

Mountain Bluebird

Record Number: 94-15

6 Mar 1994

Classification: A-D

6 miles se of Jefferson, Greene Co., IA

\*R. Thelen, \*J. Fuller, \*M. Proescholdt,

\*E. Thelen; IBL 64:77, 82

DOCUMENTATIONS

Rob Thelen (6 Mar), 1744 Salinger, Carroll 51401 [19 Aug 1994\*]

Jim Fuller (10 Mar), 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City 52240 [19 Aug 1994]

Mark Proescholdt (12 Mar), Box 65, Liscomb 50148 [19 Aug 1994]

Ed Thelen (13 Mar)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 64:77

Records Committee: IBL 65:82

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Not totally unexpected this time of year.

A-D, Good description of easy bird (male) to ID.

94-15

What species? Mountain Bluebird How many? 2 MalesLocation? Greene Co. 2 1/2 m. N of Int. P30 + E57, Then 1/4 m W.Type of habitat? River bottom, pasture hillside with scattered shrubsWhen? date(s): 3-6, 3-7, 3-13 time: 9:30 AM to 4:45 PMWho? your name and address: Rob Thelen, 1744 Salinger, Carroll, Iowa, 51401others with you: 6<sup>th</sup> wife Alicia, + children Melinda, Natasha + Jordan 13<sup>th</sup> Ed Thelenothers before or (after) you: Jim Fuller, Iowa City, Ed Thelen

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 was driving East on a gravel Road along the Raccoon River when I spotted a group of Bluebirds. I Turned around To show my wife and kids what a Eastern Bluebird looked like. As we were watching the Bluebirds flying from highline wire to the fence line wires + posts to the ditch I notice one of the Bluebirds was completely Blue. IT was standing on a wooden post roughly 25 feet away looking directly at me. I was sure it was a Mountain Bluebird. The Mountain Bluebird was completely Blue. IT's Belly was a whitish color (dull white). IT's breast and Neck was a lighter blue than its back and head. The Feet and bill were dark in color. The Mountain Bluebird was with a group of six Eastern Bluebirds on March 6<sup>th</sup>. On March 7<sup>th</sup> I saw two Mountain Bluebird Males with approximately eight Easterns in the same area. On March 13<sup>th</sup> my brother and I saw one Mountain Bluebird with appx seven Easterns. The area where the Bluebirds were staying was a river bottom along the Raccoon River 1/2 m. west of Squirrel Hollow Co. Park in Greene Co. There is a NE Facing hillside with scattered shrubs + trees where the Bluebirds liked to stay. The Bluebirds would fly along this hillside from Co. road P30 to the gravel road that goes to the west. I didn't notice a voice from the MT. Bluebird.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Eastern Bluebird, MT. Bluebird is all BlueDid any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

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

partly cloudy on 3-6 - binoculars 7x35Sunny on 3-7 7x35 + spotting scopeSunny on 3-13 7x35 + spotting scopePrevious experience with species and similar ones: My Brother Ed Thelen Documented one in 1988

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Jim Fuller Iowa City, Ed Thelen Spirit LakeHow long before field notes made? one day this form completed? 2 weeks

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

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

94-15

SPECIES: Mountain Bluebird (Male)

1

WHERE: Greene County in Raccoon River valley about six miles southeast of Jefferson.

DATE & TIME: 10 March, 1994 (9:05-9:20 AM).

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

OTHERS: Discovered by Rob Thelen on 6 March. With me was Jane Fuller. M.Ob. after.

BACKGROUND: Rob Thelen reported a Mountain Bluebird at this location to the Iowa Birdline on 6 March. Jane Fuller and I had been searching the area described for about ten minutes, when we saw a group of bluebirds feeding along a fenceline beside the road. There were five Eastern Bluebirds and a Mountain Bluebird. We watched the group, and in particular the Mountain Bluebird work along the fenceline, flying down to the ground, and back up to the fence. We were never more than 30-40 feet away, and at times only 15-20 feet.

DESCRIPTION: General size was the same as the Eastern Bluebirds. The Mountain Bluebird was entirely blue, without any rust color on the breast like the Eastern Bluebirds had. The back, tail, and folded wings were deep blue, and a little more purple blue than the Easterns. The head was also blue, except for the throat which along with the breast was a whitish-blue, and lighter in color. The bill was short and dark, and the eye was dark. There appeared to be a vague eye ring, and a darker blue line through the eye which was not very distinct. The vent area was very light blue, the lightest blue shade on the bird. The legs were dark. It behaved like the Eastern Bluebirds, flying down to the ground, and appearing to pick something off the ground, and then flying back to the fence. No vocalization was heard.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Both Eastern and Western Bluebirds have some rust on the breast, and in the Eastern male, even the throat is rust colored.

OPTICS & CONDITIONS: It was a sunny day, mid-morning, looking to the north and northeast with Swift Audubon 8.5 X 44 binoculars at distances of 15-40 feet.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen this species on numerous occasions in the western US, and twice previously in Iowa.

REFERENCES & FIELD NOTES: Field notes were prepared in the car as I watched the bird, and no references were consulted. This form was typed on 11 March.

## DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

94-15

What species? Mountain Bluebird How many? 1 ♂Location? S.E. Greene CountyType of habitat? Open area with grasses, fields, trees in backgroundWhen? date(s): March 12, 1994 time: 3:15 p.m. to 3:20 p.m. (app.)Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Iowa 50148others with you: Beth Proescholdtothers before or after you: Yes, but I don't know who they are

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.

One Mt. Bluebird had been reported on the Birdline since March 6 at this spot. Today we drove around this area and did not see this bird. As we were leaving, we saw 5 Eastern Bluebirds on fences and wires in front of us. We searched more diligently and found the male Mountain Bluebird on a barbed wire fence a short distance away from the Eastern Bluebirds.

The Mt. Bluebird was a sky-blue color on all its topside. It had light sky-blue color on its face and upper breast. It was light gray in color from its lower belly to its undertail coverts. It was the size of bluebirds. It was along a fence row and flew down often to the grass and then returned to the barbed wire or fenceposts. It was a lovely thing to see!

Similar species and how eliminated: Eastern and western Bluebirds are much darker blue in color and have rusty brown colors on their breasts. A male Lazuli Bunting is smaller, has white wing bars and cinnamon sides, and a white belly.

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, 100 yards estimated, 8x30 Binocs and 22x Scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen many Mt. Bluebirds out West, and some in Iowa once.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Glanced at Natl. Geog. guideHow long before field notes made? Right after this form completed? March 13, 1994  
viewing

What species? Mountain Bluebird How many? 1Location? South of Squirrel Hollow - GREENE COUNTYType of habitat? Roadside - OPEN - scattered trees & shrubsWhen? date(s): 3-13-94 time: Late morning to ~ 10:30Who? your name and address: Ed Thelenothers with you: yes ROB THLENothers before or after you: yes several observers saw 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.

observed a all blue bird that exhibited bluebird habits such as flitting to the ground then ~~to~~ to its perch often 10-15 yds ahead of it. It was in the company of several eastern bluebirds. It was readily identified as a ♂ mt. bluebird by its uniform blue plumage including breast, head and back. It flew after a few minutes to another perch along the ridge approx. 200 yds from the road. While flying the under feathers showed some white coloration. Its size was similar to the eastern bluebird. Its bill, eyes and feet appeared dark. Its head, back, shoulders, rump & tail were bright blue white its

Similar species and how eliminated: breast, throat, belly & flanks a more rust on breast. This bird was all blue. Eastern & Western Bluebird have subdued blue. Indigo bunting - size & shape also bluebird habits.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

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

GOOD SUNLIGHTPrevious experience with species and similar ones: Saw Mt Bluebird in Iowa

References and persons consulted before writing description:

How long before field notes made? 1 day this form completed? 3 monthsMAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240