

# ADDITIONS TO THE BIRD LIST OF MANITOBA (1991-1996)

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*(Editor's Note: After review it was decided to add a number of notes to this article. These are given in parentheses and italics.)*

Reports on additions to the bird list of Manitoba, covering the periods 1975-1984 and 1985-1990, have previously appeared in the *Blue Jay*.<sup>9,10</sup> As another six-year period has passed, it is perhaps timely to review the species added since 1990. Except where noted, records herein were reviewed by the Manitoba Ornithological Records Committee (MORC) (H.W.R. Copland, Chair; R.F. Koes, R.W. Nero, and P. Taylor). Confirmed records (indicated by an asterisk) are those for which a specimen, photograph, or sound recording exists, or there are well-documented sight records by two or more competent observers. Unconfirmed sightings were convincingly documented by single, experienced observers. All other sightings were considered hypothetical.

**White Ibis\*** An adult was present from 8 to 11 May 1991 near the town of Shoal Lake, where it frequented a number of sloughs on the Tony and Leonard Dutkywich farm. Several of the observers wrote convincing reports (MORC files), while Cliff Findlay described the occurrence in the *Blue Jay*.<sup>6</sup> Although this species has wandered to eastern Canada on a number of occasions, this sighting represents the first for the prairie provinces. Minnesota's first White Ibis, also an adult, was observed at Prairie Island, Winona County, on 13 May 1995.<sup>19</sup> White Ibises have also

been observed, albeit very rarely, in most of the other upper midwestern states, including North and South Dakota.<sup>5</sup> Most such observations involve wandering immatures in summer and fall. (*The range of the White Ibis typically runs from the southern United States to Peru and Venezuela.*)

**Mute Swan\*** The status of the Mute Swan in Manitoba was described in 1991.<sup>10</sup> In question at the time was not the presence, but the origin, of birds that had been seen in the wild. A sighting made on 21 May 1994 at Springer Lake in Nopiming Provincial Park has been accepted as the first involving probably a "wild" bird. Four experienced birders were engaged in a "Big Day" effort (a Big Day is an attempt by a birdwatcher to see as many species of birds as possible in a 24-hour period) when they first heard the noisy wing beats, then saw a Mute Swan fly by at close range.<sup>12</sup> Particular care was taken to look for leg bands or any other indication that the bird might have escaped captivity, but none was seen. Indeed, the swan flew so strongly, at such a remote location, that it was believed to be wild. It may have originated in the Great Lakes region, where a feral population exists. (*The Mute Swan is a native of Eurasia and breeds in a wild or semi-wild state in B.C., southern Ontario, plus several Great Lakes and eastern seaboard states.*)

**White-tailed Kite** White-tailed Kites, which nest no closer to Manitoba than southern Texas and Washington



*Least Tern*

*Dennis Fast*

state, are known to wander widely: north to Minnesota and the Dakotas, and east to Massachusetts and New York.<sup>5</sup> In light of this, a report by Wally Jansen of a bird seen flying along Highway 6 near Ashern on 16 April 1995 seems plausible. Unfortunately, the bird was seen only briefly, from a moving vehicle, and the descriptions provided were not conclusive (MORC). (*The White-tailed Kite ranges along the coasts of Texas and California-Washington and south through much of South America.*)

**Least Tern\*** Getting up early on 1 June 1992 paid off handsomely for Victor Reimer, when he spotted an adult Least Tern at a gravel pit behind his home near Steinbach. Only his father Jim and fellow birder Dennis Fast arrived early enough to see this diminutive tern; by 8 a.m. it had departed and was not seen again. Fortunately, by this time, both Victor and Dennis had thoroughly documented the occurrence on film. A fine photograph appeared in *American Birds* 46(5):1147. Perhaps surprisingly, this was the first sighting in the province, as the species breeds along the Mississippi-Missouri river system as far north as North Dakota.<sup>18</sup> Smith (1996) lists nine sight-

ings and one photographic record of Least Tern for Saskatchewan.<sup>4</sup> (*The Least, Little and Saunders's Terns look very similar. While the most logical choice of species is the Least Tern as it breeds from North Dakota south, the other two species are technically possible. The Little Tern breeds from Britain to New Zealand and Saunders's Tern ranges from western Africa, Arabia to eastern India. See the following article.*)

**White-winged Tern\*** Much farther away from home than the Least Tern was a White-winged Tern which appeared in the viewfinder of Arnet Sheppard's video camera, as he was recording the bird life of Cape Merry, Churchill, on 24 June 1995.<sup>14</sup> Realizing the rarity of the occurrence, Mr. Sheppard had the presence of mind to keep the videotape rolling and he obtained brief, but diagnostic, footage. Three days later, unaware of the initial sighting, two Dutch researchers, J. van Gils and I. Tieleman, informed Joseph Jehl, Jr. that they had seen a "black" tern at Twin Lakes, about 25 km to the southeast of Cape Merry. Upon investigating the report the same evening, Jehl and S. Yaeger found the White-winged Tern in and near an Arctic

Tern colony at West Twin Lake. Pertinent field marks were noted, photographs were taken, and the interactions between both tern species were studied.<sup>8</sup> Although numerous visits to the area were made by different parties over the next week-and-a-half, the bird did not reappear. Then on 13 and 14 July, the White-winged Tern was seen again at Churchill by T. and B. Holcombe and B. Chartier; MORC did not receive details on these most recent sightings.<sup>14</sup>

The White-winged Tern is a Eurasian species, which has been reported with increasing frequency in northeastern North America in recent years. The Churchill bird was the first reported for the prairie provinces. (*The White-winged Tern nests from central Europe to Mongolia and winters in Africa and Australasia. This species of tern has been recorded in many North American locations.*)

**White-winged Dove\*** The presence of a White-winged Dove in Thompson from 13 August to 5 September 1995 has been documented in detail.<sup>11,15</sup> Another first for the prairie provinces, the dove was captured on 5 September to prevent it from eventually succumbing to the inevitable bitter cold of a northern Manitoban winter. The dove presently makes its home in the Tropical House of the Winnipeg Zoo. (*The White-winged Dove normally ranges along the U.S.-Mexico border and south. Several have been recorded in Canada, although it is possible this is an escaped cage bird.*)

**Tufted Titmouse** The Tufted Titmouse, normally a sedentary species, was believed to be undergoing one of its rare expansion episodes in eastern Canada in the fall of 1995.<sup>20</sup> Could this phenomenon account for

the sighting of one in Winnipeg on 11 November 1995 by D. Phillips? The report came to light only at a much later date and MORC is not aware of the details. This was the third hypothetical occurrence in the province.<sup>16</sup> (*The Tufted Titmouse inhabits much of the eastern U.S. and is a scarce permanent resident in southern Ontario.*)

**Worm-eating Warbler\*** Birding was slow during the cold and miserable spring of 1996, but a flurry of activity in late May changed all that and kept birders hopping. On 20 May Adolf Ens, Rob Nickel and Ron Boese studied a Worm-eating Warbler at close range during a "fall out" of numerous passerines at Delta, on the south shore of Lake Manitoba. The warbler remained in the area until at least 27 May and during the intervening period it was seen by virtually all who looked for it. Manitoba's first occurrence was well-documented on film, videotape and paper.<sup>2</sup> (See colour insert for an example of this species.)

A secondhand report of a bird at Lundar, on 3 September 1996, was not supported by documentation.<sup>3</sup> There is one confirmed record of the species for Saskatchewan.<sup>7</sup> (*The Worm-eating Warbler occurs throughout much of eastern U.S. Some states have had dramatic declines which have stabilized or reversed in recent years. Overall, during the last 30 years it has shown a slight increase.*)

**Kentucky Warbler\*** Bob Shettler discovered an adult in his wooded backyard along the banks of the Assiniboine River just west of Winnipeg on 18 September 1994.<sup>13</sup> Many birders converged on the area soon afterwards, but only a lucky few managed to see the warbler.



*Kentucky Warbler*

Dennis Fast

Coincidentally, four days earlier a possible sighting had been made in Winnipeg, but this bird was not seen well enough or long enough for positive identification.<sup>13</sup>

A reported sighting at Delta on 25 May 1958 was not supported by any details, nor was one at Lundar on 27 August 1996.<sup>3,17</sup>

One day after the discovery of the Delta Worm-eating Warbler, Hélène Gauthier, a visitor from Québec, noticed a Kentucky Warbler in an Altona backyard. Later that day (21 May) several Altona birders confirmed the report and by dawn on the 22nd other birders started to arrive. Although the bird was very elusive, skulking under bushes and in tall grass, most managed a few good looks. Dennis Fast obtained diagnostic photographs.<sup>2</sup> (*The Kentucky has a range similar to that of the Worm-eating Warbler.*)

MORC continues to solicit — indeed, encourage — your contributions detailing sightings of rare birds. We would be particularly grateful for additional accounts that might support some of the unconfirmed or hy-

pothetical records mentioned above, or any details on Manitoban sightings of the Spotted Towhee or Bullock's Oriole. (These two species (re)gained species' status in 1995.)<sup>1</sup>

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“The early bird gets the worm — A nod’s as good as a wink to a blind horse — Every dog has his day in this world — He drank like a fish — This country is going to the dogs — It’s raining cats and dogs — If a bear comes after you, Sam, you must be up and doing or it’s a gone goose for you.” These are some of the “animal-oriented” expressions among the many sayings attributed to a fictional Sam Slick, a Yankee clockmaker, that have become part of our language. They were written by Thomas Chandler Haliburton, a Nova Scotia judge and humorous novelist.