

Black-headed Grosbeak  
9 Aug 1997  
Riverton A., Fremont Co., IA  
\*Michael D. Overton  
IBL 68:86

Record Number: 97-49  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Michael D. Overton, 1316 S Duff #93, Ames 50010 [\*6/9/98]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: none  
Records Committee: IBL 68:86

VOTE: 6 A-D, 1 NA

A-D, The unmarked ochre underparts with fine black streaking limited to the lower flanks identifies this bird as an immature male Black-headed Grosbeak. Occasional hybridization with Rose-breasted Grosbeak is known to occur, but based on this description I don't see any reason to suspect a hybrid.

A-D, Good description of a first fall bird, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak should be eliminated. It is a little disconcerting for the observer to comment "possible hybrid", when the description is good for a Black-headed.

NA, Mike's comment about a possible hybrid is interesting. I'm not convinced we'll ever be able to adequately document a juvenile/female Black-headed Grosbeak without photos. However, this is the best description I have seen to date.

A-D, Good description of key field marks. Any possible hybridization probably not notable until adult plumage.

A-D, All of the field marks, which are presented in great detail, match immature male Black-headed Grosbeak. The strong ochre color of underparts, yellow wing mark, dull ochre rump, and very limited flank streaking are all very impressive. If all these observations were recorded before looking at a book, this description is truly impressive. The suggestion that this is a possible hybrid befuddles me. No evidence is presented that suggests this to me.

A-D, Excellent details, including yellow under-wing coverts, unstreaked ochre breast with limited streaking on flanks.

RE-VOTE (at meeting 4/19/98): 7 A-D

97-49

## IOWA BIRD SIGHTINGS DOCUMENTATION FORM

**Species:** Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*) **How many?** 1 immature male

**Location:** Fremont co., Riverton Wildlife Area, .25 miles N of jct. check station road & Fremont co. Rd. J46

**Habitat:** Open tallgrass ditch with scattered small trees and shrubs along road between mixed hardwood bottomland forest and agricultural cropland.

**Date:** 9 August 1997 **Time:** Approx. 9:30am to 9:35am

**Observer:** Michael D. Overton, 1316 S Duff #93, Ames, IA, 50010

**Other Observers:** Dixie Overton

**Observers Before and After:** Before: none. After: ??

**Description:**

**Size:** Identical to Rose-breasted Grosbeaks that were present in same area.

**Shape:** Fairly heavy-bodied and short-tailed. Big-headed look accentuated by large bill.

**Bill:** Large, strongly convex culmen, triangular in cross-section, dark horn colored.

**Eyes:** Dark brown.

**Head:** Crown diffusely streaked brownish black and ochre-brown with a brownish black lateral stripe.

Wide white supercilium curving down posteriorly and wrapping around the auricular. Auricular brownish black. Wide white moustachial stripe outlining the chin and throat.

**Throat:** Unmarked ochre.

**Back:** Upper back and scapulars barred brownish black and dull ochre. Lower back dull ochre.

**Rump:** Dull ochre.

**Breast, Belly, Flanks:** Unmarked ochre. Limited fine black streaking on the lower flanks.

**Wings:** Brownish black with white median coverts, white tipped greater coverts, white greater primary coverts (two wingbars and a spot), and white tips to some tertials or secondaries. Yellow lesser underwing coverts showed as a yellow edge on the folded wing.

**Tail:** Dark brownish black, no pattern noted. Undertail not noted.

**Legs/Feet:** Not noted.

**Vocalizations:** None.

**Behavior:** Foraging for mulberries. Active but fairly secretive.

**Similar species and how eliminated:** Rose-breasted Grosbeak. The bird observed showed no fine black streaking on the breast and only limited fine black streaking on the lower flanks. The chin, throat, breast, upper belly, and flanks were a strong ochre color. The lesser underwing coverts showed as a yellow edge on the folded wing.

**Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification:** No.

**Viewing conditions:** Shaded direct sunlight, 15 yards (paced), Leica 10x42.

**Previous experience with species and similar ones:** Black-headed Grosbeak: several sightings in AZ, CO, and CA. Rose-breasted Grosbeak: several sightings in IA, MN, WI, MI, IL, and OH.

**References and persons consulted before writing description:** None before field notes. NGS, Peterson Western after.

**How long before field notes made?** 10 minutes. **this form completed:** 4 months.

**Comments:** Possible hybrid? There were several Rose-breasted Grosbeaks foraging in the same area.