

Rock Wren
30 Oct 1986
Cedar Rapids, Linn Co., IA
*Dale and Helen Fye
IBL 57:19, 78, Fye and Fye 1987

Record Number: 86-16
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Dale/Helen Fye

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 57:19

Fye, D., and H. Fye. 1987. Rock Wren at Cedar Rapids. IBL 57:61.

Records Committee: IBL 57:78

VOTE: 7-III

III, Concluding description; too bad they did not see the tail markings.

III, The description plus behavior and bobbing motion are convincing.

III, Description and behavior sounds consistent with Rock Wren. Description adequate to eliminate other species.

III, Good description. Streaking on breast would seem to be the key to eliminate other possible wrens.

III, Description adequate, habitat and behavior characteristic.

The whole head and neck had a swollen, puffy appearance, unlike the slimmer neck of a Common or Red-throated loon. The forehead was smooth and evenly rounded. The bird also had a distinctive diving method. Just before each dive, the neck was fully extended. Apparently, this is characteristic of Pacific Loon. I am sure this was not the same bird that I saw on 1 November because it had a chin strap and the color of the head was quite a bit darker. This bird was seen by several people through 23 November.



Drawing of Pacific Loon from documentation of Bob Myers.

On 30 November 1986, Paul Martsching and I briefly watched a winter-plumaged Pacific Loon at the Cherry Glen Recreation Area. The bird was swimming alone, so no direct size comparisons could be made; however, my general impression was that the bird was smaller than the average Common Loon. The overall description for this bird is the same as that for the 1 November bird, except that this bird showed less contrast between the back and the head. I think that this bird was probably a third individual for the following reasons: first, it is highly unlikely that the 1 November bird (the bird it most closely resembled in plumage) would have remained undetected at the reservoir for a month; second, I believe that this bird had a slightly darker head and neck than the 1 November bird, although not as dark as the 22 November bird. For these reasons, I believe that there were three different Pacific Loons at Saylorville Reservoir this fall. These records represent the eighth, ninth, and tenth reports of Pacific Loons in Iowa.

LITERATURE CITED

Dinsmore, J. J., et al. 1984. Iowa Birds. Ames: Iowa State University Press.
Lehman, P. 1986. The Changing Seasons. American Birds 40:1178.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL AT KEOKUK

BOB CECIL

At noon on 20 October 1986, I went to Lock and Dam 19 at Keokuk to check on the presence of a late Common Moorhen. After finding it, I scanned the area below the dam with a telescope to identify the gulls present. There were about 100 gulls, mostly Ring-billed with a few Herring. After a few minutes, I discovered a large gull with a dark mantle. The entire mantle was a uniform dark gray with a prominent white trailing edge to the wings. The wing tips were jet black with a white mirror just before the tip of the

outer primary. The head and tail were white. The bill was conspicuously yellow. I hurried home to get field guides, a video camera, and make some calls. One of the birders that I called suggested that I check the leg color carefully. I found the bird again at 4:30 p.m. and observed the yellow legs. The bird was slightly smaller than the Herring Gulls. The features noted confirmed the identification of an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull. There is only one previous record of this species in Iowa. The bird was present to 22 October and was seen by Jim Sandroock, Cal Knight, Jim Fuller, and James Huntington. My video tape of the bird was submitted to the I.O.U. Records Committee. This is the first time that video tape has been submitted as documentation in Iowa. Although the video tape image of the bird does not reveal all of the diagnostic marks, it does show enough detail to exclude Great Black-backed Gull. I used a Canon VM-E1 8 mm video and dubbed it to VHS format.

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

ROCK WREN AT CEDAR RAPIDS

DALE FYE AND HELEN FYE

On an overcast 30 October 1986, we were birding in southeast Cedar Rapids. At 4:30 p.m., a small bird flew in front of us and landed 2-3 feet off the ground in a small bush at the base of a railroad embankment. The bird was slightly larger than a nuthatch with a rather long, thin, slightly decurved bill. The general appearance and behavior marked it as a wren. It flew to the bottom of the steep, rock-strewn embankment and began a slow but very active ascent, hopping around on the ground and rocks except for an occasional stop on a low branch of the brush. We were able to observe the bird at less than 50 feet for approximately 15 minutes. Our presence did not seem to alarm the bird. The light eye line was distinct, but not as sharply marginated as that of a Carolina Wren. The throat and breast were white, and there was a fine delicate streaking on the breast. The flanks were rusty. The back was predominantly gray with a finely speckled appearance. The tail was held horizontally, not vertically, and no tail bobbing or wagging was seen. The tail markings were not noted. At the top of the embankment the bird alternated between standing on the rails and hopping around on the rocks. Throughout the observation it exhibited a frequent bobbing motion which involved the entire body. The following day and throughout the following week other observers were unable to relocate the bird.

1758 Memorial Dr. SW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52403

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

86-16

by the Records Committee

of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: *Rock Wren*

DATE SEEN: *10-30-86*

SITE OF OBSERVATION: *Cedar Rapids*

OBSERVERS: *Dale + Helen Fye*

DATE OF REVIEW: *4-3-87*

METHOD OF REVIEW: *Vote - via mail*

CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: *III*

COMMENTS:

The description plus behavior and bobbing motion are convincing.

The opinions expressed here are based on the information available to the Committee and should not necessarily preclude an alternate interpretation by those who observed the bird firsthand.

Any action may be re-reviewed upon submission of additional evidence.

Explanation of Classification:

- I = labeled, diagnostic specimen, photograph, or recording available for review by the Committee
- II = acceptable sight record documented independently by 3 or more observers
- III = acceptable sight record documented by 1 or 2 observers
- IV = probably correct record, but not beyond doubt
- V = record with insufficient evidence to judge
- VI = probably incorrect identification, escapee, or otherwise unacceptable record

Classification is based on the highest category agreed upon by six of seven committee members.

What species? Rock Wren How many? 1Location? Southeast Cedar Rapids, Near Roller Dam, nearType of habitat? Rocky Rail Road, right of way with some dried weeds and short brushWhen? date(s): 10/30/86 time: 5 PM to 5:15 PMWho? your name and address: Dale and Helen Eye1750 Memorial DR SE CEDAR RAPIDS IA 52403others with you: 0others before or after you: CAL + BERNIE KNIGHT and Wier Nelson the following day - did not find the bird, We did not find it the following day, Keith Darras + Pete Wickham several days later did not find it

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. Slightly larger than an English sparrow with a longer, thinner slightly downcurved bill. Pale superciliary eyeline was not sharply demarcated as that of the Carolina. Color across back was primarily gray with a fine speckling of black and pale gray. At close range there was a fine streaking of the breast. Belly was unstreaked, Flanks a pale rusty color. Tail markings not noted

Twice the bird flew across the path ahead of us about 2-3 ft off the ground. Then it gradually worked its way up the rocky slope of the railroad right of way, moving almost constantly, primarily on the rocks and the ground, occasionally on a low branch of a bush. At the top of the incline it hopped frequently from the rails to the crushed rock of the railroad bed. When standing still it exhibited a bobbing motion involving the entire body. It did not hold its tail erect as the house wren does. There were no vocalizations. Seemed unconcerned with our presence, (at times within 25-30 ft)

Similar species and how eliminated: Carolina Wren is browner and has a sharper eyeline. Housewren is smaller, Bewicks has unstreaked breast and specific tail movement, is predominately brown, also has a more distinct eyeline. Canyon has unstreaked breast and dark belly

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? _____

If yes, explain:

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

cloudy - late afternoon. Distance estimatedNikon 10x35Previous experience with species and similar ones: We had not previously seen rock, Canyon or Bewicks wren. Have seen Carolina's banded end at our feeders.References and persons consulted before writing description: On backHow long before field notes made? Same Evening this form completed? 4 wks

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

A Guide to Field Identification Birds of North America: Robbins, Braun, and Zimms, Copyright 1983

National Geographic Society Field Guide to Birds of North America

The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding, Vol. 3

The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds: John K. Terres

A Field Guide to Western Birds: Roger Tory Peterson

Color and posture very closely resembled the color plate on page 1044 of the Terres Encyclopedia