

Rosy Finch

Jan 1978

Oelwein, Fayette Co., IA

\*Halmi, \*T. G. Stone

to 19 March; Wilkinson 1978, Knauth 1978, photos

Record Number: 93-GD

Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Tom G. Stone, 12 Mar

N.S. Halmi, 18 Mar

PHOTOGRAPHS

P.C. Petersen, 18 Mar, P-0017

Richard Wilkinson, IBL 48:79-80

LETTER

Richard Wilkinson to T.H. Kent, 30 Dec 1980

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 48:76

Wilkinson, R. 1978. 'Rosy the Finch' creates stir in birdwatching. IBL 48:79-80. [photo].

Knauth, O. 1978. Finch from high Rockies spotted at Iowa feeder. Des Moines Register. 16 March 1978.

VOTE: 5 A-P

A-P, We have two documentations that give convincing descriptions of Gray-crowned Rosy Finch. The photographs are not perfect, but do show the gray crown. /thk



Rosy Finch P-0017  
Olewein, Fayette Co.  
18 Mar 1978 P. C. Petersen

93-80

Gray-crowned Rosy Finch

Wilkinson, R. 1978. 'Rosy the Finch' creates stir in birdwatching. IBL 48:79-80.

'Rosy, the Finch' creates stir in birdwatching -- For a tiny gray-capped tuft of rusty feathers, Rosy has turned the Rex and Sharon Ladeburg household upside down and sent a shiver of excitement through the Iowa ornithological community to boot.

Rosy, shortened by Sharon from Gray-crowned Rosy Finch, is the first of the species to be spotted in Iowa during the 20th Century. According to Woodward Brown's book "Annotated List of the Birds of Iowa," the last sighting occurred in 1883.

For the Ladeburgs the past two weeks of mid-February have been something to remember. Since the release of information to several members of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union about 30 individuals have visited the Ladeburg kitchen to watch Rosy eat at a feeder on the north kitchen window.

The crush, which has filled the Ladeburg's kitchen on occasion, has disrupted Mrs. Ladeburg's household duties. For the present she has been attempting to finish her work early in the morning so she can keep accurate tabs on Rosy's hourly feeding times, part of a requirement for substantiating the find.

"The neighbors can't believe that there are that many people interested in Rosy," she laughed, adding that her eight-year-old daughter Shelli Renee keeps asking why everyone is so interested in the bird, while four-year-old Susan Raynell seems to be taking in in stride.

On a recent Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the Ladeburgs hosted groups of individuals. Saturday morning approximately 10 people crowded into Sharon's kitchen. Included in the group were three members of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union: Pete Petersen of Davenport, editor of Iowa Bird Life, Dr. N. S. Halmi of Iowa City, and Woodward Brown of Des Moines. The group will help validate the sighting.

As of Monday, March 20, 1978 Rosy had failed to make an appearance to the Ladeburg feeder leading Mrs. Ladeburg to speculate that the finch had begun the long trip home.

Home for the Gray-crowned Rosy Finch is in the western reaches of North America. The birds nest above the treeline as far north as the Brooks Range of Alaska.

The Ladeburg feeder first hosted Rosy on Christmas 1977. As a scrawny ragamuffin, the finch was the first visitor to the Ladeburgs newly installed kitchen window feeder. As the days passed the little bird ate its fill of sunflower seeds and millet.

Early in January Mrs. Ladeburg identified the bird with the help of a bird book. Later, on the urging of her mother-in-law, Phyllis, she wrote to Gladys Black of Pleasantville, a well-known Iowa ornithologist. "That was on a Monday. Wednesday night about 9:30 the phone rang and you could hear her voice shake," said Mrs. Ladeburg of Mrs. Black, "she said 'Do you realize you have a rare find?' So I got excited."

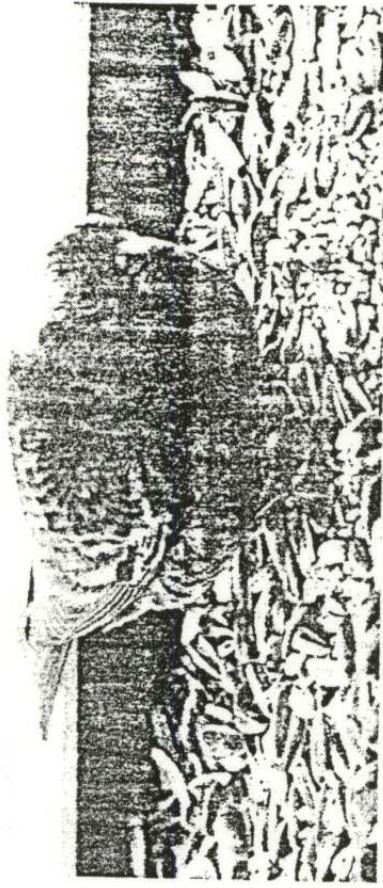
On March 10, 1978, two members of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, Joe Schaufenbuel of St. Lucus and Russell Hays of Waterloo, confirmed the sighting. During the next week, visitors began arriving to observe the celebrity at her hourly feeding. Tolerant of cameras aimed at her and large groups of people, the bird became part of the family.

"Particularly on weekends at breakfast or dinner she will come over to the edge of the tray and look in as if to say 'what are you having'", said Mrs. Ladeburg.

While observing the bird the past days the finch's personality became clearer. While tame to the presence of people, the finch seemed to be a solitary eater preferring to visit the feeder while most other birds have vacated the area. It was very punctual visiting her feeder very hour, give or take a few minutes through the morning, then again between 3 and 4 p.m. prior to roosting.

Rosy's absence March 20 raised the possibility of the bird beginning an attempt to return to its normal habitat.

"I hope that it comes back next winter with a mate," said Mrs. Ladeburg. -- RICHARD WILKINSON, Oelwein Daily News, Oelwein.



Gray crowned Rosy Finch  
Photo by Richard Wilkinson, Oelwein Daily Register

# Finch from high Rockies spotted at Iowa feeder

3/16 Des Moines Register

By OTTO KNAUTH

Register Staff Writer

A bird not seen in Iowa in almost 100 years has been identified at the feeder of Sharon Ladeburg in Oelwein.



It is a gray-crowned rosy finch, a bird of the high Rockies. The last one reported in Iowa, according to Woodward Brown's "Annotated List of the Birds of Iowa," was in 1883.

Ladeburg said the strange bird first appeared at her window feeder about Christmas, but it was not until early January that she was able to identify it with the help of a bird guidebook.

"It was very scrawny at first," Ladeburg said, "but it eats a lot of sunflower seeds and millet and now has filled out and is starting to get some color."

She said she thinks it is a female. It's bigger than a sparrow, she said and very tame.

"I hope it comes back next winter with a mate," she said.

Gladys Black, a well-known Iowa ornithologist from Pleasantville, said the gray-crowned rosy finch ordinarily is a bird of the highest ranges in the Rocky Mountains. It breeds above the timberline all the way north to the Brooks Range in Alaska, she said.

In the mountains it also is known as the snow finch. It feeds on seeds during the winter and insects during the short high-altitude summer.



Gray-crowned rosy finch  
Bird of the high Rockies

How such a bird got to Ladeburg's feeder in Oelwein is a mystery that will never be solved. Ladeburg said she thinks it must have been blown into Iowa in one of the fierce winter storms Iowa had last December.

Her yard is particularly suited to bird-watching, she said. The Ladeburgs live in the southwest part of Oelwein and a ravine runs close to their back door. It has a slough with cattails and other plants. In addition, they have chokecherry, pin oak, hickory and willow trees on the half-acre lot.

She said the finch is regular in its feeding, appearing at about hour intervals in the morning and again around 3 to 4 p.m. to stoke up for the night.

At the suggestion of her mother-in-law, Phyllis Ladeburg, also an enthusiastic bird watcher, Sharon Ladeburg wrote Black about the strange bird. The identification was confirmed last Sunday by two members of the Iowa Ornithological Union, Joe Schaufenbuel of St. Lucas, and Russell Hays of Waterloo.

"There's no question about it," said Hays, "it's a gray-crowned rosy finch, all right."

He said Sunday was a particularly exciting day for him because he also saw a rare varied thrush in Cedar Falls that day.

"Those two birds put me over the 300 mark on my life list," Hays said. He now has identified 301 different species of birds, he said.



# The Oelwein Daily Register

ONLY DAILY IN 9 NORTHEAST IOWA COUNTIES

OELWEIN, IOWA 50662

AREA CODE 319 283-2144

MEMBER ABC

Dec. 30, 1980

Iowa Ornithologist's Union  
 T.H. Kent  
 211 Richards St.  
 Iowa City, Ia 52240

Dear Mr. Kent:

I'm honored that you would want to place my photos into your records. However, on July 13 of this year fire distroied the offices and contents of the Oelwein Register and with them also our photo negatives.

While I am unable to furnish you with the photos I do remember Mrs Ladegard got several prints of the finch and a small book also published the story and photo using my picture. I do not remember the name of the publication.

I'm terrably sorry that I can't be of further assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Richard Wilkinson  
 Photographer

Bird: Verifying Documentation 93-60

Of an ExtraOrdinary Sight Record

1. Species: Gray-Crowned Rosy-Finch

2. Number 11

3. Location Oelwein, IOWA ~~to the~~

4. Date March 12 1978

~~the road~~  
401 1/2 St. S.W.

5. Time bird seen 12:28 - 12:40

6. Description of ~~size~~ size, shape and color-pattern, and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics,

~~but~~ Size - about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  to 6 inches

Shaped Like a House Sparrow.

Has Brown body with Pink on the wings and some on the stomach.

Lower and upper breast parts, ~~feet~~

Has distant Black patch on forehead.

with gray bordering the Black from the top of the eye to back of the neck,

Feet - Black Beak - Black? Probably Female

7. Description of voice if heard - not heard

8. Description of behavior - acts like

House Sparrow. ~~Turn~~ Pretty Tame

9. Habitat - general: specific - ~~It~~ Feeds on ~~Feeder~~ Feeder, Come to a Rocky Ravine like spot by house.

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by question 6, 7, & 8, Explain:

This bird doesn't have any black on back or breast like the Black Rosy

Finch. This bird had a gray on head to distinguish it from the Brown capped Rosy Finch.

11. Distance - (how measured)? about 1 Foot  
by guess.

12. Optical equipment - 7x50 Binoculars

W.2 12 21 1944  
13. Lighting - Overcast; H

14. Previous experience with this species  
or similar species: Have seen Brown  
Capped Rosy Finch in Rock Mountain  
National Park Colorado in June.

15. Other observers: Russel Hayes of  
Waterloo, Frank Moore of Waterloo,  
Robert Myers of Waterloo, and Joe  
Schäufenbuel of St. Lucas

16. Did others agree with your identification?  
yes

17. Books, illustrations, and advice consulted,  
and how did these influence the description? ?  
Birds of North America and Roger Tory  
Peterson's Guide to western birds.

18. Other observers who independently  
identified this bird: Joe - Schäufenbuel

19. How Long after observing this bird did  
you first write the description? 10 hours

Signature - Tom G. Stone

Address - 1632 Woodmayr Drive, Waterloo,  
IOWA

Date - March 12, 1978



BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF  
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

93-6D

1. Species Gray-crowned Rosy Finch, probably ♀ 2. Number 1
  3. Location 401 1st St. S.W., Oelwein, Iowa, Fayette Co.
  4. Date: March 18 5. Time Bird Seen: 10:26 AM to \_\_\_\_\_
  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): About size of House Sparrow, distinctly larger than Am. goldfinches at feeder at the same time, also a little larger than Purple Finches at the feeder previously. Conical beak yellowish, iris and legs dark; general color dull brown, except: black forehead, sharply demarcated from broad gray crescent extending across crown from eye to eye; wing coverts and primary edgings grayish; tail black; faint rosy scaling evident on rump and flanks.
  7. Description of voice, if heard: not heard
  8. Description of behavior: alighted briefly on window feeder and fed
  9. Habitat - general: small town yard near shallow rocky ravine  
specific: window shelf feeder
  10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:  
not black where Black Rosy Finch is; gray crown eliminates Brown Rosy Finch
  11. Distance (how <sup>cupped</sup> measured)? est. 4 ft.
  12. Optical equipment: none
  13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird, and you): seen from inside the house, facing north; diffuse but somewhat glowing light
  14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: seen in Nov. '72 at Red Rocks, Deuler, along with Black; Brown seen June '76 on Trail Ridge Rd., Rocky Mt. Nat. Park
  15. Other observers: Dr. Tom Kent and Tom Shires, Peter Peterken, Bernie Knight and 8 more birders from Cedar Rapids-Maion
  16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes
  17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: on 3/12: Joe Schaufensbuel, Russ Hays and Tom Stone; on 3/15: Woody Brown, Richard Mooney
  18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: description not based on guides; standard guides checked before and after trip to Oelwein
  19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 3 days
- Signature: W. H. Halmi Address: R#6
- Date: 3/21/78 City, State: Iowa City, IA 52240