

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Unusual Plumage Coloration of a Scarlet Tanager: On 16 July 1981, while surveying one of my blocks (6197D) in the Township of Chazy, Clinton County for the New York State Breeding Bird Atlas Project, I observed a male Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*) with unusual plumage coloration. My first impression was of a male Western Tanager. However, at this date the bird was seen only for a short period of time at a considerable distance in the tops of some tall trees, and evening was rapidly approaching. Returning to the same area at an earlier hour on 17 July, I was able to observe the bird under improved conditions.

The description of the bird is as follows. The head and throat were reddish-orange, not the brilliant scarlet of a male Scarlet Tanager. The wings and tail were black. The rest of the body exhibited coloration similar to a female Scarlet Tanager, dull yellow-green above and a dull yellow below. The yellow was not the brilliant yellow as in the female Western Tanager. No wing bars were present as in the Western Tanager, and the bird was singing a typical Scarlet Tanager song.

Apparently there are all gradations of xanthochroism in the Scarlet Tanager. Washburn (1970, *Kingbird*, vol. 20, no. 4, p. 180) observed a bird like the one reported here except that the back also was orange. Beardslee and Mitchell (1965, *Birds of the Niagara Frontier Region*, p. 411) mention four observations between 1935-1950 of birds similar to the one I observed.

It should be noted that lack of attention to detail could result in some of these color variants being reported as Western Tanagers or exotics.

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