

DOCUMENTATION OF UNUSUAL BIRD SIGHTING

SPECIES: Bewick's Wren

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

DATE: April 27, 1991 (3:03-3:14 PM)

LOCATION: Apsen Grove Cemetery, Burlington, Des Moines County

BACKGROUND: My brother, Chuck Fuller, had phoned me the evening before with the news that he had located a pair of Bewick's wrens in Burlington, and they were in addition to the two he had found in Lee County a few days before. The next afternoon, he took me to Aspen Grove Cemetery and after searching a wooded ravine for several minutes, we heard the call of a Bewick's wren coming from an oak tree in the cemetery proper beside where we had parked our car. The bird skipped to several other tree, staying in each several minutes, and singing constantly from each perch. Although, he had observed two birds the previous day, I only saw the one.

DESCRIPTION: The general size was of a small wren, about the size of a house wren, but with a longer tail. The upperparts of the bird were a dark brown, while the underparts were white and unstreaked. There was a very obvious white eye line. The tail was long, rounded, and had white scallops along its outer edge. The upper surface appeared barred. The tail was wagged side to side a number of times, in contrast to the up and down motion of other wrens, and other birds that tail wag. It was also cocked up in the air on occasion. When singing, the bird was in an erect posture with the tail pointing down. The eye was dark, as was the thin pointed bill. The song was somewhat like that of a song sparrow, with a trill and several other notes, but seemed higher in pitch than a song sparrow's.

SIMILAR SPECIES: The completely white underparts eliminate all other wrens except rock wren. although that bird has a blush of brown along the rear sides and under the tail and it has streaking on the upper breast. No other wren has the white tail pattern, nor wags its tail ~~up and down.~~ *SIDE TO SIDE.*

VIEWING CONDITIONS: It was midafternoon on a partly cloudy day, and the bird was viewed from a number of directions, including north, northeast, and southeast. It was at heights in the various trees ranging from 20-60 feet, and viewing distance was estimated to be 50-100 feet. Binoculars used were Swift Audubon 8.5 X 44.

FIELD NOTES and REFERENCES: Notes were made immediately after returning to the car, and were typed May 3rd. No field guides were consulted, except to look at similar wren species.

NOTE: On May 2, 1991, I saw two Bewick's wrens at a junkyard in Lee County, northwest of Argyle. Their description is similar, and one was singing a song that sounded similar.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen Bewick's wren on five previous occasions in Iowa, and a number of times in the south and west.