

Gray Jay
2 Dec 1918
Linn Co., IA
George Berry
specimen?, Halmi 1977

Record Number: 93-EU
Classification: NA

REFERENCE

Halmi, N.S. 1977. More Gray Jays in Iowa. IBL 47:65. [refers to University of Iowa specimen #32540]

VOTE: 5 NA

NA, I have not seen the specimen. It should be photographed. I agree with Halmi and Rohner that we should discount statements about the origin of birds in Berry's collection. /thk

Gray Jay

Halmi, N. S. 1977. More Gray Jays in Iowa. Iowa Bird Life 47:65

More Gray Jays in Iowa -- In response to Gladys Black's Des Moines Register article on Gray Jays, written after this species was believed to have been first seen in Iowa (IBL Vol. 97, p. 23, 1977), two more records of Gray Jays were submitted, with documentation, bringing the total for the fall-winter 1976-77 period to three.

Fern L. Tanner saw a Gray Jay in Mason City in early November, from 11 feet. A good comparison could be made with a Blue Jay on the other side of the same bird bath. Mrs. Tanner's brother, Albert Ewers, and his wife, had seen the jay nearby a couple of weeks earlier (before the Decorah bird was first seen?). Mr. Ewers had no doubt that the bird was the "meat robber" familiar to him from many hunting and fishing trips to Canada.

The other Gray Jay was seen by Marilyn H. Lilja at Cedar Falls, also in November 1976. She observed it from about 20 feet as it made several trips to her feeder. Next day it was found dead, but the specimen was unfortunately not preserved. It did give her an opportunity to verify the bird's identity. She states that she was familiar with the species from time spent in Colorado.

In April 1977, Mr. George Schrimper, Curator for Natural History at the University of Iowa Museum, called my attention to a Gray Jay specimen in the collection of the museum (no. 32540). The skin is cataloged as having been collected in Linn Co. on December 2, 1918 by George Berry, but bears a tag with a somewhat cryptic note in the hand of John Rohner, late Curator of the museum, which seems to question the site in which the specimen was obtained. The reason for this must be that Mr. Berry, an excellent naturalist in his prime, by 1918 was the victim of progressive mental deterioration, possibly caused by an infection contracted in the tropics, and was no longer deemed reliable (Meyer, IBL Vol 29, p. 74, 1959). In view of this uncertainty about the specimen's provenance, the Decorah Gray Jay of 1976-77 must still be considered the first authenticated individual of this species in Iowa. N. S. HALMI, R. No. 6, Iowa City.