

A Record of the Yellow-throated Warbler from Moosonee

by
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During the fall of 1982, a Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*) was sighted twice in the town-site of Moosonee, Ontario (51° 17' N, 80° 39' W). Not only are these the first sightings for northern Ontario (James *et al.* 1976) they also represent the northernmost record of the species in Canada (W.E. Godfrey, *pers. comm.*).

The first sighting occurred on 14 October at 1130 h when McRae observed the bird sitting on a clothes-line just north of the Ministry of Natural Resources office. Others were contacted and within 10 minutes, Diana and Ken Abraham, Pat Brown, Jim Danyluck and John Thompson also had seen the bird which, by then, had moved to a brush patch adjacent to the M.N.R. office. It was here that Ken Abraham took photographs, copies of which have been deposited in the National Museum of Canada. One hour after the initial sighting, the bird vanished and, despite a careful search that afternoon and on subsequent days, was not relocated. During the observation period, the skies were over-

cast, the temperature was 6°C, there was a gentle southwest wind and light drizzle was falling. The second observation, presumably of the same individual, was 13 November at 1400 h when Hutchison saw the warbler at his bird feeding station just south of the M.N.R. office. It was also seen at the feeder later that day by Ginger Vincent. The bird remained until 1645 h but was never seen again. The weather at the time was clear and windy with a temperature of about 20°C. There were 20 cm of snow on the ground.

Perhaps the most interesting fact about this record concerns the subspecific identity. The Moosonee bird had bright yellow lores indicating that it belongs to the subspecies *D. d. dominica*. This feature can be seen well in the photographs and has been confirmed by W.E. Godfrey (*pers. comm.*). To determine the significance of this, we checked with several observers from other regions of Ontario, asking them to supply data regarding the subspecific identity of their records. A total of 27 records were researched. Of these,

only 16 had been identified to subspecies and all were of the white-colored race, *D. d. albilora*. In addition, the only Ontario specimen, collected at Long Point in 1970, is also *D. d. albilora* (Strauch 1974). The Moosonee individual probably represents the first record of *D. d. dominica* in Ontario.

During the first observation the warbler was actively feeding throughout the period. All foraging was done within two metres of the ground and was largely restricted to hammering on rotten wood where larvae, approximately one cm in length, were being extracted. The bird repeated a harsh "chip" note constantly for the first 15 minutes but became quiet afterwards. It responded immediately to "spishing" the first time it was attempted but not again. The circumstances of the November sighting indicate that the warbler, by this time, was in "dire straits." When first seen, it was feeding on stale bread at the feeder.

Hutchison immediately went to the feeder with fresh bread and the warbler flew to his hand and began feeding as soon as the bread was placed on the feeder. Later in the afternoon, a Northern Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*) appeared in the yard and the warbler took refuge under a parked car. No vocalizations were heard during the observation period.

Although there is a well established pattern of southern birds showing up in the Moosonee area in the fall, little is known about their ability to survive. Circumstances of this sighting suggest that between predators, severe cold and food shortages, their survival rate is very low or nil.

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on Yellow-throated Warbler sightings from Ottawa-Cornwall, Kingston and Point Pelee National Park, respectively. Dr. W.E. Godfrey, Curator Emeritus, National Museum of Canada, kindly confirmed the subspecific identification from the photographs and supplied us with background information on the species in Canada. Dr. Ross James, Royal Ontario Museum, provided additional information. Finally, we would like to thank Ken Abraham for reading and making comments on the manuscript.

Literature Cited

James, R.D., P.L. McLaren and J.C. Barlow. 1976. Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Ontario. Life Sci. Misc. Pub. Royal Ontario Museum. 75 pp.

Strauch, J.G. 1974. First Ontario specimen of the Yellow-throated Warbler. Can. Field-Nat. 88: 368.

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