

Greater Prairie-Chicken
18 Apr 1999
Kellerton W.A., Ringgold Co., IA
*Jim Fuller
IBL 69:93, 70:145

Record Number: 99-10
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Jim Fuller

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 69:93
Records Committee: IBL 70:145

VOTE: 5 A-D, 2 NA

NA, Materials presented at the last Records Committee meeting (letter from Ross and "Trends in Iowa Wildlife...") seem to make a case that this species is established, despite a sharp decline in booming males in 1996 and a virtual crash in 1997, which was followed by a significant recovery in 1998. Since the restocking program at/near the location of this sighting was not continued after 1994 (except for two counties away in Missouri), it seems fairly safe to assume that these birds were produced in the wild. However, several things concern me about pronouncing this species as established. First, we are talking about maybe 30-50 known booming males, a tiny and vulnerable population base. Second, this species is declining throughout its range, including in areas with far larger tracts of habitat. Third, all the information we have (including the Breeding Bird Atlas account) mention the dependence of this species on the CRP program. This program is being cut back, and there is now less incentive to curtail row crop production as Missouri discovered on one of its former booming grounds. It is difficult for me to believe that this species is "established" in Iowa.

NA, Based on population data provided by the Iowa DNR, I'm not convinced this species is reestablished yet. Breeding success seems highly dependent on favorable weather conditions. If the species' population and range continue to expand for several more years, I would favor acceptance of future records.

A-D, The question is whether this species is established. After talking to Mel Moe, DNR, I am convinced that the population is established and expanding.

A-D, I feel that it is time to consider this population established. In a conversation with Mel Moe on July 29, 1999, he said the number of booming males was similar to last year (39 vs. 43) although the number of leks was slightly down. Missouri numbers were up substantially, and Iowa brood success appeared to be much higher than last year. I cannot predict what might happen in the future, but at the present, these birds seem stable in small numbers.

A-D, The evidence that this species is established in southern Iowa seems to be reasonably strong. They could disappear and then we could wipe them all out. Why not now?

A-D, Behavior and location would eliminate any other reasonable possibility.

RE-VOTE (by mail): 5 A-D, 2 NA

NA, As I stated before, I believe we need to look at the population of this species over a longer period of time before considering it to be re-established.

NA, The A-D voters did little to sway me. This species has, at best, a precarious hold in Iowa. One prairie fire in nesting season or one Farm Bureau member with a plow is about all it would take to send this species back to the extirpated list. We received an e-mail suggesting that this species was analogous to Barn Owl and its reintroduction program. I think a more apt analogy is Chukar, whose introduction ultimately failed, or Black Frankolin, which, in Louisiana, was pronounced established, only to have it unestablished a few years later.

A-D, Feel it is established.

A-D, Regular. I think the DNR, while probably biased towards its own product, has shown good data regarding the effectiveness of their reintroduction program. The population in southern Iowa appears precariously established at this time. As a component of Iowa's original wildlife, Prairie Chickens should be better able to handle the stresses of Iowa weather than a non-native species, leaving area as prime limiting factor in their survival. At this time, they have enough area.

A-D, The decision about when to consider this species as reestablished is arbitrary. I am willing to accept it whenever we get 6 votes.

A-D, I believe standards for establishment of reintroduced species should not be as stringent as for introductions. These birds are breeding unaided in a reasonable imitation of their native habitat. I believe they are currently established.

A-D, This problem is going to be with us and we can only hope that the problem is with us in regards to species making a comeback and not species which are disappearing. This population is very small and quite vulnerable, however, as they are apparently self sustaining I believe we can include the Greater Prairie Chicken on the list of Iowa birds.

DETAILS FOR RARE SIGHTINGS:

CLARK'S GREBE

South Blue Lake (Monona County)

5/25/99 (2 PM)

Telescope @ 75 yards

Details: Black was only on the crown and down back of neck. The red eye was entirely enclosed by white. The bill was a yellow-orange color.

Later a Western Grebe was seen at a different location on the same lake. Its eye was entirely within the black continuous from the crown. The bill was a rather pale yellow-green or even yellow-gray color.

Jim Fuller

✓

GREATER PRAIRIE CHICKEN

Kellerton WA (Ringgold County)

4/18/99 (7-8 AM)

Telescope at 80 yards

Details: Eleven chickens were displaying on a lek at the rise of a small hill. They were jumping, flying a short distance and strutting, as well as booming (a noise that sounded like blowing over a pop bottle). There were also two female birds. The male brown barred birds displayed yellow neck sacs, and "ears". The females were also brown barred, but not as prominently, were smaller, and seemed to have a shorter tail