

ILLINOIS

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Pine Warbler 2. Number of birds: 1
3. Location 235 McClellan Blvd. Dav. #A County: Scott
4. Date: 6 Sep. 1985 5. Time bird seen: 9:15 AM CDT to 9:18 AM CDT
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):
 Large wood warbler, back olive and unstreaked, tail grey with white spots at edges near tip. Head olive grey with yellowish line over eye + eyering. Throat yellow as well as upper chest. Belly + undertail coverts white. Wing bars whitish buff. Legs dark grey to black.
7. Description of voice, if heard: not heard (obs. in house)
8. Description of behavior: Bathing + preening, perched on small branches
9. Habitat - general: very wooded urban yard.
 specific: Bird observed in Magnolia tree, ash sapling + bird bath.
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
 Bay-brn Warbler - back would be streaked, less yellow on head + throat, bay
 (one seen at ^{in bath} 9:40) washy side
 Blackpoll Warbler - back would be streaked, legs yellowish.
11. Distance (how measured)? 12' - measured later 12. Optical equipment: 7x35 binocs.
Bird observed in bath from above.
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): Bird in shade,
sun behind observer
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: Have seen
10-12 times + netted.
15. Other observers: none
16. Did the others agree with your identification? —
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: —
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
checked Peterson guide, Acog guide + Master guide after obs.
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 10 min. - started,
25 min. completed.
- Peter C. Peterson Address: 235 McClellan Blvd
 Signature
- Date: 6-9-85 City, State: Davenport, Iowa 52803

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.

1. Name of observer who independently identified this bird: _____

2. Date: _____

3. Location: _____

4. Time of day: _____

5. Weather: _____

6. Direction of wind: _____

7. Direction of flight: _____

8. Nature of flight: _____

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782. Date: _____

783. Location: _____

784. Time of day: _____

785. Weather: _____

786. Direction of wind: _____

787. Direction of flight: _____

788. Nature of flight: _____

789. Nature of song: _____

790. Nature of call: _____

791. Nature of behavior: _____

792. Nature of other observations: _____