

Greater Prairie-Chicken

Record Number: 92-34

11 Dec 1992

Classification: A-S

4 miles west of Larchwood, Lyon Co., IA

*J. Dinsmore

IBL 63:69, Eby 1993

DOCUMENTATION

Jim Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010 (6/30/93)

SPECIMEN

Iowa State University #2578

REFERENCES

Records Committee: IBL 63:69

Eby, M. 1993. Greater Prairie-Chicken in Lyon County. IBL 63:55.

VOTE: 4 A-S, 2 A-D, 1 NA

NA, I think if we have certain criteria to operate by we should follow unless amended. It seems we have only a small part of a specimen to work with but if it is possible to identify I will accept on a later round.

A-S, The reintroduction of Greater Prairie Chicken into southwest Iowa has complicated the validity of sightings of wild birds. This one, however, seems to fit an established pattern of vagrancy. Although Jim did not say so specifically, I am assuming that this partial specimen will be preserved/photographed so that committee members could see it at some time in the future if they so wished.

A-S, Rule should be amended.

A-S, I saw the specimen, but take Dinsmore's description as definitive. The location and date suggest a migrant from Minnesota.

A-D, The description is excellent for Greater Prairie Chicken. I feel that we should not amend the criteria as set forth by our present rules. Dinsmore is a past committee member but we should be consistent with the past review until we can discuss this. Could the specimen be available for review of the records committee or some members of the committee at the Spring I.O.U. meeting or at some other such meeting, along with specimens mentioned by Dinsmore in his letter of January 4, 1993.

A-S, Good detailed observation and discussion of specimen by an excellent ornithologist determines this to be a Greater Prairie Chicken. The observer is a former Records Committee member. I feel the criteria for specimen should be amended in this case and that a current Records Committee member does not need to view this specimen to be accepted as a specimen by the Records Committee.

REVOTE: 4 A-S, 3 A-D

A-D [changed to A-S at meeting of 15 May 1993]

A-D, At the peril of forcing another revote on this, the following question comes to mind. Who saw what? Did the Records Committee member who saw the specimen compare the pile of feathers to a museum skin and confirm the identification, or did the member just see a pile of feathers? No mention was made whether the identification was agreed upon. While agreement was

implied, it is not specifically stated.

A-S, I saw the specimen and trust Dinsmore's comparison with other species. I agree that we should maintain the rule.

A-D [changed to A-S at meeting of 15 May 1993]
REVOTE (at meeting, 15 May 1993): 5 A-S, 1 A-D, 1 not present but previously A-S.

The bird could not be relocated on 3 November, but was seen briefly on 4 November by several birders.

This is the first record of a Common Black-headed Gull in Iowa, and one of the few records from the Midwest. Among states adjacent to Iowa, the species has been reported from Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, Missouri, and Illinois. However, with the increased reports of this species along the Atlantic Coast, more records from interior states can be expected in the future.

Department of Zoology, Box 7617, North Carolina State Univ., Raleigh, NC 27695

DIET OF A NORTHERN HAWK OWL IN IOWA

DAVID J. CONRADS

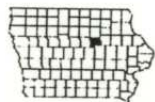
During the winter of 1981-82 a Northern Hawk Owl was observed in Waterloo. This is the only documented and photographed hawk owl in the state. The bird was first observed 25 December 1981 and was last seen 25 February 1982. During this period 20 pellets were collected from below the roosts of the owl. The pellets were recently dissected and crania of prey species were identified. Twenty-three meadow voles and two mice of the genus *Peromyscus* were identified from the remains.

Little has been written about the food habits of this species. In Minnesota, eight whole or partial pellets of a hawk owl were found in early spring 1979. Six meadow voles, one short-tailed shrew, and one Ruffed Grouse were identified from the remains (Axelrod 1980). Mikkola (1983) reported that microtines composed 95.7% of Northern Hawk Owl diets during summer in Northern Europe, 56.8% during the winter. The lower percentage in the winter was thought to be due to the snow cover making it difficult for the owls to locate microtines. During the period that the hawk owl was seen in Waterloo, the ground was snow covered (Bob Myers, pers. comm.). It is not surprising that the main diet of the hawk owl in Iowa was the meadow vole since both the owl and the vole are active primarily during the day (Eckert 1973), Schwartz and Schwartz 1981). I thank Tom Wagner for collecting the pellets, Dr. Nixon Wilson for preserving them, and Bob Flamm and his students from Walnut Ridge Baptist Academy for assisting with the pellet dissection.

LITERATURE CITED

- Axelrod, M. 1980. Diet of a Minnesota Hawk Owl. *The Loon* 52:117-118.
Eckert, A. W. 1973. *The owls of North America*. Doubleday and Co., Inc. Garden City, NY 278 pp.
Myers, B. 1982. Iowa's first Hawk Owl (*Surnia ulula*). *Iowa Bird Life* 52:31-32.
Mikkola, H. 1983. *Owls of Europe*. T. and A. D. Poyser. Calton, England. 397 pp.
Schwartz, C. W., and E. R. Schwartz. 1981. *The wild mammals of Missouri*. Univ. of Missouri Press. Columbia, MO 356 pp.

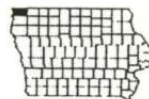
Macbride Raptor Center, E216 Field House, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242



GREATER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN IN LYON COUNTY

MARTY EBY

At approximately 9:30 a.m. on 11 December 1992, while hunting pheasants in section 12, Sioux Township, Lyon County, my dog captured a female Greater Prairie-Chicken. The bird was caught in a large brome field and died within a few minutes. In the hand, I immediately recognized the bird as a prairie-chicken, a bird I am familiar with from north-central Nebraska. The short, barred tail, feathered legs, and strongly barred underparts supported the identification. The remains of the bird were frozen and later transferred to the bird collection at Iowa State University.



Greater Prairie-Chickens are now accidental in Iowa. All recent records are from western Iowa and were found in winter. These birds probably were migrants from Nebraska or South Dakota and include one on 7 February 1979 in Harrison County (Schaufenbuel 1979) and one on 2 January 1984 in Osceola County (Spengler 1984). The Iowa Department of Natural Resources released prairie-chickens in Monona County in 1980 and 1982 and in Ringgold County in 1987-89. Birds from the first release were seen there for several years and then disappeared while those in Ringgold County have been seen several times in recent years.

LITERATURE CITED

- Schaufenbuel, J. 1979. Greater Prairie Chicken in Harrison County. *Iowa Bird Life* 49:26-27.
Spengler, R. 1984. Greater Prairie Chicken in Osceola County. *Iowa Bird Life* 54:21.

411 W. Indiana Ave., George, IA 51237

I.O.U. BUSINESS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Lake Red Rock, Saturday, 7 November 1992

HILDA A. SICKELS, SECRETARY

Present: Ann Barker (presiding), Bob Cecil, Hilda Sickels, Pam Allen, Eloise Armstrong, Diane Porter, Mark Proescholdt, Harold White. Others present: Tom Kent, Francis Moore, Hank Zaletel. The minutes for the 11 April 1992 Board meeting were approved as distributed and published in *Iowa Bird Life* (motion by Allen, seconded by Armstrong). The treasurer's report, including a balance sheet, statement of support, revenues and expenses, and membership information, was distributed and accepted.

Committee Reports

Records: Kent reported that the committee is up to date with records and the 1991 annual report has been completed. To reduce photoduplication costs, two copies of photos are being circulated for review and then used for archival purposes. The budget request for 1993 will be slightly higher. The following nominations for new members to the committee were submitted to the board: 1), for a 6-year term beginning in 1992, to succeed himself, Francis Moore; and 2), for a 6-year term beginning in 1993, to succeed Mark Proescholdt, Ann Johnson. Both were approved. Recently, the

Greater Prairie-Chicke P-0458
w. of Larchwood, Lyon Co., IA
11 Dec 1992 T. H. Kent

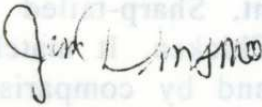
92-34

1845 19+01 N00NN-18AU

4 January 1993

To: Tom Kent, Secretary, IOU Records Committee

From: Jim Dinsmore



RE: Greater Prairie-Chicken

On 21 December 1992, I received from Marty Eby a partial frozen specimen of a Greater Prairie-Chicken. Mr. Eby of George, Iowa is the DNR Conservation officer for Lyon County. The bird was caught by Eby's dog on 11 December 1992 in a field about 4 miles west of Larchwood, Lyon County. Eby's dog caught the bird and brought it to him. It had not been shot but was injured when caught and died shortly thereafter. Eby, who has hunted prairie chickens in Nebraska, immediately recognized the bird. He put the bird carcass in the back of his truck and his dog chewed it up before he could get the bird to a freezer. Thus I received only a partial specimen, consisting of the wings, feet, and part of the body.

The following is a summary of the characteristics of this specimen, written as I look at the remains.

In size the bird is somewhat smaller than a pheasant and larger than a quail. The basic overall color is brown with considerable barring on the feathers. Some of the features I note that help identify it include the following:

- 1. feathering on the leg extends all the way down the tarsus to the base of the toes. There are small serrated extensions on the side of the toes.
- 2. The tail feathers are short and the individual feathers are marked with a series of barred patterns, the bars being black, white or brown. The tail itself is rounded in shape and there is no hint of any of the tail feathers being elongated.
- 3. The wing feathers are mostly brown. The individual primary feathers are a light tannish brown in color with a series of lighter tan markings on each feather on the area anterior to the rachis. The

greater primary coverts are also light tan in color with about three lighter colored oval shaped markings, again largely on the area of the feather anterior to the rachis. The secondary feathers have a series of distinct light tan bars across each feather and extending across both the area anterior and posterior to the rachis.

I have also compared this specimen directly with skins of Ruffed Grouse, Ring-necked Pheasant, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Greater Prairie-Chicken, and Lesser Prairie-Chicken. It matches the color pattern of the Greater Prairie-Chicken and by comparison is easily separated from the other species. I note the following key characteristics.

1. Pheasants and other members of its subfamily have a naked tarsus while the New World Grouse have feathering extending down to the base of the toes. This eliminates pheasant.
2. The tail of this bird is shorter than that of the Ruffed Grouse and the barring pattern is totally unlike that of the grouse.
3. The color pattern on the tail of the Lesser Prairie-Chicken has very fine barring while this bird has coarse, broad bars.
4. The back of the Sharp-tailed Grouse has a variegated appearance rather than the distinct barring shown by this bird. The wing coverts of the sharp-tail have a series of light tear-dropped shaped markings, very different from those on this bird.
5. The upper breast feathers of a sharptail are light colored with a dark border which give the feathers the appearance of being a series of Vs on the bird. This bird does not have these markings but rather has dark brown feathers with dark transverse bars across them just as are found on a Greater Prairie-Chicken.

I realize that this is hard to comprehend but in the hand the bird is easy to separate from the other possibilities. Also the lack of elongated tail feathers adds to the identification.

The one foot that is with the specimen has no band or other type of leg marking on it. I conclude that this is a wild Greater Prairie-Chicken. This species is known to migrate and one was photographed in the next county east several years ago.