

Mountain Bluebird Record Number: 95-19  
24 Mar 1995 Classification: A-D  
Kattleson Hogsback A., Dickinson Co., IA  
\*Ed Thelen  
IBL 65:75, 66:96

DOCUMENTATION

Ed Thelen, RR 8725, Spirit Lake 51360 [\*8/14/95]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 65:75

Records Committee: IBL 66:96

Thelen, E. 1996. Mountain Bluebirds in Dickinson County. Iowa  
Bird Life 66:67-68.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Two males seen at close range in good light -- shades of  
blue.

subterminal tail band, about 1-1.5 inches wide, which was the same color as the upperwing coverts and mantle. The undertail coverts were white with fine pale brown barring.

After careful study, I concluded that the bird was a first-basic Iceland Gull. The three most similar species are Herring, Thayer's, and Glaucous gulls in first-basic plumage. Glaucous Gull was eliminated by its larger size and longer, heavier, bicolored bill. First-basic Herring Gull is much darker overall with primaries darker than the upperwing coverts, a pale window on the inner primaries, and rectrices that are entirely black. First-basic Thayer's Gull is the most difficult to eliminate. Thayer's always show primaries that are as dark or darker than the rest of the wing. The dark tail band of Thayer's is always darker than the mantle and apparently matches the color of the wingtips (Kaufman 1990).

The bird was seen briefly the next morning, but could not be relocated later despite thorough searches of the lake. This represents the seventh record of an Iceland Gull in Iowa. The other records are: a first-basic from 13-16 March 1991 below the dam at Red Rock Reservoir (Kent 1992), at least three birds from 14 December 1991-13 February 1992 in the Davenport area (Kent 1992), a first-basic on 29 February 1992 at Saylorville Reservoir (Kent 1992), a first-basic from 16-30 January 1993 at Iowa City (IBL 63:49), an adult on 31 January 1993 at Lock and Dam 14, Scott County (IBL 63:49), and a first-basic on 14 February 1993 at Credit Island, Scott County (IBL 63:49). As birders continue to scrutinize gulls more carefully, records of this species in Iowa may continue to increase, especially in late fall and winter.

#### LITERATURE CITED

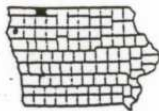
Kaufman, K. 1990. *Advanced Birding*. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, MA. 299 pp.  
Kent, T. H. 1992. *Iceland Gulls in Iowa*. *Iowa Bird Life* 62:95-98.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014

#### MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS IN DICKINSON COUNTY

ED THELEN

On the morning of 24 March 1995 I received a telephone call at work from Iowa DNR Wildlife Technician, Maury Muhm that he had seen one or maybe two Mountain Bluebirds at the Kettleson-Hogsback Wildlife Unit. He reported that they were on the fenceline that enclosed the area where Trumpeter Swans are to be released the next month. This area is along Highway 276 on the west side of Spirit Lake in Dickinson County about two miles north of the town of Spirit Lake.



After work I hurried to the area and, after about five minutes of scanning the fencelines with binoculars, I located two bluebirds. They were bluebirds but were they Mountain Bluebirds? With anticipation I grabbed my spotting scope and focused on the nearest bird. As the bird came into focus I found myself looking at a male Mountain Bluebird. I shifted the scope to the near fencepost and there sat another male Mountain Bluebird.

After watching them for a few minutes, I contemplated approaching them for a better look when all of a sudden they both flew. Luckily they flew toward me and

landed on the fenceline next to the road, no more than 40 feet away! Through my scope I could clearly see the uniform blue plumage on their head, breast, and back. I could also see some white coloration on their undertail coverts. Their eyes, feet, and bill were all dark. Their back, shoulders, rump, head, and tail were bright blue while their breast, throat, belly, and flank seemed a lighter blue.

Iowa DNR wildlife employees had observed them several times during the previous week, however subsequent searches by myself the next few days failed to relocate them. This is the tenth sighting of Mountain Bluebird in Iowa and the first in Dickinson County.

RR 8725, Spirit Lake, IA 51360

#### I.O.U. BUSINESS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tama, 17 March 1996, 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

CAROL THOMPSON, PRESIDING, MARY KUHLMAN, SECRETARY

Present: Pam Allen, Ann Barker, Bud Gode, Ann Johnson, Matt Kenne, Mary Kuhlman, Carol Thompson, Hank Zaletel.

Treasurer Report: Pam Allen distributed the year end report. It showed excess support and revenues over expenses of \$3,745.88. There is no need to cash any CDs at this time. This report will be distributed at the spring meeting.

It was moved (Johnson, seconded by Gode) that the president assign a board member to act as a liaison to each standing committee. Passed. Thompson assigned the following board members to be liaisons: Ann Johnson-Records Committee, Ann Barker-Publications Committee, Bud Gode-Library-Historical Committee, and the treasurer-Membership Committee.

#### Committee Reports

Records: Bob Cecil is temporarily taking the place of Tim Schantz on this committee.

Membership: This committee is working on replacing two members and the chair. Thompson recommended that this committee be responsible for the new traveling display.

Publications: Ann Barker will call a meeting of this committee to elect a chair and nominate a replacement for Dave Edwards.

Library-Historical: The board discussed whether to abolish this committee, restructure it, or have a historian position. It was decided to keep the committee and have the committee members review and rewrite the bylaws. An article will be in the newsletter asking for interested people to contact the president.

Education Booklet Promotion: Hank Zaletel reported that the updates are continuing. Three new sections have been added. The target date for publication is early June or July. Zaletel will investigate the costs of publication and a decision will be made later on the number to be printed. The Publications Committee will aid in the promotion and distribution of the booklet.

Big Day: Pam Allen reported that Big Day will be promoted in the newsletter. Ideas for future Big Day competitions will be discussed at the spring meeting.

Nominations: This committee will present a slate of officers for election at the spring meeting. Secretary, treasurer and two board members will be elected.

Spring Count: The date for the spring count will be Saturday, 11 May 1996.

Field Trips: Ann Johnson reported that field trips will be held on 14 April in southwestern Iowa, 27 April at Sweet Marsh, 21 September at Snake Creek Marsh, and 16 November in northeastern Iowa.

Environmental Affairs: Carol Thompson reported that Bob Cecil (chair), Jim Dinsmore, and Beth Proescholdt have been appointed to this committee. Two items have been forwarded to them for consideration. A letter from the organization to Howard A Lipke of the Northern Tall Grass Prairie Project stating considerations to be incorporated into planning this project to provide habitat for prairie birds was read. It was moved (Johnson, seconded by Barker) to approve the letter. Passed.

#### Other Business



What species? Mountain Bluebird ♂ How many? 2Location? SWAN Enclosure in Dickinson County - west of BIG SPIRIT LAKEType of habitat? Open - prairie pothole - fencedWhen? date(s): March 24, 1995 time: 4:15 to 5:15Who? your name and address: Ed Thelen RR 8725 SPIRIT LAKE, IOWA 51360

others with you: \_\_\_\_\_

others before or after you: Maury Muhm, Gary Wee, TIM Waltz, Bryan Hellier

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, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

I received a call from Maury Muhm - IDNR Wildlife Technician at Kettleson Hogback Wildlife Unit - that there was one maybe two male mountain bluebirds at the swan enclosure along HI-way 276 on the west side of BIG SPIRIT LAKE.

I hurried out there and after searching the area I found myself looking at 2 male mountain bluebirds through my scope. They were quite a distance away at this time and I was contemplating walking in on them to get a photo when suddenly they flew and landed on the fence posts no more than 40 ft away.

With the sun at my back I could see the uniform blue plumage on the head, breast and back. I could also see some white coloration on the undertail coverts. Its eyes, feet and bill were all dark. Its back, shoulders, rump, ~~tail~~ head and tail were bright blue while its breast, throat, belly and flank seemed somewhat lighter blue.

Similar species and how eliminated:

- Eastern & western bluebird were eliminated by the blue on breast  
- shape, color, size and habits eliminated indigo bunting

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

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

Good - 40 ft away and sun at my back  
- 8x40 binocs, 30X scope

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Observed out west and in IowaReferences and persons consulted before writing description: I saw one in Palo Alto County in 1989 and last year in Greene County.How long before field notes made? 1 day this form completed? 1 weekMAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City, IA 52240