

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Printed: 11/22/00

Western Tanager

23 May 1996

e. of Spirit L., Dickinson Co., IA

*Ed Thelen

IBL 66:107; 67:82

Record Number: 96-23

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Ed Thelen, RR 8725, Spirit L. 51360 [4/6/97]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 66:107

Records Committee: IBL 67:82

Thelen, E. 1998. Western Tanager in Dickinson County. IBL
68:107.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Prominent wing-bars rule out other tanagers. Most likely
a first year male.

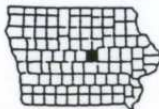
A-D, Good analysis from several sources.

A-D, Despite observer reservations, features describe this
species.

HAWK WATCHING AFTER A SNOWSTORM

BETH PROESCHOLDT

It was the day after a record breaking early snowstorm. The heavy wet snow on trees still carrying leaves bowed down branches and caused severe breakage. The morning of 27 October 1997 was clear and calm, with the temperature rising from a low of 17 degrees up to 32 degrees.



I went out grudgingly to our Grammer Grove hawk watch in northwestern Marshall County only because Eugene and Eloise Armstrong were to be there, and Eugene anticipated a big count after the snow. And there we sat in our yard chairs at 9 a.m., in six inches of snow, waiting.

It started slowly with only flocks of blackbirds and American Crows following the Iowa River south. Then a little after 10 a.m., Bald Eagles and Red-tailed Hawks started floating through.

The day was so calm that they soared over lazily and low, giving us good looks. The sun was bright with strong reflections from the snow causing the redtails directly overhead to appear as white as gulls, with their distinctive patagial marks and belly bands scarcely showing.

By 1 p.m., an amazing 72 Bald Eagles of all ages had passed. In eight autumns of hawk watching at Grammer Grove, this was more eagles than we had ever counted before in an entire season. They came along three at a time, or five or six. Once there were 12 Bald Eagles and 4 Red-tailed Hawks circling together over the field before slowly moving on.

Along with them were more special birds: 3 Golden Eagles (one a lovely juvenile), 2 coveted Rough-legged Hawks (one a dark morph), 4 Red-shouldered Hawks (one beautifully highlighted by reflections from the snow), and 69 Red-tailed Hawks, plus 1 Northern Harrier, 4 Sharp-shinned Hawks, and 2 Cooper's Hawks.

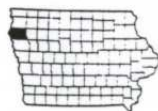
And then the show was over, but for four stragglers. But what a day! Not a huge overall count, but it was our best eagle day ever. And had it not been for Eugene's insistence, we would have missed it.

P. O. Box 65, Liscomb, IA 50148

LAZULI BUNTING IN PLYMOUTH COUNTY

JIM SINCLAIR

On 18 May 1997 I was fortunate enough to be given a private birding tour of northwestern Woodbury County and southwestern Plymouth County. My host for the morning was Jerry Probst, who proudly guided me through and around his favorite haunts.



One of our stops was along the Big Sioux River near where Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota meet. As we turned west off of Highway 12 onto the river bottoms, a small bird flew up out of the southside ditch. The bird flew a short distance before landing on a weed stem facing away from us. Jerry and I wordlessly stared at the bird for a few moments before I courageously offered, "that is certainly an interesting

bird." At that moment the bird hitched itself around and gave us a perfect front view. In unison Jerry and I called "Lazuli!"

The bird was small, approximately five to six inches long, and sparrow- or finch-shaped. The rump, mantle, and head were a lovely turquoise-blue color with a gray wash on the mantle, nape, and extending up to the crown. The throat and upper breast were also blue, while the remainder of the breast was a rich medium brown. The belly and vent were white. The wings were dark with pale feather edgings and a prominent wing bar on the median wing coverts. The eye was dark and the bill was short and conical. Jerry and I were able to ascertain that this male Lazuli Bunting was a first-spring bird by the presence of the gray wash on the mantle extending up to the head.

We watched the bird for a short while before it moved off down a brushy waterway towards more extensive cover. This was a state bird for both of us.

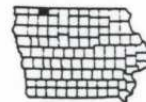
Unbelievably, another male Lazuli Bunting was discovered that same morning just a few miles south at Stone State Park. These two birds, plus two other male Lazuli Buntings which appeared at feeders in western Iowa during the later half of May, represent the largest single invasion of this species into Iowa. Up until the spring of 1997 there were only eight previously accepted records for this species in Iowa (IBL 67:91) making the Lazuli invasion of 1997 notable indeed.

810 North B. Street, Indianola, IA 50125

WESTERN Tanager IN DICKINSON COUNTY

ED THELEN

Everything you have read about moving water attracting more birds is absolutely true. In the spring of 1996 I decided to add a water feature to my backyard. I already had a bird bath but within a few days after adding running water I was rewarded with the following new birds for my yard list: Mourning Warbler, Indigo Bunting, Ovenbird, and Western Tanager.



On 23 May 1996 I was enjoying the antics of several Baltimore Orioles when I saw what at first glance I thought was another oriole. On closer inspection with my binoculars I saw that the bill was pale and shorter than the bill of a nearby oriole. I didn't know it at the time but I was looking at a Western Tanager. This bird also had a bright red-orange chin with the red radiating onto the throat and towards the eyes. It did not extend above the eyes or onto the forehead. Its back was an olive-green color while its belly, breast, flank, and sides were more of a yellow-green color, much lighter than the back. Its wings were a shade darker than the back with two prominent wing-bars. I was unable to note any coloration of the wing-bars except they were very light colored and prominent. The bird's rump was the same color as its undersides, while its forehead, crown, and nape were an olive-green color and lighter than the back. Its tail was also shorter than the tails of nearby orioles.

I could detect no sound from this bird during the three minutes of observation. It drank water and also bathed during this time. I was unable to relocate this bird after it flew into some nearby trees.

According to the Master Guide to Birding, juvenile Scarlet Tanagers resemble the female but are more variable and have bright yellow wing-bars. Also according to the National Geographic Bird Guide, the immature Scarlet Tanager has faint wing-bars. I don't think it was a juvenile or immature Scarlet Tanager because at this time of year

the bird is not in juvenal plumage and the bird I saw had prominent wing-bars. This bird had a very light-colored rump with its nape also lighter than its back giving the bird's upper part the light-dark-light sequence for its nape-back-rump. This is characteristic of the Western Tanager.

This is what A. C. Bent (*U. S. Natl. Museum Bull.*, no. 211, 1958) has to say about the plumages of the first-year male Western Tanager. "There is considerable variation among individuals, these one-year males are as a whole somewhat less brilliant than the adults. The black of the upper part is duller and more or less intermixed with greenish. The red on the head paler, less intense and more restricted in area; and the yellows decidedly duller and less brilliant."

After reviewing my notes and the above references I identified this bird as a first-year male Western Tanager. According to *Birds in Iowa* (Kent and Dinsmore, 1996) this is the 12th record for the state and the first for Dickinson County.

15362 250th Ave., Spirit Lake, Iowa 51360

WHITE-WINGED DOVE IN FORT DODGE

DIANA J. HULTINE

On 21 September 1997, I was watching several Mourning Doves feeding on the ground in my yard. I noted another dove that joined them and that was clearly not a Mourning Dove. The characteristics that I noted that separated this bird from the others were its much darker brown wings, distinct white patches on the wings, the lack of black spots on the back, and the presence of white areas on both sides at the end of the tail. I was able to compare the bird with the various doves illustrated in Robbins *Birds of North America* and identify it based on those illustrations. I was also able to take several photographs that were examined by the I.O.U. Records Committee and confirmed the identification. The bird returned to my yard several times on the 21st and again the next three days. Each time, it perched in a nearby tree and then flew to the ground where it fed and drank with the Mourning Doves. I last saw the White-winged Dove on the morning of 24 September. I have a number of different species of birds that visit my yard but this certainly was the most exciting one I have seen there yet.



1436 Second Avenue South, Fort Dodge, IA 50501



The IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, founded in 1923, encourages interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds in Iowa and seeks to unite those who have these interests in common. *Iowa Bird Life* and *I.O.U. News* are quarterly publications of the Union.

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Original manuscripts, notes, letters (indicate if for publication), editorials, and other materials relating to birds and bird finding in Iowa should be sent to the editor. Accepted manuscripts will generally be published promptly, depending on space available, with the following absolute deadlines: 15 November for the Winter issue; 15 February for the Spring issue; 15 May for the Summer issue; and 15 July for the Fall issue. Most manuscripts will be refereed. All material should be typed double-spaced or hand printed in ink on 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper. Authors should pattern their style after a current issue of the journal. If you want more detailed guidelines or advice regarding the appropriateness of your topic for *Iowa Bird Life*, contact the editor. Manuscripts may also be submitted on computer disk (Word 4.0 for Macintosh or compatible programs). Please submit one printed copy of the manuscript with the disk.

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What species? WESTERN Tanager - 1st yr. ♂ How many? 1Location? My backyard bird bath - East edge of Spirit LakeType of habitat? Suburban - edge of farmlandWhen? date(s): May 23, 1996 time: 7:15 to 7:18 pmWho? your name and address: Ed Thelen RR 8725 Spirit Lake IOWA 51360others with you: NONEothers before or after you: NONE

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, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

I spotted what at 1st glance I thought was an oriole except this bird had a bright red-orange chin. The red radiated onto the throat and toward the eyes. It did not extend above the eye or on the forehead. Its back was an olive-green coloration while its underparts the belly, breast, flank and sides were more of a yellow-green color; - much lighter than the back. Its wings were a shade darker than the back with 2 prominent wing bars - I was unable to note any coloration of the wing bars other than they were very light-colored and prominent. The birds rump was the same color as its underside while its forehead, crown and nape were (see attached sheet #1)

Similar species and how eliminated:

See attached sheet #2

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? yes - me at first.If yes, explain: I knew it was a tanager but unlike any I had ever seen. I found out from Harold WhiteViewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: (over)Low light, cloudy. I was looking at the bird at eye level and looking down at it. Dark background 80 feet distance (paced it off). Observed bird w/ Swift 8.5 x 44 binoculars.Previous experience with species and similar ones: I've seen ♂ and ♀ scarlet and Summer tanagersReferences and persons consulted before writing description: NONE See attached sheet #3.How long before field notes made? 10 min. this form completed? 1 week

that imm. scarlet tanagers may have faint wing bars which made me reserve my identification of the bird until I had reviewed available literature and my original notes which convinced me that I had seen a western tanager.

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an olive-green color - a shade lighter than the back. Its tail was olive-green also and as dark as the wings.

Its bill was pale and SHORTER than the bill of an oriole that was nearby. ALSO its tail was noticeably shorter than the orioles tail. I could detect no sound from the bird.

I was unable to relocate the bird after it left the bird bath.

Similar Species and how eliminated

♀ Oriole - size, shape and color of beak, length of tail and color of chin.

Imm. Scarlet tanager. According to Master Guide to birding Vol 3 p 196, juvenal scarlet tanagers resemble the female but are more variable and have bright yellow wing bars. Also according to National Geographic Bird Guide it states that the immature scarlet tanager has faint wing bars. I don't think it was an immature scarlet tanager because this time of year the bird is not in juvenal plumage and the bird I saw had prominent and strong wing bars. Also the bird I saw had a very light colored rump and also its nape was a shade lighter than its back giving the birds upper part the light-dark-light sequence for its nape-back-rump. This is a characteristic of the western tanager.

This is what Bent (1958) p 472 has to say about the plumages of the 1st year male western tanager. "There is considerable variation among individuals,
(over)

These one-year old males are as a whole somewhat less brilliant than the adults. The black of the upper part is duller and more or less intermixed with greenish. The red on the head paler, less intense and more restricted in area; and the yellows decidedly duller and less brilliant."

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References and people consulted:

References - BENT (1958)

- Master Guide to Birding Vol. 3
- Golden Field Guide to Birds
- Peterson Field Guide
- National Geo. Guide to Birds

People

- Harold White - Estherville
- Lee Schoenewe - Spencer
- Lavonne Foote - Spirit Lake