

Fish Crow
28 Mar 1996
Cone M., Louisa Co., IA
*Jim Fuller
IBL 66:105; 67:82

Record Number: 96-20
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City 52240

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 66:105
Records Committee: IBL 67:82

VOTE: 4 A-D, 3 NA

NA, This is one the better records supporting the existence of Fish Crow in Iowa, because it lists three substantiating characteristics. The "Cah" was heard regularly over the two minute period. The Crows had small bills and a purplish sheen. However, the word "appeared" sheds doubt in my mind as to how positive the observer was of these characters. I am voting NA waiting further evidence that Fish Crow exist or regularly wanders into Iowa.

A-D, Call and visual impressions, combined with early date, are the best available criteria for Fish Crow. (Note date is 28 March, not April.)

NA, One of the birds made a hoarse "cah". I cannot put much reliance on short bill and purplish sheen. With four other observers not reporting, I cannot judge whether or not they confirmed this species, which at best is very difficult to identify, even by call. I will defer until we hear further from the other observers.

NA, Due to discussion I have heard about this species and concerning the call of juvenile birds of the American Crow in their second year I think we need to look at this species more closely. It has been discussed that the juvenile American Crow may still be giving a call that is basically the same as an adult Fish Crow. Can we find any more information on this to see if it is true or not?

A-D, I will concede that these were Fish Crows, but why can't someone whip out their screech owl recorder and nail the calls on tape?

REVOTE: 4 NA, 3 A-D

A-D, Size is very difficult to judge without a comparison, but the description of the call, made by an experienced birder, indicates Fish Crow.

NA, This is one of the better records supporting the existence of Fish Crow in Iowa, because it lists three substantiating characteristics. The "Cah" was heard regularly over the two minute period. The crows had small bills and a purplish sheen. However, the word "appeared" sheds doubt in my mind as to how positive the observer was of these characters. I am voting NA waiting for further evidence that Fish Crow exist or regularly

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wonders [sic] into Iowa.

A-D, This is truly a problematic species for the Iowa list. I really believe that there are Fish Crows in the state and this record is probably the best of them all because it combines visual and audio characteristics. We should probably once again gather all the records and discuss.

NA, I think we may need to require a two-noted nasal "cah" that is very well described or recorded or side-by-side visual comparison with American Crow to accept this species. Also, we should be able to repeatedly find these birds at one location if they are resident. Did anyone contact the other observers?

NA, Further discussion needed on this species in Iowa.

NA, I am totally perplexed by reports of this species. I would like to return to "square 1" and re-evaluate what we have. At this time I feel we need a diagnostic recording or of course a specimen or even a photo which could be measured proportion-wise.

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

SPECIES: Fish Crow

LOCATION: In the woods along the edge of Cone Marsh (Louisa County).

DATE & TIME: 28 March, 1996 (9:48-50 AM)

OBSERVER: Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll, NE, Iowa City, Iowa, 52240.

OTHERS: With me was Jane Fuller. Others who heard what sounded like a Fish Crow at the same location on 30 March were Chuck Fuller, John Rutenbeck, Rick Hollis, Jim Durbin.

DESCRIPTION: While birding Cone Marsh, at the northwest access, I heard what sounded like a Fish Crow in the woods nearby. I looked for, and found, two crows in a River Birch tree about 40 yards away. One of the birds continued to make the call, which was hoarser than that of a Common Crow, and sounded like "cah" rather than "caw". The second bird did not make any sound. The two birds were about fifteen feet apart in the tree, and looked the same. They were the same size, and appeared to have a "small" bill, and appeared to be quite glossy, with a purplish sheen. Both birds flew away to the south after about two minutes, and I could not relocate them.

SIMILAR SPECIES: The call this bird was making was not that of a Common Crow, and the bird making the call (as well as the other bird) appeared to have a smaller bill and was more glossy than I would expect a Common Crow to be.

CONDITIONS: At mid-morning on a sunny day, I was looking to the southwest at about 120 feet with Swift Audubon binoculars (8.5 X 44).

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have heard and seen this species on numerous occasions in the south and southeast portions of the country. Last year, I documented a Fish Crow on 26 April along the Mississippi River in Louisa County.

REFERENCES and FIELD NOTES: Field notes were made immediately, and I later looked at the National Geographic Field Guide. This form was typed on 10 April.