

Long-billed Curlew
22 May 1995
Black Hawk L., Sac Co., IA
*Ernzen

Record Number: 95-14
Classification: A-D

IBL 65:73, 66:96; Ernzen 1996

DOCUMENTATION

Peter Ernzen, 401 Taylor, Ida Grove 51445 [*8/14/95]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 65:73

Records Committee: IBL 66:96

Ernzen, P. 1996. Long-billed Curlew in Sac County. IBL
66:137-138.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Size and cinnamon wing lining conclusive.

A-D, Good description and analysis. Call and cinnamon wing
linings leave no doubt.

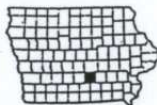
A-D, The large size, bill size, cinnamon wing linings, and
call are sufficient to exclude Whimbrel -- a species that would
be much more likely at this date.

95-14

BULLOCK'S ORIOLE AT RED ROCK RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE AND JIM SINCLAIR

On 3 September 1995, while birding the large point area on the west side of Whitebreast Bay on the south side of Red Rock Reservoir in Marion County, we saw an adult male Bullock's Oriole. We found the bird 50 feet up in the top of a tree at about 8:35 a.m. and watched it for less than a minute. The bird then flew a short distance, and we were unable to relocate it. Although the observation was brief, the bird was seen well and under good viewing conditions. Several Baltimore Orioles in the same general area allowed for comparisons. The bird had the typical black and orange color pattern of an oriole. The throat was solid black, extending downward to the breast in a broad bib. The face was bright orange with a narrow black line through the eye and a black crown. The mantle and wings were also black except for a large, white patch on the secondary coverts. The remainder of the underparts and rump were orange. The tail was not seen well but appeared dark from our angle. These features are those of an adult male Bullock's Oriole. We also considered the possibility of a Baltimore X Bullock's Oriole hybrid. Such birds usually have a less distinct white wing patch (sometimes irregularly marked with black) and a more muted face pattern that lacks a dark line through the eye.



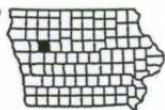
Recently, the American Ornithologists' Union split the Northern Oriole into two species: Baltimore Oriole and Bullock's Oriole. Baltimore Oriole is a common migrant and summer resident throughout Iowa. The only record of a Bullock's Oriole in Iowa is one at Clemons in Marshall County on 12 May 1993 (*Iowa Bird Life* 63:80).

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LONG-BILLED CURLEW IN SAC COUNTY

PETER ERNZEN

On the evening of 22 May 1995, my son Joshua and I were bird watching at the settling pond on the southeastern corner of Black Hawk Lake in Sac County. On the mudflat in front of us we could see several hundred gulls and terns. As we approached them, an alarm call was sounded and suddenly these birds and a smaller number of shorebirds were in the air.



As the birds circled us, several large shorebirds fell into line and were identified as Marbled Godwits. A large bird approached and attempted to fall in line with the godwits. Although the bird looked similar to the godwits in that it was tannish brown in color and possessed cinnamon wing linings, its large body size, 15 to 20 percent larger than the godwits, and long decurved bill that looked to be at least twice as large as that of the godwit, identified this bird as a curlew. The birds flew in formation for a few minutes before flying directly overhead and disappearing to the north.

After returning to my car I wrote down my observations and began the process of identification. Bristle-thighed Curlew and Whimbrel were eliminated by body size, bill length, and coloration. The Far Eastern Curlew possesses a long decurved bill,

but its small size and white wing linings eliminated this possibility. The Eurasian Curlew, though the right size, has white wing linings and white rump, which eliminated it. The clinching field mark was the ascending killdeer-like "curlee" call that was heard repeatedly as this bird was in the air. The above features combined with the call confirmed my suspicion that this was a Long-billed Curlew.

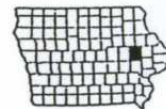
Upon returning home, I made several phone calls to report my finding. Unfortunately by the time I arrived home it was dark and anyone interested in searching for the bird would have to wait until the next day. Though several people looked for the bird, it was not relocated. Long-billed Curlews once nested on the prairies of northwestern Iowa but disappeared in the late 1800s. This is only the fourth record of this species in Iowa since 1960, all from western Iowa.

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CLARK'S GREBE AT PLEASANT CREEK

CHRIS EDWARDS

When I arrived at Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area in Linn County on the morning of 12 November 1995, Alan Martin of Cedar Rapids was searching for a large grebe which he had observed minutes earlier. We quickly relocated the bird and, during the next hour, we identified it as an adult Clark's Grebe based primarily on bill coloration and facial pattern.



The bird had a very long, slender neck and in overall size was approximately the same length as a nearby male White-winged Scoter. The bright orange-yellow bill was long, thin, and straight. The forehead, crown, nape, and hindneck were black, with the black of the crown extending down the side of the face to the top edge of the eye. The eyes were reddish and surrounded by white except for the top edge. The lores were bright white with a thin dark line underneath between the bill and the eye (see Fig. 1). The back was dark gray with some white flecking, and the sides were light gray with much white mottling. The throat, breast, and belly were white. The uppersides of the wings were dark gray with white wing stripes.

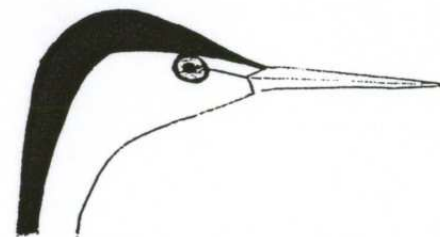


Fig. 1. Clark's Grebe, Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area, 12 November 1995. Drawing by Chris Edwards.

I observed the bird for several hours as it alternated periods of resting with active swimming and diving. It was seen by many other birders and was last reported on 14 November. There are five other Iowa records for Clark's Grebe since 1983, including three in May and one each in October and November (Dinsmore, *Iowa Bird Life* 65:86, 1995).

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95-14

On May 22 my son Joshua and I were birding the dredge pond area southeast of Blackhawk Lake in Sac Co. We arrived at 7:35 pm, hoping to view some shorebirds that had been there on the previous Saturday and Sunday. The sky was overcast, but sufficient lighting existed to identify numerous dunlins and sanderlings that were present on the Southeast mudflat.

Scanning to the north mudflat with my Bushnell 7 x 35 binoculars, I spotted what looked like several marbled godwits, and several gull and tern species. Hoping to see a common tern, my son and I walked the road below the diked dredged pond. We stopped several times to look over the edge of the dike. On the far north end of the pond we stopped one more time (I estimated that it took us 10 - 15 minutes to arrive at this location). I was just beginning to scan the gulls and terns, when one of the gulls saw me and let out with an alarm call. Among all the gulls and terns, I spotted 6 marbled godwits.

While looking at the brown underside and cinnamon wing linings of the godwits, I heard a strange but familiar call. Suddenly a seventh "godwit" flew up to join the other 6. I immediately noticed that this godwit was about 15 - 20 percent larger than the other godwits. The next thing that caught my attention was the long down curved bill. The bill looked to be 1 1/2 to 2 times as long as that of the godwits. The bird was seen from below and looked similar to the godwits in that it was a brownish colored bird with cinnamon wing linings. The familiar call I heard earlier was coming from the new bird. The call was a high pitched ascending "kilee", repeated often while the bird was in flight. This bird looked like and sounded like a long billed curlew - a bird I had seen several years before in the Badlands of South Dakota.

The bird flew around for several minutes, before departing north. While in flight the bird was about 25 - 50 feet in the air. The bird was any where from 300 to 100 feet from me - distance is estimated. When the bird flew away, it flew directly over me.

My son and I walked around the dike and returned about 45 minutes after we had started. Once there, I wrote down my observations and tried to identify the bird we had just seen. Whimbrel was eliminated by size, color and bill size. The whimbrel should have been slightly smaller to about the same size as the marbled godwits. The brown body and cinnamon wing linings did not fit whimbrel either. The bill size is variable with shorebirds, however the great length of the bill was more suggestive of the long billed curlew. The call heard does not fit the description for whimbrel in my National Geographics Field Guide to Birds of North America. Three outside possibilities the far Eastern curlew, Eurasian curlew, and bristle thighed curlew were eliminated as well. The far Eastern curlew size is about the same as that of the marbled godwit. The bird also has white wing linings with dark barring. The barring would be hard to

95-14

see, however the lighter color would be distinguishable. The Eurasian curlew was eliminated because this bird would have a white rump, and white wing linings. The bird I saw in flight turned and twisted. I did not notice any white markings on the rump. The bristle thighed curlew is much more similar to the smaller whimbrel and would be eliminated by small size, shorter bill and call - "chu-a-wut".

Upon my return home, I contacted several bird watchers and called the birdline. Unfortunately, the bird was not seen in subsequent days.

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