

Second Report of the Alberta Bird Record Committee

Andrew Slater

Since publication of the first report of the Alberta Bird Record Committee (hereafter the committee), the committee held another meeting in Red Deer. At this meeting, the process of adjudication was finally established. The committee also relaxed the number of votes necessary to accept a record to cope with turnover in the makeup of the committee. The codes are now as follows.

Accepted, Code 1. Records supported by material evidence, i.e. specimens, identifiable body parts, identifiable photographs or sound recordings (whose origin from within the borders of Alberta is not in doubt) that are accompanied by written reports of the circumstances of the observation.

Accepted, Code 2. Sight records (without supporting material evidence) by multiple independent observers that are supported by written descriptions that leave no doubt as to the species identity, or multiple occurrences reported on separate occasions by single observers. A Code 1 or Code 2 sighting must receive four favourable votes and no more than one dissenting vote, to be accepted.

Accepted, Code 3. Sight records by single observers that are supported by written descriptions which leave no doubt as to species identity, and which receive five favourable votes and no dissenting vote. A Code 3 is the minimum necessary for inclusion in the official Provincial List.

Accepted, Code 4. Sight records by single observers that receive four favourable votes and no more than one dissenting vote. For record adjudication purposes such a record is acceptable, but it does not pass the more stringent requirements for inclusion in the official Provincial List. A Code 3 or 4 species can easily be upgraded to Code 1 or 2 when (or if) additional observations are made of that species.

Insufficiently documented. Records supported by material evidence or written descriptions that are not detailed enough to eliminate all other possibilities, or to support conclusively the identification of the species as presented. Placement in this category should in no way be interpreted as a reflection on the quality of the documentation, but should be looked upon as an encouragement to substantiate occurrence of the species in the province.

Error in identification. Records submitted for adjudication that are not supported by the documentation, or that describe another species from that suggested.

Questionable origin. Records that concern species that are of questionable origin (possibly escapees) and whose wild status cannot be determined accurately.

The following are the results of adjudications made since the first report was published.

Records accepted.

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) Slave Lake; 25-28 June 1997; ten photographs (Brian Dunlop, Dennis Verbeek), and one description (Jason Rogers). **First documented occurrence in the province.** Code 1 record.

Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) Lethbridge; 21-22 August 1997; tape recording and description (Teresa Dolman). **First documented occurrence in the province.** Code 1 record.

Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) Nose Hill Park, Calgary; 22 November 1989; photograph and description (Ian Halladay). **First documented occurrence in the province.** Code 1 record

Cassin's Sparrow (*Aimophila cassinii*) near Empress; 2 August 1986; tape recording (Cliff Wallis). **First documented occurrence in the province.** Code 1 record.

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) Weaselhead Natural Area, Calgary; 4 July 1990; three written descriptions, two brief (Andrew Slater, Ross Dickson, Michael Breiteneider). Code 2 record.

Pearce Estate Park, Calgary; 16 September – 7 October 1990; two descriptions with small sketch (Ross Dickson, Doug Collister). Code 2 record

Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary; 30 May 1992; one description with sketch (Ross Dickson). Code 3 record.

Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary; 17 May 1993; one description (Ross Dickson). Code 3 record.

Red-necked Stint (*Calidris ruficollis*) Shepard Sloughs near Calgary; 6 August 1986; written description (R.W.Storms). **First documented occurrence in the province.** Code 4 record.

Frank Lake; 19-20 September 1995; two descriptions, one with sketch (Ray Wershler, Andrew Slater). Code 2 record.

Spoonbill Sandpiper (*Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*); two near Bruce Lake; 19 May 1984; description with sketches (John B. Steeves).

First documented occurrence in the province. Code 3 record.

Same location; 9 May 1992; written description with sketches (Peter Sherrington).
Code 3 record.

White-throated Swift (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) flock at Mount Lorette, Kananaskis Valley; 13 September 1996 ; three descriptions with sketches (Peter Sherrington, Brian Elder, Tom Bishop). **First documented occurrence in the province. Code 2 record.**

Records insufficiently documented.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*) at Midland Provincial Park, Drumheller; 1 June 1988; one description (Jim Wedgwood). Bearing in mind the lack of records of the species indicated in the West, and the short period of observation, the committee was not satisfied that other species, particularly Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*), were excluded by the evidence.

Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*) at Bowness Park, Calgary; 13-17 June 1984 (Jamey Podlubny); four descriptions , two with sketches (Doug Collister, Andrew Slater, Ena Spalding, John Steeves.) In view of discrepancies between the descriptions and sketches of the various observers, the committee was not satisfied that other species or hybrids were excluded by the evidence.

Scott's Oriole (*Icterus parisorum*) two at Medicine Hat; 2 June 1996 (Ben Verner); one description (Dennis Baresco). The committee was not satisfied that Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*) was excluded by the evidence.

Record of questionable origin.

Bar-headed Goose (*Anser indicus*) shot near Fort Vermilion; 2 September 1994; two photographs of specimen, magazine article (T.J. Miller). While having no doubt that the specimen shot was of the species indicated, the committee was not satisfied that it was of wild origin.

The committee continues to gather documentation of first records, and other unusual sightings, for the province. If readers have seen such birds or are aware of such records, they are invited to send the particulars to Jocelyn Hudon at the Provincial Museum or to other committee members.

The following specifics should be included when writing your report.

1. Species name – preferably both English and Scientific (Latin).
2. Where did you observe this bird – locale plus habitat details?
3. Date, time and duration of observation. Add other dates when the bird was present, if known.
4. Who found the bird, who identified it and names of any additional observers.
5. Any details regarding whether the bird is now a specimen, was captured for banding or if anyone took photos.
6. What were weather and light conditions at the time of observation? How far away was the bird and what optics, if any were used.
7. Details of your actual observation: plumage, shape, flight, method of feeding, etc. If other birds are nearby endeavour to make comparisons or compare it to other birds which you are familiar with, i.e. larger than a least sandpiper but smaller than a pectoral. Include your general impression of the bird and any relevant sketches, photos or tape recordings. Try to write up your observation without using your field guide to prompt you. A sketch, however inartistic, is always very useful!
8. List the identification features that enabled you to eliminate similar or confusing species.
9. Give specifics of your experience with this or similar species.
10. Are you 100% sure of your identification and, if not, what are your problematic concerns?
11. Did other observers differ on the identification? If so, what did they believe it to be? Supply their names and addresses.

Since the first report was published, Richard Klauke and Peter Sherrington have left the committee. Replacements for them are being appointed.

The current committee members are:

Jocelyn Hudon,	Provincial Museum,	Chair
Doug Collister,	Calgary	
Pat Marklevitz,	Edmonton	
Andrew Slater,	Calgary	
Terry Thormin,	Edmonton.	

Andrew Slater is Secretary of the Alberta Bird Record Committee.

Author's Address:

152 Oakside Circle S.W., Calgary, AB T2V 4H2