

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Burrowing Owl 2. Number: 2 (1 Ad. & 1 yg)
(see notes on reverse)
3. Location SE corner of city of Sioux Center, Iowa, (Sioux County)
4. Date: August 2, 1982 5. Time Bird seen: 10:40 AM to 11:10 AM
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field): Adult--8-10 in in lenth; generally tan in color with more or less uniform "speckled" pattern of white spots over entire body. Relatively long, tannish-gray legs. Large yellow eye with very notable light stripe over eyes so that it appeared much like a "furrowed brow" ^{no ear tufts.} Standing on elevated perch (about 3 ft. above ground, in alfalfa field) in a pose with tail thrust back, rather than than down as in other owls when perched. Young on separate perch about 150 ft. away looked much like adult, but perhaps just slightly smaller and not as filled out. Plumage generally tan, with light colored breast & no distinct spotting as in adult. Wings still moulting juvenile downy feathers. Young owl made typical "bobbing" movements.
7. Description of voice, if heard: Not heard.
8. Description of behavior: Each owl was perched on a utility pedestal, in the middle of an alfalfa field desitned for housing development. Both appeared to be looking for prey.
9. Habitat - general: open farmland at edge of town.
 specific: alfalfa field w/numerous perches.
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
screech owl--shorter legs, ear tufts, nocturnal
saw whet owl--shorter, forested habitat, nocturnal
barn owl--larger, in trees or old buildings; nocturnal
short-eared owl--larger, short legs; normally seen only in winter
11. Distance (how measured)? 150 ft. (est.) 12. Optical equipment:
20 x spotting scope & 7x50 binoculars
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): sunlight bright on bird from behind & over my shoulder (left); sky clear
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
Have previously observed and photographed burrowing owls in Dakotas; familar with all local owls.
15. Other observers: Jim Stachour, Sioux Center
16. Did the others agree with your identification? Yes, but he is not experienced in bird ID & first reported owl & location to me when he did not recognize bird.
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: None.
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description
Birds of N. AM (Robbins, et al); & Peterson Field Guide to Birds of E. N.Am. (new edition)
These texts did not influence description, as all notes were written prior to field guide confirmation.
9. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? description written on note paper during observation; transferred to this form in 2 hrs.

Signature

Date: Aug. 2, 1982

City, State: Larchwood, Iowa 51241

(additional comments on reverse side)

Species: Burrowing Owl

Location: SE corner of city of Sioux Center, Iowa, (Sioux County)

Date: August 2, 1982

Upon reporting of this bird to me by telephone at 10 AM, I rushed to location, arriving at site at 10:40 AM with Mr. Jim Stachour, who had told me of the bird. He stated that there was almost always an owl visible somewhere in this field during the day, either perched on one of the utility box pedestals in place for future housing developments, or on one of street light poles. On arriving I immediately spotted one adult on utility pedestal to east. Light was wrong, but I determined it was Burrowing Owl adult at first glance. We drove around block to view with light from behind. At this time we spotted second owl, a juvenile, on adjacent utility pedestal. Both birds were then observed and compared for about 25 additional minutes. Mr. Stachour stated the birds (adults) had been there since sometime in May, and about 2 or 3 weeks ago they noticed ~~the~~ two young out with adults. Since then it has been possible to see both adults and two young together at many times, most frequently in evenings. Many people in neighborhood have enjoyed watching the owl family throughout July. I therefore must assume that this is a pair which nested in this alfalfa field and has successfully raised two young. I will visit this site again in coming weeks and attempt to photograph birds if they remain.

Doug Harr

Note - The following day (8-3-82) Mr. Stachour phoned me to say he had now seen three young with two adults. This was verified by me on 8-7-82, at which time I also secured ID photos.

Jim Stachour, Sioux Center

None.

(new edition)

City, State: Larchwood, Iowa 51201

Date: Aug. 2, 1982