

Western Tanager  
4 Nov 1971  
Des Moines, Polk Co., IA  
W. H. Brown  
Brown 1971

Record Number: 81-EI  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION [obtained 1999, not reviewed]

Woodward H. Brown, 7 December 1971

REFERENCE

Brown, W.H. 1971. Western Tanager in Des Moines. IBL 41:113.

VOTE (1981): I-II, 5-III, 1-IV

III, weak description, competent observer.

III, sight record, distinguished observer. Description somewhat lacking but prob. OK.

## Western Tanager

Brown, W. H. 1971. Western Tanager in Des Moines. Iowa Bird Life 41:113

Western Tanager in Des Moines - Only a few goldfinches have come to our feeders this fall, due probably to an abundance of seeds in an adjoining vacant lot, so on 4 November my wife called saying there was a goldfinch just outside the window. The bird was on a horizontal branch not over seven feet from the window, and it was immediately apparent that, while it had the coloration of a female goldfinch, it was half again as long. The light colored bill was not that of a finch, nor was it an oriole bill. Prominent wing-bars ruled out any changing plumage of the local tanagers and a look at the plate of the female Western Tanager in Birds of Colorado made identification possible.

Oddly enough, I had received a call several weeks earlier from a location not over three quarters of a mile distant saying that a bird which had been observed at close range fitted the description of a female Western Tanager. Previous published records of this species are limited to sightings of two males seen in 1969 at Little Storm Lake (I.B.L. 39:44), and DeSoto Bend (I.B.L. 39:64). While the male is unmistakable, females could easily be overlooked or misidentified due to their dull plumage. - WOODWARD H. BROWN, 432 Tonawanda Dr., Des Moines.

OK  
 UK  
 Midwestern Prairie Region  
 (Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio)

## BIRDS: VERIFIING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

1. Species: Western Tanager, female 2. Number: 1
3. Location: Des Moines, IA
4. Date: 4 November, 1971 5. Time Bird seen: briefly, mid-afternoon
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):  
 About 6", yellow-green, darker on top. Prominent wing-bars.  
 Typical tanager bill, but light in color.
- however, ♀ Scarlet has wg. bars occasionally.
7. Description of voice, if heard: None
8. Description of behavior: Pecked branch of Ailanthus tree.
9. Habitat - general: Well-kept back yard of apartment in the  
 specific: heart of Des Moines
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8  
 Explain: Too large for goldfinch, wing bars eliminate Summer or Scarlet Tanagers which would not be here at this time. Bill obviously not oriole or finch.
11. Distance (how measured?) 6 or 7 feet 12. Optical equipment: too close  
from window
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you)  
overcast, but good light.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:  
Previously seen in Colo. and Tex. Similar sp. observed for 25 yrs. in Iowa
15. Other observers:  
Wife
16. Did the others agree with your identification? Yes
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: A month or so previous a good observer thought she had seen a female of the species in her yard.
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: Consulted all field guides and Birds of Colo. but not influenced. There have been 2 previously recorded observations of the species, both males in 1969

Thodward H Brown

Address: 432 Tonawanda Dr., Des Moines, IA.

Signature

Date: 7 December, 1971

City, State: