

Greater Prairie-Chicken
27 Aug 1997
Little Spirit Lake, Dickinson Co., IA
*Warren L. Baker, *Karen Baker
IBL 68:12, 87

Record Number: 97-39
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATIONS

Warren L. Baker, 23480 100th St., Spirit Lake 51360 [2/15/98]
Karen Baker, 23480 100th St., Spirit Lake, 51360

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 68:12
Records Committee: IBL 68:87

VOTE: 5 NA, 2 A-D

A-D, Description of tail and breast rule out other possibilities.

A-D, Heavy barred chest and short squared off tail should eliminate other species. Where did they come from?

NA, While the habitat and location are probably better for chickens than grouse, the description does not eliminate Ruffed Grouse. The raised crest certainly brings to mind a grouse. I am uncertain if Gr. Prairie-Chicken has this characteristic. A more concrete description of the tail would have helped this record.

NA, The slim description (smaller than hen pheasant, square dark tail, barred breast) looks pretty solid, but I'd like some indication that these birds aren't from some game farm or exotic bird breeder. The date is a little early from the Dakotas and NW Minn.

NA, The barring and square tail pattern would seem to indicate this species and I have no way of saying that it is not. I would like to know if these birds were spotted by anyone else or whether any have been introduced in Dickinson Co. or nearby Minnesota. Six birds at this time of year would certainly suggest nesting. My doubts hinge on the lack of previous experience and unlikely natural re-occurrence of nesting of this species in northwest Iowa.

NA, The documentation is compelling for Greater Prairie-Chicken but does not give enough supporting details of the rest of the birds plumage to say that this was that species beyond a reasonable doubt in my mind. What was the pattern of the mottling, what color of brown, color of wings, tail, body, shape of body, etc.

NA, Not sure that Gray Partridge eliminated, although "barred chest" is suggestive of PC. 'Small size' does not suggest PC, however.

97-39

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species How many? *Greater Prairie Chickens 6-7*
 Location? *Southwest side of Little Spirit Lake, Dickinson County, IA*
 Type of habitat? *Mown hay field*
 When? date(s): *8-27-97* Time: *11:45 a.m.*

Who? your name and address

Karen Baker
23480 100th St - Spirit Lake, Iowa 51360
 Others with you *Hubbard - Wamen Baker*

Others before and after you - *none*

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

behavior. *I saw 6 or seven brown mottled birds in a grassy field. The first one I spotted was sitting on a large round hay bale. They were smaller than a pheasant with a short square tail. The head was chicken-like with the feathers of the head sort of raised up and appeared sort of squared + flat. The chest was heavily barred. The birds on the hay bale eventually moved down in the grass with the others and they scurried away through the grass.*

Similar species and how eliminated: *Female pheasant -- tail short and square; also too small for pheasant.*

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification?

If yes, explain: *No - used several field guides including the Peterson, Golden and Stokes.*

Viewing conditions: lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: *Good lighting, used 10x50 binoculars - watched at length from car; approximately 100' away.*

Previous experience with this species and similar ones:

Had not identified this bird before.

References and persons consulted before writing description: *None*

How long before field notes made? *Immediately*
 this form completed? *6 weeks*

Mail original form to field editor for this season.