



Painted Redstart

Dansville, N. Y.

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PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEW YORK STATE RARITIES

35. PAINTED REDSTART

ROBERT SPAHN

Charles and Mary Dilgard of Dansville, Livingston Co., have been feeding birds for some forty years. On 14 December 1979, they saw a bird at their feeder that was totally unfamiliar to them. It returned on 22 December, again on Christmas, and daily thereafter. Doing a little research, the Dulgards finally were able to identify the bird as a Painted Redstart (*Myioborus pictus*), never previously recorded in New York State.

They then alerted John W. Brown, who writes a weekly birding column in a Rochester newspaper. On 6 January 1980, Mr. Brown confirmed the identification, photographed the bird, and then, after carefully explaining to the Dulgards the probable response, spread the news of the spectacular visitor. The rest is history, well-documented by local TV and national news coverage.

By 25 January, there had been over 750 visitors signed into the Dulgards' guest book, some from as far away as Chicago. There were many more who watched from their cars and then left. Throughout, the Dulgards were perfect hosts, inviting all in to sit and wait over a cup of coffee, or simply to watch and wait in comfort. Virtually all saw the bird, but on 25 January, the group waited in vain.

The following day, Mary Dilgard found bits and pieces of the bird under some bushes next to the house. Was it the victim of the visiting Sharp-shinned Hawk, or did it fall prey to one of the multitude of neighborhood cats? Whichever, it was a sad ending for this spot of brightness so far from its home range.

The Painted Redstart is actually a Central American and Mexican species. It breeds as far south as Nicaragua, and north into north-western New Mexico and west Texas. Its winter range is not much different, with sporadic occurrences in southern California and southern Arizona.

The appearance in Dansville is the fifth record east of the Mississippi River. The other four are as follows:

18 Oct. 1947	Marblehead Park, Massachusetts
22 April 1965	Madison, Wisconsin
15 Nov. to 22 Nov. 1970	Cleveland, Ohio
9 Nov. 1971	Ontario, Canada

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