

Great Gray Owl
24 Dec 1922
Polk Co., IA
A. J. Palas, J. Woodmansee
Nichols 1923, DuMont 1931, DuMont 1933

Record Number: 81-GA
Classification: NA

REFERENCES

Nichols, J.T. 1923. Bird-Lore's Twenty-third Christmas Census.
Bird-Lore 25:8-45, p 36.

DuMont, P.A. 1931. Birds of Polk County Iowa. Des Moines
Audubon Society, Des Moines, p 36.

DuMont 1933

VOTE (1981): 2-IV, 4-V, 1-VI

V, DuMont has doubts.

V, Four!!

IV, Owls reportedly seen at 50 yds -- sketchy description of
what was seen on this Xmas count report. No positive statements
about absence of ear tufts, although apparently observed sitting.

IV, Eye color noted and as stated by DuMont (1934) viewing
conditions favorable. Probably correct, but too few details.
Possibly Gr. H. Owls.

Nichols, J. T. 1923. Bird-Lore's Twenty-third Christmas Census.
Bird-Lore 25:8-45 (p 36)

Des Moines, Iowa.—Dec. 24; 8 A.M. to 2 P.M. Clear; no snow; no wind in morning, light southwest wind from 12 to 2 P.M.; temp. 28° at start, 52° at return. Fifteen miles on foot.—along Des Moines River and vicinity southeast to Levey and back. Observers together. Mallard, 1; Bob-white, 9 (1 covey); Sharp-shinned Hawk, 1; Great Gray Owl, 4; Hairy Woodpecker, 5; Northern Downy Woodpecker, 24; Red-bellied Woodpecker, 2; Northern Flicker, 2; Blue Jay, 3; American Crow, 180 (est.); Bronzed Grackle, 30 (est.); Tree Sparrow, 94; Slate-colored Junco, 24; Cardinal, 22; White-breasted Nuthatch, 18; Tufted Titmouse, 20; Black-capped Chickadee, 68; Bluebird, 1. Total, 18 species; about 508 individuals. The Great Gray Owls were observed at a distance of 50 yards in good light with 8-power glasses and color markings on breast as well as color of eyes were carefully observed.—A. J. PALAS and JOHN WOODMANSEE.

DuMont, P. A. 1931. Birds of Polk County Iowa. Des Moines, Des Moines
Audubon Society pp 1-72 (p 36)

[GREAT GRAY OWL, *Scotiaptex nebulosa nebulosa* (Forster).

The only record is given by A. J. Palas and John Woodmansee in the Bird-Lore Christmas Census, 1923, p. 36: The Great Gray Owls, (4) were observed at a distance of 50 yards, in good light with 8 x glasses, and color markings on breast as well as color of eyes were carefully observed.

The above observations were made December 24, 1922, south along the Des Moines River near Levey. The occurrence of this rare bird in Iowa would need to be substantiated by a specimen to be accepted as a state record.]

Scotiaptex nebulosa nebulosa (Forster). Great Gray Owl

A casual visitor. Anderson (1907) recorded that it was listed by J. A. Allen (White's Geology of Iowa, 1870, p. 424), and it was reported by I. S. Trostler on December 17, 1893 near Omaha (Rev. Bds. Neb., p. 55). Trippe (1872) stated that a very large bird was killed at Oskaloosa in Mahaska County, which, from the description given him by the person who shot it, must have been this species. Walter G. Savage writes from Hillsboro, Henry County: "In 1860 my father shot one. I have not known them to occur since. There is no mistake in this owl. My father shot it in a tree standing in our dooryard one night; and it was nothing else but a Great Gray Owl." David L. Savage, writing in 1894, says: "A friend in Van Buren County shot a Great Gray Owl a few winters ago. This is the only time I ever heard of this species being found in Iowa, but the identity is certain."

A sight record is listed hypothetically by DuMont (1931) because substantiating evidence, in the form of a specimen, is lacking. Four were seen under favorable conditions by A. J. Palas and John Woodmansee in Polk County, December 24, 1922. Nauman reports that one was found during the winter of 1920-21, four miles north of Sigourney, Keokuk County. It was discovered by several boys, high in a tree, and one of them succeeded in hitting it with a thrown club. The bird was caged for several days and during that time Nauman identified it as unquestionably of this species. He noted the great size, large facial disc, yellow eyes, and the lack of ear tufts. (There is some slight discrepancy as to the date of capture. Nauman's report to the writer stated about February 10, while his report to the U. S. Biological Survey gave April 25. He mentions that the ground was covered with snow.)

DuMont 1933
p 86