

Black-headed Grosbeak
20 May 1982
Rush Lake, Palo Alto Co., IA
*R. Harms, Mrs. K. Sernett (letter)
IBL 52:61; 53:36

Record Number: 82-10
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Mrs. Ken Sernett
Ronald Harms

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 52:61
Records Committee: IBL 53:36

VOTE: 1-III, 6-IV

IV, No real description.

IV, At least a hybrid, need eyeline color for full species.

Poor detail.

IV as bl.h., III suggest hybrid, Rush Lake -- little descr.
exc. breast. Grouse farm --no desc (sernett).

IV, Insufficient documentary details for a nonhybrid
identification.

IV, Most likely a hybrid, based on location and date.

REVOTE (at meeting, 20 November 1982): no change

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation
 by the Records Committee
 of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: Black-headed Grosbeak

DATE SEEN: 20 May 1982

SITE OF OBSERVATION: Mabel Grous' grove, Pocahontas Co., Iowa
 Rush Lake, Palo Alto Co., Iowa

OBSERVERS: Sernett, Harms

DATE OF REVIEW: 22 August 1982

METHOD OF REVIEW: mail vote

CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: IV

COMMENTS: The records committee felt that the descriptions submitted were not sufficient to rule out the possibility that these birds were hybrids between Black-headed and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. Such hybrids are common in eastern Nebraska and eastern South Dakota and so would be expected to occur in Iowa as well from time to time. Female hybrids would be very difficult if not impossible to distinguish from female Black-headed grosbeaks since this species is itself somewhat variable. Points that would indicate that a female was a pure-black-headed rather than a hybrid would include yellowish or brownish head-striping, bright yellow underwing coverts, warm yellow/brown underparts, as on the bird observed, and reduced streaking on the underparts. But it should be repeated that it may be impossible to identify pure female Black-headed Grosbeaks in the field.

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.

May 26, 1982
Laurens Iowa
SERNETT

T. H. Kent
211 Richards St
Iowa City, Ia 52240

Dear Sir,

I'd like to report two sightings of the black headed female Grosbeak. The first one occurred May 20 about 5:30 pm at Rush Lake.

Four of us (all members of the Pocahontas County Chapter of the Iowa Ornithologists Union) Dr. Ron Harms, Ann Luther, my husband Ken and myself, using field glasses, at a distance of about 40 to 50 yards observed this bird with an orange breast which, using Roger Peterson's field guide

could be described only as
a black headed grosbeak.

Yesterday, May 25th,
Dr. Harms, Mrs. Mabel Grous
and myself saw the
female black head grosbeak
at a distance of 30 yards
with both the naked
eye and field glasses
at the Grous farm
2 1/2 miles north and 2
miles east of Laurens.
It was on the ground
near a squirrel feeding
station. It looked exactly
like the picture in
Peterson's field guide.
This sighting occurred
at 10:40 a.m. with
excellent light

Mrs. Ken Sennett
318 Oak St
Laurens Iowa
50554

What species? Black-Headed Grosbeak ♀ How many? 1 or 2 ♀

Location? South side Rush Lake, Palo Alto Co and Mable Grove ^{Wood} grove, Paragonia Co.

Type of habitat? Open woods

When? date(s): I don't recall but Ann Sernett would be accurate time: _____ to _____

Who? your name and address: Ronald Harms, Laurens
Ann Sernett, Laurens and Mable Grove on Wed

others with you: Ken Sernett + Ann Luther at The lake but they are not experienced birders but they do have eyes and the bird
others before or after you: Sat long enough for everyone to compare 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. I choose to document the

one at the Mable Grove grove because it was seen several times by Mable who is an experienced observer. I knew what it was when she called me and I went out twice in the rain without seeing it. Then two days later Mable called again and I took Ann out and we saw it in good light. It looked like a ♀ Rose-breasted except it had no visible streaking on the yellowish-orange breast. It stayed for several min. and hasn't been seen since. We (and Mable in particular) were disappointed that "Mr" didn't show.

Personal note: I would bow to Mrs Gross on bird reference to the same or greater degree as to Ray Cummins who I readily admit knows bird better than myself. (A) Harms

Similar species and how eliminated: There were many ♀ Rose-breasted around to compare.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? Yes

If yes, explain: Ray Cummins + Tom Kent (as usual)

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

lighting: good

equipment: plain eyes + field glasses

distance: about 25-30 yds

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Yes to Rose-breasted and I'm sure I've seen the male as a child on the farm

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Ray Cummins + Petersons Guide

How long before field notes made? _____ this form completed? 4 weeks

Ann Sernett had most of her report written before we got back to town.

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