

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

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Rose-breasted Grosbeak  
28 Nov 1992  
Atlantic, Cass Co., IA  
\*Fuller, \*Kent  
IBL 63:22, 70, P-0352, P-0353

Record Number: 92-40  
Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll, Iowa City, IA 52240  
Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246

PHOTOGRAPHS

Jim Fuller, P-0353  
T. H. Kent, P-0352

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 63:22  
Records Committee: IBL 63:70

VOTE: 6 A-P, 1 A-D

A-D, Why?

A-P, The concentrated buff color on the breast with heavy streaks and reddish wash is consistent with immature 1st year male Rose-breasted Grosbeak and not Black-headed Grosbeak.

A-P, Good details provided for Rose-breasted Grosbeak. The photo is a good one and shows upper breast streakings and a whitish lower breast color.

REVOTE: 7 A-P

A-P, I am at a loss as to how th respond to the "why" vote.

A-P, A small red dot can be seen on the breast. Why? Because winter grosbeaks are rare and analyzing them should improve the expertise of the committee.



Rose-breasted Grosbeak P-0352  
Atlantic, Cass Co., IA  
28 Nov 1992 T. H. Kent

92-40

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## DOCUMENTATION OF UNUSUAL BIRD SIGHTING

SPECIES: Rose Breasted Grosbeak (First year male)

LOCATION: Feeder and yard of Donna Rourick, 1700 Bryn Mawr, Atlantic (Cass County).

DATE: 28 November, 1991 (2:20-2:45PM).

OBSERVER: Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll, NE, Iowa City, Iowa, 52240.

OTHER OBSERVERS: Tom Kent, Ann Johnson, Donna Rourick, Sharon Steffens.

BACKGROUND: Donna Rourick reported to the Iowa Birdline that there was a Black-headed Grosbeak coming to her feeder the previous two days. Soon after Tom Kent and I arrived, the bird was in a tree near the picture window, and later ate 9 sunflower seeds and drank 25 feet from the window.

DESCRIPTION: The bird was bigger than the house finches nearby. It did have the very large bill typical of grosbeaks. The bill was a night gray color, but at one time appeared to have pink sheen. The head, with its dark eye was mostly a dark brown color, with a wide light stripe above the eye. The back was brown, streaked with dark, and the rump was brown. The breast had a buffiness on the upper part, which was cut off to an off-white lower breast and belly. There was fine dark streaking to the buffy part, especially along the sides, and there was a reddish blush on the upper breast. In fact, at one time, a bright red spot could be discerned in that area. And just at the corner of the folded wing, a small red area could be seen at times. When the bird flew, the underwings gave a noticeable pinkish-red color.

SIMILAR SPECIES: The features that differentiate the first year male rose-breasted from a first year or female black-headed grosbeak are the red underwing versus yellow, the reddish area on the upper breast versus light buff, and the whitish lower breast versus buff. The bird was generally lighter, and less buffy on the underparts than expected of a black-headed grosbeak. The black-headed has less breast streaking, which is sometimes entirely absent.

VIEWING CONDITIONS and OPTICS: Looking east and northeast in mid afternoon of a sunny day. Swift Audubon binoculars (8.5 X 44) were used.

FIELD NOTES and REFERENCES: Field notes were made the evening of the sighting five hours later, and this form was typed on Thursday, December 3rd. National Geographic and Peterson (Eastern) Field Guides were consulted.



DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

**Species:** Rose-breasted Grosbeak; **Number:** 1 imm. male

**Location:** Atlantic, Cass Co., Iowa

**Date:** 28 November 1992; **Time:** 1:20 to 1:40 p.m.

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

**Others before/with/after:** Found by Donna Rourick at her feeder yesterday and identified as Black-headed Grosbeak.

Viewed with her and Jim Fuller, Ann Johnson, and Sharron Steffens.

**Habitat and circumstances:** Urban yard with feeders.

**Description of bird:** A large-billed, cardinal-sized bird that was obviously a grosbeak. The large conical bill was a pale light pink, but darker along the culmen. There was a large white superciliary line, small indistinct lower white eye crescent, and wider white line on the lower face. The top of head, back of neck, and back had dark streaks on an olive-brown background. The throat and breast were light buff with thin, distinct black streaks. The lower breast and belly were gray white. The cutoff between breast and belly was straight but not distinct. A small spot of red was seen centrally on the breast and at the bend of the wing. The underwing axillary area was red when the bird flew. The wings were dark black-brown with two broken white wing bars and a larger white spot on the lower edge distal to the bars. A few fresh wing feathers had sharply demarcated white tips. The rump was concolor with the back and unstreaked. The tail was the same black-brown as the wings.

**Voice:** Not heard.

**Similar species:** The red on the breast and axillaries and the degree of streaking led us to identifying this bird as a first-year male Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

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

**Light:** sunlight from side; **Distance:** 20-40 feet; **Optics:** 10x binocular, 420 mm lens.

**Previous experience:** My first winter grosbeak in Iowa, but I have seen many immature and female Rose-breasted and Black-headed grosbeaks.

**References before/after viewing:** We looked at field guides and Joe Morlan's article in *Birding* while viewing the bird.

**Time of notes:** 5.5 hours; **Final typing:** 19 hours.