

Rock Wren
22 Nov 1986
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA
*B&L Padelford*****#Rose
IBL 57:19, 57, 78, Padelfords 1987

Record Number: 86-17
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Babs/Loren Padelford, 22 Nov
Steve Dinsmore, 22, 29, 30 Nov, 1-8 Dec
Peter C. Petersen, 23 Nov
Jim Dinsmore, 30 Nov
Robert K. Myers, 30 Nov
Paul Martsching, 30 Nov
Francis L. Moore, 6 Dec
Mark Proescholdt, 6 Dec

PHOTOGRAPHS

B. J. Rose, P-0207 (IBL 57:62)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 57:19, 57
Padelford, L., and B. Padelford. 1987. Rock Wren at
Saylorville Reservoir. IBL 57:62.
Photograph: IBL 57:62 (P-0207)
Records Committee: IBL 57:78

VOTE: 7-II

II, I'm convinced.

II ?I-P, Descriptions identify the bird. Surprizing that
bobbing behavior not noted and that it was silent.

II or I-P if a diagnostic photo was taken and is available to
the records committee. Descriptions are consistent and adequate
for Rock Wren. Any other species are ruled out by documentations,
which were for the most part very well done.

II, A combination of all documentations gives a very accurate
description of a rock wren.

II, Should have tried to photograph.

II, Seen by many! Composite of many views allows confirmation
of ID.

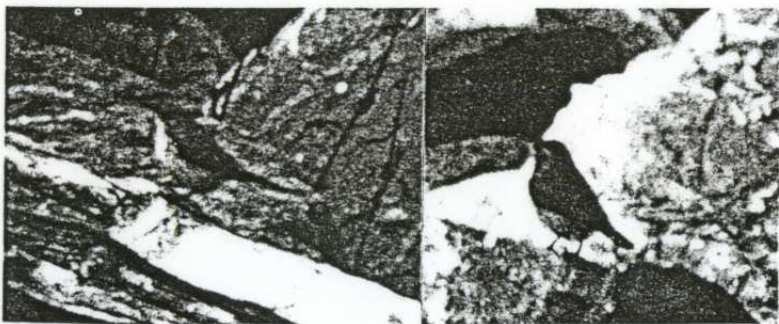
ROCK WREN AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

LOREN PADEFORD AND BABS PADEFORD

On 22 November 1986, we were birding the rock face of the Saylorville Dam with B. J. Rose. At 1:20 p.m., we stopped the car at the east turnout. As we got out of the car, a small bird flew from the roadside to the rocks, a distance of about 25 feet from us. We watched the bird for about 5 minutes as it worked its way among the rocks (presumably feeding and not always in view) and down toward the shore. The bird was larger than a House Wren, but smaller than a Water Pipit. It was uniformly gray-brown on its back, wings, and sides of the head. The throat, breast, and belly were cream-colored with pale tan vertical streaking on the breast. There was a buffy or peach-colored wash on the flanks. The bill was fairly long (about three-fourths the length of the head) and was thin, pointed, and slightly decurved. The tail in proportion to the body was shorter than that of a Water Pipit and longer than that of a House Wren. We could not relocate the bird later in the afternoon.

Jim Dinsmore, Steve Dinsmore, Pete Petersen, Bob Myers, and Paul Martsching were among the many birders who saw the bird through 8 December. Some additional characteristics mentioned in their documentations include chunky body, white speckling on the back, contrasting rump color (light to rust), and a barred tail with cream-colored corners. Two observers noted a faint white eye line. The legs and feet were described as black. The bird's behavior was described by one observer as "quite active and [it] continually flitted its wings and cocked its tail while feeding." There was some disagreement among those who documented the bird concerning the description of the tail. In addition to our description above, others described it as follows: "longer tail than a water pipit", "tail long for a wren", "fairly short tail", "large wren with a longish tail", and "long barred tail". This was the only contentious point in the overall description of the bird and shows the subjective nature of judging proportions and making size comparisons.

1405 Little John Rd., Bellevue, NE 68005



Rock Wren, Saylorville Reservoir, 22 November 1986. Photos by B. J. Rose.

I.O.U. BUSINESS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Williamsburg, 15 November 1986, 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

ANN M. BARKER

Members Present: Carl Bendorf (presiding), Eugene Armstrong, Ann Barker, Ray Cummins, Jim Dinsmore, Phyllis Harris, Francis Moore, Bob Myers, Carol Thompson.

Others Present: Tom Kent

Minutes: The minutes of the 6 September 1986 meeting were approved.

Committee Reports

Publications: Dinsmore reported that the newsletter, now in its second year, is doing quite well, and he expressed appreciation to editors, Hank Zaletel and Linda Zaletel. A proposed budget of \$925, which is about the same as last year, has not yet been approved by the Publications Committee. *Iowa Bird Life* Editor, Tom Kent, submitted a preliminary report of income and expenses for 1986. Owing to costs that were above original projection, the committee had approved a revised budget of \$5,000. The preliminary budget request for 1987 is \$5,100. Income from back issues of *Iowa Bird Life* was \$627 (net \$346). The committee recommended John Fleckenstein to fill the expiring term of Nancy Slife.

Records: In addition to reviewing bird records, the committee completed and published a new official state list. An update of the Field Checklist will be available in the near future. Myers suggested publishing an annual update of the official list. Kent noted that the annual report of the committee, published in *Iowa Bird Life*, includes this information. A budget of \$50 (\$25 for photo duplication and \$25 for copy costs) was requested for 1987. The committee recommended Carl Bendorf for another term on the committee.

Membership: Moore reported that this new committee, whose purpose is to attract new members and maintain current ones, has met twice. Membership grew slowly, but steadily, until 1978 and has leveled off since. There are 432 current members. Bendorf suggested that the activities of the committee should center around: (1) analysis of current and past membership, (2) establishment of future goals. The committee recommended a membership brochure which could be distributed at local events and mailed to potential members. Other suggestions included a questionnaire to current members and inclusion of membership information on the Field Checklist. Bendorf exhibited a new membership renewal form, which will be sent out next week. An initial budget of \$600 to \$700 was projected, which includes funds for production of a brochure and the printing and mailing of renewal notices. The committee recommended Bernie Knight for another term.

Library/Historical: Dinsmore listed eleven projects that the committee is involved in or considering. The committee reviewed its bylaws and recommended minor changes: authority to dispose of materials that are of little value, and a statement that any monies received will be deposited with the treasurer. The committee submitted a 1987 budget of \$50 to cover copying and mailing costs. The committee recommended Jim Sandrock to fill a vacant position.

Action on committee reports

The following committee appointments were approved to commence at the 1987 spring meeting and run to the year indicated: Publications, Fleckenstein (1992); Records, Bendorf (1993); Membership, Knight (1989); and Library/Historical, Sandrock (1992) [moved by Dinsmore, seconded by Moore, passed 8/0]. Suggested changes in the bylaws of the Library-Historical Committee were approved [moved by Dinsmore, seconded by Thompson, passed 8/0]. The bylaws will be published in *Iowa Bird Life*.

Old Business

Meetings: The 1987 spring meeting is planned for May 29-31 in Sioux City at Briar Cliff College. Bob Livermore is in charge of local arrangements. Bendorf will appoint a board member to serve as program chairman, since Dinsmore will be out of the state. The 1987 fall meeting was proposed for Ledges State Park during the second or third week of November, a peak time for birding at nearby Saylorville Reservoir. Hank Zaletel and Jim Dinsmore are in charge of local arrangements. The board set the dates of 13-15 November and directed the local group to pick the better of two camps for the meeting location [moved by Moore, seconded by Thompson, passed 8/0]. The 1988 spring meeting site is tentatively set for Mason City. The I.O.U. has been contacted by Fred Leshner regarding a proposal for a joint Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota meeting in the spring of 1990. Bendorf responded that we support the idea.

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

86-17

by the Records Committee

of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: *Rock Wren*

DATE SEEN: *11-22-86*

SITE OF OBSERVATION: *Saylorville Res*

OBSERVERS: *B&L Padelford, S. Dinsmore, P. Petersen, J. Dinsmore*

DATE OF REVIEW: *4-3-87*

METHOD OF REVIEW: *Vote-via mail*

CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: *II*

COMMENTS:

Descriptions were consistent and very adequate for rock wren.

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.

Babs & Loren Padelford
1405 Little John Rd.
Bellevue, NE 68005

Documentation of Rock Wren (Salpinctes obsoletus)

Location: Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co. East parking area on dam.

Distance viewed: Closest at 25 - 50 ft. It was very near the road for a few seconds. Then worked its way down the rocks.

Date: November 22, 1986 Time: 1:20 - 1:25 p.m.

Habitat: Rocky south wall of the dam.

Description: Small wren-sized bird. Larger than house wren, smaller than water pipit. Uniformly gray-brown on back, wings, and side of head. Cream colored on throat, breast & belly with pale tan vertical streaking. Buffy to peach colored wash on flanks. Fairly long (about 3/4 length of head) slightly de-curved, thin pointed bill. Tail had dark and light horizontal barring on top. Tail in proportion to body was shorter than that of water pipit, and longer than a house wren. It was apparently feeding on the rocks, gradually working its way down among the rocks moving west along the face of the dam.

No vocalizations were heard while we were watching it.

Optical equipment: Bushnell 6x25, Nikon 8x25 binoculars.

Light conditions: sunny; sun behind us as we viewed bird.

Other observer: B.J. Rose. He photographed the bird.

Previous experience: seen many times in western Nebraska.

Field guide used: National Geographic Birds of North Amer. after sighting.

This documentation being written 11/23/86 from notes taken in the field at time of sighting.

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species? Rock Wren

How Many? 1

Location? Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.

Habitat? rocky area on face of dam

Date? 22 Nov-2 Dec 1986

Time? seen twice between 2:50-3:00 P.M. on 22 Nov, 8:10-8:30 A.M. on 29 Nov, and 11:00-11:08 A.M. on 30 Nov

Observers Name and address: Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50010

Others who saw bird: B.J. Rose, Loren and Babs Padelford, Eugene and Eloise Armstrong, Bery Engebretsen, Pete Wickham, Mark Brogie, m.ob.

Description of bird: The bird was never seen for more than 10 seconds on each of the initial observations. My initial impression was that the bird was a Water Pipit because of the size, color, and streaking underneath. Closer examination revealed that the bird had a longer tail, a chunkier body, and a heavier, more decurved bill than a Water Pipit. The bird also had a faint eyeline, and whitish underparts with blurry streaking. The bird was a weak flyer, never flying more than 30-40 feet. The bird also ran under the rocks quite a bit and made it very difficult to relocate the bird. On 29 Nov, the bird was seen feeding along the road across the top of the dam and perched several times on the fence along the road. The upperparts were a uniform dull brown and did not show the contrasting gray back and rusty rump that most field guides depict. However, there was a rusty area on the rump that contrasted with the rest of the back. The bird was quite active and continually flitted its wings and cocked its tail while feeding. The bird was quite tame at this time and allowed me to approach within 10 feet of it. The flanks were also very rusty and the back was very speckled. In flight, the brown tail had light corners.

Similar species and how eliminated: The combination of a heavier body, grayish upperparts, light eyeline, and lightly streaked underparts eliminates all other wrens. Sage Thrasher eliminated by size and lack of white tail corners in flight.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were o.k. with a mostly clear sky and sun overhead. Estimated viewing distance was from about 10 feet on both looks. The bird did not cooperate very well, allowing only two brief looks. No optical equipment was used on the first observations, but Nikon 8 x 23 binoculars and a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope were used on the other observation.

Previous experience with species: I have seen several Rock Wrens in South Dakota and Wyoming.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

How long before field notes were made?immediately

How long before this form was completed?6 hours(updated immediately after each sighting)

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Rock Wren 2. Number of birds: 1
3. Location Saylville Dam, Polk Co., I.A. County: _____
4. Date: 23 Nov. 1986 5. Time bird seen: 10:10 to 10:15 AM
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field): Large wren very light grey to white below, wings & back medium grey, spotted on cap, back & wings with white. Tail long for a wren, basically brown, very pale tan corner edges with tan (very light) spots. Rump also brown with light tan spots. Legs ^{feet} black, bill looked grey. Seemed to have a faint, white eyeline.
7. Description of voice, if heard: Silent
8. Description of behavior: standing along edge of dam road & flying to rocks.
9. Habitat - general: Grassy edge of dam road & rocks to north.
specific: stayed behind rocks most of time, but remained in full view for about two minutes in the short grass.
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain: House Wren - smaller, no spotting on back, shorter tail.
11. Distance (how measured)? 80-90', est. 12. Optical equipment: 10x40 binoculars, 7x35, " etc.
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): Thinly overcast, sun to right of bird & observers.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: All observers had seen this bird in the West on several occasions.
15. Other observers: Mary Lou Petersen, Brian & Corey Blevins
16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: Steve Dinsmore, Bob Myers, Gene Armstrong
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: Checked Geographic guide after observation to verify.
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 4 hours

Peter C. Peterson

Signature

Address: 235 McClellan Blvd.Date: 23 Nov. 1986City, State: Davenport, IA. 52803

(over)

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species? Rock Wren
 How Many? one
 Location? Saylorville Dam

Habitat? one rocks facing the surface of the dam, large area covered by large boulders

Date? 30 November 1986
 Time? 10:45-11 a.m.
 Observers Name and address: Jim Dinsmore, Ames

Others who saw bird: Steve Dinsmore, Paul Martsching

Description of bird:

It was a small largely brown colored bird, dark above and light below. In shape, it had fairly short tail and chunky body, easily recognized as a wren type bird. It moved rapidly and gave only brief glimpses before it dropped down amongst the rocks. I saw it about 10 times at various distances before it disappeared for good. I did not see all of the field marks but saw several as a composite from the views I had. The bill appeared thin and slightly decurved. The back had distinct white speckling on the brown background. The breast was light and I did not look for the streaking. It was distinctly buffy colored on the flanks and I noticed this well. When it flew I noted there were small buffy colored marks on the outer tail feathers on each side that contrasted with the rest of the tail. I also noticed once that there was a distinct reddish brown area on the lower back or base of the tail. In size it appeared to be larger than most wrens I have seen other than the Carolina.

Similar species and how eliminated: The white speckling would eliminate all except the Marsh and Sedge wrens of local species. It was too large for either of those and the other color patterns (flank, tail, back) all point only to the Rock Wren.

Viewing conditions and equipment: bird was 15-30 feet away, viewed with 7 power binoculars

Previous experience with species: have seen it briefly in South Dakota twice

References consulted: Robbins et al.; Natl. Geographic guide

How long before field notes were made?

How long before this form was completed? 20 hours

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Rock Wren How many? 1Location? Saylorville Res. (Polk Co.)Type of habitat? Rock face of damWhen? date(s): Nov. 30, 1986 time: 8:45 AM to 8:55 AMWho? your name and address: Robert K. Myers, R.R. 2, Box 153 Perry, Iowa 50220

others with you: _____

others before or after you: mob.

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.

From my notes:

1. large wren with longish tail
2. fairly long thin bill with very slight decurve
3. head, back + tail = gray-brown
4. back had very light whitish specks
5. rump appeared a little lighter than back
6. tail showed dark cross-barring
7. throat + breast were white
8. breast had very faint streaking
9. sides + flanks were very buff in color
10. eye was dark and I could not make out an eye stripe

I first thought of an ^{"Oregon"} junco when I saw the bird darting between the rocks. The size and buffiness of the flanks was much the same as is the "pink-sided" junco.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:
Overcast day but didn't affect viewing at 20-35' with 10x binocsPrevious experience with species and similar ones: First rock wren but I am familiar with other Iowa wrens.References and persons consulted before writing description: NBS guideHow long before field notes made? on the spot this form completed? 6 1/2 hrs.MAIL TO: Spring ~~F. H. Myers~~, Field Reports Editor, ~~221~~ ~~221~~ ~~Street~~, ~~Des Moines~~ IA ~~50319~~
R.R. 2, Box 153, Perry, 50220

What species? Rock Wren How many? oneLocation? Saylorville ReservoirType of habitat? rocks on reservoir side of damWhen? date(s): 30 Nov 1986 time: 11 to 11:08 AMWho? your name and address: Paul Martsching 1120 Marston Ames, IA 50010others with you: Jim and Steve Dinsmoreothers before or after you: Bob Myers and 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.

large wren, brown head, gray-brown back and wings, with tiny light speckles on back. long barred tail with deep cream corners. buffy sides below wings; fine dark streaks on whitish breast.

Similar species and how eliminated: House Wren doesn't have long, cream edged tail, or fine dark streaks on breast. Carolina Wren is rusty with strong white eye line & doesn't have fine streaks on white breast. Marsh Wr has solid cap & streaked back & no fine streaks on breast. Bewick's Wr has dark & white edges to tail
Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? & no fine streaks on white breast.

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting; distance (how measured), and optical equipment:
overcast. At closest maybe 15 feet. 7 x 35 bino's.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: never seen Rock Wren before.

References and persons consulted before writing description: none

How long before field notes made? immediately this form completed? next day.

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

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

not reviewed
86-171What species? ROCK WREN How many? 1Location? Rocky face of dam at Saylorville Res., Polk Co.Type of habitat? Extensive rocky area on face of dam and along roadside on top of dam.When? date(s): 6 December 1986 time: 7:45 a.m. to 8:20 a.m.Who? your name and address: Francis L. Moore, 336 Fairfield St., Waterloo, IA 50703others with you: Chuck and Jane Fullerothers before or after you: m.o.b.

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.

This bird was very hard to see because it stayed down in the rocks. It would move up to 40 or 50 feet down inside the rocks on the dam face before it would come back up into view. After the bird got used to us following it it would stay up in full sight for up to about 1 minute at a time but not much longer. The bill was a dark gray color and its legs ~~and~~ feet were black. The eye was black with a thin short superciliary line. The top of the head and back were a medium gray color with black and white spots. The wing was a brownish-gray color. The upper tail coverts and rump were a cinnamon color also with spots like on the back. The tail was brown with black barring and buff on the outside tips of the tail feathers. The breast was whitish with very fine streaking on the sides and throat. The flanks were tinged with buff which followed through into the undertail coverts. The belly was a whitish-gray color.

Similar species and how eliminated: Canyon Wren should have white throat and brown belly. Carolina and Bewick's Wrens have bold white eye stripe and are brown on back and head. Winter Wren is dark brown with light ~~to~~ medium brown breast. House wren is brown overall. Marsh and Sedge Wrens are brown above. Cactus Wren has heavily spotted breast. Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

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

Bright overcast to sunny, excellent viewing conditions; seen from approx. 6 feet at closest without optics. Used 10x40 binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: no experience with Rock Wren. Lots of experience with House, Winter and Carolina Wrens. Some experience with Bewick's Wren.

References and persons consulted before writing description: NoneHow long before field notes made? Immediately after this form completed? 2 days

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

not reviewed
(86-17)

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species?Rock Wren

How Many?1

Location?Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.

Habitat?rocky area on face of dam

Date?1-8 Dec 1986

Time?seen at various times throughout the day

Observers Name and address:Steve Dinsmore, Ames

Others who saw bird:Bery Engebretsen, Bob Myers, Tom Stone, Francis Moore, m.ob.

Description of bird:My initial impression was that the bird was a Water Pipit because of the size, color, and streaking underneath. Closer examination revealed that the bird had a longer tail, a chunkier body, and a heavier, more decurved bill than a Water Pipit. The bird also had a faint eyeline, and whitish underparts with blurry streaking. The upperparts were mostly a uniform dull brown except that the rump was noticeably rustier. The bird was quite active and continually flitted its wings and cocked its tail while feeding. The bird was quite tame at this time and allowed me to approach within 10 feet of it. The flanks were also very rusty and the back was very speckled. In flight, the brown tail had light corners. The bird was a weak flyer, never flying more than 30-40 feet. The bird also ran under the rocks quite a bit, making it very difficult to locate the bird.

Similar species and how eliminated:The combination of a heavier body, grayish upperparts, light eyeline, and lightly streaked underparts eliminates all other wrens. Sage Thrasher eliminated by size and lack of white tail corners in flight.

Viewing conditions and equipment:Viewing conditions were variable. Estimated viewing distance was from about 10 feet on most looks. I used Nikon 8 x 23 binoculars and a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species:I have seen several Rock Wrens in South Dakota and Wyoming.

References consulted:NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

How long before field notes were made?immediately

How long before this form was completed?completed after the initial sighting and updated immediately after each initial sighting

What species? Rock Wren How many? 1
 Location? Top of the Dam at Saylorville - (Polk Co.)
 Type of habitat? Large expanse of rock rip-rap on face of dam
 When? date(s): Dec. 6, 1986 time: 1:30 p.m. to 1:35 p.m.
 Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Liscomb, Iowa
 others with you: later with me - Tim Schanz and Pat Kelly
 others before or after you: Francis Moore, Chuck and Jane Fuller that morning

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 just started walking along the top of the dam from the west parking turn-off when I saw this bird hopping along the top of the dam at the edge of the rock 25 yards away and heading toward me. It came to within 15 yards of me. It was fluffed up quite a bit on this cold, windy day. It was a small brownish bird with small white specks on the body and a cream-colored breast. It was rusty along the flanks and had markings like this // // // // // along the edges beneath the rump. It had a small wren-like bill.

Similar species and how eliminated:

No other wren looks quite like this.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

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

cloudy, distances paced off, 8x30 Binoculars

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen some Rock Wrens out west.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Natl. Geog. Birds of N. America

How long before field notes made? shortly afterwards this form completed? Feb. 25, 1987

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