

## **The First Record of Eastern Whip-poor-will (*Antrostomus vociferus*) in British Columbia.**

**By Rick Tootchin and Don Cecile. Submitted: April 15, 2018.**

### **Introduction and Distribution**

The Eastern Whip-poor-will (*Antrostomus vociferus*) is an eastern North American species that is found locally breeding throughout its range in dry deciduous or mixed forests with little or no underbrush (Cink *et al.* 2017). The degree of openness in the forest understory appears to be more important than the forest composition (Wilson 1985b). The Eastern Whip-poor-will is missing from many areas of dense uninterrupted forest (Wilson 1985b). Common in open and partially open pitch pine (*P. rigida*) scrub-oak habitat on Cape Cod, but dramatically fewer singing in black oak (*Q. velutina*), scarlet oak (*Q. coccinea*)pitch pine habitat along glacial moraines with closed canopy; decreased light here may influence foraging success (Cink *et al.* 2017).

In Canada, the Eastern Whip-poor-will's breeding range extends from east-central Saskatchewan in southern Prince Albert National Park east to Cumberland House and Endeavour (Smith 1996b), east through southern Manitoba, but absent from southwest region (Godfrey 1986), to southern Ontario mainly from the Rideau Lakes along the Canadian Shield edge south of Algonquin Provincial Park, along the shoreline of Georgian Bay and Bruce Peninsula to Sudbury (Cadman *et al.* 2007a), into southern Quebec where this species occurs mainly from 47°N south with scattered populations north to Lake St. Jean (Roy and Bombardier 1996), locally in central and southern New Brunswick north to lower Miramichi Valley, and locally in central Nova Scotia (Erskine 1992a).

In the eastern United States, the Eastern Whip-poor-will breeds from the Canadian border south to the Gulf Coast states and west to north-western and south-eastern Minnesota, but is absent from most of south-central and south-western Minnesota or in Red River valley, and absent to rare in north-eastern region of that state (Janssen 1987), northern Iowa, but absent from much of north-central and north-western Iowa (Fleckenstein 1996c), is found in extreme south-eastern South Dakota along the lower Missouri River and possibly west to Charles Mix County (Peterson 2012), easternmost Nebraska, west to Johnson and Pawnee counties, with range extending west along Niobara River to eastern Cherry County, and west along Platte River to Saunders County (Sharpe *et al.* 2001d), eastern fourth of Kansas (Busby and Zimmerman 2001), and eastern Oklahoma, west to Osage and Okmulgee counties, with numbers diminishing toward the south (Baumgartner and Baumgartner 1992, Reinking 2004b). Of note there is a disjunct population in south-eastern North Dakota (American Ornithologists' Union 1998a). The Eastern Whip-poor-will's range extends east to the Atlantic Coast and south to south-central and north-eastern Arkansas (James and Neal 1986), south-eastern Missouri, but is

absent from the Mississippi lowlands (Jacobs and Wilson 1997), western Tennessee, north-eastern Mississippi (Turcotte and Watts 1999), the northern half of Alabama (Imhof 1962), northern Georgia and sparingly on the Coastal Plain (Schneider *et al.* 2010), eastern South Carolina, east to lower Coastal Plain (McNair and Post 1993b), and eastern North Carolina (Potter *et al.* 1980). Recent breeding bird atlases indicate significant gaps within the eastern U.S. range, including much of northern Indiana (Castrale *et al.* 1998a), south-eastern and northernmost counties of Pennsylvania (Wilson *et al.* 2012), western New York and the Adirondack Mountains (McGowan and Corwin 2008), and the species is largely absent from all, but forested south-eastern Ohio, with the exception of an outlying population in north-western Ohio (Rodewald *et al.* 2016).

The Eastern Whip-poor-will arrives as a spring migrant at American breeding sites in late March to mid-May, with most birds arriving in April. In northern Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina, arrives in numbers in late March–early April; early records for Alabama include March 22 for the Mountain Region and 27 March for the Piedmont Region (Imhof 1962). Other early records include March 19 for Atlanta, Georgia (Burleigh 1958) and March 8 for coastal plain of South Carolina (Post and Gauthreaux 1989). In Maryland, this species arrives in early April (Reese 1996b). At Cape May, New Jersey, the Eastern Whip-poor-will arrives in late April, with the earliest date March 28 (Sibley 1997). In Massachusetts, this species is detected in migration in late April–late May with earliest arrival date April 12 (Veit and Petersen 1993). In Vermont, the Eastern Whip-poor-will arrives in the last week of April and migration peaks in early May (Kibbe 1985i). In Nova Scotia, this species arrives in mid-May with earliest arrival date May 7 (Tufts 1986). The Eastern Whip-poor-will Arrives in Arkansas during the first week of April (James and Neal 1986), in Kansas by mid-April, with earliest date April 2 (Thompson *et al.* 2011, Cink *et al.* 2017). Between years at same site in Kansas, spring arrival varies by up to 2 weeks between April 12–24; with the average date April 15), presumably due to annual differences in weather (Cink *et al.* 2017). In Minnesota, migration peaks in early May, with earliest date in the southern part of the state April 9 and in northern part of the state April 12 (Janssen 1987). In Ontario, the Eastern Whip-poor-will arrives in early May, with earliest date April 24 (Speirs 1985).

Fall migration periods of the Eastern Whip-poor-will are poorly known because birds tend to be less vocal in fall (Cink *et al.* 2017). The proportion of residents to migrant birds singing in the early fall is unknown (Cink *et al.* 2017). This species leaves the United States in early September–late November, with the peak occurring from mid-September to mid-October (Cink *et al.* 2017). Some individuals may remain farther north in mild winters, but this remains largely unstudied (Cink *et al.* 2017). In Nova Scotia, last fall sighting of the Eastern Whip-poor-will is October 11; an extreme late date for a singing individual is from October 31 and November 1, in Annapolis County (Tufts 1986). In Massachusetts, fall migration for this species is detected from

August–late September, with latest date October 28 (Veit and Petersen 1993). Fall departure dates in Vermont for the Eastern Whip-poor-will are poorly defined; with the latest date October 3 (Kibbe 1985i). At Cape May, New Jersey, breeding birds call until late September and occasionally into early October, and October–November records are mainly of banded birds with 20 birds banded October 7-9, 1987 and the latest record is a sight record from December 2 (Sibley 1997). In Maryland, the Eastern Whip-poor-will leaves by mid-October (Reese 1996b). In northern Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina, this species departs by late August to mid-October, with late dates of September 3 in Mountain Region of Alabama (Imhof 1962), 21 September in South Carolina (Post and Gauthreaux 1989), and mid-October at Atlanta, Georgia (Burleigh 1958). It is difficult to distinguish between departing summer residents and arriving winter residents in these southern states (Cink *et al.* 2017). It is unknown if some breeding birds from north-western South Carolina overwinter in the southeast coastal region, or if birds from northern Alabama overwinter on Gulf Coast (Cink *et al.* 2017). The Eastern Whip-poor-will leaves Ontario from early September–early October, with latest date October 10 (Speirs 1985). This species leaves Minnesota from early August–late September, with latest dates September 26– October 2 in the northern part of the state, and September 28–October 3 in the southern part of the state (Janssen 1987). Kansas birds depart late September–early October, with latest date October 14 (Thompson *et al.* 2011, Cink *et al.* 2017). The Eastern Whip-poor-will leaves Arkansas from August–September, with latest date September 24, but the timing is poorly documented (James and Neal 1986). Of interest, this species has been recorded in Costa Rica mid-November (Stiles and Skutch 1989).

The Eastern Whip-poor-will overwinters throughout Florida (Robertson and Woolfenden 1992a), rarely north to coastal South Carolina (Post and Gauthreaux 1989), sandy areas of the Gulf Coast of Alabama (Imhof 1962), coastal Louisiana and Texas (Hamel 1992), south along Atlantic slope of Mexico from Tamaulipas and eastern Nuevo León south to Isthmus of Tehuantepec and south throughout Central America, except the Yucatán Peninsula, to Honduras (Howell and Webb 2010). The Southernmost portion in Nicaragua of the Eastern Whip-poor-will winter range is poorly known. South of Nicaragua this species is a “casual to very rare winter resident” along the entire Pacific slope from sea level to 1,220 m of Costa Rica (Stiles and Skutch 1989) and western Panama, where there are 2 records from the western Chiriqui highlands (Ridgely and Gwynne 1989).

The Eastern Whip-poor-will is a casual vagrant during migration in western Cuba, Jamaica (Raffaele *et al.* 1998), and Bermuda (Amos 1991). In North America, this species is a vagrant to eastern Colorado, and east-central Quebec (American Ornithologists' Union 1998a).

Along the west coast of North America, the Eastern Whip-poor-will is an accidental vagrant. Records from California are more complex since Mexican Whip-poor-will occurs in the state. There are 2 accepted records of the Eastern Whip-poor-will for California by the California Bird Records Committee (Tietz and McCaskie 2017). There are no records for this species in Oregon (OFO 2016) or Washington State (Wahl *et al.* 2005, WBRC 2016). The Eastern Whip-poor-will is accidental in south-eastern Alaska with a specimen record on West Petersburg, Kupreanof Island, on November 22, 1972 (Kessel and Gibson 1978, Gibson and Kessel 1997). The Eastern Whip-poor-will is an accidental vagrant in British Columbia with a specimen record from Vancouver Island (Cecile 2002a).

In 2010 the American Ornithologists Union (A.O.U.) split Whip-poor-will into 2 species, the Eastern Whip-poor-will and Mexican Whip-poor-will (*Caprimulgus arizonae*) the latter is found in California (Garrett and Dunn 1981, Small 1994), northern Arizona, southern Nevada, central New Mexico, and extreme western Texas south through the highlands of Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador to Honduras, also (probably) in southern Baja California (Chesser *et al.* 2010). Winters from central Mexico south through the breeding range to Honduras; northern and southern limits of wintering range of migratory population poorly known (Chesser *et al.* 2010).

### **Identification and Similar Species**

The identification of the Eastern Whip-poor-will is covered in all standard North American field guides. This is medium-sized nightjar species measuring 149–169 mm;  $n = 15$  in wing length on males, and is slightly longer than that of females that range between 147–163 mm;  $n = 15$  (Pyle 1997c). The tail length of the males range between 114–128 mm;  $n = 15$ , and females range between 105–124 mm;  $n = 15$  (Pyle 1997c).

The Eastern Whip-poor-will is very similar to the Mexican Whip-poor-will but male Eastern Whip-poor-wills have more white in the outer 3 rectrices and there are differences in song (Dunn and Alderfer 2011, Cink *et al.* 2017). The Eastern Whip-poor-will song is a loud, clear whistled “WHIP puwuw WEEW”, and also the classic “Whip-poor-Will”, whereas the Mexican Whip-poor-will's song is a rolling, trilled “g-prrip prrEE” that is lower-pitched, rougher and with a different rhythm than the Eastern Whip-poor-will (Dunn and Alderfer 2011, Cink *et al.* 2017). The two species occupy distinct breeding ranges within North America, but can overlap in some areas within their overwintering ranges in Mexico and Central America (Howell and Webb 2010).

The Common Poorwill (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*) which breeds in the southern dry interior of British Columbia has a simpler song (Dunn and Alderfer 2011). This species gives a whistled “poor-will” with a final “ip” note given at the end, but is only audible at close range (Dunn and

Alderfer 2011). The Common Poorwill favours more open country in sagebrush, and on open rocky slopes (Dunn and Alderfer 2011). This species is smaller, measuring 20 cm, with a shorter tail that has limited white on the outer 3 rectrices (Dunn and Alderfer 2011).

The following identification parameters are taken from Cink *et al.* (2017).

The head is large and flattened, with large dark brown eyes with eyelashes on lids, small dark brown or blackish bill (with enormous gape) bordered by long, un-branched rictal bristles. The legs and feet are brownish and small, with inner side of middle-toe claw pectinate. Tail and wings rounded. The plumage is grayish-brown streaked with blackish-brown, with broad blackish stripes on the crown. There is buff barred-brown on the belly, becoming more blackish-brown at the top of the breast. There is a band of white on the lower throat that is accentuated by a blackish throat above and a blackish breast below. The wing-coverts are grayish brown, spotted and speckled tawny and buff. In flight, both male and female have brown wings heavily spotted tawny with blackish spots across the scapulars. The male has very broad white tips on the outer 3 rectrices. The female has narrower buffy tips. There is no seasonal plumage change. The Eastern Whip-poor-will's plumage is extremely cryptic, causing a sitting bird to blend easily with leaf litter or a tree branch.

### **Occurrence and Documentation**

The Eastern Whip-poor-will is an accidental vagrant in British Columbia with a single record of a freshly dead bird found by B. McIntyre at Amphitrite Point near Ucluelet on November 5, 2001 (Cecile 2002a). The bird was published in *Wildlife Afield* as a Mexican Whip-poor-will and had accompanying pictures (Dorst 2006). Since that time, a re-look at the tail feathers of the bird, which was a male, has revealed it was in fact an Eastern Whip-poor-will (A. Dorst Pers. Comm.). The tail feathers look identical to illustrations of the tail of a male Eastern Whip-poor-will drawing in the *National Geographic Guide* 2011 edition on page 295 (Dunn and Alderfer 2011). The Eastern Whip-poor-will is a highly migratory species that is prone to vagrancy (Cink *et al.* 2017). Both Alaska's and British Columbia's single records are from the west coast, both are specimen records, and both occurred in the month of November. Given the nocturnal nature of this species, it might be a long time before another is found in the province. This species could turn up anywhere in British Columbia, particularly in known vagrant traps or at banding stations.

### **Acknowledgements**

We wish to thank Barb McKee for editing the original manuscript. We want to thank Adrian Dorst for providing us an update on the identification of the British Columbia Whip-poor-will.

## References

- American Ornithologists' Union. 1998a. Check-list of North American birds. 7th edition ed. Washington, D.C.: American Ornithologists' Union.
- Amos, E. J. R. 1991. A Guide to the Birds of Bermuda. Warwick, Bermuda: E. J. R. Amos.
- Baumgartner, E. M. and A. M. Baumgartner. 1992. Oklahoma bird life. Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press.
- Burleigh, T. D. 1958. Georgia birds. Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press.
- Busby, W. H. and J. L. Zimmerman. 2001. Kansas breeding bird atlas. Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas.
- Cadman, M. D., D. A. Sutherland, G. G. Beck, D. Lepage and A. R. Couturier. 2007a. Atlas of the breeding birds of Ontario 2001-2005. Toronto: Bird Studies Canada, Environment Canada, Ontario Field Ornithologists, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and Ontario Nature.
- Castrale, J. S., E. M. Hopkins and C. E. Keller. 1998a. Atlas of Breeding Birds of Indiana. Indianapolis: Indiana Department of Natural Resources.
- Cecile, D. 2002a. Fall season-British Columbia-Yukon. *North American Birds* 56: 92-95.
- Chesser, R. T., R. C. Banks, F. K. Barker, C. Cicero, J. L. Dunn, A. W. Kratter, I. J. Lovette, P. C. Rasmussen, Jr. Remsen, J. V., J. D. Rising, D. F. Stotz and K. Winker. 2010. Fifty-first supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds. *Auk* 127(3): 726-744.
- Cink, Calvin L., Peter Pyle and Michael A. Patten. 2017. Eastern Whip-poor-will (*Antrostomus vociferus*), version 3.0. In *The Birds of North America* (P. G. Rodewald, editor). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York, USA. [Online Resource] Retrieved from the Birds of North America: <https://birdsna.org/Species-Account/bna/species/whip-p1> [Accessed: December 6, 2017].
- Dorst, A. 2006. Whip-poor-will (*Caprimulgus vociferous*): A new species for British Columbia. *Wildlife Afield* 3: 16-17
- Dunn, J. L. and J. Alderfer. 2011. National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America. National Geographic Society, Washington D.C. 574pp.

- Erskine, A. J. 1992a. Atlas of breeding birds of the Maritime Provinces. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia Museum.
- Fleckenstein, J. 1996c. "Whip-poor-will." In The Iowa breeding bird atlas, edited by L. S. Jackson, C. A. Thompson and J. J. Dinsmore, 198-199. Iowa City: Univ. of Iowa Press.
- Garrett, K. and J. Dunn. 1981. Birds of southern California: status and distribution. Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles Audubon Soc.
- Gibson, D. D. and B. Kessel. 1997. Inventory of the Species and Subspecies of Alaska Birds, *Western Birds* 28(2): 45-95.
- Godfrey, W. E. 1986. The birds of Canada. Revised Edition. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada.
- Hamel, P. B. 1992. Land manager's guide to the birds of the south. Atlanta, GA: The Nature Conserv., Chapel Hill, North Carolina and the U.S. For. Serv., southern region.
- Howell, S. N. G. and S. Webb. 2010. A guide to the birds of Mexico and northern Central America. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Imhof, T. A. 1962. Alabama Birds. Tuscaloosa, AL: Univ. of Alabama Press.
- Jacobs, B. and J. D. Wilson. 1997. Missouri breeding bird atlas 1896-1992. Jefferson City: Nat. Hist. Ser. 6. Missouri Dep. Conserv.
- James, D. A. and J. C. Neal. 1986. Arkansas birds: Their distribution and abundance. Fayetteville: Univ. of Arkansas Press.
- Janssen, R. B. 1987. Birds in Minnesota. Minneapolis: Univ. Minnesota Press.
- Kessel, B., and Gibson, D. D. 1978. Status and distribution of Alaska birds. *Studies Avian Biol.* 1.
- Kibbe, D. P. 1985i. "Whip-poor-will." In The atlas of breeding birds of Vermont., edited by S. B. Laughlin and D. P. Kibbe, 146-147. Hanover, NH: Univ. Press of New England.
- McGowan, K. J. and K. Corwin. 2008. The second atlas of breeding birds in New York State. Ithaca: Comstock/Cornell University Press.
- McNair, D. B. and W. Post. 1993b. Supplement to "Status and distribution of South Carolina birds.". Charleston, SC: Charleston Mus. Ornithol. Contr. no. 8.
- Nicholson, C. P. 1997q. "Whip-poor-will." In Atlas of breeding birds of Tennessee., edited by C. P. Nicholson, 156-158. Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press.

- OFO. 2016. Oregon Field Ornithologists - Records Committee. [Online resource]  
<http://www.oregonbirds.org/index.html>. [Accessed: December 6, 2017].
- Peterson, R. A. 2012. The South Dakota Breeding Bird Atlas. South Dakota Ornithologists' Union,  
Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center Online version 2012. [Online Resource]  
Retrieved from <http://www.rmbo.org/SDBBA2/> [Accessed: December 7, 2017].
- Post, W. and Jr. Gauthreaux, S. A. 1989. Status and distribution of South Carolina birds.  
Charleston, SC: Charleston Mus.
- Potter, E. E., J. F. Parnell and R. P. Teulings. 1980. Birds of the Carolinas. Chapel Hill: Univ. of  
North Carolina Press.
- Pyle, P. 1997c. Identification guide to North American birds Part I: Columbidae to Ploceidae.  
Bolinas, CA: Slate Creek Press.
- Raffaele, H., J. Wiley, O. Garrido, A. Keith and J. Raffaele. 1998. A Guide to the Birds of the West  
Indies. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.
- Reese, J. G. 1996b. "Whip-poor-will." In Atlas of the breeding birds of Maryland and the District  
of Columbia., edited by C. S. Robbins, 194-195. Pittsburgh, PA: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press.
- Reinking, D. L. 2004b. Oklahoma breeding bird atlas. Norman: Univ. Okla. Press.
- Ridgely, R. S. and J. Gwynne. 1989. A Guide to the Birds of Panama, with Costa Rica, Nicaragua,  
and Honduras. 2nd ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.
- Robertson, Jr., W. B. and G. E. Woolfenden. 1992a. Florida bird species: an annotated list. Fla.  
Ornithol. Soc. Spec. Publ. no. 6.
- Rodewald, P. G., M. B. Shumar, A. T. Boone, D. L. Slager, and J. S. McCormac. 2016. The Second  
Atlas of Breeding Birds in Ohio. The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park,  
PA. 600 pp.
- Roy, L. and M. Bombardier. 1996. "Whip-poor-will." In The breeding birds of Quebec: atlas of  
the breeding birds of southern Québec., edited by J. Gauthier and Y. Aubry, 626-629.  
Québec Region, Montréal: Assoc. québécoise des groupes d'ornithologues, Prov. Of  
Quebec Soc. for the protection of birds, Can. Wildl. Serv., Environ. Canada.
- Schneider, T. M., G. Beaton, T. S. Keyes and N. A. Klaus. 2010. The breeding bird atlas of  
Georgia.



- Sharpe, R. S., W. R. Silcock and J. G. Jorgensen. 2001d. "Whip-poor-will." In *Birds of Nebraska*, 232-233. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press.
- Sibley, D. A. 1997. *Birds of Cape May*. 2nd ed. Cape May Point: New Jersey Audubon Soc.
- Small, A. 1994. *California birds: their status and distribution*. Vista, CA: Ibis Publ. Co.
- Smith, A. R. 1996b. *Atlas of Saskatchewan birds*. Regina: Sask. Nat. Hist. Soc. Spec. Publ. no. 22.
- Speirs, J. M. 1985. *Birds of Ontario*. Toronto, ON: Nat. Heritage/Nat. Hist. Inc.
- Stiles, F. G. and A. Skutch. 1989. *A Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press.
- Tietz, J. and G. McCaskie. 2017. Update to Rare Birds of California: 1 January 2004 – 3 January 2017. [Online Resource] Retrieved from [http://www.californiabirds.org/cbrc\\_book/update.pdf](http://www.californiabirds.org/cbrc_book/update.pdf) [Accessed: December 6, 2017].
- Thompson, M. C., C. A. Ely, B. Gress, C. Otte, S. T. Patti, D. Seibel and E. A. Young. 2011. *Birds of Kansas*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Tufts, R. W. 1986. *Birds of Nova Scotia*. 3rd ed. Halifax, NS: Nimbus Publ. Ltd. and Nova Scotia Mus.
- Turcotte, W. H. and D. L. Watts. 1999. *Birds of Mississippi*. Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi.
- Veit, R. R. and W. R. Petersen. 1993. *The birds of Massachusetts*. Lincoln, MA: Massachusetts Audubon Society.
- Wahl, T. R, B. Tweit, and S. Mlodinow. 2005. *Birds of Washington: Status and Distribution*. Oregon State University Press, Corvallis, Oregon. 436pp.
- WBRC. 2016. *Washington Bird Records Committee – Summary of Decisions*. Washington Ornithological Society, Seattle, WA. [Online resource] <http://www.wos.org/wbrcaccepteddec2014.pdf> [Accessed: December 6, 2017].
- Wilson, A. M., D. W. Brauning and R. S. Mulvihill. 2012. *Second atlas of breeding birds in Pennsylvania*. University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press.
- Wilson, S. G. 1985b. Summer distribution of Whip-poor-wills in Minnesota. *Loon* 57: 6-8.