

FIRST VERIFIED RECORD OF WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKER FOR ALBERTA

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On 23 June 1992, Beverley Lane found a bird on the ground beside a medical lab building at 2480-39 Avenue Northeast in Calgary. The bird had apparently flown into the dark, reflective, mirror windows of the building and killed itself. Bev tentatively identified the bird as a female Williamson's Sapsucker. Because of this identification, and the fact that the bird had only recently died and was in fresh condition, Bev took the specimen to the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary. Staff at the sanctuary confirmed the identification and froze the specimen.

The specimen has been deposited in the Natural History Section at the Provincial Museum of Alberta in Edmonton, where it is catalogued as #93.6.1. All the diagnostic features of a female Williamson's Sapsucker are readily observable — head is brown; back, wings and sides are barred with dark brownish-black and white; rump is white; belly has a narrow yellow patch; and the breast has a black patch. The exposed culmen measured 21 mm and the wing chord 134.7 mm.

Prior to this record, the Williamson's Sapsucker was considered hypothetical for Alberta based on two sight records. Both observations were from Waterton Lakes National Park, a logical place in Alberta for occurrences of this southwestern species. C. H. Young is said to have seen one on 17 May 1922, and a male became "trapped" in a garage

in Waterton and was observed at very close range on 11 April 1967.^{4,5} In Saskatchewan there have also been a few records of this species. A specimen was collected on 30 May 1965 in Moose Mountain Provincial Park, and there is a sight record from Saskatoon on 23 August 1977.³

In North America, the Williamson's Sapsucker breeds locally from extreme southern interior British Columbia south in the Cascades, Sierra Nevada and Rockies to southern California, central Arizona and southern New Mexico.¹ It winters adjacent to its breeding range at lower elevations south to Texas and central Mexico. Williamson's Sapsucker had also been recorded as accidental east of its breeding range with reports from southern Saskatchewan, Oklahoma and west-central Texas. There are also sightings from Minnesota, South Dakota, Kansas and east-central Texas.

In Canada, the breeding distribution of Williamson's Sapsucker is restricted to extreme southern British Columbia, where two subspecies are recognized.³ The nominate subspecies, *thyroideus*, breeds in the Okanagan region of British Columbia east to Midway. Subspecies *nataliae* breeds in the East Kootenays of British Columbia, and may no longer occur in that province with the last breeding record at Cranbrook in 1938, and the most recent record in July 1947 at Cranbrook.²

1. AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION. 1983. Check-list of North American birds, 6th Edition. Allen Press. Lawrence, Kansas. 877 pp.
2. CAMPBELL, R.W., N.K. DAWE, I. MCTAGGART-COWAN, J.M. COOPER, G.W. KAISER and M.C.E. MCNALL. 1990. The birds of British Columbia. Volume II: Nonpasserines, diurnal birds of prey through woodpeckers. Royal British Columbia Museum. Victoria. 636 pp.
3. GODFREY, W.E. 1986. The birds of Canada. Revised edition. National Museum of Canada. 595 pp.
4. SADLER, T.S. and M.T. MYRES. 1976. Alberta birds 1961-1970. Occ. Paper No. 1. Natural History Section, Provincial Museum of Alberta, Edmonton. 314 pp.
5. SEEL, K.E. 1969. An annotated list of the avifauna of Waterton Lakes National Park. Nat. and Hist. Parks Branch, Dept. of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Park files, Waterton. 281 pp.

THE URBAN ROCK WREN

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I usually do a lot of bird-watching in Saskatoon during the last two weeks of August each year, as this is when the fall warbler migration peaks. It was one of these warbler-watching days, 20 August 1991, which provided me with an unusual "birding" experience.

It was high noon and blazing hot when I returned home after a short but exhausting walk through Cosmopolitan Park, along the east bank of the South Saskatchewan River. Although the park is just a short distance from where I live, the heat made the outing simply unbearable. However, after finding many species of migratory songbirds, I felt well rewarded for my effort.

After eagerly gulping down a litre of iced tea, I decided to step outside onto my balcony, which overlooks the backyard from an elevation of approximately 4 m. Its strategic loca-

tion offers an excellent vantage point for spotting sneaky birds moving through the yard. The sun was blazing off the east-facing deck, making the surface temperature resemble that of hot coals! There did not seem to be much bird activity in the yard which was unusual for that time of year. However, I soon noticed some movement to my left and there, hanging upside down from the stucco wall of my neighbour's house, was a rather content looking Rock Wren.

The bird soon flew onto the roof of the house and hopped into the eaves trough where I could hear it clawing and scratching as it explored the length of it. Upon reaching the end, it climbed over the edge of the trough and landed on the side of the house again. The bird repeated this action several times as I stood less than 4 m away, quite amused, needless to say.