

First Specimen Record of the Indigo Bunting, *Passerina cyanea*, in British Columbia

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A specimen originally identified as a Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*) collected on 1 November 1953 in Port Hardy, Vancouver Island, was recently re-identified as an Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*). This represents the first British Columbia specimen record and an unusually late fall occurrence of the species north of its wintering ground.

Key Words: Indigo Bunting, *Passerina cyanea*, Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

While at the Yale Peabody Museum (YPM) in New Haven, Connecticut, to study the pattern of molt in the Lazuli Bunting (*P. amoena*), I came across specimen YPM 72124, labeled as a Lazuli Bunting. The bird was collected by Kenneth Racey (field number 104) on 1 November 1953 at Port Hardy (50°41'N, 127°30'W), northern Vancouver Island, British Columbia. It was sexed as a male, with "clear" (i.e., unossified) skull, total length of 145 mm and wing length 65 mm. The stomach contained insects.

Upon examination, it was obvious because of the coloring of its ventral contour feathers that the bird was a hatching-year Indigo Bunting, *P. cyanea*, in its first basic plumage (Rohwer 1986). The throat was mottled gray and dingy white, blending into a mottled gray and dark olive-buff on the breast and belly. Hatching year Lazuli Buntings have a light throat, buffy cinnamon breast, and light belly, sometimes with dark streaks along the belly feather shafts. Despite having looked at over 200 hatching year Lazuli Bunting specimens, I have never seen a hint of olive or such uniform coloration of the breast and belly as is displayed in this specimen and is common in young Indigo Buntings (Godfrey 1986; S. Rohwer, University of Washington, personal communication). Otherwise, the specimen has a uniform ruddy brown crown, back, and rump. The wings are dark brown with poorly distinguished dark buff wing bars. Hatching-year Lazuli Buntings, by contrast, have much more distinct wing bars. Otherwise, the tail is a uniform dark brown, indistinguishable from that of a Lazuli.

Godfrey (1966) listed the earliest known British Columbia record of Indigo Buntings as a sighting at Trail in 1958 by a man variously cited as Sam H. Hopkins (Cannings 1974) or as the late Sam Sopkinson (Street and Merilees 1974). I am aware of nine more recent sight and photographic records in B.C. (summarized by Cannings 1974; Roberson 1980; Godfrey 1986). Nine of these ten records were in the summer, late May through July (Roberson 1980), with only a single autumn record on 1 September 1977 at Golden (Rogers 1978).

The Yale Peabody Museum specimen 72124 is the earliest known record of the Indigo Bunting in B.C., and, as far as I can tell, the only Indigo Bunting specimen from the province (R. W. Campbell, personal communication). Furthermore, it is only the second, and by far the latest, autumn record for the species. The 1 November date would be unusually late anywhere north of the winter range of the species; latest migration dates from across northern North America are typically in early October. Finally, YPM 72124 is the first Vancouver Island record. This also would have been a surprising occurrence for a Lazuli Bunting, but it was not reported as such in the literature at the time.

No doubt other important mislabeled specimens lie in museum cabinets awaiting examination by trained eyes.

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