

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck
29 May 1987
nw of Boone, Boone Co., IA
*Steven R. Espeland
IBL 57:119; 58:75; 65:83, P-0223

Record Number: 87-13
Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATION

Steven R. Espeland

PHOTOGRAPHS

Steven R. Espeland, P-0223

REFERENCE

Field Reports: IBL 57:119

Records Committee: IBL 58:75; 64:69, 65:83

VOTE: 1-III, 1-V, 5-VI

VI. Until we have more information on the origin of these occasional birds in the Midwest, the origin of this particular bird is suspect.

VI. No problem with ID. At the present we are treating possible escapes as VI. I would favor a relook at our policy for such species.

VI. I think we should request documentations on this type of record so that we keep as complete a sighting record as possible on possible escapees. I concur with Iowa Birds on this one. I find it impossible to not vote this record a VI unless we can prove this bird is a natural vagrant and not a released or escaped individual since it does occur with regularity incaptivity.

VI. I believe the ID is correct but can't rule out possibility that this was likely an escaped bird.

VI. Nothing to confirm it as a wild bird. Not as solid as captured bird which showed no signs of feather damage from captivity and was still rejected.

III. I lean toward accepting this record, even though it represents the first acceptable state record, for the following reasons. (1) ID seems beyond doubt. (2) Since about 1970 this species has been expanding its range. (3) Texas population is migrating to some extent. Thus some movement inherent in the genetic makeup. If range expanding, then this tendency is enhanced, with most likely time for overshoots being spring migration. (4) May 8, 1977 Iowa record also fits pattern. In the same year, on May 4-17, there was a flock of 6 at Arlington, Texas, significantly north of usual range.

V. I believe the identification. I understand the species is a frequent captive and is believed to wander rarely, unlike the far-travelling Fulvous species. The probability that it is an escape seems rather high.

REVOTE (at meeting, 14 Aug 1994): 7 A-P

IOWA BREEDING BIRD ATLAS DOCUMENTATION FORM

(Dendrocygna autumnalis)

What species? BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING DUCK How many? 1Location: County BOONE Block _____Location in detail Observed standing in shallows of \approx 0.25 A. (See map)
farm pond located on Eilene Glover acreage NW of BOONE, IOWAHabitat? Farm pond w/random stands of cattails, sedges etc.When? date? 5-29-87 Time: 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Approx. 1st at 6:00 p.m.Observer? Name: STEVEN R. ESPELANDAddress: 3190 NW 142ND AVE POLK CITY, IOWA 50226Telephone: 515-685-3662

Description of bird(s): include size, shape, detailed description of all parts including bill, eye, head, neck, back, wings, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet; also voice and behavior. Use additional sheets if necessary.

The bird was first observed at approximately 6:00 p.m. from a distance of approx. 75 yds while I was returning home from work. I was in my truck driving south on the gravel road immediately adjacent to the farm pond, when I noticed 9 Canada geese standing in shallow (1-2") water on the far west edge of the pond with a much smaller "heron-looking" bird standing amongst them.

I wasn't overly concerned as to the exact identity of the "heron" as there are commonly Great Blue herons, Green herons and less often, egrets feeding in the shallows on the westside of the pond.

At approximately 6:45 p.m., I was feeding shelled corn to the cattle that graze the pasture surrounding the pond, when I decided

(CONT.)
ON
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Similar species and how eliminated:

FULVUS WHISTLING DUCK - Lacks distinctive wing patches and pink bill, legs and feet.

Did anyone have reservations about identification? If so, explain:

No reservations whatsoever after Field Guides were consulted.

Viewing conditions: lighting, distance and how measured, optical equipment used. LIGHTING - EXCELLENT, FULL SUN
 DISTANCE - VERY GOOD - ESTIMATED BY OBSERVER
 OPTICAL EQUIP - BUSHNELL 7X50 BINOCULARS

Previous experience with this species and other similar ones:
 NONE, EXCEPT STUDY SKINS OBSERVED IN ORNITHOLOGY 340
 COURSE TAKEN AT IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: Give all details observed that indicate that the species breeds on the block. If nest, eggs, young, or courtship display were observed, describe in detail.

NOT APPLICABLE

If books or other birders were consulted before writing up the documentation, please list them here:

GOLDEN'S BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA

MUSGROVE'S WATERFOWL IN IOWA
 1977

BELLROSE'S DUCKS, GEESE AND SWANS OF NORTH AMERICA

DOUG REEVES, NON-GAME BIOLOGIST, IOWA DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES

How long after observation were field notes made?

The same evening that I observed it, I made notes so as to check field guide as to correct identification

How long after observation was this form completed?

10 WEEKS

to throw some corn to the geese that were still observed standing in the pond shallows. (It should be noted that these geese were probably raised locally by a man who lives approx. 1.0 mile east of this location. He also has a farm pond of similar size and lets some of his geese free fly the area and thus have been fairly common visitors to this particular pond.)

I carried my bucket of corn approx 100-150 yds to the edge of the pond and stopped within approx 50 yds of where the geese were standing. They soon got nervous and entered the deeper water. It was then that I observed the "heron-like" bird was still standing where it had been observed at 6:00 p.m. It was then standing by itself and at that time I realized that it was not a heron but a species of waterfowl. I immediately noticed the bright reddish-pink bill and pink legs showing above the waterline.

I was still approx. 50 yds. away at this time and I still couldn't positively identify the bird so I began to move toward it to get a better look since I did not have my binoculars with at this time. It immediately flushed and flew to the west and then to the south of my position. It banked east, then north and then back to the west again not more than the length of the pond (approx. 75 yds) from me. I noticed the light wing patches, the bill and leg color and that its feet were trailing when it circled me. I got a real good look at it when it banked to the north because the sun was in the western sky at this time and illuminating the bird.

- CONT

It circled just this one time and then immediately (3) 87-13 landed again in another adjacent pool of water separated from the main pond by a woven wire fence. This spot was approx. 100 yds NW of my position. I especially noticed the light wing patches at this time as it was landing going away from me.

The bird also called 3 separate times during the time it flushed and was circling me, and at the time reminded me of "hoarse-high-pitched" gull-like squawks.

Still not being sure of what I was seeing, I ran back to the house to grab my binoculars, camera and tripod. I was at the house approx. 15 minutes getting my gear together and then went to return to see about getting a better look with binoculars and maybe snapping a picture if I could. When I stepped out the front door of the house, I looked to the pond with my binoculars and could see that the "duck" had returned to almost the exact spot it had been when first observed. The house sits above the level of the pond and approximately 200-250 yds south, giving a fairly good view of the west edge of the pond.

I decided to approach it from a different direction this time to make the best use of the sunlight for photography purposes. I walked the road immediately adjacent to the pond, crossed the fence when I was north of the pond and began to work myself into position.

I stayed approx. 50 yds away from the water's edge until I was immediately north of the bird. It remained standing in the same position without moving. I only had a 135 mm lens on my VIVITAR 35mm camera and tried to get as close as possible.

87-13 (4)
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I observed the bird for approximately 1 minute with binoculars at approx. 50 yds. and then I began to slowly creep forward to set up the tripod and camera. I was frequently looking through the camera to see how it looked through the lens to get the best picture I could.

When I had crept as closely as I thought I could, I slowly spread the legs on the tripod and started to kneel down to set up. It was exactly at this moment that the bird flushed and made another set of calls. The bird circled the pond one time as it had done previously and I was able to snap two photos of it. (see photos attached) as it passed overhead. It then flew SE approx. 1/4 mile then banked again back toward the pond as if it may come back to land. I hunkered down when it approached hoping it would land again but it passed over me and kept going in a North westerly direction toward the Des Moines River. The last I saw of it was when it went behind the treeline due Northwest of the pond.

Description of bird as seen by observer:

1. The bright reddish-pink bill stood out very well along with the pink legs and feet.
2. When the bird banked away from me and when it landed going away from me, the light wing patches were very distinctive.
3. I noticed its trailing feet extending beyond the margin of the tail when it passed overhead.
4. The distinction between the chestnut colored breast and black belly was easily recognizable as it passed overhead.

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8143 (5)

5. The posture of the bird was very erect as it stood in the 1-2" water.
6. The bird called each of the two times that I flushed it.

Comments about Photos

1. Taken with 35mm VIVITAR WITH 135mm lens without the aid of tripod although tripod was attached to the camera at the time.
2. Photo #1
 1. Color on bill recognizable
 2. Feet extending beyond margin of tail
 3. Distinction between breast and belly color is fuzzy but appears to be there
3. Photo #2
 1. Light wing patches fuzzy

Additional Comments

1. Observer is 100% positive about correct identification
2. I believe the bird became more nervous the second time I approached it because the 9 Canada geese had left the pond and it remained alone.

GENERAL HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION MAP

BOONE COUNTY IOWA

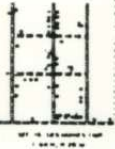
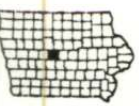
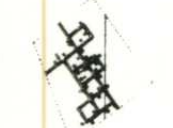
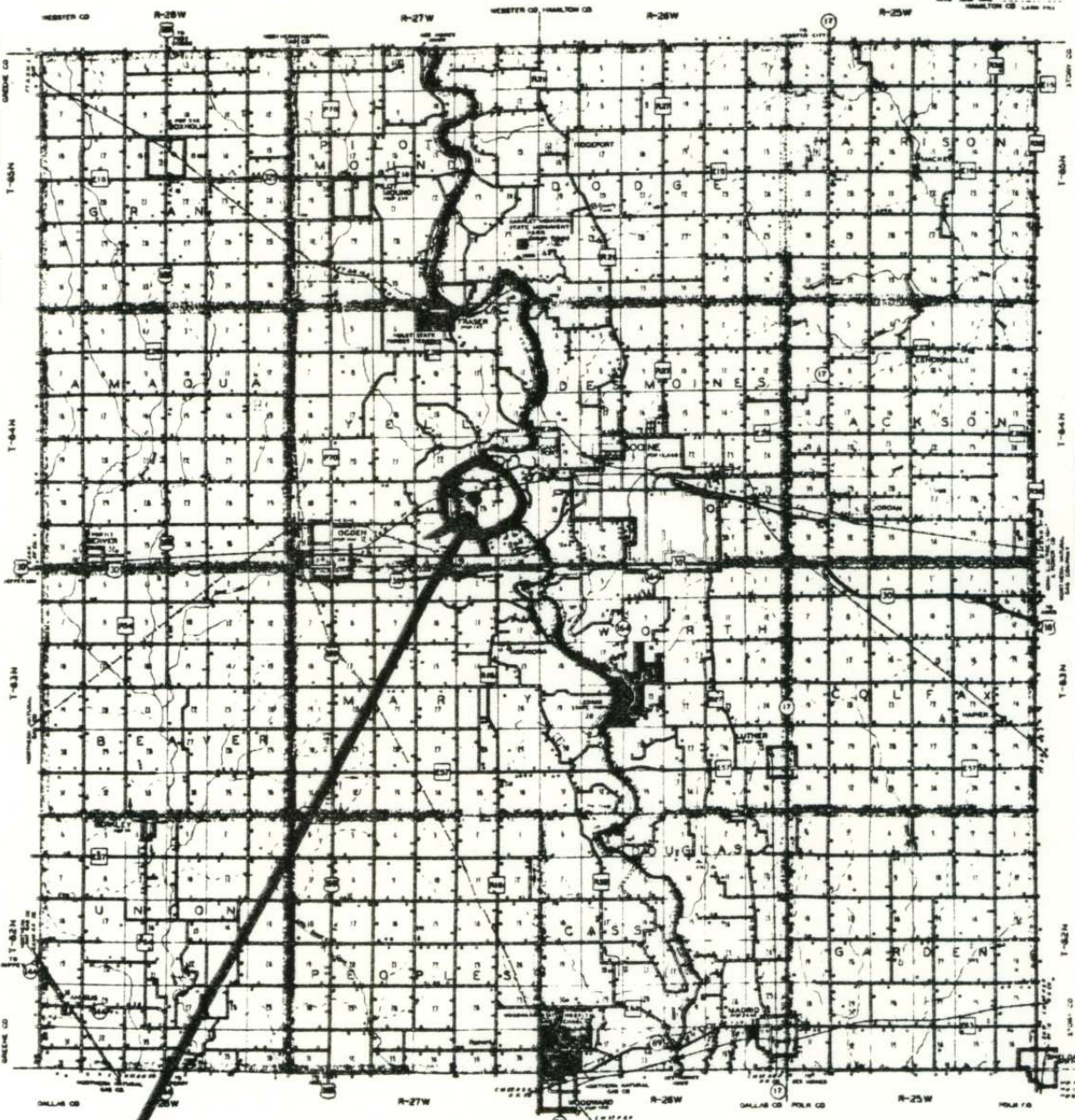
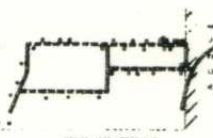
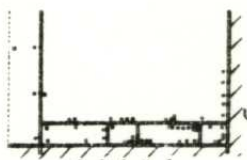
REVISED BY THE IOWA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION DIVISION OF PLANNING AND RESEARCH OFFICE OF TRANSPORTATION INVENTORY

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

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OBSERVATION SITE
OF BLACK-BELLIED
WHISTLING DUCK

22
T-26N
R-26W

BOONE COUNTY
ROAD CONDITION JANUARY 1, 1976
POLYCONIC PROJECTION

