

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Printed: 11/24/00

Western Tanager

8 May 1997

Ames, Story Co., IA

*Kevin Healy, *Jim Dinsmore, K. Niyo

to 13 May; P-0560, IBL 67:91, 68:86, Healy 1998

Record Number: 97-17

Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Kevin Healy, 2427 Waterford Drive, Ames 50010

Jim Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Drive, Ames 50014 [*10/1/97]

Kayleen A. Niyo (7 May) [not reviewed]

PHOTOGRAPH

Reid Allen, 11 May, P-0560

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 67:91

Records Committee: IBL 68:86

Healy, K. 1998. Western Tanager in Story County. IBL 68:21-22.

VOTE: 1 A-P, 6 A-D

RE-VOTE (by mail with photo): 6 A-P, 1 A-D

LAUGHING GULLS IN CENTRAL IOWA

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

During 1996, I saw three Laughing Gulls in central Iowa. Here, I provide details of each sighting and comment on their status in Iowa.

On 10 May 1996, I observed an adult Laughing Gull at Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County. The bird was resting on Sandpiper Beach in the company of Ring-billed Gulls and Caspian Terns. I watched and photographed the bird from 10:24 to 10:40 a.m. and noted the following. The bird was slightly smaller than a Ring-billed Gull and much slimmer. The bird was in alternate plumage with a black hood, faint white eye crescents, and blood-red bill. The mantle and upperwings were dark gray except for black primaries. The underparts and tail were white. The legs were black. In flight, I noted that the undersides of the outer primaries were black and there was no white bar on the upperwing separating the black primaries from the gray upperwing.

On 17 August 1996, Jim Sinclair, Ray Cummins, and I were birding Runnells Wildlife Area in Marion County. We were walking along the main dike when I saw a smaller gull flying with Ring-billed Gulls. I recognized the bird immediately as a juvenile Laughing Gull. We studied the bird at close range intermittently from 9:00 to 10:35 a.m. The bird was slightly smaller and slimmer-winged than a Ring-billed Gull. The bird was almost entirely brown, except for a paler face, throat, and belly, and black primaries. The black bill was rather long and slightly drooped. The eye was dark with prominent white eye crescents, especially around the posterior end of the eye. The mantle and scapulars were edged with pale buff giving the bird a somewhat scaly appearance. In flight, there was a broad, black terminal tail band. The legs appeared black, and the bird seemed long-legged compared to a Ring-billed Gull. I aged the bird as a juvenile because of the extensive brown color on the body and wings.

Finally, on 5 September 1996, I saw a juvenile Laughing Gull near the north end of the Highway 14 bridge at Red Rock Reservoir in Marion County. This bird's description matched that of the juvenile seen earlier at Runnells Wildlife Area. I watched the bird from 12:45 to 1:10 p.m. and photographed it. It is possible this was the same bird seen on 17 August.

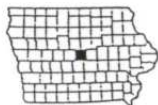
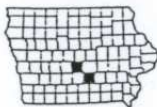
None of these birds were relocated after the initial sighting. Records of Laughing Gulls in Iowa continue to increase as observers become more aware of the possibility of finding them. There are a few records from spring (April-May), but most are from fall (July-October) with a peak from early August to mid-September.

612 1/2 W. Magnolia, Fort Collins, CO 80521

WESTERN Tanager in STORY COUNTY

KEVIN HEALY

On the afternoon of 8 May 1997 my neighbor, M. J. Hatfield, called to alert me to the presence of a Western Tanager near my home. Shortly after 4:00 p.m. an adult male Western Tanager in breeding plumage visited one of our feeders, sampling oranges slices set out to attract Baltimore Orioles. I observed



the bird intermittently over the next two hours, feeding alone or near Baltimore Orioles and American Goldfinches. I saw a yellow bird with a red head and black wings, mantle and tail. In size it was between that of a Baltimore Oriole and an American Goldfinch, closer to that of the goldfinch. The bird was bright red on the face, throat, and crown; the red was less bright on the nape. The eye was black with a fine yellow eye ring. The wings were black with two bars; the upper bar broader and yellow, the lower bar thinner and a more pale yellow (almost white). The bird was frequently observed in our neighborhood over the next six days, last seen the morning of 13 May. It fed on oranges garnished with marmalade at the home of Lucy Rimler. Numerous birders from as throughout the state enjoyed her hospitality as well. This is the first recorded observation of a Western Tanager in Story County and about the twelfth for Iowa.

2427 Waterford Drive, Ames IA 50010

FERRUGINOUS HAWK IN CERRO GORDO COUNTY

CAROLYN J. FISCHER

On 12 February 1997 at 2:30 p.m. I was driving south along Dogwood Avenue in southwestern Cerro Gordo County. Tim Phalen, Jan Walter, and I were looking for a Snowy Owl that had been recently sighted in that section of the county. The terrain is rolling hills covered with open farm fields.

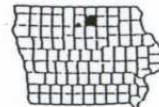
From the left side of the car, a large buteo flew rather low and parallel to me car. The wings were long, straight edged, and appeared pointed. The back was very dark, the tail was white at the base, and was not fanned out. The underside was very white and patagial marks were absent from the leading edge of the wings. The bird flew with strong wing beats.

The bird landed in a field on a 5-foot fence post approximately 45 yards from us. Using my window mount spotting scope and having a side view of the bird, I made the following observations:

Large head and bill. Head was light but not all white. Throat was white, without a malar stripe. Dark line through the eye, with a light area above and below the eye. Crown was brown with some streaking. Breast very white, no belly band, white leg feathers, unable to see the feet. Had some brown-black spots on the flanks. Back dark brown and the wing tips were just short of the tail tip. With bird perched, the tail looked dark except a slight rufous wash at the tip.

We watched, using a 30x spotting scope, for 30 minutes in good sunny viewing conditions. Referring to Clark and Wheeler (1987), I was able to eliminate light-morph Red-tailed Hawk by lack of a prominent eye line, white cheek, and absence of malar stripe. We concluded that we were watching an immature Ferruginous Hawk. After returning home I consulted Dunne et al. (1988) for further confirmation. The Iowa Bird Line was notified of the sighting. The hawk was seen in the area by others for the next several days.

There had been only five accepted records of Ferruginous Hawk in Iowa. This is the first accepted record of the Ferruginous Hawk in Cerro Gordo County (Kent and Dinsmore, 1996).



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97-17

5 May 1997

Dr. Tom Kent
Records Committee
Iowa Ornithology Union

Dear Dr. Kent,

I enclose a description of the bird seen in our back yard yesterday. Dr. Dinsmore thought it warranted a report. Thursday was a great day for our feeder: White Crowned Sparrow, Harris' Sparrow, Lincoln Sparrow as well as the Western Tanager.

Bird: Adult male Western Tanager, breeding plumage

Date: Thursday May 8 1997 1600-1800

Place: Story County. 2427 Waterford Drive Ames IA 50010 0.7 mi. N of E-29, 0.8 mi. W of I-35. Seen with Baltimore Orioles and American Goldfinches at back yard feeders.

Weather: Dry, variably clear to cloudy, strong winds from west to north west.

Viewing Conditions: Seen through binoculars (Leica 10x,42) and spotting scope (Swarovski ST HD-80) through kitchen window range 30 to 200 feet.

Description: Yellow bird with red head; black wings, mantle and tail. Size between that of Baltimore Oriole and American Goldfinch. Bright red on throat, face and crown; less bright on nape. Eye black with fine yellow eye ring. Two distinct wing bars: upper broad yellow; lower thinner and pale yellow (almost white).

Seen by Mary Jane Hatfield, Kevin Healy, Rosanne Healy, Kay Niyo all of Ames. First seen by Mary Jane Hatfield.

Yours truly,

Kevin Healy
2427 Waterford Drive
Ames IA 50010
(515) 233-5914

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species Western Tanager How many? one

Location? NE edge of Ames-Tullamore Glen area

Type of habitat? housing area with wooded ravine behind it

When? date(s): 9 May 1997 Time: 4:15-4:20 p.m.

Who? Jim Dinsmore

4024 Arkansas Drive, Ames

Others with you Lucy Rimler

Others before or after you Kevin Healy, Kay Niyo, and others

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.

medium sized bird, larger than sparrow, smaller than robin
Predominantly bright rich yellow in color with red wash to front of face and top of head
Wings and tail dark black, white wing bars on tail. When it faced away from me, I could see the distinct black "saddle" across the top of the back between the wings.
Large, light colored bill also noted

Similar species and how eliminated: Nothing else similar to this bird in this plumage

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification?
If yes, explain: no reservations

Viewing conditions: lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: bird about 15 feet away, sitting at a jelly feeder, had both side and rear views of the bird
Good light and leisurely view from inside of house at bird on feeder on deck

Previous experience with this species and similar ones: I have seen this species in western North America but in this plumage it is unmistakable.

References and persons consulted before writing description:
Looked at Robbins field guide after viewing bird but not needed to identify the bird.

How long before field notes made? Field characteristics noted while viewing the bird. Documentation written next morning.

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Western Tanager How many? 1 maleLocation? Dr. Kevin Healy's home, Ames, IAType of habitat? Mature oak/hickory subdivisionWhen? date(s): 5/7/97 time: 5:30pm to 7pmWho? your name and address: Dr. Kayleen A. Niyoothers with you: Kevin and Rosanne Healyothers before or after you: m.g. Hatfield, Jim Dinsmore

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.

About 7", completely red head; yellow "collar," breast, belly, back, & rump. Black wings & upper bar ~~pale~~ yellow and lower bar yellowish white or pale yellow. Tail black. Thick seed-eater bill. Dark legs.

Eating orange halves in feeders. He tried to drive a ~~♂~~ oriole off the feeder part of the time, but was unsuccessful and had to sit and wait for oriole to leave. Was at feeder about 10' from house windows.

Similar species and how eliminated: I have seen Western Tanagers in Wyoming and Idaho, so I knew that was what it was.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No.

If yes, explain:

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

Excellent light. About 10'. Used my Zeiss 10x42 binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: See statement above.

References and persons consulted before writing description: National Geographic Soc. Birds of N.Am., 2nd ed. I called Jim Dinsmore & he also went out & saw it.

How long before field notes made? 1 day this form completed? 7/4/97

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240 52246