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COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

SCARLET TANAGER

Piranga olivacea

Location: Behind Lamar Community College; Lamar, Prowers County, Colorado

Date: May 25, 1992

Setting:

The riparian area behind Lamar Community College is a variably open to dense deciduous woodland along Willow Creek. My son Ben and I entered the area at the south end of the nature trail. We were there about 1:00 p.m. and observed the Scarlet Tanager at a distance of about 35 feet, for less than one minute. The day was clear and sunny, viewing conditions were excellent and we used 10 power binoculars to watch the bird. It flew up from a tangle of tamarisk and perched completely in the open. The perch was about 15 feet up in a small bare tree. The bird sat horizontally, at an angle, facing away, but turned to look at us as we watched it. It flew off after less than a minute and I was unable to re-locate it then or later.

Description:

The bird was a brilliant and unmistakable breeding-plumaged male. It was about 8" long. It had unmarked jet black wings and tail. The rest of the bird was brilliant crimson red. The bird looked very sharp, with clean borders between the black and red. The bill was heavy and strikingly yellow against the red face and black eye.

Similar Species:

We only need to consider bright red birds. Northern Cardinal and Summer and Hepatic Tanagers lack black wings and tails. Vermilion Flycatcher has a dark back and mask, is smaller and lacks stout yellow bill. *Carpodacus* finches are more brown, less red and lack red and black contrast.

Experience with Species:

I have seen many Scarlet Tanagers in breeding plumage but this is my first male in Colorado. I have experience with all other birds mentioned above.

This report is prepared from notes made during and after observation.

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