

Common Raven  
17 Dec 1983  
Dubuque, Dubuque Co., IA  
\*W Herrmann  
IBL 54:4, 13, 39

Record Number: 83-38  
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

William Herrman

LETTER

Bruce Peterjohn to Tom [Kent], 20 March 1984

REFERENCES

Christmas Bird Count: IBL 54:4, 13

Records Committee: IBL 54:39

VOTE: 1-II, 4-III, 1-IV, 1-V

V, Tail wrong. Not heard. Not confirmed by other observers. Size can be misleading. Date and location make raven possible, but need more convincing detail than provided.

III, Not very good description (but what can one say about a big black bird?), bird should have been flushed to observe flight pattern, get better look at tail pattern and possibly make it call.

III, Should have been reported to bird line for possible additional confirmation.

IV, Not convinced.

III, While not a great description, location and date as expected. Convincing points to me are (1) size comparison with crows nearby (2) rounded tail (diagnostic if accurately seen). As good as can be documented without hearing call.

III, Place and time OK for species.

COMMENTS from Bruce Peterjohn, Regional Editor for American Birds in letter of 20 March 1984 to T. Kent: "The raven seemed to have been identified by its size without direct comparison with crows; such comparisons are questionable at best. The description of a "rounded tail" is wrong, ravens have wedge-shaped tails. Lack of vocalizations is a serious omission as was the absence of flight characteristics. This information would have to be provided for an acceptable documentation."

REVOTE (at spring meeting, 1984): no vote change.

83-38

105-K E. Ticonderoga Dr.  
Westerville, OH 43081  
March 20, 1984

Dear Tom,

Thank you very much for sending me a copy of your newly published book. It appears to be thoroughly prepared and very informative. I'm sure it will prove to be quite useful in my preparation of seasonal reports for American Birds.

I'm afraid the winter season was rather dull throughout the midwest. With the exception of a few rarities, most notably the Slaty-backed Gull, there weren't many noteworthy observations. Hopefully, this spring will be better.

I was troubled by both of the questionable documentations and feel both are unacceptable. The description of the Peregrine Falcon was rather vague and contained a number of inaccuracies; his statement "the under tail was barred and the chest showed a distinct barred pattern on a predominantly golden colored chest and belly" certainly does not describe a Peregrine. Other field marks are vaguely described if they are mentioned at all. The observer's inexperience and lack of optical equipment add to the uncertainty of this identification.

The raven seemed to have been identified by its size without direct comparison with crows; such comparisons are questionable at best. The description of a "rounded tail" is wrong, ravens have wedge-shaped tails. Lack of vocalizations is a serious omission as was the absence of flight characteristics. This information would have to be provided for an acceptable documentation.

I hope these comments are useful. Except for these sightings, your report appeared to be pretty good. Good luck with your Iowa birding this spring.

Sincerely,



Bruce Peterjohn

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

83-38

by the Records Committee  
of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: COMMON RAVEN

DATE SEEN: Dec 17, 1983

SITE OF OBSERVATION: Dubuque County

OBSERVERS: William Herrmann, John Feller, John Stampe

DATE OF REVIEW: 1983-84

METHOD OF REVIEW: Circulation by mail to Committee; discussion at meeting.

CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: IV

COMMENTS:

This documentation was fair, but the Committee felt that to be acceptable, this record needed to have more information regarding the exact tail shape, the call of the bird, and some idea of head shape and bill size. There are very few Iowa records (about 7), most for northcentral Iowa, although the date and location would be likely for Common Raven. Most of the additional information needed to clinch this identification could have been obtained by flushing the bird.

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.

Herrmann  
CBC

83-38

1983 CBC  
Documentation  
Dubuque, Iowa

Specie: Common Raven                      Number: One  
 Observers: William Herrmann (documentor), John Feller, John Stampe  
 All black bird observed at a distance of 300 feet  
 Relative size: One half larger than a dozen Am. crows about 100  
                   feet away from the raven at same distance  
~~Head and~~ Neck ruffed and short  
 Mandibles heavy and straight  
 Bird was preening and displayed rounded tail  
 No vocalization  
 Date: Dec. 17, 1983 at 2:00 P.M. Mostly clear and below zero  
 Observed with 7 x 35 Binoculars for more than five minutes with  
                   sun at observers backs and bird to the east  
 Location was about three miles south of Dubuque city limits, in  
                   narrow valley with scattered cedar trees, with bird in a  
                   leafless tree  
 Identification agreed on by the three observers who have seen  
                   the ravens in the western mountains, and one had seen them  
                   this past summer in the north woods.

Specie: Carolina Wren                      Number: One  
 Observer: William Herrmann  
 Observed at feeder about 8 feet from window, feeding on suet  
                   and oatmeal.  
 This bird came to feeder during full week before CBC Dec.17, and  
                   and came again on Dec. 24. Temperatures well below zero for  
                   this entire week with 7" heavy snow cover.  
 Location about 6 miles south of Dubuque at feeder at home on  
                   Mississippi River bluff.  
 (Note: Two other Carolina wrens reported on count day some 12  
                   miles north but not documented).