

Purple Gallinule
20 Jun 1988
Des Moines Co., IA
*R. Cecil, *Jim Fuller, *D. Porter
Cecil 1988

Record Number: 93-HV
Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Robert Cecil, 21 and 28 June
Jim Fuller, 24 June
Diane Porter, 28 June

PHOTOGRAPHS

Gary L. Wagner, 24 May, P-0258 (IBL 58:115)

REFERENCE

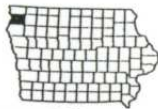
Field Reports: IBL 58:109
Photograph: IBL 58:115 (P-0258)
Cecil, R. 1988. Purple Gallinule in Des Moines County. IBL
58:115.

VOTE: 5 A-P

A-P, Color photos show red bill with yellow tip, pale
forehead, blue-purple head and neck, greenish back and wings, and
prominent white undertail coverts. There is no white flank
line./thk

YOUNG PEREGRINE FALCON FOUND DEAD IN NORTHWEST IOWA

DOUGLAS C. HARR



On 9 July 1988, I received a telephone call from Bruce Morrison, of Sheldon. He reported that his next-door neighbor, Paul Miller, had discovered an unusual and beautiful raptor dead on his farmland between Sheldon and Matlock, in Sioux County. Morrison, a media specialist at Northwest Iowa Technical College, and a well-known local wildlife artist, was sure the bird was a Peregrine Falcon. I requested that he preserve the bird in his freezer until I could pick it up for examination in a few days.

When I unwrapped the frozen carcass I found an immature Peregrine Falcon, Continental form, identical to that pictured in *A Field Guide to Hawks North America*, by Clark and Wheeler. The first question that came to mind was what was this young Peregrine doing in northwest Iowa in mid-summer? There are no recent reports of wild, nesting Peregrines in Iowa, and it is unlikely that northwest Iowa ever had any nesting, due to lack of suitable habitat.

The bird was sent to Nongame Biologist Doug Reeves at the Department of Natural Resources and to James Dinsmore at Iowa State University for further verification. Because the bird exhibited no external injuries, it was then forwarded to Madison, Wisconsin, where US Fish and Wildlife Service veterinarians could make a more complete post-mortem examination to determine the cause of death.

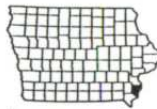
Dinsmore and Reeves believed the bird to be a young-of-the-year, and thus likely to have been fledged within a few miles of where it had been found. I contacted Paul Miller to learn more about how and where he found the bird. He related that on 8 July 1988 he was driving into the abandoned farmstead on his property when he spotted it lying on the ground alongside the driveway. I then visited the site and found it to be directly beneath two old electric lines, indicating a possible collision as cause of death. I also visited several farm elevators in the area, hoping to either see an adult or immature Peregrine, and visited with some elevator managers. Reeves proposed that these tall, flat-topped buildings might serve as nest sites or hunting perches for Peregrines in an area otherwise devoid of anything that might appear suitable. This search yielded no other observations or clues.

We then are left with a mystery—was this young Peregrine raised locally? If so, where, and are there any remaining parents or nestmates? Unless someone living in the area observed this or other Peregrines and comes forth with new information, we can only speculate about this young falcon and its presence at a most unusual location and time in Iowa.

P.O. Box 65, Larchwood, Iowa 51241

PURPLE GALLINULE IN DES MOINES COUNTY

ROBERT CECIL



On 20 June 1988, I was contacted by Gary Wagner, a Burlington property owner, regarding a Purple Gallinule that had been present on his acreage since late May. I made arrangements with Elizabeth Christiansen, Chuck Fuller, and Jane Fuller to look for the bird the following morning. At 7:30 a.m. on 21 June, we approached a small, recently constructed farm pond containing dead trees and shrubs as well as emergent willows and other vegetation. The bird flushed from tall grass along the bank and landed in a dense willow about 20 feet from shore. After some maneuvering, we were able to get good views of the bird as it moved slowly through the foliage. Features observed included blue-purple underparts and head, brown back, red bill with yellow tip, pale blue frontal shield, white undertail coverts, and long yellow legs. The bird was chicken-like in size and structure. The only significant behavioral characteristics included the continual flicking of its tail, and the stealth with which it moved through the willow. No sounds were noted. The bird was also seen and documented by Jim Fuller and Diane Porter. Mr. Wagner reported that the bird was last seen on 31 June.

Purple Gallinule is a rare visitor to Iowa. There are five records since 1960 (Dinsmore, J. J. et al. 1984. *Iowa Birds*; Haldy, L. 1983. Purple Gallinule in Iowa County. *Iowa Bird Life* 53:58). Including the present bird, five birds were first seen in May and one in late summer. Mr. Wagner deserves appreciation for recognizing the rarity and significance of his find, for contacting birders, and for his graciousness in showing others to this unusual and beautiful bird.

327 S. 6th St., Keokuk, IA 52632



Purple Gallinule, Des Moines County, 24 May 1988. Photo by Gary L. Wagner.

93-HV

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

93-#v

What species? Purple Gallinule (Porphyrola martinica) How many? 1 adult

Location? Just north of Burlington in Des Moines County, Iowa

Type of Habitat? Recently flooded farm pond with emergent vegetation, dead trees and shrubs.

When? date(s): June 21, and June 28, 1988 time: 7:30 AM to 8:00 AM
1:30 PM to 2:00 PM

Who? your name and address: Robert Cecil, 327 S. 6th, Keokuk, Iowa 52632

Others with you: Elizabeth Christiansen, Chuck and Jane Fuller, Diane Porter and husband

Others before or after you: Jim Fuller. Landowner was also present, but forgot his name.

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

On June 20, received a call from a Burlington property owner that he had a Purple Gallinule at his pond. As he seemed both convinced and knowledgeable, I made arrangements to stop by the next morning, and then called the Fullers. One the morning of the 21st, Christiansen, Fullers, owner, and myself approached the pond and flushed a dark, approximately Coot-sized bird from the shore, and observed it fly into a willow growing out of the water. As the willow was dense, it took some maneuvering to get a good view. Features noted included red bill, light blue frontal shield, white undertail coverts, and long yellow legs. Under parts were a rich bluish purple, while back had some brownish highlights. In general structure, the bird was quite similar to a Common Gallinule. Also similar to Coot, but less duck-like--more like a chicken. On June 28, also noted a red eye, a yellow tip on the red bill (which was shaped like a Coot's), and "see through" nostrils--when bird was viewed from side, I could see through the nostrils (is this clear??)

The bird continually flicked its tail. At no time did I see it swim. It remained in the willow clump, slowly climbing about and staying out of sight. I should add that we could get within perhaps 30 feet of the clump, indicating the bird relied more on stealth than distance in avoiding us.

Moorhen

Similar species; how eliminated: Common ~~Gallinule~~ slate-colored, not purple, and has red, not blue frontal shield. This bird was pretty unmistakable.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? Nope.
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. Lighting excellent.
Optics: 10x40 binocs and 20x scope. Distance about 30' (estimate)

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Life bird. Have seen several Common Moorhens, including one this spring.

References and persons consulted before writing description: We dug out field guides during observation--otherwise, not used in description.

How long before field notes made? at time this form completed? 24 hours

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

What species? PURPLE GALLINULE How many? 1 ADULTLocation? GARY WAGNER ACREAGE-IRISH RIDGE RD - 3 MILES N. BURLINGTONType of habitat? SMALL MANMADE PONDWhen? date(s): 24 JUNE time: 6:35AM to 7:10 AMWho? your name and address: JIM FULLER, 6 LONGVIEW KNOLL, RR#4, IOWA CITY, IA, 52240others with you: GARY WAGNER, CAL KNIGHTothers before or after you: C & J FULLER, BOB CECIL, LIZ CHRISTENSEN

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

THE BIRD WAS SEEN CLIMBING IN & SITTING IN A WILLOW TREE IN A SMALL POND. IT WAS SMALL CHICKEN OR DUCK SIZE. THE LEGS WERE LONG, THE FEET CHICKEN LIKE & LARGE & YELLOW. THE HEAD WAS A DEEP PURPLE, WHILE THE NECK & BREAST WERE MORE BLUE PURPLE & NOT SUCH A VIVID COLOR. THE BACK & WINGS WERE SOMEWHAT BROWNISH - ALMOST BRONZE COLORED. THE BILL WAS RELATIVELY LONG - ITS LENGTH WAS ABOUT THE WIDTH OF THE HEAD. THE END 1/3 TO 40% WAS YELLOW-GREEN & THE BASAL 60% - 2/3 WAS RED - THERE WAS A SHARP LINE BETWEEN THE TWO COLORS ON THE BILL. THERE WAS A UNIQUE LIGHT BLUE COLOR - SHARPLY DELINEATED - ON THE FRONT OF HEAD ABOVE THE BILL. THE EYE APPEARED DARK. IT HAD A SHORT RAIL-LIKE TAIL WHICH SHOWED A PURE WHITE AREA UNDER IT, WHICH WAS ESPECIALLY NOTICEABLE WHEN IT FLICKED THE TAIL UP & DOWN IN A NERVOUS WAY. NO VOCALIZATION WAS HEARD.

Similar species and how eliminated: COOT - BILL COLOR + BLUE AREA ON HEAD + PURPLE COLOR. COMMON MOORHEN - BLUE AREA ON HEAD + PURPLE COLOR & YELLOW LEGS.Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

EXCELLENT 9X36 BINOCULARS AT 50 FEET. CLOUDY GOOD VISIBILITY.Previous experience with species and similar ones: SEEN ONCE AT S. AMANAReferences and persons consulted before writing description: NONEHow long before field notes made? RETURN TO IMMED. CAR this form completed? 14 HOURS

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

DOCUMENTATION OF BIRD SIGHTING IN IOWA

93-#1

Species Purple Gallinule

How many One

Location A private residence near Burlington, Iowa, where I was taken by Bob Cecil

Type of habitat Pond with trees and stumps in it; surrounded by deciduous trees. Bird hung out in a clump of willows growing out of the middle of the pond.

When June 28, 1988

Who Diane Porter, 908 East Briggs, Fairfield IA 52556

Others with you Bob Cecil and Michael Porter

Others before or after you Bob Cecil and probably many others

Description

(From my notes taken in presence of bird) bluish purple below; iridescent black-brown back; raises tail to show flashy white undertail coverts; light blue frontal plate; red bill and eye; bill wrinkly red; yellow tip of bill; yellow legs; hiding in willows; good at staying concealed, but we see enough.

Similar species; how eliminated

I couldn't think of any similar species.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? No.

Viewing conditions: lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment Clear sunny day.

Distance 20 yards (estimated). Zeiss 8-power and 10-power binoculars, and Bob Cecil's scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: None

References and persons consulted before writing descriptions: Peterson open while bird on view.

How long before field notes made? On the spot *This form completed* one month.