

## Extreme extralimital summer record of Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana* from Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles

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Cotinga 18 (2002): 96–97

Un ejemplar de *Piranga ludoviciana* en plumaje de reproducción fue fotografiado el 5 de julio de 2001, en la Playa Frans, Bonaire, Antillas Holandesas. La distribución normal durante la temporada de reproducción en Norteamérica occidental se extiende desde el noroeste de México hasta el sudoeste de Canadá. Durante el período no reproductivo su distribución abarca desde México hasta el oeste de Costa Rica, aunque hay cinco observaciones del norte del Caribe, y observaciones ocasionales del oeste de Panamá. Esta es la primera observación en las Antillas Holandesas y Sudamérica, a c.5.900 km de su área de reproducción más cercana, en el oeste de Texas, EEUU, y c.1.600 km del límite meridional del área de invernada ocasional, en el oeste de Panamá.

Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana* breeds in western North America, from extreme north-west Mexico (Baja and Sonora), California, Arizona, New Mexico and extreme south-west Texas in the south to British Columbia, Mackenzie, Saskatchewan and Alberta in the north<sup>1</sup>. In winter, it regularly occurs from Mexico south to western Costa Rica<sup>1</sup>. Individuals occasionally winter in southern parts of the breeding range and, more rarely, winter vagrants are reported in Gulf and Atlantic coastal states of the USA<sup>1</sup> and in Panama<sup>6</sup>. There are two records for Cuba, one in January and the other unspecified<sup>2</sup>, a record for the Bahamas<sup>1,4</sup>, and two records in Hispaniola<sup>3</sup>. There are no South American records<sup>6</sup>, and neither has it been previously recorded from the Lesser Antilles<sup>4</sup> or Netherlands Antilles<sup>7</sup>.

While surveying birds on the morning of 5 July 2001, at the tiny fishing community of Playa Frans, Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles, we identified a breeding-plumaged male Western Tanager when, apparently attracted to some pooled fresh water, it landed on the flat roof of a small structure beside a house. The bird was c.10 m from us at eye level when first noticed. It was very skittish and, when we attempted to photograph it, immediately flew to a small, densely foliated tree c.20 m to the south of the community. We spent the next 90 minutes attempting to photograph the bird but caught only two brief glimpses in flight in the same general area.

We returned that evening at c.18h00 and, after at least 30 minutes, succeeded in relocating the bird feeding in bushes by the roadside. We observed it for approximately 15 minutes; during this time, we acquired four identifiable photographs that clearly show the field marks of a breeding-plumaged male Western Tanager (Fig. 1). Photographs were taken with an Olympus D460 digital camera through the right objective of a pair of Swarovski EL 10x42 binoculars.

The individual had a reddish head and throat; pale-coloured, thick *Piranga*-type bill; bright lemon-

yellow underparts, rump and uppertail-coverts and nape; black back and tail; black wings with yellow shoulder bar; white wingbar, and white outer edges to the tertials. There are no other species with such plumage that could be confused.

During our evening observations, it actively fed on insects in the low thorn scrub common in the area, sometimes flying to the ground in search of prey. As previously noted, it was very shy and difficult to approach closely. While attempting to relocate the bird in the morning and evening, we noted various other species, all common Bonaire residents, feeding around several houses and buildings where fishing gear and probably fish remains were scattered. These included numerous Black-faced Grassquit *Tiaris bicolor* and Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*, and smaller numbers of Troupial *Icterus icterus*, Tropical Mockingbird *Mimus gilvus* and Yellow Oriole *Icterus nigrogularis*. Given this we suspect that insects (and perhaps other food supplies) were more abundant in and around the community, which may account for the presence of the tanager at this location.

This constitutes the first record of Western Tanager for the Netherlands Antilles and South America as defined by Ridgely & Tudor<sup>6</sup>. It was c.5,900 km from its nearest breeding areas in west Texas and c.1,600 km from its occasional wintering range in west Panama. We surmise that this individual probably arrived on Bonaire during the most recent spring or fall migration and did not attempt to return north thereafter.

### Acknowledgements

We extend our grateful thanks to the Buddy Dive Resort and Carol Bradovchak for their friendly assistance during our stay on Bonaire. Also, thanks to local birder Jerry Ligon for ongoing discussions about the birds of Bonaire and to Jackie Cerratani for assistance in translating the Spanish summary.

## References

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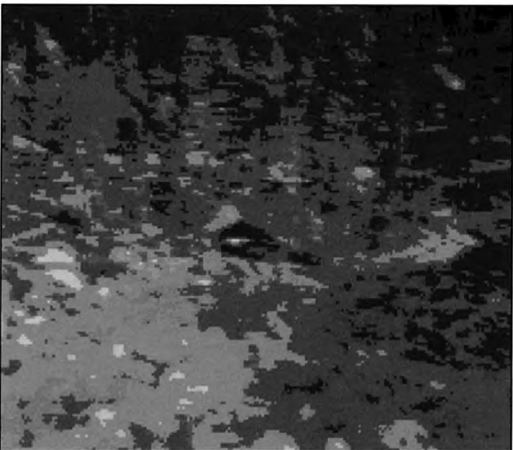


Figure 1. Four digital photos of male Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana*, Playa Frans, Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles, 5 July 2001 (Jeffrey V. Wells)

## A note from *Cotinga* 19: 14, 2003

### Western Tanager photographs

In *Cotinga* 18, the photos on p. 97 of the male Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana* did not reproduce as we had hoped; indeed, many readers may have been hard-pressed to identify the bird as a tanager! As the originals do clearly show a male Western Tanager, we have given interested readers the option of viewing them in colour on the Internet. Visit the NBC home page ([www.neotropicalbirdclub.org](http://www.neotropicalbirdclub.org)) and follow the links via *Cotinga* 18 to

[www.neotropicalbirdclub.org/feature/cotinga18/westerntanager.html](http://www.neotropicalbirdclub.org/feature/cotinga18/westerntanager.html)

<Note by SMS: as of 20 January 2016 the link to the “feature” was not working. The color images are therefore reproduced below.>



**Figure 1.** Four digital photos of male Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana*.  
Playa Frans, Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles, 5 July 2001 (Jeffrey V. Wells)