

Common Raven

5 Feb 1998

Lake Manawa, Pottawattamie Co., IA

\*Manit Bunnimit

IBL 68:61

Record Number: 98-05

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Manit Bunnimit, 2722 Crown Point Ave., Omaha, NE 68111-1329

[\*6/13/98]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 68:61

Records Committee: IBL 69:90

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, In support of the alternatives: Am. Crow. As if anticipating this record, I have watched crows all winter, and noted rounded/wedge-shaped tails on many of them. Chihuahuan Raven. More probable at this location than C. Raven. "Birds in Kansas" reports a Dec '89 specimen from Wichita and states that they occasionally wander eastward in winter. (Also, I'm not sure this species would ever be reported if it were a vagrant, so it may be more common than thought). In support of the record: The behavior of this bird definitely suggests Common Raven (I saw a million Chihuahuan Ravens this winter, and noted that they were pretty much crow-sized). The description of the voice is pretty subjective but supports Common Raven and, assuming that everyone including the observer knows a what a Common Crow sounds like, eliminates that species. Tough call, but probably OK.

A-D, The call notes, large size, and broad wings argue against American Crow and Chihuahuan Raven. The flight behavior and wedge-shaped tail further eliminate American Crow.

A-D, Description good, but SW part of state is not where this bird would be expected.

A-D, Wedged tail and voice are convincing.

A-D, Close comparison with Crow, wedge-shaped tail, voice difference, and previous experience convince me of a long-expected record.

A-D, The size, tail shape, and voice convince me even though this is a very unexpected species at this location.

A-D, The description is clear on 3 features which, taken together, satisfactorily eliminate Common Crow and even Chihuahuan Raven. Size, soaring flight, call, and tail shape were noted and carefully described with crow in mind. Observer's experience with ravens and obvious eloquence positive to ID.

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February 5, 1997

Dear Mr. Kent,

I would like to report my sighting of a **Common Raven** at Lake Manawa State Park, near Council Bluffs, IA. Before I proceed with the details of the sighting, I would like to mention that I have observed Common Ravens many times during trips to Rocky Mountain National Park, CO and occasionally while travelling in the southwestern U.S., so I have become quite familiar with their identification in fairly close proximity of both American Crows and Chihuahuan Ravens. Of course, living in Omaha gives me the opportunity to observe American Crows daily (I see them fly to their roost and they are common on the UNO campus where I am going to school).

Today (2/5/98) I was birding solo between classes and was travelling south on the road that follows the west edge of Lake Manawa. There was virtually no open water (just a few small spots along the edge of the lake) and the only birds I was seeing were two American Crows (one calling in a tree and the other eating something on the ice/snow that was covering the lake). At about 11:10 a.m., just south of the large house with a driveway that leads out onto this road, I saw a very large, dark bird approaching from the northeast portion of the lake. From its size I half-expected it to be a Bald Eagle (I'm not kidding, it was a very raptorial bird), which are seen regularly at the lake. The sky was overcast so I did not have to put up with the glare during my observation. I immediately grabbed my 8X42 binoculars to get a closer look.

The bird was flying fairly close, probably only about 70-80 feet (maybe ten feet above the crow in a nearby tree). There was only a very mild wind (5-10 mph?). The bird's wings were noticeably broad. It flew for most of the time by soaring with its wings held very flat, only twice flapping its wings momentarily (shallow wingbeats) and once folding its wings rather tightly and gliding. All of the crows I have seen flap steadily, gliding only occasionally. When it crossed the road and while it was flying away from me I could see a very large, clear-cut, wedged-shaped tail which appeared to have a slight "V" shape from the rear (reminiscent of a grackle). It could not have been mistaken even for the tails of the occasional American Crows that appear quite rounded. The sheer size of the bird and the wedge-shaped tail were enough to distinguish it from any of the crows, but what about the Chihuahuan Raven? Fortunately, as it flew by, the bird made two brief call notes that were very hoarse (sounding much more like *grrrawgk* than the *gaw* of the

American Crow), and much deeper than the Chihuahuan Raven that I heard in northern Texas. However, because it has been a few years since I had seen or heard the Chihuahuan, I decided to double check the calls on a tape I had at home. The tape and I agree that the call was that of a Common Raven. The bird was in view for only about one minute, then it disappeared over the trees bordering the southwest edge of the lake.

I attempted to relocate it by driving roads in the general direction that I saw it heading, but was unsuccessful. Before long (1 hour?) I had to discontinue my search because of my schedule. I have contacted only two other birders (a married couple prominent in the local birding community), but the sighting should also make the Nebraska Birdline. Hopefully others will be successful in finding it and perhaps be fortunate enough to photograph it. Thank you for your time in considering this sighting for inclusion in the records of Iowa's birdlife.

Sincerely,

*Manit Bunnimit*

Manit Bunnimit

P.S. This is the first documentation that I have had to make, so please call or write to me if you need any clarification or require additional information that I may have inadvertently left out. Also, I would very much appreciate it if you could contact me after a decision has been made as to whether or not this sighting is accepted by the Iowa Records Committee. Thank you.