

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

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species PINE WARBLER 2. Number: 1 (ONE)
3. Location GRANDVIEW CEMETERY, FREMONT CO, IOWA
4. Date: SEPT 4, 1976 5. Time Bird seen: 1.30 pm to 1.50 pm.
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): NOTES TAKEN IN FIELD QUOTED HERE (NO FIELD GUIDE IN HAND).
"LARGE WARBLER; GREENISH ABOVE (NO BACK STREAKS); YELLOW BELOW, ESPECIALLY UNDER THROAT; FADING TO WHITE POSTERIORLY FAINT STREAKS SIDES OF BELLY. 2 STRONG WHITE WINGBARS. SUGGESTION OF YELLOW EYE-STRIFE."
7. Description of voice, if heard: NOT HEARD
8. Description of behavior: SLOW MOVING, DELIBERATE, AS FED IN EDGE SITUATION.
9. Habitat - general: oak-hickory woods surrounding cemetery atop loess bluffs
specific: at Missouri River bottoms.
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
YELLOWTHROATED VIREO PROB. MOST SIMILAR IN GENERAL APPEARANCE, BUT NO SPECTACLES; ALSO WARBLER BILL (FEATURE IMPLIED ABOVE WHEN BIRD DESCRIBED AS "LARGE WARBLER". why not Bay-br. or Blackpoll.
11. Distance (how measured)? 25 FEET (JUDGEMENT) 12. Optical equipment: 8X40 BELL & HOWELL BINOCULARS
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):
CLEAR SKY, SUNNY, WITH SUN BEHIND + TO MY RIGHT.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
HAVE MUCH EXPERIENCE IN N. CAROLINA WITH PINE WARBLER, YELL-THR. VIREO (LIVED THERE 3 YRS)
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:
NONE IN THE FIELD. MY CONCLUSION IN THE FIELD THAT THE BIRD WAS A PINE WARBLER WAS VERIFIED AT HOME USING PETERSON + ROBBINS.
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? FIELD MARKS NOTED IN THE FIELD (SEE ABOVE)
- Signature W Russell Address: RR2, #
- Date: 12/7/76 City, State: MALVERN, IOWA 51551

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. Distance (how estimated)? 25 feet (Tape Measure)

2. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): CLEAR SKY, SUNNY, WITH SUN BEHIND + TO MY RIGHT.

3. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: HAVE MUCH EXPERIENCE IN MICHIGAN WITH THIS WILSON'S WOODPECKER (USED THESE 3 YRS)

4. Other observers: NONE

5. Did the bird show any unusual behavior?

6. Other observers who independently identified this bird:

7. Notes, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: NONE IN THE FIELD. MY CONCLUSION IN THE FIELD THAT THE BIRD WAS A PINE WILSON'S WOODPECKER WAS VERIFIED AT HOME USING PETERSON + ROBBINS.

8. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? FIELD NOTES MADE IN THE FIELD (SEE ABOVE)

Signature: John R. Peterson

Date: 12/1/76

City, State: MARSHFIELD, WISCONSIN

Address: ARC, #2