

Gray Jay

Nov 1976

Mason City, Cerro Gordo Co., IA

*Fern Tanner

Halmi 1977

Record Number: 93-EW
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Fern L. Tanner

REFERENCE

Halmi, N.S. 1977. More Gray Jays in Iowa. IBL 47:65.

VOTE: 5 A-D

A-D, Description of overall color and head are enough to be convincing. /thk

Gray Jay

Halmi, N. S. 1977. More Gray Jays in Iowa. Iowa Bird Life 47:65

More Gray Jays in Iowa -- In response to Gladys Black's Des Moines Register article on Gray Jays, written after this species was believed to have been first seen in Iowa (IBL Vol. 97, p. 23, 1977), two more records of Gray Jays were submitted, with documentation, bringing the total for the fall-winter 1976-77 period to three.

Fern L. Tanner saw a Gray Jay in Mason City in early November, from 11 feet. A good comparison could be made with a Blue Jay on the other side of the same bird bath. Mrs. Tanner's brother, Albert Ewers, and his wife, had seen the jay nearby a couple of weeks earlier (before the Decorah bird was first seen?). Mr. Ewes had no doubt that the bird was the "meat robber" familiar to him from many hunting and fishing trips to Canada.

The other Gray Jay was seen by Marilyn H. Lilja at Cedar Falls, also in November 1976. She observed it from about 20 feet as it made several trips to her feeder. Next day it was found dead, but the specimen was unfortunately not preserved. It did give her an opportunity to verify the bird's identity. She states that she was familiar with the species from time spent in Colorado.

In April 1977, Mr. George Schrimper, Curator for Natural History at the University of Iowa Museum, called my attention to a Gray Jay specimen in the collection of the museum (no. 32540). The skin is cataloged as having been collected in Linn Co. on December 2, 1918 by George Berry, but bears a tag with a somewhat cryptic note in the hand of John Rohner, late Curator of the museum, which seems to question the site in which the specimen was obtained. The reason for this must be that Mr. Berry, an excellent naturalist in his prime, by 1918 was the victim of progressive mental deterioration, possibly caused by an infection contracted in the tropics, and was no longer deemed reliable (Meyer, IBL Vol 29, p. 74, 1959). In view of this uncertainty about the specimen's provenance, the Decorah Gray Jay of 1976-77 must still be considered the first authenticated individual of this species in Iowa. N. S. HALMI, R. No. 6, Iowa City.

Fern L. Tanner
415 - N. Jff.
Mason City Ia
50401

93-EW

Dr. Nicholas Halmi

Dear Sir:

Besides filling out this form to the best of my knowledge and memory, I would also like to relate the circumstances prior to my sighting of the Gray (Canada) Jay.

My brother, Albert Ewers first spotted it about two blocks from our home about two weeks before I saw it. My husband's sister that lives in the area that my brother first saw it, also saw it. He has gone to Canada twice a year for many years hunting and fishing and will know the "meat thief" as he called it.

One afternoon in early Nov. as I can remember, I was looking out back kitchen window at bird of bath. A Blue Jay flew in and lit on one side of bird bath and almost simultaneously the Gray Jay lit on the other side of bath. It looked larger and fluffier than the Blue Jay and sat there three or four minutes until the Blue Jay made a unfriendly gesture and it flew into a nearby Spruce tree - it returned every day for three or four days so my husband also got to see it. I watched every day for it and thought it had gone but one day four or five weeks later it lit in a small bush close by our house - I have not seen it since, but have hopes it wintered near by and might show up come spring -

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Gray Jay 2. Number: 1

3. Location 415 N. JEFF. MASON CITY IOWA

4. Date: EARLY NOV. 5. Time Bird seen: 3 P.M to 3:15 P.M.

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):

Fluffy gray - white cap on head, grayish white underside. Looked larger than blue jay that was 18 in. away at time. Little shorter beak than blue jay - Black patch at back of head -

7. Description of voice, if heard: not heard -

8. Description of behavior: From bird bath to spruce tree.

9. Habitat - general: spotted in spruce tree several times - also once
specific: on small bush -

Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6,7 & 8, Explain:

11. Distance (how measured)? 11 feet

12. Optical equipment: none needed

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): bright day.

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: - none

15. Other observers: Albert & wms - Mrs Luella Olson - Marwin Tanner

16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:

Peterson's "A Field Guide to western Birds"
verified our original identification

Fern L. Tanner

Address: 415 N. Jeff.

Signature

Date: 3-7-77

City, State: Mason City - Iowa 50401