



## Earliest Confirmed Records of Chestnut-sided Warbler (*Setophaga pensylvanica*) for British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest

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Chestnut-sided Warbler (*Setophaga pensylvanica*; Figure 1) breeds mainly from east-central Alberta across southern Canada to Nova Scotia and south through the New England States and through the Appalachian Mountains to northwest Georgia. It winters in southern Mexico and Central America and migrates mainly east of the Great Plains (Richardson and Brauning 1995). It is one of 35 species of wood-warbler (Family Parulidae) recorded in British Columbia through 2006 (Campbell et al. 2007) and is among the more common “eastern” warblers reported in the Pacific Northwest. In Oregon the species now occurs almost annually, mostly in the spring (Nehls 2006, p. 509) and in Washington there are 15 records through 2004, mostly between 11 June and 18 July (Mlodinow 2005, p. 308). In British Columbia, there are 36 records, mostly in summer, through 2000 (Campbell et al. 2001, p. 41). Richardson and Brauning (1995) attribute this increase in numbers and westward range expansion of Chestnut-sided Warbler in North America to “clearing of primeval forests and the subsequent growth of shrubby habitats.” Also, the proliferation of highly qualified and eager birdwatchers reporting their findings helped document the westward movement.

Salt (1972, 1973) published the first records for Alberta, both specimens taken in in 1972. A dead adult male was found below a window in Edmonton on 31 May and another bird was collected near Pigeon Lake on 15 June. There were earlier reports of occurrence and breeding in 1934 but they were



**Figure 1.** In breeding (alternate) plumage, Chestnut-sided Warbler is the only species of wood-warbler in North America with a greenish-yellow cap, white breast, and reddish streaks on its sides. *Photo courtesy of The Young Forest Project.*

unsubstantiated and not accepted. While compiling information for the articles Salt uncovered an early record for British Columbia in summer 1944 at Tupper Creek in northeastern British Columbia (10U 687015E 6155827N) only 2.4 km from the Alberta border. Two

nests with eggs were apparently found on 4 July by T.E. Randall, a collector, who could not confirm the record as he had “lost” the specimens and field notes for the “plentiful” warbler. The record was not accepted by Campbell et al. (2001, pp. 42-43), especially because Cowan (1939) collected in the area between 5 May and 30 June 1938, recording 17 species of wood-warbler without encountering Chestnut-sided Warbler. The first accepted record for British Columbia was a breeding male photographed at Red Pass in Mount Robson Park (11U 365179E 5872701N; el. 1,031 m) on 22 June 1971 (Shepard 1972; Figure 2).

Three early records of Chestnut-sided Warbler, predating the province’s first documented occurrence in 1971 by 26 years, have recently been uncovered in the field notes of the late Glenn R. Ryder. One record is from the Okanagan valley and two are from the Celista/Scotch Creek area of Shuswap Lake. Details, verbatim from Glenn’s notes (see Campbell and Henderson 2013), follow.

May 29, 1946 – Knox Mountain (Kelowna) – *A New Bird for me out of Its normal range the nearest area would be Saskatchewan. (1) in Low shrubs at foot of Knox Mtn. [11U 322059E 5531579N; el. 548 m] Top of head Yellow face area white with Black mask through eye and down to Back of neck, Bellie white sides with chestnut Colour just a thin Band under wing. Yellow on Back with Black stripping to tail. Wing bars whitish yellow upper one and one Yellow Bar. Bill Black Bird was not shy stayed in area feeding on things under leaves.*

July 20, 1947 – Celistown Creek (Celista) – *(1) male is seen in Aspen [trembling] Douglas Maple woodlands along Celiston Creek [1.3 km east northeast of Celista; 11U 336149E 5646554N; el. 363 m]. A Bird with a Yellow head Crown and with a chestnut Band of stripe up by Its wing on It’s side, with a white Breast the head has a Blackish Mask like line through the eye and down Its neck to meet with the Chestnut Band.*



**Figure 2.** Photographs documenting the first record of Chestnut-sided Warbler for British Columbia were not published (see Shepard 1972). The image of the warbler was small and contrast was not crisp, but with accompanying field notes some of the distinguishing features were obvious when the 35-mm slides were projected. These included the chestnut-streaked sides, white cheek, throat, chest and belly, black moustache, and light crown. Details were sufficient to add Chestnut-sided Warbler to the avifauna of British Columbia (Campbell 1977). *Photo by Michael G. Shepard, Red Pass, BC. BC Photo 172 (see Campbell and Stirling 1971).*

*Back shows a Olive greenish with Darker feathering. It has (2) whitish wing Bars. Birds of Canada by P.A. Taverner 1934 said this Bird is from eastern N. Am. And in Canada could be found west to Manitoba and parts of Northern Saskatchewan. What is this male doing in these parts of B.C.?*

May 28, 1949 – Meadow Creek valley (Scotch Creek [11U 330647E 5649588; el. 569 m]) – (1) male is seen in Aspen [Figure 3] woods along the old Gold Mining Roadway. It was not shy either. I took notes on Its Colours, etc. The striking thing was Its chestnut Colour on Its sides. It had a white Belly. Black in face of Bird and also white, the top of It' head was yellow. Back was greyish looking with some whitish looking feathers. Wings had two pale Yellowish Bars. The Bird would make some sort of a song But went on feeding most of the time. I was watching It. I finally rode off Leaving the Bird to feed.



**Figure 3.** In British Columbia, Chestnut-sided Warbler has frequently been reported in various successional stages of trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) in forest clearings, near water, or along roadways. Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.

The Chestnut-sided Warbler is a rare bird anywhere on the west coast of North America (Roberson 1980, p. 391). The first record for California was a specimen collected on 21 September 1908 (Marsden 1909) and through the early 1990s is now reported each year during spring and autumn migrations (Small 1994, p. 217). The three sightings in British Columbia in the 1940s are the earliest for the Pacific Northwest. In Oregon, the species was first confirmed with photographs at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge on 21 June 1966 (Schmidt et al. 1989, pp. 93-95) and in Washington State a specimen was obtained near Othello on 18 June 1960 (Marshall 1970).

As in British Columbia, early occurrences of Chestnut-sided Warbler in Alberta were questionable and not accepted by ornithologists (Salt 1972, 1973). Between 1938 and 1972 there were only two additional records for Alberta, both accepted, the first for the province being an adult male at Cold Lake on 29 June 1962 (Nordstrom 1978). Between 1972 and 1980, there were 32 reports mostly in spring migration (Pinel et al. 1993). The spring dates recorded by Glenn Ryder in the Shuswap Lake region of British Columbia (28 and 29 May) fall within the arrival dates reported in Alberta, between 27 and 31 May (Pinel et al. 1993, pp. 206-207). Both of Ryder's spring arrival dates were of adult males, which Kendeigh (1945) states arrive in the northern parts of their range in late May, about one week before females. †

#### **Acknowledgements**

The author inherited the late Glenn Ryder's voluminous field notes with an earlier promise to publish noteworthy information that would increase our knowledge of wildlife in British Columbia (see Campbell and Henderson 2013).

I am grateful to *The Young Forest Project*, a unique citizen approach to providing young forests for wildlife, for the photograph of the Chestnut-sided Warbler.

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