

Species: Scarlet Tanager

Piranga olivacea

(Vernacular Name)

(Scientific Name-use binomial)

Date(s): 12 June 1976

Time Bird Seen: 1100 to 1103

Locality: Bear Creek Canyon, where road crosses Bear Creek culvert

Nearest Town: Boulder (just beyond NCAR labs) County: Boulder

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

NAME

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE

Mary Jane Foley

900 Linden, Boulder

442-1476

Optical Equipment: 8 x 40 binoculars

If photographed, type of equipment used: Nikkormat on 1250mm Celestron telephoto

Light Conditions: Clear, bright day, 2/10 Cu, but bird in shade on tree

Distance from bird (how measured): About 20m, estimate

Number of Birds Seen: One Sex: Male Plumage: Breeding, w/slight molt

Describe the bird's overall behavior and demeanor:

When first seen, bird was dropping out of a fir tree, swooped over pool where we were resting, and landed in a Box Elder. Then it flew some 10m back to another fir, where I photographed it. It had a bug at first, but ate it before I got the camera set up. It stayed in the fir for about three minutes, while I fired away. Then it flew back up the canyon and disappeared. There was a Western Tanager at the pool immediately before the Scarlet showed up

Describe in great detail the bird's size, overall shape, plumage and color-pattern. Include details on shape of bill, wings and tail. Give particular emphasis to the marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance in field guide descriptions is not enough. Describe what you actually saw in the field:

The bird appeared to be the same size as the Western Tanager male seen just before. The bright scarlet, with black wings and tail were strikingly seen. Mary Jane said, "What's that red balloon?", which brought a laugh. After it settled down in the fir tree, the yellow molt spots, one on each side, could be seen. I shot four pictures, the best of which is attached. The light colored tanager bill was also noted, and it shows in the photo.

Describe the bird's song or call, if heard, including method of delivery, i.e., from perch, in flight, etc:

Not heard.

Describe the habitat in which you observed this bird:

Transition forest - Ponderosa Pine, Douglas Fir, Blue Spruce along north facing slope of canyon, Box Elder just below pool, Rocky Mtn. Maple, Chokecherry, Current bushes along creek - Area is part of the Boulder, Greenbelt, rather heavily used by hikers.

How were similarly appearing species eliminated?

The only other bird I've ever seen that came close - scarlet head and body, black wings and tail, was the Scarlet Honey-eater, but that was in Pago Pago! The picture speaks for itself here. As Robbins et al. point out, there is no other North American bird with the observed colors.

Prior experience with this and similarly appearing species:

I've seen molting male Scarlet Tanagers in Pennsylvania, but never one in breeding colors. Western Tanager has been observed many times.

Books, illustrations and advice consulted and how did these influence this documentation?

Robbins, Bruun, Zim, and Singer, Birds of North America - Bird seen matched description and picture perfectly.

This report was written from notes made during x after        observation; from memory       

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