willow near the water just south of the lookout. Further out on the same branch overhanging the water, a Northern Waterthrush was also roosting. That evening others who saw him bedded for the night were Carol Bjorklund, Lauren Mang, Lucille Bradatsch, Phyllis Ilsley and Bill Dowhanuik. Observations that day ceased at 9:05 p.m.

There were sightings and sounds of Prothonotary until 18 May in the general area. Trevor Herriot in his notes recorded that on 11 May at 7:15 a.m. he saw the warbler and heard him sing. He was also seen by Paul Chytyk early in the morning. On 16 May at 7:00 a.m. He heard the Prothonotary singing on an overhanging branch, from Willow Island and located him with his telescope. He was also seen and heard by Robert Kreba the same morning. Kreba also heard him sing the morning of 18 May but did not see him.

Margaret Belcher's *Birds of Regina*, Revised Edition, lists two previous unconfirmed reports of the Prothonotary Warbler: on 17 May 1969 by Dr. B. Bedard and G. Bobbitt, and on 13 September 1978 by R. Kreba. The sighting from 9 May to the song on 18 May 1988 is substantiated by a photograph making it the first confirmed record of the Prothonotary Warbler for Regina and Saskatchewan.



American Goldfinch nest

G.L. Hoyle