

Sept 2005

It all started in the spring sighting of 2004 with the sighting of a pair of brightly colored different birds.

At the time, this non-birder believed that they were some-one's caged birds that had been released.

Several more sightings that spring and into the summer led my non-birding twin brother to finally tell me about these birds in the spring of this year after he once again saw them in May.

He described them by size and coloration. This pair was in a timber area North of Denison, Iowa on a private cabin area owned by my brother as a week-end get-away at the end of a long abandon { 40 years } dirt road.

With trees along both sides of the trail {no longer a real road} whenever it rained, it would take several days to dry out enough to allow one to drive in and out.

The timbered location was comprised of mixed hard wood trees, some larger mature trees, much dense underbrush, and small trees, with some open spaces.

I didn't want to identify the birds for my brother, but instead told him to look into the two bird field guides I had given him a few years before and see if he could find "his" birds.

It didn't take him long before he was calling me once again to say he had indeed found them. He then said they were the most beautiful birds he had ever seen in the wild.

I was still skeptical that he had a pair of Painted Bunting and arranged several week-end trips to attempt to see and photograph these birds.

On the third try we both saw the pair on the night of June 16<sup>th</sup>. 2005 at about 8:45 p.m. just before sunset. They flew into a small clearing in front of the cabin, not enough light for good photos and before you could really say there they are, both birds were gone.

They were in front of us for maybe 5 to 8 seconds at 15 yards. I fixed my binoculars on the brightly colored male and observed his sparrow size and his coloration. With a blue head, red under its neck and belly, green over its back, but what stood out also, was his red eye ring. The female was mostly green and looked a pale

green in the evening light. I did not have time to study her, before they both took off.

Now a believer, I spent several other late afternoon and early evening trying to get photos of this pair.

Just after the June 16<sup>th</sup> sighting, I e-mailed several people asking about the possibility of Painted Bunting nesting in Iowa. Everyone I e-mailed said little or no sighting in Iowa and no nesting ever recorded.

I also e-mailed Ric Zarwell on June 17<sup>th</sup> to tell him and to seek his help in getting them documented.

Stan Buman was also with me when my brother told us about his sightings. We agreed that with several more eyes and spending an evening with an overnight and a morning we may have a better chance of seeing the buntings.

Working with Ric's timetable and Stan, we decided on an overnight on July 15<sup>th</sup> and morning of July 16, 2005. Ric asked if he might be able to bring another good birder along. Ric brought Danny Akers with him.

We had a couple of weeks of very hot humid Iowa temperatures and that Friday night July 15<sup>th</sup> was another hot one.

We did not see the pair again that night or the following morning.

One additional sighting was made prior to our over night try by my brother, as he saw the pair again on June 26, again in the late afternoon-evening.

All together the birds were seen four times in 2005 and three times in 2004. No additional sightings were made after the June 26<sup>th</sup> 2005 date.

The location is hard to get into and out of, especially if it rains. Added to that, is that its use, is controlled as a week-end escape from the business world by my twin brother and is not open to the public.

I have impressed upon my brother, that if they should return next spring, we really need to get this pair documented. I will be seeking help from a few birders that would have the time to help

document this pair of Painted Buntings in Crawford County, Iowa  
next spring.

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