

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

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Lazuli Bunting

18 May 1997

Stone S.P., Woodbury Co., IA

*Ann Johnson

IBL 67:91, 68:86

Record Number: 97-20

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Ann Johnson, 532 120th St., Norwalk 50211 [*10/1/97]

Kenn Kaufman, 7934 Sabino Sunrise Circle, Tucson, AZ 85750

[not reviewed]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 67:91

Records Committee: IBL 68:86

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Also documented by Kenn Kaufman

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*)

Location: Stone State Park, Woodbury Co., Iowa

Date: 18 May 1997 **Time:** 7:45 AM **Length of observation:** Approximately 5 minutes on first occasion; re-located for about two-three minutes around 10:00 AM

Name and Address: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Avenue, Norwalk, IA 50211

Other observers: Kenn Kaufman, Tucson, AZ; mob

Background: We were with a field trip at the spring Tri-state meeting. An Indigo Bunting was singing and we were trying to find it for the group. A bunting popped up and as I was raising my binoculars, Kenn announces Lazuli Bunting.

Viewing conditions (light, distance, optics): The bird was observed at about 50 feet through Zeiss 7X42 binoculars. The morning was clear and bright with the sun to our left and behind us.

Description of bird: The bird was a fairly small passerine that with the naked eye was similar in size and shape to an Indigo Bunting. The belly had some white on it, but with the naked eye I thought that was perhaps due to delayed molt. Through binocs I saw a bunting that was turquoise on the head and throat. The breast was a pumpkin color and the belly was white. The bill was conical.

The bird then flew several feet and bathed in the small stream in front of us. The back and rump were approximately the same color as the head. The tail was black and the wings were dark with white edges to the median and greater wing coverts. This edging was quite broad on the median coverts, creating a broad white wing bar. The bird did not sing.

Similar species/discussion: The identification is straightforward. The turquoise color, breast band, and wing bars eliminate a molting Indigo Bunting. Bill shape and size eliminate any of the bluebirds.

Previous experience: I have seen a number of Lazuli Buntings over the years as recently as this spring in Texas, but this was the first in Iowa.

References consulted:

____ 1987. Field Guide to the Birds of North America, 2nd Edition. Washington, DC: National Geographic Society.

Kenn Kaufman
7934 Sabino Sunrise Circle
Tucson, AZ 85750
E-mail kennk@ix.netcom.com

LAZULI BUNTING -- 18 May 1997. One male, apparently adult, at the Turtle Lake Trailhead at Stone State Park, north edge of Sioux City, Iowa. First seen about 0745, watched for about five minutes before it moved up into woods; seen again more briefly about 0945. Viewed as close as 20 yards, at eye level and below, as it foraged along edge of open woods and came down to edge of stream. Later seen singing in top of dead tree in same area. I think I was the first to identify it out loud, but the bird was also seen and identified by Ann Johnson, Mike Overton, and several others. This description written 4 June 1997, based on extensive scribbled notes taken immediately after the sighting.

Typical male Lazuli Bunting. Essentially identical in size and shape to Indigo Buntings, several of which were foraging in same area. Head entirely turquoise blue, with this color extending down the throat to meet the upper edge of the chest; slightly darker on lores. Band across the upper chest pale orange-rufous, this color extending only slightly downward at sides of breast; lower breast and belly entirely creamy white. Wings mostly blackish with a touch of blue edging. Two very conspicuous wingbars, the upper one (on median coverts) broader than the lower one (on greater coverts). Upper back and scapulars blue, perhaps slightly darker than head. Pale blue of rump very conspicuous when bird was flying away. Tail dark, appeared to have some blue edging. Bill bicolored, with upper mandible blackish and lower mandible pale gray.

No callnotes heard with certainty (there were Indigo Buntings, which sound very similar, calling in the same area). Bird sang a few times from treetop in mid-morning; series of bright phrases, some of them doubled, similar to song of Indigo Bunting.

As always in this part of the continent, I looked for signs of hybridization, but to all appearances this bird was a "pure" Lazuli. Its wingbars and underparts pattern were fully developed, and there was no dark indigo-blue mixed into the dorsal color.

According to *Birds in Iowa* (Kent and Dinsmore 1996), Iowa had nine definite records of the species through 1995 (but spring 1996 produced more reports, and I believe at least one or two others were seen in May 1997).

I have extensive past field experience with Lazuli Buntings and all similar species.