

Greater Prairie-Chicken

2 Jan 1984

Osceola Co., IA

\*Ron Spengler

IBL 54:17; 55:56; Spengler 1984

Record Number: 84-02

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Ron Spendler

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 54:17

Spengler, R. 1984. Greater Prairie Chicken in Osceola County.

IBL 54:21.

Records Committee: IBL 55:56

VOTE: 7-III

III, Reasonable date and location; diagnostic field marks.

III, Well seen and well described by experienced observer.

III, Odd place for one, but once they migrated far. One couldn't ask for a better description. Is it possible there is a population there?

Spengler, R. 1984. Greater Prairie Chicken in Osceola County. Iowa Bird Life 54:21.

**Greater Prairie Chicken in Osceola County.** — Over the past several years I have received three winter reports of Gr. Prairie Chickens by hunters in our county. The descriptions of the birds given by these untrained observers were not very specific and I did not give them much credence, but I did not entirely discount these reports.

On 2 January 1984 at approximately 8:30 a.m., I personally observed a bird in flight along a county gravel road bordering the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of sec. 10, T99N — R40W, Osceola County, Iowa. This bird's strong flight and size larger than a Gray Partridge caught my attention, and while observing the bird it landed on a grainary in the farmer's yard. I observed the bird for about 10 minutes with a 20X bushnell spotting scope at a distance of approximately 50 yds. Weather conditions were clear and sunny, offering excellent observation. At this close range I was easily able to see the fully feathered legs and tarsus of the bird and the following other characteristics which make me proof-positive of the species identification: Larger than Gray Partridge, but smaller than hen Ring-necked Pheasant (approx. 13-14") in length; brown body plumage with barring especially evident on belly; whitish throat patch with darker eye line; blackish tail, short and rounded; and long dark feathers on the sides of the neck.

I have observed Gr. Prairie Chickens before on booming grounds in Minnesota. I was close enough to this bird that I could see that it had no markings or bands present. Ron Spengler, Executive Director, Osceola County Conservation Board, Court House, Sibley, IA. 51249.

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation  
by the Records Committee  
of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: GREATER PRAIRIE CHICKEN  
DATE SEEN: Jan 2, 1984  
SITE OF OBSERVATION: Osceola County  
OBSERVERS: Ron Spengler  
DATE OF REVIEW: 1984  
METHOD OF REVIEW: Circulation by mail to Records Committee  
CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: III  
COMMENTS:

This bird was well-described by an observer familiar with the species, and the Records Committee had no doubts about accepting the record.  
It is interesting that this bird may still appear on occasion in Iowa during severe winters, and it would be interesting to know where it came from. Apparently in Minnesota a few birds appear in western and southwestern Minnesota during winter, presumably from the populations in northwest Minnesota. Perhaps this bird was one of these.

The opinions expressed here are based on the information available to the Committee and should not necessarily preclude an alternate interpretation by those who observed the bird firsthand.

Any action may be re-reviewed upon submission of additional evidence.

- Explanation of Classification:
- I = labeled, diagnostic specimen, photograph, or recording available for review by the Committee
  - II = acceptable sight record documented independently by 3 or more observers
  - III = acceptable sight record documented by 1 or 2 observers
  - IV = probably correct record, but not beyond doubt
  - V = record with insufficient evidence to judge
  - VI = probably incorrect identification, escapee, or otherwise unacceptable record

Classification is based on the highest category agreed upon by six of seven committee members.

Spengler  
84-02



Office in Osceola County Courthouse • Sibley, Iowa 51249

January 5, 1984

RON SPENGLER • EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

• Phone 712/754-4107

Mr. Doug Harr, Wildlife Mgmt. Biologist  
Big Sioux Wildlife Unit  
SCS Office Bldg.  
Rock Rapids, Iowa 51246

Dear Doug,

This letter is to report the sighting of a greater prairie chicken in Osceola County. Over the past several years I have received three winter reports of prairie chickens by hunters in our county. The descriptions of the birds given by these untrained observers were not very specific and I did not give them much credence, but I did not entirely discount these reports.

On January 2, 1984 at approximately 8:30 a.m., I personally observed a bird in flight along a county gravel road bordering the NE 1/4 of sec. 10, T99N - R40W, Osceola County, Iowa. This bird's strong flight and size larger than a gray partridge caught my attention, and while observing the bird it landed on a grainery in the farmer's yard. I observed the bird for about 10 minutes with a 20X bushnell spotting scope at a distance of approximately 50 yds. Weather conditions were clear and sunny, offering excellent observation. At this close range I was easily able to see the fully feathered legs and tarsus of the bird and the following other characteristics which make me proof-positive of the species identification: Larger than gray partridge, but smaller than hen pheasant (approx. 13-14") in length; brown body plumage with barring especially evident on belly; whitish throat patch with darker eye line; blackish tail, short and rounded; and long dark feathers on the sides of the neck.

I have observed chickens before on booming grounds in Minnesota and am quite certain of this sighting. I was also close enough to this bird that I could see that it had no markings or bands present.

Sincerely,

  
Ron Spengler