

BLACK-THROATED SPARROW AT OLDS, ALBERTA

THELMA LISSEL, RR3, Site 7, Box 23, Olds, Alberta. T4H 1P4

Spring 1994 brought calm, warm weather to central Alberta; ideal conditions for migrating birds. We had enlarged our bird feeder the previous fall to accommodate the large numbers of winter birds expected. Tree Sparrows appeared on 10 April, Song and Vesper Sparrows on 25 April, White-crowned Sparrows on 10 May, Clay-coloured Sparrows on 15 May, Chipping Sparrows on 19 May and White-throated Sparrows on 5 June.

At 1900 hours on 28 May 1994 we observed an unusual bird feeding with the goldfinches on the feeder outside our kitchen window. Its bold black-and-white facial pattern and distinctive black bib left no doubt as to its identity — a Black-throated Sparrow far from its southwestern United States haunts.

The feeder contained a mixture of red millet, niger thistle and black sunflower seeds. The sunflower seeds and the millet appeared to be

preferred by the Black-throated Sparrow. It fed two to three minutes at a time and returned to the tray four times that evening. It reappeared the following morning at 0530 hours. The bird fed periodically all day, allowing extensive observation and the acquisition of photographic documentation. The Black-throated Sparrow was not aggressive and seemed to go about the feeding tray unnoticed by the other birds.

The Black-throated Sparrow appeared again at the feeder at 0600 hours on 31 May. However it, along with American Goldfinches and a Chipping Sparrow, was immediately driven from the feeder by a Song Sparrow and did not return. It was seen briefly for the last time on 1 June atop a small spruce tree.

Editor's Note: This would appear to be the first documented record of the Black-throated Sparrow in Alberta.



Black-throated Sparrow

Thelma Lissel