

Purple Gallinule

Record Number: 83-02

17 May 1983

Classification: A-P

South Pond, southwest of South Amana, Iowa Co., IA

*Schaufenbuel, *Kent, *Petersen, *Myers,

*Moore, also 19, 21, 28 May; IBL 53:47, 50; 54:38, Haldy 1983

DOCUMENTATIONS:

Joe Schaufenbuel (May 17)

Thomas H. Kent (May 17)

Peter C. Petersen (May 17)

Robert K. Myers (May 19)

Francis L. Moore (May 21, 28).

PHOTOGRAPHS:

Ron Oswald (May 19, P-0100)

Francis L. Moore (May 28, P-0104)

Bruce Trumpold (May ??, P-0133)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 53:47, 50

Haldy, L. 1983. Purple Gallinule in Iowa County. IBL 53:58.

Records Committee: IBL 54:38

VOTE: 2-I-P, 5-II

II, Good description; behavior is typical of this species.

II, Seems little doubt here! Excellent descriptions.

NOTE: photos not circulated prior to vote.

Halcy, L. 1983. Purple Gallinule in Iowa County. Iowa Bird Life 53:58.

Purple Gallinule in Iowa County — On 16 May 1983 Bruce Trumpold of Middle Amana reported a probable gallinule at the South Amana Pond in northeast Iowa County, Iowa. The South Amana Pond is formed by a large man-made dam across a stream in a wooded valley. Much of the shoreline is virtually enclosed by thick timber and understory.

At 6:30 on the evening of the 16th I was fighting my way through the thickets of poison ivy, gooseberry, raspberry, and multiflora rose along the west shore of the pond. I hoped that this effort would reward me with a view of what I assumed would be a Common Moorhen. Just when anticipation was fading into disappointment, I suddenly flushed a dark, pigeon-sized bird from the shore into a tree about 10 feet above the ground. As I approached to a closest distance of 15 feet, it rather casually walked, hopped, and flew higher into the surrounding trees, reaching a distance of 35 feet or more above the ground. I could clearly see its long, bright-yellow legs and enormous, chicken-like feet. When it walked along a branch it regularly flicked up its short, stubby tail to display white undertail coverts. Its beak was like that of a coot, red with a yellow tip. Above the beak, on the forehead, was a dull white plate. When the bird reached the upper branches of the trees it emerged into the direct sunlight, which revealed the iridescent purple hue of its belly and breast.

I observed the bird in the tree for 5-10 minutes, left to check the field guides, and returned one hour later to startle it from the shore into a tree once again, and confirm that it was indeed a Purple Gallinule (*Porphyryla martinica*).

Thanks both to the bird's cooperative manners and the success of the Iowa Birdline, the Purple Gallinule has been observed by over 50 people and been the subject of many photographs. The bird is still present at this date, 7 June.

During the day the Purple Gallinule regularly forages for food, working up and down the west shore of the pond where the undergrowth is most dense and meets the water's edge. It usually walks along the shoreline or on fallen logs in the water. Sometimes it wades into shallow water, but seems to prefer to stay out of it. To my knowledge, it has never been observed swimming. When cautious it slinks into the undergrowth, but when alarmed it seeks refuge in the branches of trees and shrubs, 6-15 feet above ground.

The Purple Gallinule is an accidental visitor to Iowa. If accepted by the IOU Records Committee, this occurrence would be only the sixth unquestioned record of the species in Iowa, and perhaps the first to allow such extensive observation of the bird and its behavior (See Dinsmore and Graham, "Purple Gallinule in Iowa" IBL 49:87-88, 1979). — LANNY HALDY, Middle Amana, IA. 52307

What species? Purple Gallinule How many? 1Location? Iowa Co, Iowa. 1 mile S.W. of South AmanaType of habitat? Man-made Lake, 25+ acres, in wooded Valley.When? date(s): May 17 1983 time: 7:05 a.m. to 7:20Who? your name and address: JOE Schaufenbuel 924 Pammel Ct. Ames 50010others with you: —others before or after you: Many

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.

Coot-like bird observed swimming about 45-60 yards away. Color over body was dull purple or Royal Blue from head, belly, and underparts. Wings and back were a green-dive. Undertail was bright clean white. Bill red, tipped in yellow with a light blue frontal shield. Legs were somewhat long with long toes. Legs were yellow.

Bird was observed swimming and walking near shore in shallow water and picked at surface. It flicked or lifted its tail revealing the white-under-tail about every 10 seconds.

Similar species and how eliminated: Coot and C. Gallinule are basic black.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

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

Fair. Light rain with medium overcast. Sun was filtered through at my back as I viewed bird. 7x35 binoculars

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I have seen Purple Gallinule and C. Gallinule several times before.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Robbin's, Birds of N. America

How long before field notes made? at sighting this form completed? 1 day

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

Joe Schaufenbuel

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

83-02
I-PWhat species? Purple Gallinule How many? 1Location? South Pond, sw of South Amana, Iowa Co., IowaType of habitat? artificial lake in deep wooded valley with brushy edgeWhen? date(s): 17 May 1982 time: 7:55 to 8:45 AMWho? your name and address: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City IAothers with you: James Sandrock, James Huntington, John Cordellothers before or after you: Lanny Haldy, Carl Bendorf, Tom Staudt

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.

"Gallinule; orange-red bill in basal 2/3, yellow tip distal 1/3; small (1-1.5 cm) disc on forehead at bill -- light blue-gray; underparts and head purple shading to blue on back of neck; wings and back iridescent blue-green -- mostly green with brown streaking; yellow legs and feet; undertail coverts bright white; no white along edge of wing."

The bird was first seen under a bush at the lakes edge. Later it was walking in the open along the edge feeding. The day before it was reported by Haldy to be sitting in bushes and trees. Not heard.

Similar species and how eliminated: Common Moorhen -- frontal shield, leg color, lack of white along wing eliminate this species. Habitat and sitting in trees fits Purple Gallinule.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? no

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: overcast, 100 yds (est), 8 x binocs, 50x Questar, 20 x scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Many seen in Florida two weeks before; seen once before in Iowa.
References and persons consulted before writing description: none

How long before field notes made? while viewing this form completed? 8 hrs

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

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Purple Gallinule 2. Number: 1
3. Location 1 mi S.W., South Amund, Iowa Co., Iowa
4. Date: May 17, 1983 5. Time Bird seen: 11:50 AM to 12:05
May 22, 1983 12:20 PM - 12:22
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):
Coat sized & shaped bird, fairly long, yellow legs with very long toes. Neck & chest rich cobalt blue, head a bit darker blue, grey back, black tail with white below. Bill red except for yellowish tip, shield pale blueish. Second view - also seen in flight (May 22)
7. Description of voice, if heard: silent
8. Description of behavior: walking along shore of pond, feeding
9. Habitat - general: pond surrounded by forest
specific: pond shore, very shallow areas & dry areas
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
Common Gallinule or Moorhen - This bird rich blue below on neck, shield light bluish mixed, no white along side.
11. Distance (how measured)? 100 yards - est. 12. Optical equipment: 20x scope, 10x binocs
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): O.C. - very light fresh
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: Have seen frequently in southern U.S.
15. Other observers: May 17 Cal + Bernice Knight while I was there, before me - T. H. Kent, Lanny Haldy, Jim Sandrock, Carl Bendorf. May 22 - with Mary Lou Petersa, Corey + Lewis Blair
16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: most of above.
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
none needed.
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? May 17 field notes - 15 min. full sheet - 3 hours. May 27 - 2 hours.

Robert Peterson

Address: 235 McClellan Blvd.

Signature

Date: May 17, 1983

City, State: Davenport, IA 52805

(over)

What species? Purple Gallinule How many? 1Location? .7mi west and .5mi south of South Amana - Iowa Co.Type of habitat? Woodland pondWhen? date(s): May 19, 1983 time: 8:00AM to 8:15AMWho? your name and address: Robert K. Myers 1236 Sylvia Ave. Waterloo, Ia.others with you: Betsy Myersothers before or after you: many others both before + after

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.

Bird was approx. gull size + shaped.

Overall color was a dark greenish purple with white under tail coverts.

Bill was red with yellow tip and had a light (blue) shield on forehead.

Legs were bright yellow with long toes.

Similar species and how eliminated: Common gallinule does not show the light blue shield on forehead or the yellow legs or the overall purple color. Common should show a white stripe on side which this bird did not.Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

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

Day we were there was cloudy and not very good viewing conditions. Eye est. would say we were about 50yd. from bird. We used 20x scope + 7x35 binocsPrevious experience with species and similar ones: No experience with purple - for viewing
Have seen Common ~~two~~ Three Times.References and persons consulted before writing description: NONEHow long before field notes made? 7 hrs. this form completed? 5 days

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

What species? Purple Gallinule (*Porphyryla martinica*) How many? 1 adultLocation? South Armana Pond .7 mi W of jct U.S. 6 and 220 at South Armana thendown farm lane to South about .3 or .4 mi. on West side of Pond.Type of habitat? Iowa country Pond with Algae and moss along shore, mixed deciduous woods around perimeter.When? date(s): May 21 and May 28, 1983 time: 5/21 7:05am 7:55am 5/28 9:25am to 10:10amWho? your name and address: Francis L. Moore, 336 Fairfield St., Waterloo, IA 50703others with you: Russell Hays on 5/21/83; Waterloo Audubon Society field trip on 5/28/83.others before or after you: M. ob.

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 first seen in a small tree on the West side of the pond. It stayed in the tree for about 10 minutes while I viewed it with my Celestron C90 Telescope w/33X eyepieces. It then flew down to the pond shore behind the brush for about 5 minutes. It finally came out in the open and walked along the shore and flew to one of several dead trees laying in the water at the edge of the pond. As it fed it almost continually flicked its tail up and down and its ~~white~~ undertail coverts were highly visible. It fed by picking up the moss by the logs and draping it over the log then took the moss over and picked insects off of it then did the same thing over & over. It also caught insects on the shore and while in the small tree. The bird had a bright red bill with a yellow tip and a small light blue frontal plate on the forehead. The head, neck, breast and belly were a vivid bright purple and bluish color. The back was a greenish-blue color changing to a bronze color on the lower back and then to a bronze-brown color on the wings. The tail was dark and short. The birds legs were bright yellow with very long toes, the feet were bright yellow, too. The eye was red. No voice was heard.

Similar species and how eliminated: Common Moorhen has white stripe down side, a red frontal plate and is dark gray to blackish body and brown back, not purple like this bird.Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: on 5/21 heavy overcast, light rain from approx. 75 yards; on 5/28 bright overcast. from approx. 50 yards across Pond. Viewed both days with 7X35mm Bausch + Lomb Roof prism binoculars and Celestron C90 spotting scope. Also C90 mounted on Nikkoromat camera @ 20X. Previous experience with species and similar ones: No previous experience with this species, have seen several Common Gallinule in Iowa. References and persons consulted before writing description: NoneHow long before field notes made? None made this form completed? 5/28/83 7:00 pm.

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