

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

1988 JRC

What species? Bewick's Wren How many? 1

Location? 3 miles west of Argyle in S. Lee Co, Iowa.

Type of Habitat? Farmstead

When? date(s): May 15 and May 19 time: AM to _____

Who? your name and address: Robert Cecil, 327 S. 6th, Keokuk, Iowa 52632

Others with you: Chuck Fuller on the 15th, Jim Fuller on the 19th.

Others before or after you: Don't know

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.

Chuck and I were looking for Lark Sparrow and/or Blue Grosbeak and their ~~typical~~ usual location when we heard an unfamiliar song. (Chuck has hearing in one ear only, and cannot echo-locate birds, so was looking at tree line across field) I was looking in the right direction, but could not find bird, when Chuck finally announced it was a Bewick's Wren. I figured out what he was hearing was what I was looking for. I don't recall who finally found the bird first, but we both noted the following when we found it: A song that included three clear notes, a buzz, and a trill. While the song was similar in makeup to a Song Sparrow, it was tonally quite dis-similar, and would not be confused. Also noted on the 15th, overall gray color, size smaller than Carolina Wren, white, narrow eye stripe. The bird sang repeatedly, tail held down.

On the 19th with Jim Fuller, the bird began singing immediately upon one play of Screech Owl tape. In addition to features noted above, noted the whitish but lightly barred outer tail edging. decurved bill. In both cases, bird moved from tree to tree singing, as if territorial.

Similar species; how eliminated: Too small for Carolina Wren--song much different. Bill incorrect for song Sparrow, whose song is similar in makeup. Only other similar species might be Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, which is smaller, slimmer, and has much different song or call.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? No

If yes, explain:

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

Average about 40 ft. Lighting good. Optics: 10x40 Zeiss Dialyt

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen Bewick's Wrens in both Iowa and Wash. State.

References and persons consulted before writing description: None

How long before field notes made? At time this form completed? May 31

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

June 2--late note--

Just reviewed my notes before submission, and dug out my NGS Field Guide. I was aware that there was a difference between Eastern birds and Western, and that one was predominately gray and the other brown, but, assuming that this bird was of the Eastern variety, did not give it much thought. I now see that the Western is the gray phase. While I did not spend much time studying the bird's color, I did note in my field notes made at the time that the general body color was gray, and assume in retrospect that my notes were correct. Could this have been a Western race bird? I don't know if the Fullers will submit notes, but if they do, I would be interested in knowing what they reported.