

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

What species? Great Crested Flycatcher How many? 1

Location? Effigy Mounds National Monument, Allamakee County, Iowa

Type of Habitat? railroad tracks at base of river bluff (wooded) and adjacent to Mississippi River, "right-of-way" bordered by brushy growth

When? date(s): November 8, 1993 time: 10:30 to 11:00 AM

Who? your name and address: Dennis Carter, P.O. Box 531, Decorah, IA 52001
319-382-3754

Others with you: none

Others before or after you: _____

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

When I flushed this bird from one of the rails where it was perched, my first thought was a late phoebe. When I saw it through my binoculars after it perched, I realized it was too large and too contrastingly marked for a phoebe and identified it as Great Crested (catbird size) Flycatcher.

The head was gray with a crested appearance which was not always pronounced. The back was a dark brownish-gray. The wings showed chestnut (rusty) on the outer primaries in flight. The secondaries were edged in ~~rusty~~ ^{white}. The chest and throat were dark gray; the throat seemed somewhat paler in a side view. The belly was bright yellow in good light; in poorer back light, it appeared paler. The contrast between the gray breast and yellow belly was quite pronounced. When the bird was perched, the tail appeared to be dark brown but showed rusty feather edges when the bird flew. When viewed from underneath the tail was rusty (perched). The flycatcher fed ^{at first} 3 or less above the ground, sometimes on the ground, except for two brief forays ^{of about 30'} into trees on the nearby bluff. It occasionally was seen catching some kind of large insect, possibly crickets or grasshoppers. When perched on a post it assumed an erect flycatcher-type pose.

Similar species; how eliminated: I considered the possibility that this might be an Ash-throated Flycatcher, a species that was recorded in Minnesota in Nov, 1990. The bird I saw lacked the pale coloration and slim appearance of Ash-throated. I feel that the bright yellow belly, contrasting with the dark gray chest eliminates Ash-throated. At no time during my observation, did I feel that this bird might be an Ash-throated Flycatcher.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? _____
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.

clear day with excellent light which was at my back when I first observed the bird, no wind. Distance was 20 to 40 yards (stepped off). I had good views of both the upper and under parts of the bird. I was using 8X40 binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I have seen this species regularly (in summer) for 30+ years. It is a common summer resident in areas that I regularly cover in NE Iowa. I observed Ash-throated Flycatcher regularly during 10 years spent in Arizona, Colorado, and Utah.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Peterson's "A Field Guide to the Birds (Eastern)", Nat. Geographic "Field Guide to the Birds of North America", and Robbins' "Birds of North America."

How long before field notes made? on site this form completed? same day as observation

The bird did not appear to be sick or injured.
Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

The bird gave no call of any kind. I left the bird briefly and walked on up to the base of Hanging Rock, relocated it on my return trip. It was not with other birds.