

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

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Varied Thrush (IXOROUS NAEVIUS) 2. Number: 1
3. Location NE Shore of Ingham Lake, Emmet County, Iowa
4. Date: 11-28-76 5. Time Bird seen: 11:00 Am to 11:15 Am
11:20 Am, 11:27 Am
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 the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field): bird was slightly smaller than a robin, dark gray back and head. Breast and throat reddish brown (or orange). lower belly white, a conspicuous stripe above eye to back of head same color as breast but lighter in shade. ~~Dark~~ DARK GRAY NECKLACE across ~~breast~~ breast light orange wing bars at the shoulder and at lower coverts. Bill was robin like, shorter than the head.
7. Description of voice, if heard: NONE
8. Description of behavior: Sitting on ground - Feeding on ground - (unable to determine what on) Flew in to lower branches of tree - then to gooseberry bush
9. Habitat - general: Wooded area on North shore of Lake
specific: Bur oak timber, somewhat open with ground cover of brome grass and gooseberry bushes
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain: No other bird marked in such manner.
11. Distance (how measured)? Approx. 20 feet and 75 feet 12. Optical equipment: 7x50 Bush + Lomb Binoculars
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): Clear day light was full on the bird. Sun to observers back.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: No previous experience with this species.
15. Other observers: Larry Kroph, Wildlife Tech. Ingham Lake Wildlife Unit, Wallingford, Iowa
16. Did the others agree with your identification? Yes
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: None Known
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
Birds of North America by Robbins, Bruun, Zim
Birds of America by Pearson, Burroughs
A Field Guide To Western Birds by Roger Tory Peterson
The illustrations and descriptions in all books match that of the bird reported.
Bob Moats Address: 1017 N. 5th

Signature

Date: 1-24-77

City, State: Estherville, Iowa, 51334

BOB MOATS
STATE CONSERVATION OFFICER
1017 North 5th Street
ESTHERVILLE, IOWA 51334

(over)

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Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio

NEEDS VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, there really is no need to describe your observations in writing. But, if you have seen something unusual and want to share this experience with others, a written description is essential. It is true your immediate friends who know and respect your ability probably will accept your report without question, but what about those who do not know you, particularly the bird students 100 years from now who cannot know you? Also, what about the habitual skeptics? And most importantly, what about the compilers of regional bird lists who probably will insist that records be scientifically sound? All these critics will investigate your observation not because they assume you are wrong, but merely because they ordinarily expect verification. Whether the individual demanding verification realizes it or not, in doing so, he is employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

If your observation involves a common species during a season of abundance, verification is achieved simply by returning there again in season. If, however, the observation involves a rare species, or a common species out of season, verification is not obtained easily and special documentation is necessary. The best documentation is a collected specimen, and many bird students insist this is the only acceptable evidence. However, others recognize the importance and reliability of sight records accumulated by the experienced field observer, and maintain that even extraordinary sight records are acceptable if accompanied by an adequate verifying description.

It must be emphasized that a request for documentation is not an affront, but an effort to perpetuate a record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for all to examine. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation irrespective of the observer.

It should also be pointed out that with the great photographic equipment now available, species identification from photographs are possible. Such species documentation are highly desirable and should be sent to the state editors or to large museums.