

Eastern Meadowlark
26 Dec 1987
w. of Wildcat Den S.P., Muscatine Co., IA
*P. Petersen
IBL 58:46, 49, 58, 76

Record Number: 87-32
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Peter C. Petersen

REFERENCES

Christmas Bird Count: IBL 58:46, 49
Field Reports: IBL 58:58
Records Committee: IBL 58:76

VOTE: 4-III, 2-IV, 1-abstain

III, good description.

IV, Description fits. We didn't do very well on Barb Wilson's specimens. Should we require call note for winter ID? I'm willing to come to some general agreement.

III, Generally sounds like it could be an Eastern, especially considering the southeast Iowa location. Darker overall color leads me to believe the most likely is an Eastern Meadowlark. It would be better if a call could have been heard. What is typical "Eastern habitat"? Should have been described! He finally used an Iowa documentation form, gsp!

IV, Very possibly correct ID, but the two species can be very difficult in hand to ID and I know of no really good marks to separated them--except, of course, when they call.

Abstain, This idea that Eastern Meadowlarks don't winter in Iowa is absurd for Eastern Iowa. I have finally seen one well enough to fully document. Do we need to collect some to prove a point?

III, while cheek color (due to molt) and tail barring (see Wilson specimens and demonstrations) by themselves are not convincing, I believe the preponderance of the evidence including location, time of year, mild winter, allow acceptance as Eastern, although I would not object to IV because call not heard.

III, Reports two of the field marks of Eastern (throat pattern, tail pattern). While throat/cheek pattern can be deceptive in winter and tail pattern can be anytime, having the two of them agree strongly suggests that the bird is Eastern. Too bad it didn't call, but one can't have everything.

REVOTE: 2-III, 4-IV, 1-abstain

IV, Willing to change my vote later if we come up with definitive criteria for accepting E. Meadowlark in winter.

IV, Maybe collection is the only alternative to a sure ID on this species or *S. neglecta* at that time of year. A call note would probably be enough to separate the two. I think we should set that as a minimum.

IV, The bird was probably an Eastern, but I'm not convinced that determination can positively be made without hearing the bird or having it in hand.

IV, On one hand, field marks taken together increase likelihood of Eastern. On the other hand, lack of vocal info and extreme difficulty of separation based on plumage alone without

direct comparison raise questions. I could compromise, but will hold out for the promised specimen documentation and will be the first to concede when specimens are presented for the period Dec 20 to Feb 15. A series of SE IA specimens taken in late Dec and in midwinter would be of extreme interest.

III, We're going to look like fools if we keep rejecting winter Eastern Meadowlarks for which there is some written evidence. Afterall, we have winter specimens at ISU.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

87-32

What species? Eastern Meadowlark How many? 1

Location? 1/2 mi. W. of Wildcat Den State Park, Muscatine CO, IA.

Type of Habitat? roadside grassy edge

When? date(s): Dec. 26, 1987 time: 9:55 AM to 9:57 A.M.

Who? your name and address: Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd. Davenport A. IA.

Others with you: Ken Olson, Gary Inhelder

Others before or after you: 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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Typical meadowlark - yellow below, black V on chest, back brown, tail short, white outer tail feathers. Crown stripes dark, back dark, noticeable in flight. Yellow restricted to throat, cheeks white. Primary wing feathers + central tail feathers with bars joined by black along vane of feathers. Overall view from behind dark. Bird was seen in typical Eastern habitat.

Similar species; how eliminated: Western Meadowlark - would show yellow on cheek, distinctly barred ^{central} tail & primary feathers.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no
If yes, explain: _____

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.
+ thin Overcast, bird about 75 meters away after landing, within 40' in flight
10X40 binoculars, 20X60 scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen thousands & banded many

References and persons consulted before writing description: none

How long before field notes made? 5 min this form completed? 9 hrs.

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).
Note: Eastern Meadowlarks are as likely as Westerns in E. Central Iowa.