

Clark's Nutcracker  
20 Dec 1996  
near Pony Creek Park, Mills Co., IA  
\*Kent, \*J.Fuller, \*S. Dinsmore, \*Petersen  
IBL 67:61, 82, P-0532

Record Number: 96-71  
Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Thomas H. Kent (20 Dec), 211 Richards St., Iowa City 52246  
Jim Fuller (20 Dec), 6 Longview Knoll, Iowa City 52240  
Stephen J. Dinsmore (26 Dec), 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014  
Peter C. Petersen (26 Dec), 235 McClellan, Davenport 50803  
Bill F. Huser

PHOTOGRAPHS

Thomas H. Kent, 20 Dec, P-0532  
Reid Allen, 22 Dec. P-0533  
Bill F. Huser

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 67:61  
Records Committee: IBL 67:82  
Photo: Field Notes 51:756, 1997, P-0532

VOTE: 7 A-P



Clark's Nutcracker P-0533  
near Pony Creek P., Mills Co.  
22 Dec 1996 Reid Allen 96-71

< 010 41-02 FINJNN-22PU 88C

Clark's Nutcracker P-0532  
near Pony Hollow, Mills Co., IA  
20 Dec 1996 T. H. Kent 96-71

< 010 41-02 FINJNN-22PU 88C

Clark's Nutcracker P-0532  
near Pony Hollow, Mills Co., IA  
20 Dec 1996 T. H. Kent 96-71

< 008 41-01 FINJNN-08PU 88C

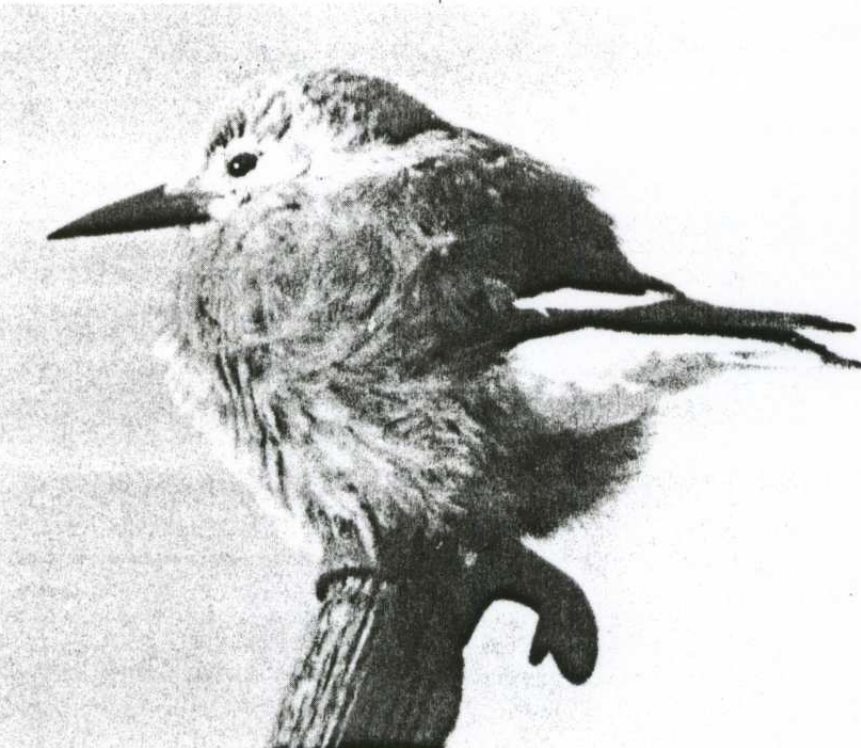


that E. Screech-Owl numbers have declined in *Sangamon*, IL. Following last fall's massive fall invasion, excellent Snowy Owl counts were logged across the n. states, with >35 in Illinois, 25 in Indiana, 17 in Iowa, and four in Ohio. Snowy Owls pressed S to *Davies*, MO, where one was seen by many between mid-December and early January (R. McNeely, †PMc, m.ob.), and to *Warrick* in extreme s.w. Indiana Dec. 26 (ML). The season's 2nd-best owls consisted of two Great Gray Owls that appeared in Clay Banks Forest, *Cerro Gordo*, IA Feb. 9; at least one remained through the end of the period (RA, †PA, †CFs, †JF, m.ob.). Both Long-eared and Short-eared owls were reported in all 6 states; peak counts included six Long-eareds in *Muhlenberg*, KY Dec. 11 (BPB) and 22 Short-eareds at the Ayrshire strip mine in s. Indiana Jan. 29 (JCb, ML, AT).

**SA** Hands down winner of the "Bird I most wanted to see" award, was the Region's first Boreal Owl since 1914. This elusive owl made a one day appearance Feb. 9 in a Rockford, IL, backyard. Attention was initially drawn to the bird when it hit Marian Doyle's window. The owl then flew to a nearby yew tree, where it remained for the rest of the day. Ms. Doyle thoughtfully contacted local birders who, not surprisingly, responded with alacrity to document this rare occurrence (†BG, †RM, FS, VS, m.ob., ph).



As the first Boreal Owl to visit the Middlewestern Prairie Region in more than 80 years, this bird drew a lot of attention during its one-day stay at Rockford, Illinois, February 9, 1997. Photograph/Fred Stellema.



**Hummingbirds to Warblers**

A Rufous Hummingbird frequented a Loudenville, OH, feeder until Jan. 4, when a cat chased it into a screen, whereby it became Ohio's first specimen (\*LY, BG, m.ob.). December E. Phoebes were reported in several states; the latest was seen Dec. 28 at Roxana Pond, IN (JB). The peak Horned Lark counts included 2000 in *Floyd* and *Cerro Gordo*, IA Feb. 14 (TK), and 1385 in *Sangamon*, IL Jan. 9 (DBo). The imm. Pinyon Jay that arrived in *Boone*, IA Nov. 30 remained throughout the winter season (†SD, †CE, †JF, m.ob). A major surprise of the season was the appearance of two Clark's Nutcrackers in the Region. The first, which constituted Iowa's 6th record, appeared at the Roy and Bobbi Davis feeding station in Mills, IA, in mid-December. The bird, which displayed a penchant for suet, was identified by birders Dec. 20-26 (†JF, †TK, †SD, †PP, m.ob., ph). The second Nutcracker was discovered at the farm home of Britten and Martha Gray, in *Hancock*, IL Dec. 27. This bird was found dead Jan. 13 and the specimen, which is preserved in the Illinois State Museum (\* E&E Franks), provided the first confirmed Illinois record. The largest Am. Crow tally consisted of 148,000 in Vermilion, IL Jan. 1 (RCh, SB). Two Fish Crows were discovered in Branson, MO Jan. 6 (A. Floyd).

An extremely tardy Barn Swallow remained in Rittman, OH, from Dec. 1-19 (I. Beck, J. Wert). Red-breasted Nuthatches were uniformly scarce across

A far-flung stray from the mountains of the west, this Clark's Nutcracker reached Mills County, Iowa, in December 1996, providing a sixth state record. Photograph/T. H. Kent.

the Region; this dearth was underscored by Larry Gara's observation, "For the second time in 32 years in our (Wilmington, OH) home we failed to see a single Red-breasted Nuthatch all winter." Late House Wrens were reported at Clinton L., IL (RCh, SB), in *Clermont*, OH Dec. 29 (†DD), and two in the Miami Whitewater wetlands, OH Feb. 2 (PW). The Region's only Sedge Wren was found at L. Panorama, IA Dec. (†SD). Several Marsh Wrens were reported in s. reaches of the Region, but one exceptionally hardy bird was still present in Rockford, IL Dec. 21 (DW). It was another good season for Townsend Solitaires. Four reports came from Iowa, with single birds at Storm L., Dec. 3 (M. Schwitters, *vide* TK), Waterman Creek W.M.A., Jan. 31 (SD), near Des Moines Feb. 16 (BE), and in *Cherokee* Feb. 23 (†RT, PE *et al.*). East of the Mississippi R. solitaires appeared at Klehm Arboretum, Rockford, IL Dec. 28-Mar. 3 (DE, BW, m.ob.) and in Salamonie State Forest, IN Dec. 31-Jan. 5 (JWi, †Haw, m.ob). The later provided Indiana's 2nd Townsend's Solitaire record.

Varied Thrushes were unusually widespread, with 7 reports scattered across 5 states. Records included two in Iowa, two in Indiana, one in Illinois, one in Ohio,



## DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

**Species:** Clark's Nutcracker; **Number:** 1

**Location:** residential area north of Pony Creek Park, Mills Co., Iowa

**Date:** 20 December 1996; **Time:** 9:07 to 9:30 a.m.

**Name and address:** Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246.

**Others before/with/after:** present at feeder of Roy and Bobbie Davis, which is near the top of the hill on the northwest side of the rural housing area. Bobbie Davis told us that the bird had been coming to the feeder for about a week. With Jim Fuller, who received the report on 20 December.

**Habitat and circumstances:** about a mile into the mixed wooded and open areas of the Loess Hills.

**Description of bird:** I first noticed the bird as it flew into a tree behind the house and then to a wooded area across the road. Soon it flew to the top of the feeder on the large deck behind the house. It subsequently fed on a large hanging suet feeder. The bird was longer and larger-bodied than a Blue Jay. It was overall gray, white, and black. The under tail, upper tail except for a black line down the center (central retrices), and secondaries were pure white. The tertials were black like the rest of the upper wing and the secondary coverts appeared scalloped as they covered the secondaries, leaving a white trailing edge on the inner wing that was, perhaps, one-fifth of the width of the wing. The folded wing was almost black with the white secondaries represented as a small white rectangle. I did not note the color of the underwings. The body was medium gray, except for a poorly demarcated, almost white area around the eye and in front of the face. Jim noted a thin white eye ring. The bill was very long (relative to other corvids), thick at the base and tapering to a sharp point. The bill was dark, but I did not note its exact color. The bird sat on the feeder with body feathers fluffed and allowed us to approach within about 10 feet. In fact, Jim tried to flush it so that I could photograph the upper wing and tail, but it did not budge. A few minutes later it flew to the suet and started hammering at it while I walked about and shot photos from all angles.

**Voice:** I did not hear it.

**Similar species:** none.

**Any one have reservations?:** no.

**Light:** Light overcast to light sun; **Distance:** as close as 10 feet; **Optics:** 10x binocular, 400 to 540 mm lens.

**Previous experience:** Have seen many in Colorado.

**References before/after viewing:** Looked at National Geographic guide after making notes, but before I got a good look at upper wing in flight.

**Time of notes:** during viewing interval; **Final typing:** 1 day



## DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

96-71

SPECIES: Clark's Nutcracker

LOCATION: Yard and feeder of Roy and Bobbi Davis, 20281 Fanch Road, Pacific Junction (Mills County).

HABITAT: Open yard in rural neighborhood in loess hills, with wooded area to the west and north.

DATE & TIME: 20 December, 1996 (9:07-9:40 AM)

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

OTHERS: With me was Tom Kent. MOB later.

DESCRIPTION: As we arrived, Tom immediately spotted this bird in a tree in the Davis' yard. Very shortly, it flew down to the deck and later the suet feeder on the deck. It spent most of the time sitting around the deck, although it did fly into a wooded area to the west, but was never out of view. It was a large bird, estimated a little larger than a Blue Jay. It's body was also bulkier than a Blue Jay. It was quite cold, and the bird was "fluffed out", which also would make it appear bulkier. It was generally a gray bird, with areas of black and white. The upperparts were gray, except for the wings and tail, which were black. There was also a white patch where the tips of the secondaries showed on the folded wing. The head was gray, but with white around the eye, on the forehead over the bill, and in the throat area. There was also an indistinct white eye ring around the dark eye. The bill was black, and quite long and bulky, although it did come to a rather sharp point. The underparts were gray, except for the undertail coverts which were a striking snow white. The legs and feet were black.

In flight, the bird flapped its wings, glided, and swooped much like a Crow. It also showed white panels on the trailing edge of the inner wing, which were the tips of the secondaries. These white patches were not clearly cut off from the black of the wing, as there was black webbing that extended part way between the secondaries. In addition, the upper tail showed a wide central strip of black, and the outer tail feathers were white. No vocalization was heard.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Gray Jay has some dark on nape, is dark gray and not black on tail and wings, has a much smaller bill, and does not show the wing and tail pattern in flight.

OPTICS and VIEWING CONDITIONS: It was early morning on a mostly sunny day. Swift Audubon (8.5 X 44) binoculars were used most of the time, but when the bird flew into the woods a KOWA TSN-4 telescope (20X) was used. Distances ranged from as close as 8 to 50 feet in the yard, and up to 200 feet while using the telescope. Direction of viewing ranged from east, north, and west with binoculars, and toward the southwest with the telescope.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen this species numerous times in the mountains of the western US.

REFERENCES and FIELD NOTES: Field notes were made in the car immediately after viewing, and National Geographic field guide was seen at that time. This form was typed on 26 December.



96-71

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Clark's Nutcracker

Number: 1

Location: n of Glenwood, Mills Co., IA

Habitat: feeder

Date: 26 December 1996

Time: 7:58-8:10 a.m.

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

Others who saw bird: m.ob.

Description of bird(s): Throughout the observation, the bird fed on a suet feeder and perched in a nearby tree. Size was rather large, at least 50% larger than a nearby Blue Jay. The slender bill was black, pointed, and roughly equal to the length of the head. The head, mantle, breast, and belly were dark gray. The vent and undertail were white. There was also some white around the eye and a small white patch on the rear portion of the crown. The wings were black with a small white patch in the secondaries (formed by white tips to the secondaries). In flight, I noted that several of the outer rectrices were white and the remainder of the rectrices were black. The legs were black. The behavior was very jay-like with a lot of wing and tail-flicking. The bird vocalized several times, giving a nasal two or three note call.

Similar species and how eliminated: The plumage and size were distinctive and eliminated all other corvids, especially Gray Jay.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were excellent with overcast skies and light snow. Estimated viewing distance was as close as 15m. I used 10x42 binoculars and a 20-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: I have seen numerous nutcrackers in several western states.

References consulted: none

How long before field notes made: written during observation

How long before this form completed: written 5 January 1997

DOCUMENTATION FORM  
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

96-71

What species? Clarke's Nutcracker How many? 1  
Location? Ray Davis home - 20281 <sup>sr?</sup> Trach, near Pacific Jet, IA  
Type of Habitat? yard in area surrounded by woods  
When? date(s): Dec 26, 1996 time: 10:00 AM to 10:10 AM  
Who? your name and address: Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd. Dav. IA. 52807  
Others with you: Mary Lou Petersen, Brian Blevins  
Others before or after you: n.o.b.

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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Medium sized corvid, length of a Blue Jay but tail shorter  
Head & body including back medium grey, bill black, heavy, straight  
Wings black with white streaks, tail same.

Similar species; how eliminated: Nothing is similar

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no  
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. Full sun at 90° angle → then about 70°. Range - 8-10m. est. 10x40 Zeiss binocs.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen many times in the West (all of us).

References and persons consulted before writing description: none

How long before field notes made? during obs. this form completed? 1 week

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).