

The First Record of Painted Redstart (*Myioborus pictus*) in British Columbia.

By Rick Toochin.

Introduction and Distribution

The Painted Redstart (*Myioborus pictus*) is a beautiful species of warbler that is found breeding in pine-oak (*Pinus* spp.- *Quercus* spp.) and pinyon-juniper (*Juniperus* spp.) woodlands in the foothills and mountains from Arizona and New Mexico south to southern Nicaragua, but very patchily distributed within this area (Howell and Webb 2010, Dunn and Garrett 1997). In Arizona, this species is a common breeder in all southern and central mountains of the upper Sonoran zone, with post breeders moving into transition and Canadian zones (Barber *et al.* 2000). The Painted Redstart is found west to the Baboquivari Mountains, north to Hualapai Mountains and the Mogollon Rim (Monson and Phillips 1981). In New Mexico, the Painted Redstart breeds locally in Mogollon highlands north to San Francisco and Magdalena Mountains, east to the Black Range and south to Peloncillo and Animas Mountains (Barber *et al.* 2000). This species is rare to fairly common in middle-elevation riparian woodlands and adjacent oak and pine-oak woodlands (Hubbard 1978c). The Painted Redstart is an uncommon, irregular, and very local summer resident in the high canyons of Brewster County, Texas (Barber *et al.* 2000). This species is typically only encountered in the Chisos Mountains of Big Bend National Park (Barber *et al.* 2000). In some years it is fairly common with 4–6 birds seen per day, and in other years it is absent (Barber *et al.* 2000). The Painted Redstart has bred in Jeff Davis County (Texas Ornithological Society 1995). This species has also occurred rarely during summer months in north-central New Mexico, southern Nevada, especially in the Spring Mountains region, and in mountains of southern California, especially in the San Bernadino Mountains, with breeding documented there, and in Laguna Mountains of San Diego County (Dunn and Garrett 1997).

In Mexico, the Painted Redstart breeds at 1,000–3,000 m in elevation from eastern Sonora and western Chihuahua on the Pacific slope, and from northern Coahuila on the Atlantic slope, south to Oaxaca (Howell and Webb 2010). This range extends south of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, breeds from eastern Oaxaca and central Chiapas, Mexico, south through southern Guatemala, and from central Honduras to western-central Nicaragua, and in north-eastern Honduras, and central El Salvador (Howell and Webb 2010, Russell and Monson 1998).

The Painted Redstart is a short-distance migrant that is not often seen on migration (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). Most birds breeding in United States migrate to Mexico and Central America to spend the winter months (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). A few individuals remain in south-eastern Arizona through the winter, usually at lower elevations, but also can be found up to 1,700 m in the Chiricahua Mountains than during warmer months

(Barber *et al.* 2000). The seasonal movement of the Painted Redstart within wintering areas depends on the climate (Barber *et al.* 2000).

The Painted Redstart winters primarily in Mexico and Central America from south-eastern Sonora (Russell and Monson 1998) and south-western Chihuahua on the Pacific slope, and southern Nuevo León on the Atlantic slope south through the remainder of the Mexican and Central American breeding range (Howell and Webb 2010). This species also winters sparingly in some lower canyons of the Santa Catalina, Huachuca, Santa Rita, Pajaritos and Baboquivari Mountains in Arizona (Monson and Phillips 1981).

The Painted Redstart outside of its breeding range in North America is a casual vagrant (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). This species is casual in south-western Arizona, south-western Utah, south-western Colorado, and southern Texas (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). This species is an accidental vagrant in eastern North America with records from widely scattered locations such as from Mississippi (Dunn and Garrett 1997), and Alabama (Dunn and Garrett 1997); during winter in Louisiana (Dunn and Garrett 1997), during the spring in Wisconsin (Domagalski 2001), during the spring in Georgia (Dunn and Garrett 1997), Michigan (Byrne 2003, MBRC 2017), Ohio (Dunn and Garrett 1997), New York (NYBRC 1980, Spahn 1980), Massachusetts (Rines 2009), Montana, and in eastern Canada in southern Ontario (Speirs and Pegg 1972), and recently in Manitoba (Swick 2016).

Along the west coast of North America the Painted Redstart is only regularly recorded as a vagrant in California, with about 107 records as of 1997, with all but 2 records having been found in southern California, where recorded on coastal slope mainly fall and winter, and in mountains and intermountain lowlands mainly spring (Dunn and Garrett 1997, Hamilton *et al.* 2007). The species has also been recorded as a vagrant during the fall in Baja California, Mexico (Howell and Pyle 1993). There are no records for Oregon (OFO 2016) or Washington State (Wahl *et al.* 2005, WBRC 2016). The Painted Redstart is an accidental vagrant in British Columbia with a well-documented sight record from the fall (Weber and Kautesk 1975).

Identification and Similar Species

The identification of the Painted Redstart is covered in all standard North American field guides. This large-sized warbler measures 15 cm in length, with a wingspan of 22 cm, and weighs 8 grams (Sibley 2000, Dunn and Alderfer 2011). The Painted Redstart is an active species that has the unusual behaviour of persistently flitting momentarily on to tree trunks; usually low down, to pick off insects (Curson *et al.* 1994). This species also flycatches, and frequently spreads its tail and wings, showing off its white areas (Curson *et al.* 1994). This posturing is used mainly to maintain contact between mated individuals (Curson *et al.* 1994). The Painted Redstart is such a

dynamic and unique looking species that it should not be confused with any regularly occurring warbler species in British Columbia.

The following detailed descriptions are taken from Dunn and Garrett (1997).

On adult males the entire head, throat, upper breast, and upper-parts are jet black with a very slight gloss. There is a thick white arc just below the dark eye. The bill is black. The centre and lower breast and uppermost belly are bright red, contrasting sharply with the black chest, sides, and flanks. The lower flanks are slate-gray. The longer, underlying under-tail coverts are mostly black; the shorter coverts overlying these are mostly white with black centres. The lesser wing-coverts are slaty; the medium-coverts are broadly tipped with white, and the greater-coverts are completely white on the outer webs, forming a conspicuous white forewing patch. The tertials and inner secondaries are bordered with white on the outer webs. The remainder of the remiges are blackish. The axillars and underwing coverts are white. Visible portions of the outer 2 pairs of rectrices are pure white; the third pair (r4) is white on the outer web and tipped with white on the inner web. The legs and feet are slaty-black.

Adult females are basically the same looking as adult males, but the red of the breast is slightly paler with a more orange tone. To notice this it helps to have a female and a male side by side to directly compare each other.

Juvenile plumage is held from June to August (Sibley 2000). This plumage is not held late into the fall and looks similar to adult birds by the end of the summer (Dunn and Alderfer 2011). Birds in juvenile plumage have a dull black head and upper-parts with a white arc under the dark brown eye. The bill is black. The breast is dull slate, with the feathers tipped with dull gray-brown, the lower breast and belly slate, irregularly spotted with dull grayish-buff. The vent area and under-tail coverts mottled grayish. The legs and feet are slaty-black.

Occurrence and Documentation

The Painted Redstart is an accidental fall vagrant in British Columbia. The only record for the province was a bird found by the late Brian Kautesk and was seen by a few lucky people on November 4, 1973 at Ambleside Park in West Vancouver (Weber and Kautesk 1975). This bird was associated with a small flock of Black-capped Chickadees (*Poecile atricapillus*) and Chestnut-backed chickadees (*Poecile rufescens*), Golden-crowned Kinglets (*Regulus satrapa*), and Dark-eyed Juncos (*Junco hyemalis*) (Weber and Kautesk 1975). Despite several people conducting intense searches for the next week the bird was never relocated after first day of its discovery (Weber and Kautesk 1975). The timing of the British Columbia record fits perfectly into the timing of Painted Redstart records in California where records have occurred from

August 24 – November 8 (Hamilton *et al.* 2007). There are only 2 other Canadian records and the timing of these records also falls into the early November period found in California. The first record for Canada came from Pickering Township, Ontario County, Ontario and was present from November 4-15, 1971 (Speirs and Pegg 1972). Recently a bird was found in Pinawa, Manitoba and was seen from October 27 - November 7, 2016 (C. Artuso Pers. Comm.). Other records for eastern North America have also been found in late October into November (Dunn and Garrett 1997). It is unclear if these birds were 1st year birds or adults since the Painted Redstart loses its juvenile plumage early in the late summer and looks very similar to adult birds by the late fall (Curson *et al.* 1994, Dunn and Garrett 1997). What is clear is that the Painted Redstart does wander enough out of range that it is a species that might well occur again in the Province. It is a species that could turn up anywhere in southern British Columbia with the late fall period of mid-October to early November being the most likely time period for this species to be found again in the future. Keen observers should watch for this southern gem in known passerine vagrant traps and have their camera ready!

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