

American Pipit
19 Dec 1987
Rathbun Res., Appanoose Co., IA
*Ray Cummins, *B&M Heusinkveld
IBL 58:46, 75

Record Number: 87-31
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Ray Cummins
Bill/Marj Heusinkveld

REFERENCES

Christmas Bird Count: IBL 58:46
Records Committee: IBL 58:75

VOTE: 6-III, 1-IV

III, OK for Water Pipit but don't think we should assign this bird to *A.s. japonicus* simply based on leg color. Other features of description don't really seem to fit illustration of this unlikely subspecies in NGS guide.

III, The behavior and description fit Water Pipit well. I liked these documentations--Ray's is particularly good--but how did he remember all that after 20 hours and looking at books? Who wrote on these documentations? We need more information on leg color. Does the Asiatic rare occur in Iowa?

III, Good descriptions. A well studied bird. My opinion is that the bird is a Water Pipit from the documentations. The yellow legs are strange and according to NGS this race is in western Alaska not supposed to be here or in Florida.

III, a photo of this bird could make a good ID quiz. Water Pipits can have pale legs in fall. I do not think this was the Asian subspecies, *A.s. japonicus*, as Cummins suggests.

V, The documentations conflict--Cummins uses "bold white eyebrow line" as a point to eliminate Sprague's--Heusinkvelds say "no defined eye line". Pipit sp, might be a better designation although it was probably a Water.

III, Prob imm (leg color). Enough info to eliminate Sprague's--good example of solid discussion and consideration prior to elimination of a possible alternative ID (Contrast with Br-wing Hawk doc).

III, I wish it were Sprague's, but apparently fall Water Pipits can have pale legs.

REVOTE: 7-III

III, A Water Pipit is well described here. *A. s. japonicus* not ruled out completely but extremely unlikely. Sprague's not really a possibility from the descriptions. I do not see any problem with this one.

III, Good description of fall water pipit with light legs.

III, I agree probably an immature/fall individual.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

What Species? WATER PIPIT (A.S. JAPONICUS) How Many? 1

Location? ISLANDVEIW EAST LAKE RATHBUN CBC

Type of Habitat? MOWED GRASS POINT WITH A LIMESTONE ROCK ROAD

When? date(s): DECEMBER 19TH, 1987 time: 2:05PM to 2:35PM

Who? your name and address: RAY CUMMINS 609 S. MAIN ST. CENTERVILLE, IA. 52544

Others with you: MARK HOFFMAN

MART HEUSINKVELD

Others before or after you: BILL & MARGE HEUSINKVELD & BERGSTROM PARTY

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 SMALL SLENDER SPARROW SIZED BIRD WITH A STRAIGHT SLENDER BILL THAT WAS DARK ABOVE AND YELLOW BELOW EXCEPT FOR THE TIP, THE EYE WAS BLACK WITH A THIN INDISTINCTIVE WHITISH EYE-RING, A BLACK EYELINE AND WHITE EYEBROW MARK WHICH EXTENDED FROM THE BILL TO ABOUT THE SAME DISTANCE BEHIND THE EYE, THE EAR PATCH WAS GRAY WITH A WHITE LINE RUNNING ABOVE A THIN BLACK MALAR STRIPE, THE CROWN WAS DARK UNSTREAKED GRAY, THE THROAT WAS CLEAR AND WHITE SAME AS THE MALAR AND EYEBROW LINE, THE BACK WAS ALL A DARK GRAY, THAT WOULD BE SOME WHERE IN BETWEEN THAT OF A FEMALE & MALE JUNCO, WITH 5 BLACK STRIPES, THE TAIL WAS BLACK WITH WHITE OUTER TAIL FEATHERS WHICH WERE AT LEAST AS PROMINENT AS A JUNCO IN FLIGHT, THE WINGS HAD TWO INDISTINCTIVE TAN WINGBARS, THE BREAST HAD A YELLOWISH OFFWHITE BASE COLOR, HEAVILY AND EXTENSIVELY STREAKED WITH BOLD BLACK MARKS, THE LEGS AND FEET WERE RINGBILLED GULL YELLOW.

THE BIRD WAGGED IT'S TAIL UP AND DOWN WHILE FEEDING ALONG THE EDGE OF THE ROAD. THE BIRD WAS COOPERATIVE AND WOULD USUALLY RUN ONLY A FEW FEET WHEN APPROACHED TO CLOSELY. IF FLUSHED IT WOULD LAND ON A PICNIC TABLE OR STONE FIRE RING FOR A BRIEF PERIOD AND THEN FLUTTER DOWN AND RESUME FEEDING.

Similar species; how eliminated: SPRAGUE'S PIPIT WAS BEGRUDGINGLY ELIMINATED FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS: 1) BOLD WHITE EYEBROW LINE. 2) DARK GRAY BACK PATTERN, THERE WAS NO TAN OR BROWN IN THE BACK 3) THIN BLACK MALAR STRIPE 4) BIRD WAS IN SHORT GRASS AND NOT PARTICULARLY ~~WEIRY~~.
WARY

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? Yes
If yes, explain: HEUSINKVELD'S FIRST CALLED IT A SPRAGUE PIPIT (SEE NEXT PAGE) AND BERGSTROM PARTY IDENTIFIED IT AS A SPRAGUE PIPIT.

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. 20X SPOTTING SCOPE FROM A STEPPED-OFF DISTANCE OF 25YDS & AN ESTIMATED DISTANCE OF 15YDS, PLUS 10X BINOCULARS.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I HAVE SIGHTED WATER PIPIT IN IOWA ON ONLY THREE PREVIOUS OCCASIONS.

Reference and persons consulted before writing description: PETERSON & NORTH AMERICAN FIELD GUIDE THE BIRDS WERE USED AFTER AN INTIAL LOOK AT THE BIRD. I THEN VARIFIED THAT THE PIPIT HAD YELLOW LEGS AND BECAME CONFUSED UNTIL I SAW A PICTURE OF A.S. JAPONICUS IN THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHC FIELD GUIDE.

How long before field notes made? 26 HRS this form completed? 26 HRS

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

WHAT SPECIES? Water Pipit HOW MANY? 1
 LOCATION? Island View Camping on shore of Rathbun Lake
 TYPE OF HABITAT? Short grass at edge of blacktop road in camping area
 WHEN? DATE: Dec. 19, 1987 TIME: 3:30 to 3:45 PM
 WHO? (NAME AND ADDRESS) Bill and Marj Heusinkveld, 840 S. Park, Centerville, Iowa

OTHERS WITH YOU? None

OTHERS BEFORE OR AFTER YOU? Bob Bergstrom Jr. and Bob Bergstrom Sr.
Ray Cummings and Mark Hoffman

DESCRIBE THE BIRD(S) INCLUDING 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.

Size about the same as a Harris Sparrow, only slimmer, longer legs and neck.

Bill - slender. Eye - no defined eye line.

Head - streaked brown. Back - streaked or mottled brown.

Breast - Streaked quite heavily. Wing - Darker.

Tail - Fairly long, white on outer edge. The white showed more when flying.

Legs - Dull yellow. Voice - Did not call.

Behavior - Not at all shy. We would drive forward slowly and it would run or fly a short distance. It seemed to want to stay on or next to the blacktop. I got out of the car to take pictures and could approach to about 25 feet before it would move a short distance. It bobbed its tail emphatically when standing. It would run very fast for about 10 feet running one leg at a time.

It is doubtful my pictures will turn out very good, even though I used a 300 lens.

Elvin Sprague's

SIMILAR SPECIES; HOW ELIMINATED:

Sprague Pipit is described differently for habitat and shyness^{yes} and previous lack of sightings in Iowa would indicate it was a Water Pipit.

DID ANYONE DISAGREE OR HAVE RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE IDENTIFICATION? yes

IF YES EXPLAIN: We have reservations primarily because of the yellow legs. We had first decided it was Sprague Pipit until Ray Cummins showed us a National Geographic Bird book which indicated that a subspecies could have yellow legs. In conversation with Gladys Black, she said she was familiar with Water Pipit in Florida with yellow legs and that from our description of its lack of shyness, it was likely a Water Pipit.

VIEWING CONDITIONS: GIVE LIGHTING, DISTANCE (HOW MEASURED), OPTICAL EQUIPMENT.

Very poor light, heavy overcast and rain. Distance varied from 25 to 40 feet by judgment. We used 8 and 10 power binoculars.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH SPECIES AND SIMILAR ONES:

Water Pipit previously seen only in Colorado.

REFERENCES AND PERSONS CONSULTED BEFORE WRITING DESCRIPTION:

Bird of North America

Perterson's Field Guides to Eastern and Western Birds.

HOW LONG BEFORE FIELD NOTES MADE? Immediately THIS FORM COMPLETED? One day