

Mountain Bluebird

4 Jan 1993

Big Creek State Park, Polk Co., IA

*G. Gordon Brown, Jr.

female; IBL 63:50, 64:68

Record Number: 93-08

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

G. Gordon Brown, Jr., 922 Yuma Ave., Ames [11/27/93]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 63:50

Records Committee: IBL 64:68

VOTE: 6 A-D, 1 NA

A-D, Good description of female Mountain Bluebird.

A-D, Fieldmarks diagnostic for female Mountain Bluebird. Description of hovering behavior also supportive of this species.

NA, Mountain Bluebirds have gray breast, flank, and bellies, and would lack any buff color. The buff could be the drab winter colored breast and flanks of the Eastern Bluebird which would have a white belly. Although Mountain Bluebird is the most likely bluebird to hover, other do hover from time to time.

A-D, The coloration, lack of any orange on underparts, and behavior are all indicative of a Mountain Bluebird.

A-D, I need to be educated about behavioral differences.

REVOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Female Eastern Bluebird would not have "gray head and back". Several references give Mountain Bluebird breast and flanks as "grayish-brown" which could also be described as "buffy-gray."

A-D, While I have a concern that this description was written with heavy influence from the NGS Guide, I feel the record is valid. The NA voter took exception with the use of term "buff" on the bird's sides. The observer described it as "buffy Gray", which in my viewing of the NGS illustration, appears to be an appropriate description of female Mountain Bluebird. I don't feel this would be easily confused with the rusty breast and flanks of the female Eastern Bluebird. I've never seen and Eastern Bluebird hover.

A-D, NA vote was based on buffy breast and sides as looking yellowish to orangish tan in color, but the documentor says buffy GRAY, which is describing a shade of gray.

A-D, The observer's "buffy gray" is possibly the equivalent of Master Guide's "gray brown" so the color perception doesn't bother me. Although other bluebirds may hover to some extent, hovering often during a fifteen minute observation period is behaviorally consistent with Mountain Bluebird.

A-D, A female because of drab coloration and lack of blue on underparts. Bird lacks reddish coloration of Eastern or Western. Lacks contrast between head and back, between chin and belly, and between belly and rump of Eastern. Zimmer uses dingy-buff to describe female Western. Bluebirds are not more drab in winter. They molt once in fall, so they are fresher in winter than in summer. Would have been nice to have wing length in reference to tail. Longer and thinner bill might be hard to judge.

A-D, NA review states that breast, flank and belly should lack any buff color but NGS Guide says that females in fresh fall plumage the throat and breast are tinged with red orange but has grayish brown flanks. Buffy flanks fits this description very well and in early January this color would be somewhat worn to a buffy color. This is consistent with Mountain Bluebird female.

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species How many? Mountain Bluebird ♀ 1
 Location? Big Creek State Park
 Type of habitat? Prairie, lined by rows of Pine tree + berry bushes
 When? date(s): 1/4/1983 Time: . 2:00-2:15 p.m.
 Who? your name and address
 G. Gordon Brown jr 922 Yuma Ave Ames, Iowa

Others with you None
 Others before and after you
 Unknown

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also describe voice and behavior. Head and back were Gray. Eye and bill were black. Throat and Breast were a buffy Gray becoming white at the belly, flanks were buffy gray. Rump, tail and wings were a bright Blue. Underwing and Under-tail were a very light Blue, nearly white. Legs were Black. Size @ 8"
 Behavior: The bird was flying from perch to perch, briefly land on the ground. Hovered often.
 Didn't call.

Similar species and how eliminated:
 Eastern Bluebird: lack of orange on Breast and Behavior.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification?

If yes, explain: No one to disagree with.

Viewing conditions: lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: Binoculars and Scope 20x-45x, Sun was out and behind me.

Approached the bird to within 15'

Previous experience with this species and similar ones:

Saw several on western states visits 12 and 10 years ago

References and persons consulted before writing description:

N&S Field Guide

Jim Dinsmore

How long before field notes made? 10 min

this form completed? 1 day

Mail original form to field editor for this season.