

Lewis's Woodpecker

14 Oct 1992

3 miles north of Washta, Cherokee Co., IA

\*Brewer, \*Bierman, \*Petersen, \*Kent, \*M. Proe

IBL 63:19, 70, P-0345

Record Number: 92-37  
Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Marion M. Brewer (14 Oct), RR 2, Box 25, Cherokee, IA 51012  
(6/30/93)

Dick Bierman (16 Oct), 901 Harris St., Cherokee, IA 51012

Peter C. Petersen (16 Oct), 235 McClellan, Davenport, IA 52803

Thomas H. Kent (17 Oct), 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246

Mark Proescholdt (18 Oct), Box 65, Liscomb, IA 50148

PHOTOGRAPH

T. H. Kent, 17 Oct, P-0345

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 63:19

Records Committee: IBL 63:70

Brewer, M. M. 1994. Lewis's Woodpecker in Cherokee County. IBL  
64:18.

VOTE: 4 A-P, 3 A-D

A-P, I hesitantly give this record a AP instead of AD because I can see the dark wings with a greenish cast, and under magnification, in bright sunlight, the reddish color of cheeks and lower breast. If this photo had been unaccompanied by documentation, my decision might have been different.

A-D, I can't identify the Lewis's Woodpecker from the photo.

A-P, The photo shows a woodpecker silhouette and method of perching. Only Lewis's Woodpecker has all dark wings, tail, back, head, belly, and lower breast as shown in the photo. A greenish sheen can be seen in the wing and light color (whitish or light gray) can be seen in the upper breast area. The belly and lower breast area has a reddish or dark pink color. The bill is long and dark. In comparison to nearby Robin this bird is quite large (as a Lewis's should be). This is conclusive photo evidence for Lewis's Woodpecker.

A-D, Good details provided for a Lewis' Woodpecker. The photo is fairly good, but I feel A-D is better than A-P with this photo alone.

REVOTE: 4 A-P, 3 A-D

A-D, Photo is just not acceptable as per colors. Posture is correct, but if others can see colors in photo, they can see more than I.

A-P, While a less than perfect photo, the diagnostic greenish sheen was visible, and the overall shape and partially visible gray collar were supportive.

A-P, The photo is not perfect, but I think the analysis by two A-P voters indicates that this could not be any other woodpecker. If this were a "quiz" photo, I believe that experts would be certain of its identity.

A-P, If the A-D voters look very carefully at the photo they will see that the photo is diagnostic for this species as per my prior review.

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union  
Lewis's Woodpecker

Printed: 10/18/94  
14 Oct 1992 RC No. 92-37 (cont)

A-D, The photo is pretty good, but I still feel A-D is better than A-P with this photo alone. The colors and bird's markings need to be more definitive for me to vote A-P.

REVOTE (at meeting, 15 May 1993): 4 A-P, 2 A-D, 1 not present.

identified, so details of what was seen and heard are an important check on the validity of the record.

Most observers provide an optimum amount of data. Some people provide a short list of such pithy findings that we suspect that they left out some birds that others would report. A few provide long lists that include all common birds leaving the editors to pick out the important findings. This is a heavy burden when there is so much data to enter into the computer for sorting. We ignore sightings that do not provide specific locations, dates, and numbers. Early and late dates and high counts are useful, although observers should use some discretion if these are not unusual or if they were only birding in the middle of the expected migration interval.

211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246 and 6 Longview Knoll, NE, Iowa City, IA 52240

### LEWIS'S WOODPECKER IN CHEROKEE COUNTY

MARION M. BREWER

On 14 October 1992, Vernie Bierman and I were cleaning out a few bluebird houses which were located on a dead end road 3 miles north of Washta on the west side of the Little Sioux River in Cherokee County. At 2 p.m., at the end of the road, I saw a flicker-sized woodpecker about 15 yards away in a burr oak tree. It had a mostly dark head, back, and wings, and a very noticeably pinkish belly. It had a light colored collar around its neck, a lightly streaked chest, dark bill, and a greenish cast to the dark back. It flew crow-like with slow wing beats from the oak to a tall wooden utility pole. There it perched with the top half of bird looking over the edge. With a Nikon scope, I could see a reddish color above its bill and on its cheek.



I consulted the National Geographic field guide and quickly identified the bird as a Lewis's Woodpecker, a species I had never seen before. I was not aware of its rarity in Iowa until I consulted Iowa Birds. There I found that it had been reported in the state only twice, from 28 November 1928 to 20 March 1929 in Sioux City (Bailey, *Bull. Iowa Ornith. Union* 7:3, 1929; Youngworth, *Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci.* 38:277-285, 1931) and from 10 November 1935 to 10 March 1936 in Clear Lake (Davis, *Iowa Bird Life* 6:12, 28, 1936). Later that afternoon I reported this observation on the Iowa Birdline and my phone rang for a week.

The next afternoon, I met Eugene Armstrong and several other birders who had been unable to locate the bird in the morning. Almost on cue, it showed up for all of them to see. The Lewis's Woodpecker stayed for five days from 14-18 October and then was not seen again. Over those days, it was my pleasure to meet many birders from other parts of Iowa. The woodpecker often perched on top of a utility pole and fed on an acorn. Perhaps the good crop of acorns in the fall of 1992 attracted the bird to this area.

1537-560th Street, Cherokee, IA 51012

### NORTHERN PARULA NEST IN VAN BUREN COUNTY

D. RANDALL PINKSTON

The Northern Parula nests across southeastern Canada and the eastern United States with a conspicuous gap in Iowa and much of the Western Great Lakes region (Peterson 1980). It prefers bottomland forest and swampy habitats where its nest is typically placed in a tuft of Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) in the South, or beard lichen (*Usnea* sp.) in northern forests. It may also nest in wooded areas where no hanging moss is available (Pough 1946).



In Iowa the Northern Parula is a rare summer resident in riparian habitats of southeastern and central Iowa (Dinsmore et al. 1984). Evidence of nesting has been inferred from a female and nest reported from Lacey-Keosauqua State Park in Van Buren County on 29 May 1979 (Koenig 1979), and two carrying nesting material at Wildcat Den S.P. in Muscatine Co. on 9 May 1986 (Myers 1986). Interestingly, Spanish moss does not occur in Iowa and, historically, the beard lichen is known primarily from the northeast and from Dickinson and Emmet counties in northwestern Iowa (Malone and Tiffany 1978).

On 15 May 1993, my wife Patricia and I discovered a Northern Parula nest at Lacey-Keosauqua State Park, Van Buren County, along the first stream crossing at the east entrance road. A male's characteristic song was heard near where a female was foraging. Soon the female disappeared into or onto the nest which was placed approximately 40 feet high in the outermost branches of a hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) tree.

We returned the next day with Jim and Joyce Durbin to study the nest in more detail. From ground level it appeared to be a woven basketlike structure of grasses, leaves, and bark shreds (Figure 1). It was attached along its length to a stout branch and secured on the other side and below to drooping twigs. Again, a male was singing near the nest but the female was not observed the second day.

My son Daniel and I returned to the nest on 23 May. We observed it in the rain for three hours between 10:40 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Again, a male was singing at intervals throughout the period but no Northern Parula activity was observed at the nest. On one occasion a female Brown-headed Cowbird landed briefly at the nest, peered inside, gave a rattle call, and flew away. Egg-laying by Northern Parulas occurs from 20 April to 30 May in Texas (Oberholser 1974). Perhaps the nest was occupied by an incubating or brooding female the whole time, although it might also have been abandoned. Unfortunately, I was not able to return to the nest again.

The Northern Parula is a common summer resident in Missouri where Breeding Bird Survey data indicate it has increased steadily over the past 25 years (Robbins and Easterla 1992). Summering Northern Parulas were recently found in Henderson County, Illinois (across the Mississippi River from Des Moines County, Iowa), north of the species' usual range in that state (Bohlen 1989). Our observations provide a second record of nest-building by the Northern Parula in Iowa, both from Lacey-Keosauqua State Park. Evidence of successful nesting in the state is still lacking but will no doubt be discovered someday in southeastern Iowa. My thanks to Jim Dinsmore and Tom Kent for recognizing the significance of this nest discovery at the time it was made.



92-37

170-117 965 N11117 75- 844

Lewis's Woodpecker  
north of Washta, Cherokee Co.  
17 Oct 1992 T. H. Kent

## DOCUMENTATION FORM

For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

92-37

What species? Lewis Woodpecker How many? 1Location? 3 miles S.W. of Quimby Iowa, Cherokee CountyType of Habitat? mixed woods & pastureWhen? date(s): 10-16 & 10-18 1992 time: after lunch  
toWho? your name and address: Dick BiermanOthers with you: Jim Huber, Pate Peterson, Ann Johnson, B.J. Rose, Bill HaeselOthers before or after you: many

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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Flicker sized or slightly larger woodpecker. Dark back & wings which shown greenish in good light. raspberry checks dirty gray breast with a reddish cast on the lower half.

IT would perch on a power pole top, fence post top, or would fly down and get an acorn and go into a tree and eat or store it.

Similar species; how eliminated: Young Red head - this bird had no white wing patches. Black Backed - this bird was too large & black backed doesn't have a greenish cast.

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

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

Good light 25-40 yards. 15x60 power spotting scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

I've seen Lewis WPKs. in Wyoming & AZ.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

None

How long before field notes made? when this form completed? 3 days

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

DOCUMENTATION FORM  
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

92-37

What species? Lewis' Woodpecker How many? 1

Location? 2 mi. N. of Washita, Cherokee Co. Ia.

Type of Habitat? border of oak grove, pasture edge.

When? date(s): October 16, 1992 time: 11:50<sup>AM</sup> to 12:15<sup>PM</sup> EST

Who? your name and address: Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd. Davenport IA

Others with you: Brian Blevins, Kelly McKay, Dick Bremer 5280

Others before or after you: Gene Armstrong, Marion Brewer, in. ok

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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Fairly large, dark woodpecker between Flicker + Red-headed in size. When first seen closely bird was insect hunting + perched on a small branch facing us. Chest + upper belly barred + streaked with very little pinkish red visible. Head dark with some dark red showing around bill, which was dark. Uppermost chest + neck pale grey, continuing around to hind neck as a narrow collar. Back, wings + tail glossy black, somewhat greenish iridescent in full sun. Flew with a direct flight, no undulation, slow wing beats. Not heard. We felt the bird was an immature.

Similar species; how eliminated: Nothing is similar

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

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

Sun behind observers for all close views, clear day.  
Closest about 50 m, 10x40 Zeiss binocs.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen this species many times (about 10) in S. D. + the Rockies.

References and persons consulted before writing description: none

How long before field notes made? 10 min. this form completed? 8 hrs.

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

**Species:** Lewis's Woodpecker; **Number:** 1

**Location:** 3 miles southwest of Quimby, Cherokee Co., Iowa

**Date:** 17 October 1992; **Time:** 9:10 to 9:20 a.m.

**Name and address:** Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246.

**Others before/with/after:** With Dick Tetrault. Found by Marion Brewer. Seen by others before and after.

**Habitat and circumstances:** Open pasture and wooded edge on bluff west of Little Sioux River.

**Description of bird:** When we drove up, we saw a dark object on top of a fence post and thought it was inanimate until it flew. It was about the size of a flicker, but appeared mostly dark and lacked any contrasting black and white or sharp color marking. The breast and throat were lighter and the sides showed some maroon coloration. We soon relocated the bird in a dead tree north along the edge of the pasture. It moved up and around limbs and poked at them like a woodpecker. A starling was in the same field of view. The bird was about 50% longer than the starling. The bird appeared mostly dark. The black bill appeared relatively long, thin, and pointed. The face was dark with indistinct dark maroon on the sides of the face at some angles. The eye was black. The breast and throat were lighter (medium gray), but I did not appreciate a distinct gray collar. The primaries, secondaries, and greater coverts were iridescent greenish-black, which contrasted with the non-iridescent, dusky black scapulars and back. The sides were dark gray to maroon. The belly appeared darker. The legs were dark. The tail protruded beyond the wings and was black.

**Voice:** Not heard.

**Similar species:** The shape and behavior was that of a woodpecker. This is the only woodpecker that lacks contrasting marks. The plumage did not have all the features illustrated for an adult bird, so it may have been a first-year bird.

**Any one have reservations?:** No.

**Light:** High clouds; mostly viewed against light sky looking northwest in morning light; **Distance:** As close as 30 feet; **Optics:** 10x binocular; 20x scope (nearly filled field).

**Previous experience:** Have seen a few in Colorado.

**References before/after viewing:** Looked at National Geographic guide briefly after making notes.

**Time of notes:** About 5 minutes after last viewing; **Final typing:** 2 days.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? If yes, explain:  
Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.  
I was wearing a pair of glasses for all closer and clear days.  
Closest about 20 m, 1000 m, 1000 m.  
Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen this species many times (about 10) in S.D. for flicker.  
References and persons consulted before writing description: none.  
How long before field notes made? (date) this form completed? 8 hrs.  
Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird List).



What species? Lewis' Woodpecker How many? 1Location? North of Washta - Cherokee CountyType of habitat? Pastureland, wooded ravines, wooded hillsides, large power polesWhen? date(s): Oct. 18, 1992 time: 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Iowa 50148others with you: Bob + Wayne Livermore, Jerry Probst, Cal + Bernie Knight, Dixie Kanago, others  
Beth Proescholdt, Dick + Judy Bierman, Lee + Nancy Schoenewe, Bill Huser,others before or after you: Tim Schantz, Ann Johnson, Armstrongs, Tom Kant, others

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 saw the bird at three different times. The first sighting was in a bare tree (60-70 yards ~~away~~ away for about 1 minute<sup>total</sup>) and then in an oak tree down the valley a bit. The back was seen and it had a green iridescent sheen and the bird had a light gray collar on the nape of the neck. It was flicker-size and maybe bulkier than a flicker. It flew down and out of sight.

The second sighting was not long afterwards in another oak tree. It had flown up, sat in a tree for a while and then flew downhill. It was 60-70 yards away and I saw for 1 minute or so with binocs and a 22x scope.

The third sighting was probably around 3:00 p.m. Bill Huser found it in a large cottonwood to the north and high up. Had excellent looks. The woodpecker had a dark face, eye, and bill. It had a pinkish blush on light grayish belly which sometimes showed up better than other times. It had a dark-looking head and back and I couldn't see a greenish tinge this time. It had a light gray collar on the back of the neck. Looking through a Kowa scope it turned its head once and I saw dark red "patches" on either side by the bill. This was only time I observed this. It appeared to be getting insects in the cottonwood branches. It flew from the cottonwood in a straight flight and was all dark-looking on the top side in flight - it appeared to be a large size in flight. It flew back to cottonwood in a bit and was still there as we left at 3:30 p.m.

Similar species and how eliminated:

No other similar species comes to mind.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

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

Sunny - sun behind us all 3 times. At the 3<sup>rd</sup> sighting it was mostly sunny with the sun behind us. Distances estimated. 3<sup>rd</sup> sighting → 30-40 yards away for about 15 minutes and later 100 yards away from car and window mounted scope. 8X30 Binocs, 22x scope, a Kowa scope

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen once in NW Nebraska at Chadron S.P.

References and persons consulted before writing description: NoneHow long before field notes made? 8:30 p.m. this form completed? Nov. 22, 1992

on Oct. 19 and before looking at