

Mountain Bluebird

7 Feb 1999

nw of Peterson, O'Brien Co., IA

Schoenewe, Fuller, Kent, Thelen

P-0612, P-0616, P-0619, IBL 69:70, 70:145

Record Number: 99-03

Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Lee A. Schoenewe (7 Feb), 518 W 4th St., Spencer [3/23/99]

Jim Fuller (13 Feb), 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City 52240

T. H. Kent (13 Feb), 211 Richards St., Iowa City 52246

Ed Thelen (14 Feb), 15362 250th Ave., Spirit Lake

PHOTOGRAPHS

T. H. Kent (13 Feb), P-0612

Jim Fuller (14 Feb), P-0616

Ed Thelen (14 Feb), P-0619

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 69:70

Records Committee: IBL 70:145

VOTE: 7 A-P

A-P, Two birds (male and female) or one bird (female)?

A-P, Feather wear (after single molt in late summer)

eliminates feather edging and brown areas on female. Male should be blue in all stages of molt, but brighter in spring with wear (as with goldfinches). I sent the photo to Lee Schoenewe and he responded by saying the bird was the same one he saw; i.e., there was only one bird present.

A-P, How many birds? What sex?



Mountain Bluebird P-0612
SE, O'Brien Co., IA
13 Feb 1999 T. H. Kent 19-03

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99-03

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species How many? MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD 1 ♀
 Location? HILL TREE FARM LOOKOUT ON WATERMAN BLVD, O'BRIEN CO.
 Type of habitat? HILLY RIVER VALLEY
 When? date(s): 2/7/99 Time: 12:40 - 12:55 PM

Who? your name and address

LEE A. SCHOENEWE 518 W. 4th ST SPENCER

Others with you NANCY SCHOENEWE

Others before and after you J. FULLER, T. KENT E. THELEN GARY GRANGE

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also describe voice and

behavior. I STOPPED THE TRUCK ON THE TOP OF THE HILL AND GOT OUT TO OBSERVE SEVERAL EAGLES AND HAWKS SOARING OVER THE RIDGE ABOVE THE RIVER. I SAW A FLASH OF BLUE FLY ACROSS THE ROAD AND LAND ON A TELEPHONE WIRE. WHEN I GOT THE BIRD IN MY BINOCULARS I IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZED IT AS A MALE MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD. I WAS ABLE TO GET THE BIRD IN THE SCOPE ON SEVERAL PERCHES AND IT TWICE HOVERED AND LIT ON THE GROUND. IT WAS ENTIRELY BLUE WITH DARKER SKY BLUE ON THE TAIL, WINGS, BACK AND HEAD, AND A LIGHTER MORE SILVERY HUE ON THE THROAT, BREAST AND BELLY. THE EYE, BILL & LEGS WERE DARK.

Similar species and how eliminated:

• EASTERN AND WESTERN BLUEBIRDS HAVE RUST COLOR

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: SUNSHINE; 30-70 YARDS; 8X40 BINOCULARS
20X-60X SCOPE

Previous experience with this species and similar ones:

SEEN MANY TIMES IN BLACK HILLS, S.D.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

How long before field notes made? IMMEDIATELY
 this form completed? 5 HOURS

Mail original form to field editor for this season.

2/13+14/99 RELOCATED THE BIRD IN THE SAME AREA
 JUDGED IT A FIRST YEAR MALE BASED ON THE SILVER-GRAY
 BREAST AND BELLY. DEFINITE BLUE ON BACK AND HEAD WHEN
 SEEN AGAINST DARK BACKGROUND.

99-03

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

SPECIES: Mountain Bluebird (Female)

LOCATION: Little Sioux River bluff about three miles northwest of Peterson (O'Brien County). Habitat was hillside with mostly scattered Red Cedar trees.

DATE & TIME: 13 February, 1999 (3:40-3:50 PM) & 14 February, 1999 (11:30-35 AM)

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

OTHERS: Tom Kent was with me. A male Mountain Bluebird was discovered by Lee and Nancy Schoenewe at this location on 7 February, and was seen again by them on 13 February. A female Mountain Bluebird was seen at this location by Ed Thelen on 14 February and by Ed, Rob, and Marty Thelen on 21 February.

DESCRIPTION: The bird was seen sitting on the tips of cedar trees and on utility wires. Although Eastern Bluebirds had been seen in the area, none were present for comparison at the time of viewing. This bird was generally the same size as an Eastern Bluebird, but seemed to be a little longer and thinner. It also seemed to sit more erectly than an Eastern Bluebird. The only blue area on the bird was the folded wing (and tail), and it was not brilliant, rather more of an aqua color. The upper back and head, and even some of the side of the face was a dull bluish-gray. The underparts ranged from a dirty grayish color on the breast and upper belly, to the lower belly and vent which were an offwhite color. The throat was a lighter gray. The tail, which was noticeably longer than the wing tips was a similar blue to the wings. The bill was relatively short, pointed, and black. The leg color was dark. There was a white eye ring. No vocalization was heard.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Both female Eastern and Western Bluebirds show a rust color on the upper breast. The Eastern also has some rust on the throat, while the Western shows a grayish-blue throat, all of which differ from the breast and throat color of the female Mountain Bluebird.

DISAGREE: No one diasagreed with ID.

VIEWING CONDITIONS: Both days were cloudless, and the bird was being viewed toward the south and southeast at distances of 50-100 feet. I was using Swift Audubon binoculars (8.5 X 44).

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen Mountain Bluebirds on numerous occasions in the west, and have seen males three previous times and females once before in the state.

REFERENCES: National Geographic guide was looked at after the viewing. No written notes were made at the time. This form was typed on 19 February.

99-03

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Species: Mountain Bluebird; **Number:** 1 female

Location: Waterman Creek A., O'Brien Co., IA

Date: 13, 14 February 1999; **Time:** about 3:30 p.m. and mid-a.m.

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

Others before/with/after: reported by Lee Schoenewe; with Jim Fuller

Habitat and circumstances: hilly with patches of cedars; near Little Sioux River

Description of bird: The bird popped up in response to a Mountain Bluebird tape. I did not record notes in the field, but rather concentrated on taking photos. This description is from the photos. This overall gray-blue bird appeared more elongated than an Eastern Bluebird and did not have the hunched back appearance. It perched in cedars and flew about. I did not see it hover. The underparts are light gray with a hint of blue except for the white undertail. The upperparts are slightly darker with areas of light blue on the head and turquoise blue in some of the flight feathers and tail feathers. The bill is thin and black. The eye is dark. I thought there was a slight eye ring in the field but I don't see this in the photos. In one photo the wings look slightly longer than the tail, but in other the tail seems slightly longer. As expected the feather edging present in fresh plumage is not evident in the worn spring plumage. Bluebirds molt once per year in the summer.

Voice: not heard

Similar species: Eastern Bluebird eliminated by uniform overall color, longer wings, elongated body.

Any one have reservations?: A male was reported, but we did not see it.

Light: clear, sun on bird; **Distance:** 20 yards (est); **Optics:** 10x binocular, 540mm lens

Previous experience: seen in west and once in Iowa.

Reference used while writing: Dunn, J. 1981. The identification of female bluebirds. *Birding* 13:4-11.

Time of notes: none; **Final typing:** 13 days

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

99-03

What species? Mt. Bluebird (♀) How many? 1

Location? West of Peterson, O'Brien County

Type of Habitat? Hilltop along gravel road with numerous cedar trees
along with some oak trees. Highline wire along road.

When? date(s): 2-14 and 2-21 time: ^(M) NOON to ^(A) 8:00 AM to 8:30

Who? your name and address: Ed Thelen 15362 250th Ave Spirit Lake Iowa

Others with you: on the ~~21st~~ 21st Rob, Matt and Marty Thelen

Others before or after you: Lee Schonewee first reported this bird

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.

Bluebird shape with all grey plumage - only blue color seen when it was flying or preening. Then the blue was seen in the tail and in the wings. A tinge of blue was seen on lower belly. (see photo) Dark eye and feet. White coloration on undertail coverts.

It was usually seen on highline wire on south side of road above numerous cedar trees and some oak trees. Occasionally it would hover and land on ground apparently catching some bug.

Similar species; how eliminated:

No orange coloration seen on breast which would be found on eastern bluebird and western bluebird. The only question is whether this bird is a female, ~~male~~ first year male or whether there was 2 mt bluebirds at the spot. Since the only blue seen on this bird was in the wings and tail with just a tinge of blue on lower belly I

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.

GOOD - light at my back
30x power scope
8.5x44 binoculars

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

I've seen numerous mt. Bluebirds but this is my first female.

References and persons consulted before writing description: NONE

How long before field notes made? week this form completed? 2 weeks

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