

Observations of Three-toed Woodpeckers in an Adirondack Bog with Notes on Plumages. In the township of Inlet, Hamilton County, there is a sphagnum bog in which I found both species of three-toed woodpeckers in October, 1969. I visited the bog in the fall of 1970 and 1971, and in the summer of 1971 and 1972, to continue my observations. The area is a flat grassy plain of about fifty acres with a small pond at its head and a small stream (Eagle Creek) running through the center of the bog. Spruce and tamarack encircle the bog; many of these trees were dead due to high water levels caused by beaver dams. On the higher slopes above the bog were large stands of spruce, white pine, balsam and a few hemlock and some hardwood trees. The three-toed woodpeckers shared the bog area with such northern species as Gray Jays, Olive-sided Flycatchers, Boreal Chickadees, Rusty Blackbirds and Lincoln's Sparrows.

On June 3, 1972 Paul De Benedictis and I found a male Northern Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides tridactylus*) and a nesting pair of Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers (*Picoides arcticus*). The hole of the latter was about 17 feet above the bog in a dead conifer. The adults were feeding young at this nest on June 17, and were photographed by Dorothy Crumb. Returning on July 1 and 2 with John Bull, we found five *tridactylus* around the bog and had an excellent view of a pair feeding a nestling that appeared nearly ready to leave the nest hole. This appears to be the first known breeding record for the species in New York State in fifteen years and the only known state nest with a definite date for nestlings, according to Bull (verbal comm). This nest hole, too, was 17 feet above the bog and was in a dead spruce. Old three-toed nest holes (identified by the beveled lower half of the hole) ranged from 4 to 30 feet above the bog. Both adult *tridactylus* at this nest were very black-backed birds with only a trace of white flecking on the back and might easily have been mistaken for *arcticus*, had we not had close observations.

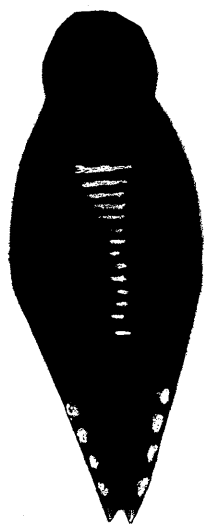
On previous visits to the bog I had numerous sightings of both species. Some individuals were in plumages which one does not find depicted in the field guides. I saw several *tridactylus* which were only partially barred on the back, others with only a few white flecks. I found a breeding pair of *arcticus*, one of which had two large white spots on the upper back.

On July 6, 1972 Dr. W. Earl Godfrey of the National Museum of Canada permitted me to examine the skins of *Picoides tridactylus bacatus* taken in Quebec. This is the same subspecies as the Adirondack population. These skins and the Adirondack birds that I have observed, were very similar. Both ranged from fairly well-barred-back birds to birds with only scant flecking. Most of the skins had backs that were only partially barred or were flecked down the center of the back. While *arcticus* has white outer tail feathers, *tridactylus* usually has barred outer tail feathers. Dr. Lester Short informed me that there are variant specimens of *tridactylus* at the American Museum of Natural History with the white outer tail feathers.

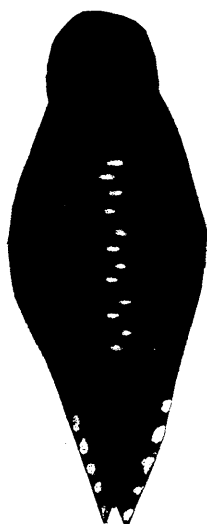
Dr. Godfrey once collected what he thought to be a first record of *tridactylus* for Nova Scotia, but on examining the bird in the hand he found it to be *arcticus* with a few white feathers on the back. The specimen is in the Ottawa museum. Upon examination, I noted that this bird had a few all-white feathers on the back, whereas *tridactylus* tends to have white on the feather tips only, producing the barred effect.

This "spotted" *arcticus* was similar to the individual I saw at Inlet, New York. It appears that identification of three-toed woodpeckers is not as "cut and dried" as one might assume from the field guides as the following sketches show. One final word of caution — the outer tail feathers are best seen when the tail is spread and very often difficult to see in the field.

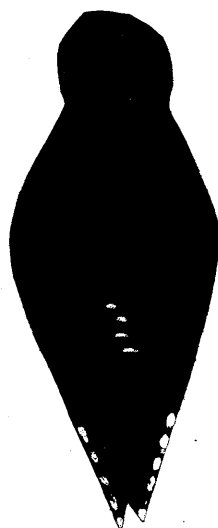
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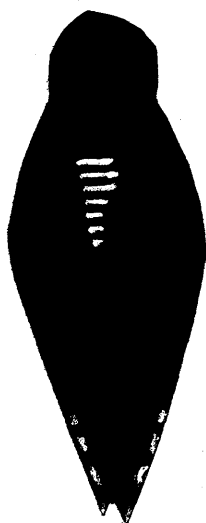
Tridactylus



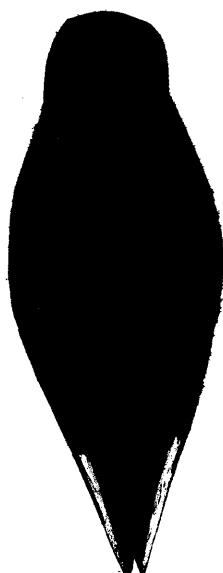
Tridactylus



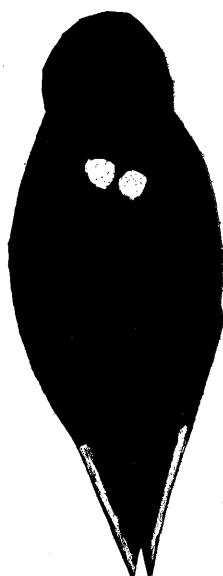
Tridactylus



Tridactylus



Arcticus



Arcticus

BACKS OF THREE — TOED WOODPECKERS