

Rock Wren

8 Nov 1988

Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA

*S. Dinsmore, *****

to 28 Nov; IBL 59:15, 77, Dinsmore 1989

Record Number: 88-31

Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Steve Dinsmore, 8-28 Nov

Mark Proescholdt, 9 Nov

Ann Johnson, 9 Nov

Jim Fuller, 10 Nov

Robert Cecil, 19 Nov

Diane Porter, 11 Nov

Ray Cummins, 19 Nov

PHOTOGRAPH

Steve Dinsmore, 9 Nov, P-0267 (IBL 89:22)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 59:15, 22

Records Committee: IBL 59:77

Photograph: IBL 89:22 (P-0267)

Dinsmore, S. J. 1989. Rock Wren at Saylorville Reservoir. IBL 89:22.

VOTE: 1-A-P, 5-A-D, 1-abstain

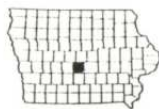
A-D. Well seen by m.ob. Apparently also photographed.

A-D. (did anyone get a photo?) Documentations conclusively describe Rock Wren (some weaker than others) but good group of descriptions. I have no problem with this record.

SENT TO: Steve Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010; Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, IA; Ann Johnson, 532 120th Ave., Norwalk, IA 50211; Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll, Iowa City, IA; Robert Cecil, Des Moines, IA; Diane Porter, 908 East Briggs, Fairfield, IA 52556; Ray Cummins, 609 S. Main St., Centerville, IA 52544. [3/29/89]

ROCK WREN AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

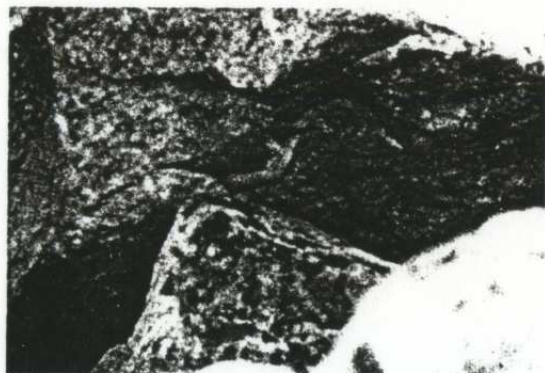
STEPHEN J. DINSMORE



In the early afternoon of 8 November 1988, I was birding the Cherry Glen Recreation Area of Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co. At 3:08 p.m., I heard a distinctive "tick-ear" call coming from the rock rip-rap along the lake shore. I mentioned to Beth Brown, who had joined me, that it sounded like a Rock Wren. I quickly tracked the bird down and, sure enough, it was a Rock Wren. Beth and I watched the bird for about fifteen minutes and noted the following. The bird was definitely a wren because of the body shape, long tail, and bill shape. The bill was dark, thin, and very slightly decurved. The legs were dark. The bird was sparrow-sized, although there were no other birds for direct comparison. The upperparts were light gray with some lighter speckling on the back. The tail was buffy and contrasted with the color of the rest of the bird. The underparts were white with some blurry streaks on the flanks. Throughout the observation, the bird would alternately pause and bob up and down several times. This behavior is characteristic of Rock Wrens.

The bird was very cooperative and many birders saw it on the rock rip-rap between the two Cherry Glen boat landings through at least 28 November. This is the fifth state record in the last fifty years, the second from Saylorville Reservoir. The other record from this location was 22 November to 8 December 1986 (Padelford, L. and B. Padelford. 1987. Rock Wren at Saylorville Reservoir. *Iowa Bird Life* 57:62). It is interesting that both records from this location have been in late fall and the birds have frequented the rocky rip-rap along the lake shore. Perhaps regular checks of this habitat in late fall would produce more sightings of this species.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010



Rock Wren, Saylorville Reservoir, 9 Nov 1988. Photo by S. Dinsmore.

REVIEWS

Birds in Minnesota by Robert B. Janssen. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1987. 352 pp., hardbound \$35.00, paperbound \$14.95.

REVIEWED BY W. ROSS SILCOCK

In the early 1970s, when I first became interested in recording birding data, I marvelled at the concise way Imhof's *Birds of Alabama* summarized a large amount of data. As a birder, I found that these data could be used to pinpoint almost to the day when to look for a certain species. In 1975, after I had moved to Iowa, I began to collect arrival and departure dates not only from Iowa, but from neighboring states, with the aim of predicting more accurately when to look for certain species. Thus I was thrilled to see the new (in 1975) *Minnesota Birds*, written by Janet Green and Robert Janssen. Here was a book which was even more concise than Imhof's, presenting in brief but readable form the data needed for a birder to be able to pinpoint the best time to look for a given species. Because Minnesota is directly north of Iowa, I could expect to see birds a few days earlier or later than the dates given in this book. I felt that the basic strength of this book was its success in presenting as much information as it did without overwhelming the reader and in a form useful to the field birder interested in distribution, both temporal and spatial, of a state's birds. Thus, with a great deal of anticipation I opened a copy of the update entitled *Birds in Minnesota*, authored by Robert Janssen, this time in a solo effort. I was also a little fearful that the successful approach used in 1975 might in some way be changed, possibly for the worse; however, I was not disappointed. This new book was not a reprint with just a few new dates inserted, nor was it a radically altered version. Most of the species accounts, however, are revised and rewritten and reflect the author's dedication to up-to-the-minute record keeping and his extensive coverage of Minnesota's birding localities, many of which he and his birding colleagues have made famous.

The general outline of the new book is similar to that of its predecessor, including sections introducing the geography and geology of Minnesota, an introduction to the species accounts, and the accounts themselves. There are a few minor changes in the form of the new book, and one rather major change in emphasis. This involves the section entitled in 1975 "Geography and Ecology of Minnesota's Birdlife," which consisted of a standard summary of landscape regions, vegetation types, and lists of species of birds which were considered typical of each. This type of summary is useful but probably derives from the days when, in many cases, state bird books were written in a detached and objective manner. The new book is an example of the difference in emphasis seen when a local expert writes subjectively on his beloved state's birds and birding localities. Here, Kim Eckert provides a well-written and in places rapturous essay whose title indicates the difference between the two approaches: "Minnesota; unique geography, diverse habitats, rich avifauna." Eckert places much emphasis on Minnesota's specialty species, and, as he states, "Minnesota clearly emerges as one of the prime birding states visited by birders from across the country."

88-31

Rock Wren

Cherry Glen area - Saylorville

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species? Rock Wren

How Many? 1

Location? Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.-Cherry Glen Rec. Area

Habitat? hopping around in rock rip-rap along lakeshore

Date? 28 Nov 1988

Time? 3:08-3:20 p.m. on 8 Nov

Observers Name and address: Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50010

Others who saw bird: Beth Brown, m.ob.

Description of bird: I was scoping the lake for waterbirds when I heard a distinctive "tick-ear" call from the rip-rap along the lakeshore about 75 yards away from me. I immediately got out of the car and tracked down the bird, which I recognized as a Rock Wren because of the size, coloration, distinctive call, and bobbing behavior.

The bird continually hopped among the rip-rap as I watched it for over 15 minutes. The bird would alternately move among the rip-rap and then pause and bob up and down several times. I have seen this behavior in many other Rock Wrens. The bird was clearly a wren because of the long tail, chunky body, bill shape, and behavior. The bird seemed sparrow-sized, although there were no other birds nearby for comparison. The upperparts were light gray with some lighter speckling on the back and wings. The long tail was buffy colored, and contrasted strongly with the color of the back. The legs were dark. The underparts were white with some pale gray streaks on the breast and sides. The undertail coverts were buffy. The bird had a light eyeline and a dark eye. The bill was dark, slender, and slightly decurved. I heard the charactersitic "tick-ear" call roughly 20 times, as well as a raspy chattering noise, almost like it was scolding us. The bird frequented the same area through at least 20 Nov.

Similar species and how eliminated: The size, behavior, gray upperparts and buffy tail, light eyeline, and call eliminate other wrens.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were excellent with very good light. Estimated viewing distance was as close as 20 feet. I used Bausch and Lomb 8x40 binoculars.

Previous experience with species: I have seen numerous Rock Wrens in western U.S. and one individual at Saylorville in fall 1986.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

How long before field notes were made? during observation

How long before this form was completed? 3 hours

What species? Rock Wren How many? 1Location? Cherry Glen area - SaylorvilleType of habitat? large rocks and boulders around boat rampWhen? date(s): Nov. 9, 1988 time: 10:35 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - (approximately)Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Liscomb, Iowaothers with you: Beth Proescholdt, Eugene and Eloise Armstrong, Knightothers before or after you: Steve Dinsmore, Beth Brown

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.

As we pulled into Cherry Glen, Eugene and Eloise had been watching the Rock Wren for about an hour. We walked down the boat ramp toward the wren which was calling on occasion. It popped out of the rocks and hopped from rock to rock. It bobbed as it walked at times. It was 30-40 feet away and was brownish and dark on its back and buffy somewhat on its breast and quite buffy on its rump. It flew across the boat ramp to the other side and showed buffy tail tips contrasting with a black subterminal band. It had a strong light eye-stripe.

Similar species and how eliminated:

It would be similar to another wren species, but all the wrens are quite different and distinctive.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

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

Cloudy, distances estimated - probably 30-60 feet at the various times we observed the wren.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen some Rock Wrens out west and at Saylorville two years ago.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Robbins' Birds of N. America, Nat'l. Geog. Birds of N. America, R.T. Peterson's field guide.

How long before field notes made? Nov. 12, 1988 this form completed? Nov. 12, 1988

DOCUMENTATION FORM
Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species: Rock Wren

Location: Cherry Glen boat ramp, Saylorville Lake, Polk County, IA

Habitat: Rip-rap along lakeshore and boat ramps

Date(s): 11/9/88

Time: 8:43 am to 8:51 am

Name and Address: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Ave., Norwalk, Iowa 50211

Other observers: none

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 behavior and voice.

"Large wren with dark legs, eyes, and bill." Bill appeared good sized and relatively straight. "Eyestripe" was "pale". "Light throat and breast" were "very finely streaked" with the "color changing to a rusty buff on sides and lower belly. Very distinct heavy barring on underside of tail and undertail coverts. Head and back were a dull brown with some darker spotting/mottling." Color got "rustier on the rump and tail." The short flights didn't allow much observation, but "light patches on the corners of the tail" were discernible. The bird bobbed and called (chuck-ee') as it worked its way up the hill in the rocks to where it admired itself briefly in the mirror on my Bronco!

Similar species and how eliminated:

Size eliminated the more expected wrens. Light streaking on breast eliminated the somewhat similar canyon wren.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? NA

If yes, explain:

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

Overcast morning, observed through binoculars at distances of 10'-30' (estimated).

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

A number of both canyon and rock wrens have been seen on trips west.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

None prior to field notes; National Geographic Field Guide consulted prior to completion of this form.

How long before field notes made? immediately How long before this form completed? 9 hours

What species? ROCK WREN How many? 1Location? SPAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR - CHESSY GLEN ACCESSType of habitat? ROCKSWhen? date(s): 10 NOVEMBER 1948 time: 7:45 AM to 8:15 AMWho? your name and address: JIM FULLER 6 LONGVIEW KNOLL ROAD, IOWA CITYothers with you: NONEothers before or after you: M.O.B.

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.

GENERAL SIZE - LARGER THAN HOUSE WREN AND SMALLER THAN HOUSE SPARROW. ♀

LONG WREN LIKE TAIL - ROUNDED ON END WITH DARK BARRIOL ALTERNATING WITH A DINGY WHITE UNDERNEATH. DINGY CORNERS OF TAIL ON UPPER SIDE COULD NOT BE SEEN. BACK WAS A GRAY-BROWN AND BREAST WAS A DINGY WHITE WITH VERY FAINT GRAY STREAKS WHICH COULD ONLY BE SEEN AT CLOSE RANGE. SIDE OF HEAD WAS GRAY STREAKED & THERE WAS A SMUDGE (CIRCUM) BEHIND THE EYE. THE EYE WAS DARK. THE BILL WAS A GRAY COLOR, ^{ITS LENGTH} ^{MAI}BE $1\frac{1}{2}$ - $2\frac{1}{3}$ THE LENGTH OF THE HEAD AND IT HAD A VERY SLIGHT DOWNWARD CURVATURE. THERE WAS A WARM BROWN COLOR ON THE SIDES BELOW THE WINGS. THE LEGS WERE DARK. THE BIRD MOVED QUICKLY THROUGH THE LARGE ROCKS APPEARING OCCASIONALLY. IT SANG A SOFT TRILL SEVERAL TIMES THAT SOUNDED TO ME LIKE "TREEEE". IT SAT ON A WOODEN DOLK FOR ABOUT 30 SECONDS AND SANG

Similar species and how eliminated:

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

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

EARLY MORNING. CLEAR SKIES
9X36 BINOCULARS 15-50 FEET

Previous experience with species and similar ones: SEEN IN THE WEST SEVERAL TIMESReferences and persons consulted before writing description: NATHL G. EOL GUIDEHow long before field notes made? IMMEDIATE this form completed? 12 HOURS

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

DOCUMENTATION FORM

For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

88-31

What species? Rock Wren (Salpinctes obsoletus) How many? 1Location? Cheery Glen area of Sailorville Lake, Polk Co., IAType of Habitat? Heavy rock rip-rap on lake shoreWhen? date(s): Nov. 19, 1988 time: Afternoon to Who? your name and address: Robert Cecil 327 S. 6th, Keokuk, IAOthers with you: Tom Kent, Francis Moore, John Cecil, and a host of othersOthers before or after you: Ray Cummins, the Proescholdts, Steve Dinsmore, and a host of others

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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Received word the bird had been found on the 19th (AM), so we looked in the afternoon after failing to find it in the morning. The bird was flushed by others, and Francis and I headed for the spot. Francis drove the bird through and from a depression in the rocks, giving us what were initially fleeting views. Noted over the course of the observations were the following: The bird remained low, flying in short flights from rock to rock. It also stopped a couple of times on the sand on the beach. It appeared to be primarily brown above and much paler below. The bill was thin, and almost straight - only slightly curved. In flight, the tail showed a slight dark band near the tip, and a slightly lighter terminal band. Overall, the size was similar to or slightly larger than a Carolina Wren - body proportions were quite similar.

On several occasions, the bird issued a short, trill. On another, it repeatedly made a "tick-ear" call note, which was probably the most diagnostic field mark I noted.

No bobbing of the body was noted. The cinnamon rump was not apparent to me, nor was spotting on the back, nor was the light throat streaking. If I had not been concerned about unduly disturbing the bird (and if it had not already been conclusively identified, and if it had not been colder than hell), I probably would have spent more time looking for those field marks.

Similar species; how eliminated:

This bird was obviously a Wren, but too large for any other regular Iowa Species but Carolina. Carolina, with which I am very familiar, has deeper brown back, more conspicuous superciliar stripe, and more curved bill. Canyon has dark belly.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. 10x40 Binocs. Distance perhaps 30 ft. Lighting conditions OK - I believe it was overcast - forgot to note.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen Rock Wren in Arizona, but view was briefly of one bird. Have seen numerous Carolina's

References and persons consulted before writing description: Used National Geographic after sighting. Also used to look at Canyon Wren during writing this

How long before field notes made? None this form completed? 2 days.

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

DOCUMENTATION FOR ROCK WREN

Species: Rock Wren

How many? One

Location: Cherry Glen, Saylorville Reservoir. Between the two boat ramps.

Habitat: Big dam rocks at shore of reservoir.

Date: 11/19/88 about 3 P.M., a cold and windy day.

Name and address: (Michael and) Diane Porter, 908 East Briggs, Fairfield, IA 52556.

Other observers: It's been on the bird line for most of November. The IOU group failed to find it in the morning. Midafternoon Mark Proescholdt and Beth Proescholdt told us they had just seen the wren. Michael and I went and found it also.

Description:

Wren came out from between some big rocks, about ten feet from the water, perched briefly on a rock, and despite the cold wind sang the song of the rock wren. Its fairly long tail was cocked up. Its back was grey and its rump was a little (but definitely) rusty. It had a fairly long bill and a more streamlined appearance than a house wren. Throat and breast were very light. (Streaks on breast were not visible, light eyeline could be imagined but not sworn to, and buffy outer corners of tail were not observed.)

Species I considered:

Song ruled out other wrens; habitat strongly indicated rock wren. It was too big and too light beneath for a house wren. Tail too long for a winter wren.

Reservations: None.

Viewing conditions: It was an overcast day, but not really dark. Distance about 75 feet (est.). Duration: two brief looks of about 10 seconds each, during one of which the bird sang.

Previous experience: I have seen a lot of rock wrens in Arizona and Southern California, always in rocks. Most were in desert; one was in the bed of a rocky stream. I am familiar with all the North American wrens except the sedge wren.

I reviewed all the wrens in the standard guides the day before going to see the rock wren. I made notes immediately after viewing the bird. This report is written on 11/28/88, nine days after the sighting.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

What Species? Rock Wren How Many? 1

Location? Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.

Type of Habitat? Large rock riprap at Cherry Glen boat ramp

When? date(s): November 19th 1988 time: 10:05AM to 10:21AM

Who? your name and address: Ray Cummins 609 S. Main St. Centerville, Ia. 52544

Others with you: Tom Johnson

Others before or after you: Many

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, undertail, legs, & feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

A large wren with grayish-brown back, long bill, finely streaked white breast and throat, white eyeline, buffy lower sides, chestnut tail and rump with buffy outer terminal spots on the tail. Song heard, but 7 days later I can't describe it, someday I'll learn to take field notes on all birds I want to document.

Similar species; how eliminated: Finely streaked white breast eliminates all other wrens.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? no
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. 10x50 Nikon binoculars in good light (cloudy but good contrast) estimated 10 to 15yds

Previous experience with species and similar ones: sighted in Texas in August of this year.

Reference and persons consulted before writing description: Birds of North America NGS

How long before field notes made? 7 days This form completed? 7 days