

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Printed: 11/24/00

Lazuli Bunting

18 May 1997

s of Westfield, Plymouth Co., IA

\*Jim Sinclair

IBL 67:91, 68:86, Sinclair 1998

Record Number: 97-19

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Jim Sinclair, 810 N. B St., Indianola [\*10/1/97]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 67:91

Records Committee: IBL 68:86

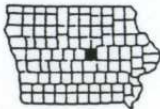
Sinclair, J. 1998. Lazuli Bunting in Plymouth County. IBL  
68:106-107.

VOTE: 7 A-D

## HAWK WATCHING AFTER A SNOWSTORM

BETH PROESCHOLDT

It was the day after a record breaking early snowstorm. The heavy wet snow on trees still carrying leaves bowed down branches and caused severe breakage. The morning of 27 October 1997 was clear and calm, with the temperature rising from a low of 17 degrees up to 32 degrees.



I went out grudgingly to our Grammer Grove hawk watch in northwestern Marshall County only because Eugene and Eloise Armstrong were to be there, and Eugene anticipated a big count after the snow. And there we sat in our yard chairs at 9 a.m., in six inches of snow, waiting.

It started slowly with only flocks of blackbirds and American Crows following the Iowa River south. Then a little after 10 a.m., Bald Eagles and Red-tailed Hawks started floating through.

The day was so calm that they soared over lazily and low, giving us good looks. The sun was bright with strong reflections from the snow causing the redtails directly overhead to appear as white as gulls, with their distinctive patagial marks and belly bands scarcely showing.

By 1 p.m., an amazing 72 Bald Eagles of all ages had passed. In eight autumns of hawk watching at Grammer Grove, this was more eagles than we had ever counted before in an entire season. They came along three at a time, or five or six. Once there were 12 Bald Eagles and 4 Red-tailed Hawks circling together over the field before slowly moving on.

Along with them were more special birds: 3 Golden Eagles (one a lovely juvenile), 2 coveted Rough-legged Hawks (one a dark morph), 4 Red-shouldered Hawks (one beautifully highlighted by reflections from the snow), and 69 Red-tailed Hawks, plus 1 Northern Harrier, 4 Sharp-shinned Hawks, and 2 Cooper's Hawks. And then the show was over, but for four stragglers.

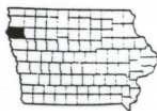
But what a day! Not a huge overall count, but it was our best eagle day ever. And had it not been for Eugene's insistence, we would have missed it.

P. O. Box 65, Liscomb, IA 50148

## LAZULI BUNTING IN PLYMOUTH COUNTY

JIM SINCLAIR

On 18 May 1997 I was fortunate enough to be given a private birding tour of northwestern Woodbury County and southwestern Plymouth County. My host for the morning was Jerry Probst, who proudly guided me through and around his favorite haunts.



One of our stops was along the Big Sioux River near where Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota meet. As we turned west off of Highway 12 onto the river bottoms, a small bird flew up out of the southside ditch. The bird flew a short distance before landing on a weed stem facing away from us. Jerry and I wordlessly stared at the bird for a few moments before I courageously offered, "that is certainly an interesting

bird." At that moment the bird hitched itself around and gave us a perfect front view. In unison Jerry and I called "Lazuli!"

The bird was small, approximately five to six inches long, and sparrow- or finch-shaped. The rump, mantle, and head were a lovely turquoise-blue color with a gray wash on the mantle, nape, and extending up to the crown. The throat and upper breast were also blue, while the remainder of the breast was a rich medium brown. The belly and vent were white. The wings were dark with pale feather edgings and a prominent wing bar on the median wing coverts. The eye was dark and the bill was short and conical. Jerry and I were able to ascertain that this male Lazuli Bunting was a first-spring bird by the presence of the gray wash on the mantle extending up to the head.

We watched the bird for a short while before it moved off down a brushy waterway towards more extensive cover. This was a state bird for both of us.

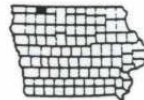
Unbelievably, another male Lazuli Bunting was discovered that same morning just a few miles south at Stone State Park. These two birds, plus two other male Lazuli Buntings which appeared at feeders in western Iowa during the later half of May, represent the largest single invasion of this species into Iowa. Up until the spring of 1997 there were only eight previously accepted records for this species in Iowa (IBL 67:91) making the Lazuli invasion of 1997 notable indeed.

810 North B. Street, Indianola, IA 50125

## WESTERN Tanager IN DICKINSON COUNTY

ED THELEN

Everything you have read about moving water attracting more birds is absolutely true. In the spring of 1996 I decided to add a water feature to my backyard. I already had a bird bath but within a few days after adding running water I was rewarded with the following new birds for my yard list: Mourning Warbler, Indigo Bunting, Ovenbird, and Western Tanager.



On 23 May 1996 I was enjoying the antics of several Baltimore Orioles when I saw what at first glance I thought was another oriole. On closer inspection with my binoculars I saw that the bill was pale and shorter than the bill of a nearby oriole. I didn't know it at the time but I was looking at a Western Tanager. This bird also had a bright red-orange chin with the red radiating onto the throat and towards the eyes. It did not extend above the eyes or onto the forehead. Its back was an olive-green color while its belly, breast, flank, and sides were more of a yellow-green color, much lighter than the back. Its wings were a shade darker than the back with two prominent wing-bars. I was unable to note any coloration of the wing-bars except they were very light colored and prominent. The bird's rump was the same color as its undersides, while its forehead, crown, and nape were an olive-green color and lighter than the back. Its tail was also shorter than the tails of nearby orioles.

I could detect no sound from this bird during the three minutes of observation. It drank water and also bathed during this time. I was unable to relocate this bird after it flew into some nearby trees.

According to the Master Guide to Birding, juvenile Scarlet Tanagers resemble the female but are more variable and have bright yellow wing-bars. Also according to the National Geographic Bird Guide, the immature Scarlet Tanager has faint wing-bars. I don't think it was a juvenile or immature Scarlet Tanager because at this time of year

DOCUMENTATION FORM  
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

97-19

What species? Hazuli Bunting How many? 1♂  
Location? South-west Plymouth County  
Type of Habitat? bottomland row crop  
When? date(s): May 18, 1997 time: 7:40 to 7:45 approx  
Who? your name and address: Jim Sinclair, 810 N. 35th, Indianola  
Others with you: Jerry Probst  
Others before or after you: ?

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.

First spring male Hazuli Bunting.  
Turquoise-blue bird first observed from the back.  
Overall blue rump and mantle and head.  
Gray wash on back extending up the neck to the crown. Dark eye and dark lores giving the bird almost a mask-like appearance.  
Throat and upper chest blue, rest of chest a rich medium brown, belly and vent white.  
Wing was dark with pale feather edgings and one bold wing bar.

Similar species; how eliminated:

Too small for a bluebird, wing bar and ventral pattern eliminates Indigo Bunting

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

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

20 to 40 yards, perfect lighting conditions  
10x42 field glasses

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen Indigo and Hazuli together

References and persons consulted before writing description:

AGS Field Guide

How long before field notes made? \_\_\_\_\_ this form completed? 10 hours

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