

Vermilion Flycatcher
13 May 1988
Rice L., Worth Co., IA
*Gerald Anderson
IBL 58:82, 59:77, Anderson 1983

Record Number: 88-06
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Gerald Anderson

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 58:82
Records Committee: IBL 59:77
Anderson, G. 1989. Vermilion Flycatcher at Rice Lake. IBL
59:63.

VOTE: 5 A-D, 1 NA

A-D. Plus: The description certainly sounds exactly like a Vermilion Flycatcher and time of year perfect for vagrant. The description of fly-catching behavior was a nice addition. Minus: Unfortunately, the description was not written for two weeks. Certainly, this species is easy to identify. However, every day that goes by decreases the reliability of the memory for details. On balance, there seems to be enough clear detail to accept this record.

A-D. Minimal description, but adequately eliminates similar species.

A-D. Observer unknown to me and obviously not experienced at describing birds. Nevertheless, the description catches essential features of Vermilion Flycatcher. No other bird with this color pattern would be swooping after flies in Iowa. Date reasonable for spring overmigrant.

A-D. Brief but complete documentation is convincing to rule out everything but Vermilion Flycatcher. The way description is written it could not be anything else."

NA. Red top of head not bordered by "brownish" but "blackish". Wings more black than brown. Upright flycatcher not mentioned.

A-D. Description adequately considers other possibilities & eliminates same. Time, location O.K.

REVOTE: 6-A-D, 1-NA

A-D. In view of the distinctive appearance of a male bird of this species, possible confusion between brownish and blackish seems to be a trivial point. Also, a bird described as swooping for insects is just as strong point for a flycatcher as "upright" appearance might be.

A-D. Unreadable documentation. Based on the strength of the affirmative and the fact that the adult male is easy to identify.

A-D. The red underparts and crown, brownish streak through the eye, brown wings, dark bill, and insect-catching behavior describe a Vermilion Flycatcher. There is nothing else the bird could have been. Date is right for vagrancy of this species.

A-D. I would be more skeptical of a perfect description than an imperfect one. The behavior coupled with the color pattern are diagnostic as far as I know.

A-D. Description still eliminates any other species even though the details are so skimpy. They are good enough to prove

such a distinct species as this. Brown or black? does the observers perception of this dark coloration change the other positive marks on this individual? this could have been a function of the lighting at the time of observation.

NA. Color problems mentioned, also time lag. If 12 hours (Townsend's Warbler) are a problem--2 weeks are 30x worse.

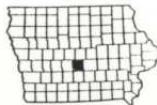
A-D. NA are not convincing (picky, picky!).
SENT TO: Gerald Anderson RR2, Lake Mills, IA 50450

LITERATURE CITED

- Anderson, R. M. 1907. The birds of Iowa. Proc. Davenport Acad. Sci. 11:125-417.
Bartsch, P. 1922. An inland record of the Man-o'-war-bird. Auk 39:249-250.
Briggs, S. 1969. Some notes on an early Iowa record and Paul Bartsch. Iowa Bird Life 39:85-87.
Coale, H. K. 1910. A new bird for Illinois. Auk 27:75.
DuMont, P. A. 1933. A Revised List of the Birds of Iowa. Iowa City: University of Iowa Studies in Natural History, Vol. 15, No. 5.
Harrison, P. 1983. Seabirds an Identification Guide. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
Hodges, J. 1949. Notes on the bird life in the Mississippi Valley. Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci. 56:343-345.
Peck, M. E. 1896. Note. Iowa Ornithologist 2:34.
Synder, D. E. 1961. First record of the Least Frigate-bird (*Fregata ariel*) in North America. Auk 78:265.

SABINE'S GULL AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE



At 4:05 p.m. on 20 October 1988, I noticed a small, brown-mantled gull resting with other gulls on a large mud bar north of the Jester Park area of Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co. Initially, the bird looked like a small, first-winter Franklin's Gull; however, after studying the bird for several minutes, I concluded that the bird must be a juvenile Sabine's Gull. Bob Myers joined me at about 5:15 p.m., and we watched the bird until 5:50 p.m.

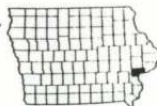
The bird remained resting on the mud bar until about 4:25 p.m., when it flew. In flight, the striking wing pattern was obvious. The outer primaries were black, forming a triangle from the bend of the wing outward. The inner wing, out to a line from the bend of the wing to the tip of the inner most secondary, was brown. The rest of the wing was white. In flight, the tail was slightly forked and was white except for a black terminal band. When perched, the upperparts, crown, and nape were light brown. The wings were darker than the rest of the upperparts. The underparts and forehead were white. The legs were black. The bill was also black and was shorter and thicker than the bill of a Franklin's Gull. The wing pattern and gray-brown crown, nape, and upperparts identified the bird as a juvenile Sabine's Gull.

This is the sixth record of a Sabine's Gull in Iowa. There are three old records and three recent ones, all from fall. The other recent records are both from Saylorville Reservoir: 10-24 November 1983 (Kent, T. H. 1983. Sabine's Gull at Saylorville Reservoir. *Iowa Bird Life* 53: 105-106) and 5 October 1986 (IBL 57: 17, 78).

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010

TOWNSEND'S WARBLER IN MUSCATINE COUNTY

GERALD WHITE



On 12 May 1988, I was taking an early morning birding walk in Wild Cat Den State Park. At 7:20 a.m., I was in an area of the woods that had an edge transition zone, when a small bird flew out of heavy cover and landed about 30 feet away in a small bare tree. Although the bird had its back to me, it did turn and look at me twice during its brief period of exposure. I was able to

see the following features: mid-sized warbler by shape and size (about 5 inches long); black crown; back and rump had the base color of dark olive with black spots that were most noticeable around the shoulder area (The spots gave the impression of streaking.); two white wing bars; dull white undertail coverts; some dark feathers in the shape of possible spots near the flank; cheek and ear covered with a good-sized patch of black surrounded with yellow (Each color had intense color saturation.); black throat; and dark and warbler-shaped bill.

I was not able to see the side or complete front of the bird; however, the features of the head and throat as illustrated in the National Geographic Society's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* were those of a male Townsend's Warbler. The black spots clinched my identification in the field. I did not realize until evening that I had seen a record bird (second for Iowa) and, regretfully, had not notified many fellow birders. A subsequent search with tape recordings on the following day failed to produce the bird again.

1505 E. 5th St., Muscatine, Iowa 52761

VERMILION FLYCATCHER AT RICE LAKE

GERALD ANDERSON



A male Vermilion Flycatcher was found catching insects along a small creek that runs into Rice Lake in Worth County at 10:30 a.m. on 13 May 1988. It had a red breast, brown streak between the red on the top of the head and the red throat, and brown wings. It was smaller than a Cardinal. The bird repeatedly swooped down from its perch on a small tree to catch insects and returned to a perch. Curt Rector and I watched the bird for five minutes from a distance of 30 to 40 feet in bright sunlight.

RR2, Lake Mills, IA 50450

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

FROM DIANE PORTER

I have some questions about Chimney Swifts that I hope *Iowa Bird Life* readers can answer for me: (1) Do Chimney Swifts roosting or nesting in chimneys create any fire hazard?; and (2) Do their droppings cause any significant inconvenience or health hazard?

Migrating Chimney Swifts return each year in flocks numbering several thousand birds to ancestral roosting places. I talked by telephone in 1987 with Chimney Swift expert Richard B. Fischer, retired Professor of Environmental Education, Cornell University. He told me that Chimney Swifts do not nest communally. The large aggregations of birds are nonbreeding individuals, those that have finished their nesting for the season, and migrating birds. In light of this information, one would not expect a buildup of nests to cause a fire hazard in the chimneys used by large flocks in migration. Also, I have heard the speculation that the birds' movements in and out of the chimneys actually help clean the chimneys and hence reduce the fire hazard.

88-06

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

88-06

What species? VERMILION Flycatcher How many? 1 maleLocation? WORTH County North Shore Rice LakeType of habitat? Edge of Timber and marshWhen? date(s): MAY 13 1988 time: 10:30 AM to 10:35 AMWho? your name and address: GERALD ANDERSON RR 2 LAKE MILLS IOWAothers with you: CURT RECTOR

others before or after you: _____

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.

Smaller than CARDINAL

SMALL DARK BILL

MALE BIRD Red breast

Brownish streak Between red TOP OF HEAD and Red THROAT, breast.
Through the eyes

Brown wings

He WAS Flying AFTER insects, He would swoop down catch A insect FLY back and THEN do it AGAIN and AGAIN.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

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

BRIGHT SunLight, guessing About 30-40 feet

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Never seen one but HAVE seen manyReferences and persons consulted before writing description:
CARDINALS and SCARLET TANAGERS and it WAS NOT one of themHow long before field notes made? 2 weeks this form completed? MAY 27, 1988MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species? Vermilion Flycatcher
How Many? one male
Location? Worth County, north shore Rice Lake

Habitat? edge of timber and marsh

Date? May 13, 1988
Time? 10:30 am to 10:35 am
Observers Name and address: Gerald Anderson, RR 2, Lake Mills, Iowa

Others who saw bird: Curt Rector

Description of bird:
smaller than cardinal
small dark bill
male bird red breast
brownish streak between red top of head and red throat, breast
through the eyes
brown wings
He was flying after insects. He would swoop down catch a insect fly
back and then do it again and again
Similar species and how eliminated:

Viewing conditions and equipment:
bright sunlight, guessing about 30-40 feet

Previous experience with species: never seen one but have seen many
cardinals and scarlet tanagers and it was not one of them

References consulted:

How long before field notes were made? 2 weeks

How long before this form was completed? May 27, 1988

*typed copy
provided by J. Dinsmore*