

Three-toed Woodpecker
28 May 1975
Bettendorf, Scott Co., IA
Mark Friedericksen
to 31 May; Friedericksen 1976 (plus editor's note)

Record Number: 81-CF
Classification: NA

REFERENCES

Friedericksen, M. 1976. Northern Three-toed Woodpecker in Iowa. IBL 46:27-28.
[anonymous = P.C. Petersen]. 1976. Editors note. IBL 46:28.

NOTE

P.C. Petersen to Records Committee, 1981
Records Committee: IBL 64:70

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

Tom Kent to Records Committee, 13 Sep 1993

VOTE (1981): 2-I, 3-IV, 2-V

V, Don't know observer. What happened to bird? Did P. Petersen see it?
I, Specimen in Putnam Museum now?

IV, No description given except for feeding behavior (which fits). Anyone know disposition of specimen? Any photos?

I, Specimen was at Putnam Museum in freezer. Sent to taxidermist and lost due to his freezer being disconnected. There was absolutely no mistake on the ID -- examined by Jon Dunn and Dave Bohlen also. Ed note not included -- see IBL 46:28.

V, The report contains no description -- pity that although the bird died and a specimen was obtained no mention of its preservation is made.

IV, The reference contains no description of the bird. Possibly should be V as it stands. However isn't the bird a specimen at the Putnam Museum? Or at least didn't Pete Petersen see it? (the dead bird).

REVOTE (by mail 1981, after addition of data from Petersen): 2-II, 2-II, 3-III

III, Professional documentation and photographs should be obtained in cases such as this. My III vote is based on faith not facts.

II, Examined in hand by competent observers.

I, On basis of specimen. Points up desirability of getting a photograph of the specimen even though it is to be mounted.

I, Collected, verified by 3 experienced ornithologists.

III, Young boy's report of a bird which was captured by hand and eventually died. IBL note contains no description. The carcass was deposited with Putnam Museum -- but was lost due to freezer failure. Pete Petersen saw specimen and verifies identification. However -- he provides us with no description.

III, Although specimen was lost, is a recent record. Should have written description of specimen however. Record rests on Petersen's word as it stands.

REVOTE (1993): 1 A-D, 6 NA

NA, If similar record were present today I would not accept.

NA, If we can't get Pete to write a description, this will have to be "one that got away." No description, and no specimen = no evidence. It is too bad that even the feet didn't get saved when the freezer went off.

NA, American Birds article plus absence of written description casts a serious doubt on this record.

NA, Kaufman's article raises sufficient doubt. In order to preserve any history, we may well need two sets of standards, but new identification evidence may put even some old records in doubt.

13 September 1993

To: IOU Records Committee
From: Tom Kent
Re: Request for reconsideration of record

Record: 81-CF Three-toed Woodpecker

Reason for request: Clarification of acceptance criteria.

Comment: There is no description of this bird. We have accepted some specimens as sight records based on the fact that an expert (especially DuMont) had examined the specimen. We have uniformly turned down sight records without description even when an unmistakable species was seen in appropriate circumstances by an experienced observer (see 81-EX Painted Bunting). A recent article suggests that juvenile Hairy Woodpeckers (Kaufman, K. 1993. Identifying the Hairy Woodpecker. *Am. Birds* 47:311-314) can have a yellow top knot and has been mistakenly keyed out as a Three-toed Woodpecker. A juvenile Hairy Woodpecker could be out of the nest by 28 May and be well feathered. There is little precedent for Three-toed Woodpecker as far south as Iowa. In Minnesota the most southerly record is at about the Twin Cities level. There is a Nebraska record from Scottsbluff on 16 June 1916 (Bray, Padelford, and Silcock 1986). The Nebraska record is at least near the Balck Hills where this species occurs. There is no other Midwest record as far south as the Iowa record. Should we worry about inconsistencies in acceptance of records based on expert testimonial?

I attach the relevant pages from the Kaufman article and Bray book.



Figure 3. Some points regarding juvenile Hairy Woodpeckers. Left: two variations on typical head patterns. The red patch is on the crown, not on the nape, and it may be present in females as well as males. It's my impression that the darker-faced juvenile Hairies occur in those populations that have fewer white spots on the wings, but I have not checked this thoroughly. Center: a variant juvenile Hairy Woodpecker from Newfoundland. This bird might easily be mistaken for a Three-toed Woodpecker, as it has barring on the back, barring on the flanks, and a yellow crown patch. All three of these variations seem to be possible in juveniles from many populations, although the black bars on the back and flanks seem to be most consistent and noticeable on those from Newfoundland and the Queen Charlotte Islands. Right: the head of an adult male Three-toed Woodpecker, for comparison.

But juveniles have the red patch centered on the crown; it may be large or small or essentially nonexistent, but it is present to a varying degree in both sexes. This patch varies in color as well, and it may be orange or even yellow. In any standard field guide, a woodpecker with a yellow crown patch and some white on the back would key out to Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides tridactylus*). Indeed, juvenile Hairies have been misidentified as such on many occasions, even as far afield as the Gulf Coast (where the sedentary and lethargic Three-toed would probably never turn up even if it wanted to). The resemblance to Three-toed Woodpecker is heightened by the fact that many juvenile Hairies have at least a trace of black barring on the flanks and on the back. This barring can be quite pronounced in many from the Maritime Provinces and from far western Canada.

In Figure 3, I illustrate a juvenile Hairy from Newfoundland with yellow crown patch, barred flanks, and barred back, a bird that easily could be mistaken for a Three-toed. While such extreme examples are not common, they do exist. To identify this

bird correctly, we would note the width of the white stripes on the face; the color of the tufts of feathers at the base of the upper mandible (mostly white in Hairy, mostly black in Three-toed); and if all else failed, we could take a close look and count the toes!

A different kind of problem can arise in spring and summer, when juvenile Hairies are on the loose.

Juvenile woodpeckers usually have a geeky air, a slight clumsiness that sets them apart from their elders. So an experienced birder might spot an inexperienced bird by its behavior alone. This brings us back to where we started, to the Hairy-versus-Downy problem, because practiced birders often get clues from what the woodpecker is doing at first glance.

The Hairy Woodpecker *acts* substantially bigger, all out of proportion to the size difference between the two, like a teenager trying to distance himself from his kid brother. The Downy will forage on minor twigs, clambering about like an overweight chickadee, and will even climb the stalks of weeds such as mullein. The Hairy demands trunks and major branches of real trees. (This is probably part of the reason why the Downy is found more often than the Hairy in suburbs and city parks). Climbing, the Downy proceeds in a jerky, fidgety crawl, while the Hairy hitches up in bolder leaps. In the air, the gentle rollercoaster undulations of the Downy can't compare with the swooping, bounding flight of the Hairy. These behavioral points can't be illustrated, but they help to define the appearance of each species for the observer who has watched both.

Acknowledgements

I'm grateful to Mary LeCroy at the American Museum of Natural History, New York, and to Tom Huels at the University of Arizona, Tucson, for allowing access to those collections while I was researching this column.

Canyon, Sioux County, by C.E. Mickel (Mickel and Dawson, 1920) is #ZM6311 in the UNSM collection.

There are two other records, both Class I-S. One collected 13 September 1919 in Monroe Canyon, Sioux County, by C.E. Mickel (Mickel and Dawson, 1920) is #ZM6310 in the UNSM collection, and another, collected 29 September 1920 in Monroe Canyon, Sioux County, by C.E. Mickel is #ZM6313 in the UNSM collection (see Bray et al, 1985; NOU 1986b).

A third specimen in the UNSM collection, #ZM6312, is labeled as a Red-naped Sapsucker, although the label also states S. v. varius. We believe it to be a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (see Dunn, 1978).

This species may be a casual migrant in western Nebraska, but there are no recent records. Observers have generally not attempted to separate it from Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, with which it was until recently considered conspecific (American Ornithologists' Union, 1985).

WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKER, Sphyrapicus thyroideus

Accidental. Class III. There are four records, two of which are accepted, both in Class III. Descriptions have been published of male birds seen 24 March 1939 at Hastings, Adams County, by Mrs. A.H. Jones and others (Jones, 1939), and 5 May 1959 near Grand Island, Hall County, by Mrs. Houser (NOU, 1959).

DOWNY WOODPECKER, Picoides pubescens

Regular. Class I-S. One collected 5 July 1981 at Norfolk, Madison County, by Jane Dunlap is #724 in the WSC collection.

HAIRY WOODPECKER, Picoides villosus

Regular. Class I-S. One collected 10 December 1976 at Albion, Boone County, by Wayne Mollhoff is #206 in the WSC collection.

THREE-TOED WOODPECKER, Picoides tridactylus

Accidental. Class I-S. One collected 15 June 1916 two miles west of Scottsbluff, Scotts Bluff County, by C.E. Mickel and R.W. Dawson and identified by H.C. Oberholser (Swenk, 1918b) is #ZM6345 in the UNSM collection.

There are two additional records, neither accepted.

[BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER, Picoides arcticus]

Class VI. There are five records, none accepted. One description has been published (Class VI): a bird identified as a female was seen 30 August 1970 near Merna, Custer County (Kieborz, 1971). The description is suggestive of a Downy Woodpecker, and the date is unlikely.

NORTHERN FLICKER, Colaptes auratus

Regular. Class I-S. One collected 28 August 1972 in Wayne County by Wayne Mollhoff is #46 in the WSC collection.

PILEATED WOODPECKER, Dryocopus pileatus

Accidental. Class II. There are 11 records, five accepted, all Class III. Descriptions have been published for a bird seen 26 October 1952 near Fort Calhoun, Washington County, by Augusta R. Galley (Rapp, 1953); for one seen near Cook, Otoe County, in February 1970 by Sam Antholz (Fiala, 1971). The authors are in possession of a description of one seen 25-29 January 1984 in Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy County, by Tanya Bray and Babs Padelford (NOU, 1984a). The authors have descriptions by the same observers of two additional sightings in Fontenelle Forest 7 December 1984 and 11 May 1985.

The 11 records referred to have come since 1952, prior to which time this species had been extirpated from Nebraska. Bruner et al (1904) state that it was "formerly not uncommon in the more heavily wooded portions of the Missouri bottoms," with the last record 20 May 1895 near Omaha, Douglas County.

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER, Contopus borealis

Regular. Class I-S. One collected 4 September 1909 at Roca, Lancaster County, by J.T. Zimmer is #ZM10564 in the UNSM collection.

WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE, Contopus sordidulus

Regular. Class I-S. One collected 24 May 1900 in Monroe Canyon, Sioux County, by Merritt Cary is #ZM6396 in the UNSM collection.

81-CP

Fredericksen, M. 1976. Northern Three-toed Woodpecker in Iowa.
Iowa Bird Life 46:27-28

Northern Three-toed Woodpecker in Iowa -- Date: May 28-31, 1975. Place:
Woods in Century Oaks, Bettendorf, Iowa.

I saw the bird the first time early in the morning about 7:00 or 8:00 a.m. I wasn't really looking for birds at the time but I noticed the bird didn't look like the other woodpeckers around. As I looked at it I got very close to it. It was feeding on a dead oak tree. As it climbed up the tree it scraped the bark off the tree and started feeding. Since I never saw the bird before I went home and got my camera. When I came back it was gone. I saw it the next day at the same tree, but it was lying on its back and flinching and fluttering around. I took her home and she died two days later. MARK FREDERICKSEN, 31 Briarwood Chase, Bet-

tendorf, Iowa. Editors note -- Mark is a student of my wife's at Black Hawk Junior High and joined us on the 1975 Davenport Christmas Count. He mentioned finding this bird during the course of the bird count and upon returning home secured it from the freezer. It is now in the collection of the Putnam Museum and will be mounted.

Petersen, P. C. 1981 (note in Records Committee review of this species)

"Specimen was a Putnam Museum in freezer. Sent to taxidermist and lost due to his freezer being disconnected. There was absolutely no mistake on the I. D.- examined by Jon Dunn and Dave Bohlen also. Ed. note not included ~~it~~ see IBL 46:28"

not included refers to the ed note above which failed to get xeroxed prior to the committee's review/THK