

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Printed: 10/18/94

Eurasian Wigeon
18 Mar 1992
4 mi. s. of Ventura, Cerro Gordo Co., IA
*Pinkston
Pinkston 1993, IBL 62:75, 63:69

Record Number: 92-01
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Randall Pinkson, 526 Reno St., Iowa City, IA 52245

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 62:75

Pinkston, R. 1993. Eurasian Wigeon in Cerro Gordo County. IBL 63:23-24.

Records Committee: IBL 63:69

VOTE: 7 A-P

A-D, Excellent description separating this species from American Wigeon. Wonderful drawings left no room for doubt!

A-D, The established vagrancy pattern of the Eurasian Widgeon fits the described bird. It was seen in spring and with Am Widgeons. The bright cinnamon head with a pale buffy forehead patch and gray sides distinguish it from Am Widgeon and are diagnostic.

A-D, Drawing of two species is excellent and matches the description of the documentation for this bird.

A-D, Very good details and description provided for Eurasian Wigeon. The good drawings of the three wigeons were quite helpful.

speculum. The gray sides on the Eurasian Wigeon versus the brown sides on the two American Wigeons was distinct in flight as well. The belly was white. I did not pay particular attention to the underwing/axillaries and did not notice any difference there between the three birds.



Figure 1. Male Eurasian Wigeon with American Wigeons in Cerro Gordo County, 18 March 1992. Drawing by the author.

I left a few minutes later when the ducks swam out of view around a bend in the ditch. I immediately notified Mason City birders and the Iowa Bird Line. Unfortunately, the Eurasian Wigeon was not seen again despite extensive searching by several parties over the next few days.

The Eurasian Wigeon breeds across the northern Palearctic region from Iceland to northeastern Siberia and winters in southern Eurasia and northern Africa. It was first recorded in North America from New York in 1842. Since then it has become the most frequent Palearctic waterfowl species visiting North America. Records show a regular southward migration in the fall and winter along both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and a northward spring migration through the interior (Hasbrouck 1944). Edgell (1984) noted a marked increase in records from western North America since 1966 while those from the east remained static or declined marginally. Reasons for these recent trends are apparently independent of variations in observer factors.

The Eurasian Wigeon is considered accidental in Iowa (Kent and Bendorf 1991) with only four previously accepted records (Dinsmore et al. 1984, Bendorf and Kent 1991). A male from a flock of four was collected at North Twin Lake in Calhoun County in October 1933 (DuMont 1935). Typical of midwest sightings, the other three records involve single males associated with American Wigeons. The first was reported with minimal detail from Rock Creek Lake in Jasper County on 13 April 1972 (Maish 1972). The second was observed at Sweet Marsh in Bremer County on 15-17 April 1984 (Moore and Myers 1984) and the third at Riverton Wildlife Area in Fremont County on 6 March 1991 (Dinsmore 1992). An exceptional midwest sighting of three males and two females near Spirit Lake in Dickinson County on 1-2 April 1985 was not accepted based on concerns about the birds' origin (Kent 1986).

Thanks to Tom Kent for his assistance in the preparation of this note.

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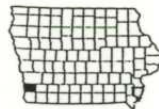
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MERLIN PREYING ON BUTTERFLIES

BARBARA L. WILSON

On 13 September 1982 at about 9:30 in the morning, I watched a Merlin hunt butterflies over our farm five miles north of Hastings in Mills County. The Merlin flew above the treetops with a flock of swallows. Occasionally, a swallow would dive on it. At times the falcon would grab at something with its talons. Initially I thought it was catching swallows, but then I realized it was catching smaller prey. Numerous large butterflies were flying near the falcon, and apparently they were the prey. As indicated by their size and the southward movement of the aggregation both high in the air and near ground level, they were monarch butterflies.



When it caught a butterfly, the Merlin would slowly drift downward with wings and tail spread. At the same time it lowered its head and brought the legs forward so it could feed. As the bird ate, butterfly wings would spiral to earth like leaves. Apparently the bird was only eating the body. The Merlin was clearly not deterred by the bad taste of the butterflies, because it caught one after another. Slowly the Merlin, swallows, and butterflies drifted away south. Birds are the main prey of Merlins but occasionally they will eat insects, especially dragonflies (Palmer, R. S. Handbook of North American Birds, vol. 5, Yale Univ. Press, 1988).

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92-01

Canada Warbler: This species was widely reported with the first on 15 Aug at Ledges S.P. (JiS). The high count was 8 at Call S.P. on 27 Aug (MCK), and the last was on 13 Sep at Iowa City (DRP).

Scarlet Tanager: The last was on 20 Sep in Wapello Co. (RLC).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: 14 were at Sweet M. in Bremer Co. on 7 Sep (DeC). An imm. male was discovered by Donna Rourick in her Atlantic backyard on 28 Nov (AMJ, *THK, *JLF--photos).

Blue Grosbeak: A probable summer resident was in Lyon Co. on 1 Aug (DCH).

Indigo Bunting: The last was on 2 Oct in Marion Co. (JLF).

Dickcissel: There was only 1 report of a single bird on 12 Oct in Boone Co. (SRL).

Rufous-sided Towhee: This species was thought to be very scarce this fall in the NW (JV).

American Tree Sparrow: The first were on 18 Oct at Saylorville Res. (THK) and 19 Oct at Union Grove S.P. (MPR).

Clay-colored Sparrow: 2 were at Moorehead P. in Ida Co. on 14 Oct, and 1 was late on 23 Nov at Union Grove S.P. (MPR--details)[2nd latest].

Field Sparrow: 2 were still at the Coralville Res. on 25 Oct (DRP).

Savannah Sparrow: 33 were seen in Cass Co. on 14 Oct (MAP).

Le Conte's Sparrow: Up to 8 were at Snake Creek M. in Greene Co. 18-26 Sep (DCP--details, THK, JLF, JDu, MPr, AMJ), and 2-12 were s. of Mason City on 7-8 Oct (CJF, JLW, RG).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow: 1 was at the Saylorville Res. on 3 Oct (BE). All other reports were of 1-3 at Snake Creek M. in Greene Co. 18-26 Sep (DCP--details, THK, JLF, JDu, MPr, AMJ).

Fox Sparrow: The first was on 4 Oct at Grammer Grove (MPR).

Lincoln's Sparrow: The first were 2 on 19 Sep at Snake Creek M. (JLF). The peak of 24 was in Ida Co. on 26 Sep (PE). The last on 28 Oct were in Ida Co. (PE).

Swamp Sparrow: 50 were at Snake Creek M. on 26 Sep (DCP).

White-throated Sparrow: The first were on 12 Sep in Johnson Co. (JLF) and on 13 Sep in Allamakee Co. (JiS).

White-crowned Sparrow: The first was on 30 Sep in Ida Co. (PE).

Harris's Sparrow: The first was on 22 Sep at Moorehead P. (PE). Single birds reported from the east were in Allamakee Co. (DeC, LAS), Johnson Co. (DRP), and Linn Co. (JBD fide DLD).

Dark-eyed Junco: 1 appeared at Trumbull L. in Clay Co. on 19 Sep (LAS)[3rd earliest]. Birds of the Oregon race were reported from Cerro Gordo Co. (RG, JLW).

Lapland Longspur: 1 was early on 6 Sep in Scott Co. (PCP)[record earliest]. There were flocks of 150-200 in Marshall Co. on 2 Nov (MPR) and Dallas Co. on 26 Nov (RLC).

Snow Bunting: The first were 2 on 27 Oct in Muscatine Co. (DCD); 29 Oct was quite early for a flock as large as 400 in Cerro Gordo Co. (CJF). Other reports from Nov were 1-4 birds in Johnson, Linn, and Marion counties.

Bobolink: 25 were thought to be migrants in Sioux Co. on 25 Sep (JV).

Western Meadowlark: 1 in Jefferson Co. on 1 Aug was considered unusual (DCP).

Yellow-headed Blackbird: The only report was of 17 at Saylorville Res. on 29 Aug (PA/RA).

Rusty Blackbird: The first were 20 on 30 Oct at De Soto N.W.R. (BKP/LJP). Other large flocks were seen on 8 Nov, with 80 at Rice L. (DeC) and 375 in Kossuth Co. (MCK).

Brewer's Blackbird: Details were provided for 13 in Cherokee Co. (DBi--details) and 2 at Red Rock Res. (MPR--details), both groups seen on 7 Nov.

Common Grackle: Large flocks were 5,000 at Fairfield on 20 Sep (DCP), and 40,000 at Rathbun Res. on 7 Nov (RLC). Single birds were still present on 23 Nov in Cass Co. (MAP), on 24 Nov in Mason City (CJF--details), and at the end of the period in Sioux Co. (JV).

Purple Finch: The first 2 appeared on 11 Sep in Clayton Co. (MPR).

Red Crossbill: The only reports were of 1 in Cherokee Co. on 18 Oct (LAS) and 3 at L. Ahquabi S.P. on 15 Nov (AMJ).

Common Redpoll: All reports were of single birds; on 1 Nov at Red Rock Res. (AMJ), on 21 Nov in Cherokee Co. (DBi), and at a Sioux Center feeder on 29 Nov (JV).

Pine Siskin: September reports were of 3 on the 19th at Hitchcock Nature A. (BKP, LJP), and 8 at Saylorville Res. on the 27th (JDu). They were considered exceptionally abundant at Sioux Center at the end of the period (JV).

American Goldfinch: 3 were still in the nest on 20 Sep at Fairfield (DCP).

Eurasian Tree Sparrow: Apparently established n. of Burlington, birds were seen there throughout the period; 2 on 27 Aug (THK, JLF), 7 Sep (THK), 2 Oct (PCP), and 20 Nov (THK).

CONTRIBUTORS

* = documentation only

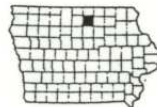
Carol A. Alexander (CAA), Fairfield; Pam Allen (PA), West Des Moines; Reid Allen (RA), West Des Moines; Dick Bierman (DBi), Cherokee; Tanya E. Bray (TEB), Bellevue, NE; Marion M. Brewer (MMB), Cherokee; Dennis Carter (DeC), Decorah; Raymond L. Cummins (RLC), Centerville; David L. Dankert (DLD), Cedar Rapids; *Jeffrey B. Dankert (JBD), La Crosse, WI; James J. Dinsmore (JJD), Ames; Dan C. Dorrance (DCD), Davenport; James Durbin (JDu), Marion; Bery Engebretsen (BE), Des Moines; Peter Ernzen (PE), Ida Grove; Carolyn J. Fischer (CJF), Mason City; James L. Fuller (JLF), Iowa City; Rita Goranson (RG), Mason City; Douglas C. Harr (DCH), Larchwood; Bill F. Huser (BFH), Sioux City; Ann M. Johnson (AMJ), Norwalk; Thomas N. Johnson (TNJ), Mystic; Matthew C. Kenne (MCK), Algona; Thomas H. Kent (THK), Iowa City; Sharon R. Laub (SRL), Rippey; *Wolfgang Oesterreich (WO), Ames; Babs K. Padelford (BKP), Bellevue, NE; Loren J. Padelford (LJP), Bellevue, NE; Marietta A. Petersen (MAP), Walnut; Peter C. Petersen (PCP), Davenport; D. Randall Pinkston (DRP), Iowa City; Diane C. Porter (DCP), Fairfield; Beth Proescholdt (BPr), Liscomb; Mark Proescholdt (MPR), Liscomb; *James E. Scheib (JES), Iowa City; Lee A. Schoenewe (LAS), Spencer; Charlotte Scott (CS), Seymour; Darrin Siefken (DSi), Tripoli; Jim Sinclair (JSi), Indianola; John Van Dyk (JV), Sioux Center; and Jan L. Walter (JLW), Mason City.

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EURASIAN WIGEON IN CERRO GORDO COUNTY

RANDALL PINKSTON

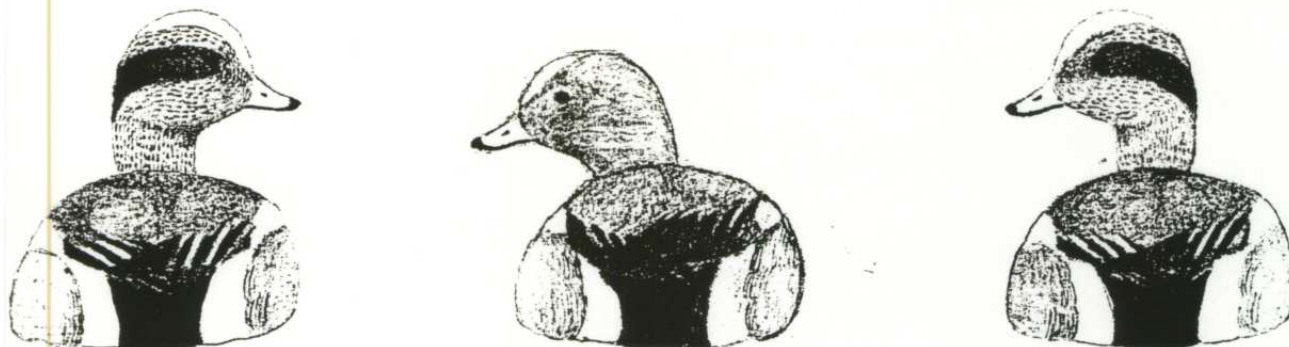
On 18 March 1992 at 11 a.m. I was birding along Cerro Gordo County Road S14 approximately four miles south of Ventura. I turned east onto County Road B43 (210th St.) and stopped the car to look at some waterfowl on an irrigation ditch crossing the field to the north.



My attention was first drawn to a large duck swimming away from me with its head turned left (Figure 1). It was flanked by two male American Wigeons that were similar in size. Its head and neck were bright cinnamon-buff, bringing to mind a male Redhead or a female merganser before I fully realized what I was viewing. But the head lacked a Redhead's rounded profile, and the color was not quite red enough. Additionally, the forehead and crown were pale buff. In other respects the bird was similar to the American Wigeons. Its petite "dabbler" bill was pale blue-gray with a black tip and edges, wrong for either Redhead or merganser. The eye appeared dark.

The breast was not seen due to the viewing angle but the sides were finely vermiculated silver-gray, distinctly different from the warm liver hue on the American Wigeons. The posterior flanks formed a broad white crescent on each side, framing the black crissum and undertail coverts. A large white patch was visible on the wing coverts. It was clearly a male Eurasian Wigeon.

Within a minute the three wigeons took off and flew in a narrow circle to the north and east before returning to the ditch. In flight, the bird was again similar in size to the American Wigeons. The striking upperwing pattern was also similar with large white patches on the wing coverts and white inner secondaries contrasting with a dark



Eurasian Wigeon

Anas penelope

Date: 18 March 1992

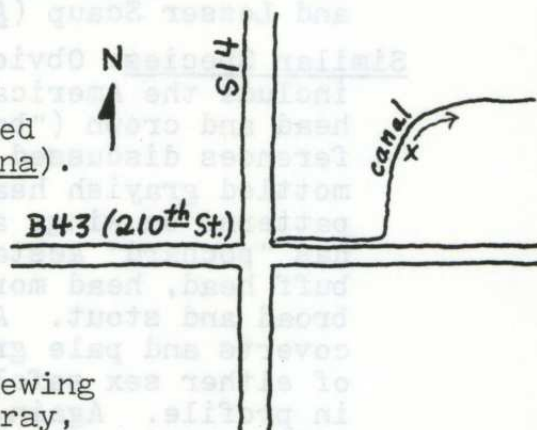
Time: Approx. 11 a.m.

Location: County Roads B43 at S14, approx. 4 miles south of
Ventura, Cerro Gordo Co., IowaDescription (see illustration):

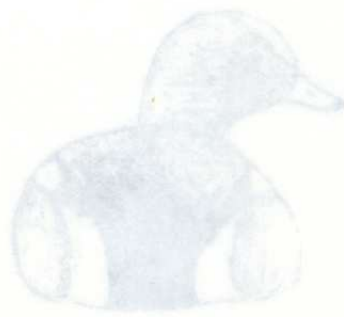
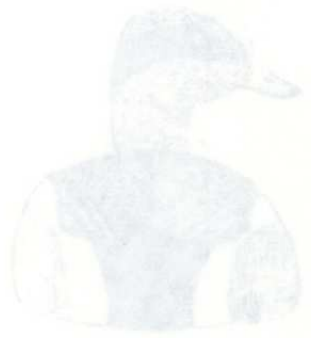
Large "dabbling duck" swimming directly away from me with head turned left. Flanked by two male American Wigeons (Anas americana). Size of American Wigeons. Head and neck bright cinnamon-buff. Forehead and crown (or "pate") a pale buffy. Bill size and shape as in American Wigeon, that is petite for a large dabbling. Tip and edges black surrounding dorsal saddle of pale blue-gray. Breast not seen due to viewing angle. Sides finely vermiculated silver-gray, distinctly different from warm liver hue of the two American Wigeons. Posterior flanks forming a broad white crescent on each side framing the jet black crissum and undertail coverts. Large white patch on wing coverts visible on swimming bird. Eye appeared dark.

In flight, again the bird was similar in size to American Wigeons. Striking upperwing pattern also similar with large white patch on wing coverts and white inner secondaries contrasting with dark speculum. The gray sides on the Eurasian Wigeon versus the warm liver sides on the two American Wigeons was distinct in flight as well. Belly white. I did not pay particular attention to the underwing/axillaries and did not notice any difference there between the three birds. Legs not really noticed. No voice heard.

Conditions: Observed for almost a minute initially swimming directly away from me on a drainage canal at 50-60 meters. The 3 wigeons then took off and made a narrow circle to the north and east, returning to the canal about 60-80 meters away. They were once again viewed for 1-2 minutes until they swam out of view around a corner in the canal to the east. Total viewing time about 3 minutes with Zeiss 10x40 and Selsi Zoom 10x-30x60 binoculars. Partly cloudy, sunny, temp. 30sF, winds N 16 mph. Scattered nearby were several



(over)



Eurasian Wigeon
Anas penelope

Mallards (Anas platyrhynchos), N. Shovelers (Anas clypeata) and Lesser Scaup (Aythya affinis).

Similar Species: Obvious differences from American Wigeon include the American's dark (green) face mask, white forehead and crown ("baldpate"), as well as those other differences discussed above. Female American has finely mottled grayish head and brownish sides, lacks striking patterns on wings and hindparts. Redhead (Aythya americana) has "pochard" gestalt with darker brick-red vs. cinnamon-buff head, head more rounded in profile, tricolored bill broad and stout. Also has relatively plain wing with gray coverts and pale gray remiges. Canvasback (Aythya valisineria) of either sex safely separable on the basis of head and bill in profile. Again, male's head is dark brick-red, back and sides whitish, lacks bold wing pattern. Female mergansers easily separable on the basis of bill alone.

Previous Experience: One previous sighting of Eurasian Wigeon, also a male with American Wigeons, at Ganado Lake in Arizona on 7 October 1979. Several years experience with many American Wigeons and the other similar species discussed in Texas, Arizona, and Iowa.

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Conditions: Observed for almost a minute initially swimming directly away from me on a drainage canal at 50-60 meters. The 3 wigeons then took off and made a narrow circle to the north and east, returning to the canal about 60-80 meters away. They were once again viewed for 1-2 minutes until they swam out of view around a corner in the canal to the east. Total viewing time about 3 minutes with 10x40 and 8x42 binoculars. Partly cloudy, sunny, temp. 50°F, winds N. 15 mph. Scattered nearby were several