

American Woodcock

4 Jan 1997

Cedar Rapids, Linn Co., IA

*Kelly J. McKay

IBL 67:55, 60, 87

Record Number: 97-03

Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Kelly J. McKay, 6143 34th Ave., Moline, IL 61265 [6/15/97]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 67:55, 60

Records Committee: IBL 68:87

VOTE: 1 A-D, 6 NA

NA, Common Snipe is much more likely and cannot be eliminated from such a brief view in the dark.

NA, Probably was a woodcock, but the view was marginal at best and the only field mark described was a long bill.

A-D, Long bill and round wings are good. Whistling noise is fairly diagnostic. Not unprecedented but I wonder what it found to eat.

NA, Although this bird didn't vocalize, I don't believe Common Snipe can be ruled out under these conditions.

NA, Although I wouldn't be surprised to have a woodcock occurring in Iowa in winter, from the details given I cannot be sure. Woodcock and Snipe have the same length and wingspan, and size is very difficult to judge in the dark. I'm not sure about the wing noise--can't snipe sound the same? The rounded wing and close distance favor woodcock. We aren't told much about the habitat, except that it was along the river, which would be ok for snipe. I favor woodcock, but I'm not 100% sure.

NA, Snipe not completely ruled out by just noting it was not in the right habitat for snipe. In winter, a snipe could show up where there is water even in a woodland. I have seen them there in Lee County in late Dec./early Jan. Also Snipe and Woodcock are not that much different in size.

NA, Given the date, ability to judge size is critical (vs. C. Snipe) (Snipe could be in riparian habitat--I saw one years ago in woodland in Colorado that I ID'd as Woodcock but the tour leader said Snipe).

Unusual Bird Report Form for Christmas Bird Counts

CBC Name (not bird club name): Cedar Rapids CBC Date: 1-4-97

Species (include number, age, sex etc. as appropriate): American Woodcock

Observer: Kelly J. McKay Other observers who saw bird: Mark Bollinger

Description (Describe size, color and pattern above and below, head, bill, tail, wings etc. as needed. Use this space for a drawing if helpful. Include photos if available.):

We were playing Barred Owl tape, while dark, along the Cedar River. A bird, larger than a Screech Owl and smaller than a Barred Owl, flushed from the ground and flew about 10 ft. above and slightly in front of the truck through the light from the parking lights. Its wings were rounded and made a soft whistling noise. I observed a very long bill on the bird as it flew over. We were unable to relocate the bird.

Sounds made, if any: The wings made a rather soft whistling noise.

Conditions of observation (Time of day, weather, duration of observation, distance to bird, optics used, etc.): 0530, foggy with light wind, 5 seconds, 10-15 ft., Leica Ultra 10x42 binoculars (however, only briefly observed before it disappeared).

Behavior and Habitat (What was the bird doing while you watched it? What habitat was it in?): It flew over us, sitting on ground at base of rocky bluff in a mature bluff forest, before it flushed

Similar Species (What similar species might be in your area in winter? How did you eliminate them from consideration?):

Cowbird Snipe - Wrong habitat; American Woodcock, much larger.