

# YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO SIGHTING IN REGINA

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About 9:00 a.m. on 28 May 1987, Bob Luterbach telephoned me to announce that he had just seen a Yellow-billed Cuckoo in Goose Hill Park (north of Wascana Lake and south of Quinn Drive, east of Broad Street). I went at once and found Bob, Robert Kreba and Chris Adam all searching, but we did not find the bird.

About five weeks later, on 6 July 1987, on an overcast day, I was walking west from the Willow Island parking lot on the south side of an extensive grassed area. When I reached a point just past the end of a southern boundary hedge, I noticed a long-tailed grayish bird flying rapidly westward on the north side of the grassed area, 60 m away. It was low, at eye level, so I had a side view but could see at once that it was a cuckoo. When it reached the trees at the west end of the grass, it swung to the left without altering its height above the ground, made a wide circle (about 20 m radius) and then returned over its previous route. When it was a short distance past where I stood watching it, the bird changed course, flying southeasterly a short distance then it swooped upwards into a densely leaved poplar close to the parking lot. As it did so, I saw the extensive rufous in the wings. I was 140 m from the tree which was approximately 10.5 m high.

According to Lowery, the Yellow-billed Cuckoo is a common summer resident known by "the yellow mandible, the rufous inner margins of the

wing feathers, and the extensive white tips on the feathers of the long tail ... [which] immediately distinguishes this species from the Black-billed Cuckoo."<sup>1</sup> In the account of the latter he states that it has no rufous in the wings.<sup>2</sup>

Peterson states: "dull brown above and whitish below; further distinguished by the presence of rufous in the wings."<sup>2</sup> Later he again refers to "rufous in the wings" and notes that the Black-billed Cuckoo has no rufous in the wings.<sup>3</sup>

I saw my first Yellow-billed Cuckoo in Tennessee when my late wife, Marjie, and I were driving to Florida. We found the species to be relatively common and, although it nests about 4.5 m from the ground, I thought of it as a treetop bird. Occasionally, we witnessed the upward swoop to the treetop, rufous in the wings prominent, just as in the Regina bird.

I have no doubt of the identification of the bird I saw on 6 July 1987: a Yellow-billed Cuckoo. I recently spoke to Bob Luterbach on the telephone and learned that he had seen it very briefly, so my sighting supports his report.

As I neither shot, photographed nor taped the bird, I offer the sighting as an addition to the Hypothetical List of Saskatchewan Birds.

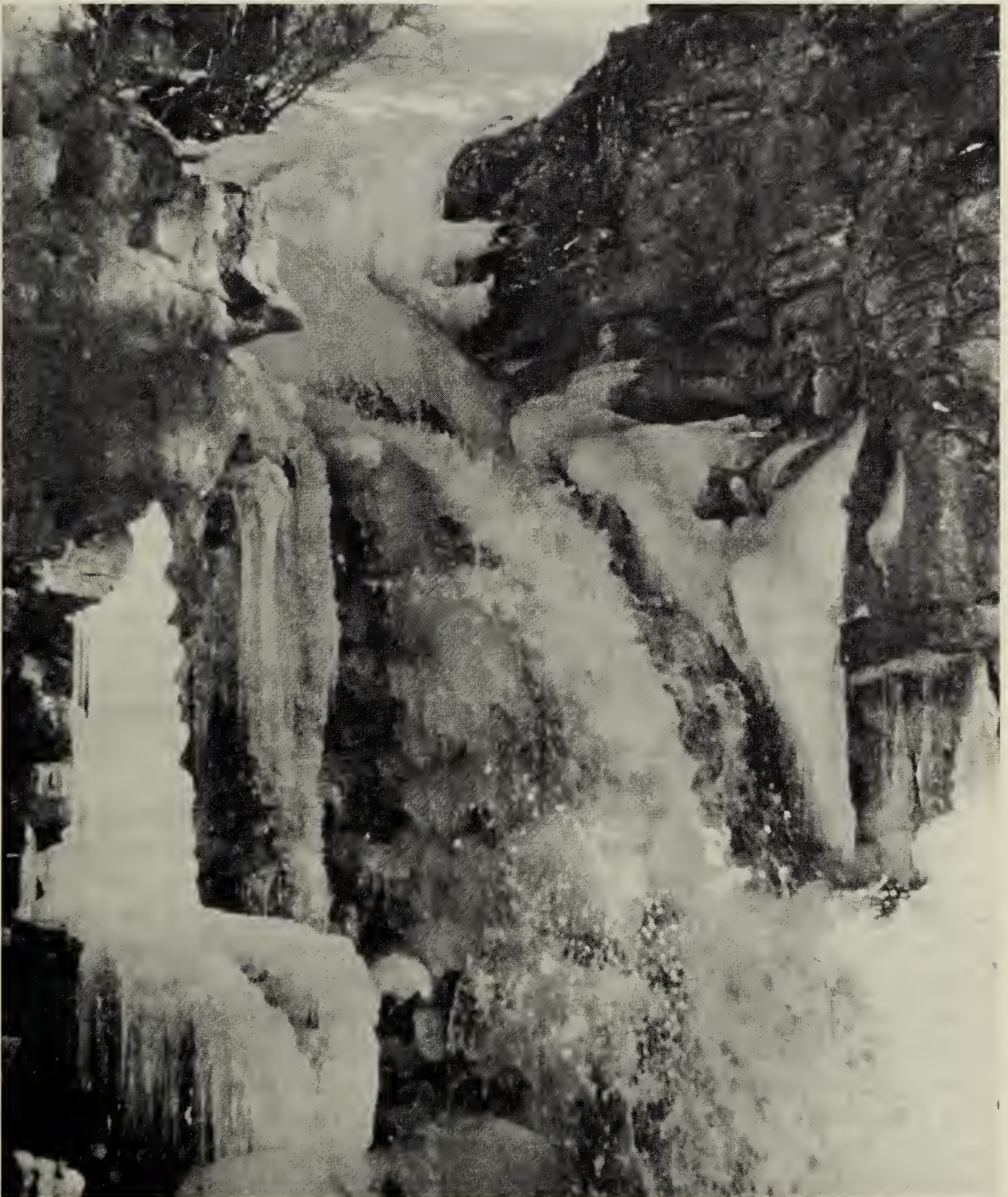
I firmly believe that additions to the Hypothetical List should be "first

person" accounts, and should be published in the *Blue Jay*, as relatively few members receive *American Birds*. Such would allow each member to scrutinize the account and learn how the identification was made.

I do not know why I did not write up the sighting in 1987. About that time I was involved in endless details of a projected trip to Kenya, so I expect I was distracted.

I want to thank Bob Ewart, of Wasicana Centre Authority, for providing me with a plan of the grassed area with precise measurements.

1. LOWERY, G.H. JR. 1955. Louisiana birds. Louisiana State Univ. Press, Baton Rouge.
2. PETERSON, R.T. 1947. A field guide to the birds. Houghton Mifflin, Boston. 342 pp.
3. ——. 1980. A field guide to the birds east of the Rockies. Houghton Mifflin, Boston. 342 pp.



Northern winter scene.

J.B. Gollop