

IDAHO RARE BIRD REPORT FORM

Species reported:

RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKER

Reporter (**please include address, phone, e-mail**):

**Stacy Jon Peterson
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Other observers:

none (other than my 2 year old daughter!)

Date and time of record:

February 17, 2003 – 0900 hrs

Date report prepared:

March 6, 2003 – based on notes taken at the time of the sighting and subsequent research into the species complex...

Locality:

**Peterson's backyard
Mtn Home AFB, Idaho (Elmore County)**

GPS: N: 43° 03' 03", W: 115° 51' 12"

Habitat:

Landed about three feet off ground on open trunk of non-native pine tree (species unknown) in our suburban backyard.

Conditions: (weather, light, distance, optical aids, duration, etc.)

Light was good, moderate sun with patchy clouds. Observed from inside our house through screen-less window with 10X50 Bauch-and-Lomb Elite binoculars for approximately two minutes, during which time it worked its way up the tree and fed at sapsucker wells drilled on the sides of the trunk. Distance, about 60 feet without any obstructions.

Description of bird(s): (size, colors, all field marks observed, field marks not seen)

The bird was clearly a sapsucker with the nice vertical white wing patch on the side. The back was rather dark, with limited whitish flecking down the central back. Closer examination with binoculars showed that the red head had a white patch extending partway down the side of the neck from the base of the bill, and a hint of black around the auriculars. The nape was also smudged blackish, with rosy-red tones.

Behavior of bird(s): (songs, calls, interactions with other birds)

The bird did not vocalize or interact with other birds, but did appear to feed at sapsucker wells in the host tree (non-native pine).

List similar species and how you eliminated them:

The bird was immediately determined to be a woodpecker by its posture and feeding style on the trunk of the tree. It was further determined to be a sapsucker by the white vertical stripe on the side (wing patch...). This and the checkered black/white back eliminate Red-headed Woodpecker – the only other woodpecker with an entirely red head. One must always be cautious about possible hybrid Red-naped / Red-breasted sapsuckers, but my understanding based on photos of “known” hybrids in California and elsewhere is that a red head this extensive, including the entire crown, forehead, and throat (and extending down onto the breast as it did in this bird) supports pure Red-breasted Sapsucker.

What is your experience with this or similar species?

I have lived and birded actively for several years in California where both Red-breasted and Red-naped Sapsuckers are frequently observed, and have good experience with both. If I were in California, I would not hesitate to call this bird Red-breasted Sapsucker; I recognize the relative rarity and the significance of such a call in Idaho, but I am convinced that this is still the correct identification. My feeling based on the hue and extent of the red hood, the white flecking on the back (instead of yellowish), and the dark auriculars and nape is that this Red-breasted Sapsucker is of the southern “daggetti” subspecies; perhaps a female. This species breeds as far north as southern Oregon, and is apparently the more migratory of the two races.

Were photos obtained? **(please enclose if possible)**

No photos were obtained.

NOTE: On December 7, 2003 an identical sapsucker returned to our yard, and THIS time my wife Laura and I were able to get 32 photos of varying quality and a couple minutes of 8 mm video. This sighting will be written up and submitted as a second record, although I am strongly suspicious that it is the same "returnee" bird that was viewed earlier this year (last winter season; February 17, 2003).