

Gray Jay

Nov 1976

Cedar Falls, Black Hawk Co., IA

*Marilyn H. Lilja

Halmi 1977

Record Number: 93-EX
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Marilyn H. Lilja

REFERENCE

Halmi, N.S. 1977. More Gray Jays in Iowa. IBL 47:65.

VOTE: 5 A-D

A-D, Although documentation is much delayed and brief, I am inclined to believe that the bird was correctly identified. /thk

Gray Jay

Halmi, N. S. 1977. More Gray Jays in Iowa. Iowa Bird Life 47:65

More Gray Jays in Iowa -- In response to Gladys Black's Des Moines Register article on Gray Jays, written after this species was believed to have been first seen in Iowa (IBL Vol. 97, p. 23, 1977), two more records of Gray Jays were submitted, with documentation, bringing the total for the fall-winter 1976-77 period to three.

Fern L. Tanner saw a Gray Jay in Mason City in early November, from 11 feet. A good comparison could be made with a Blue Jay on the other side of the same bird bath. Mrs. Tanner's brother, Albert Ewers, and his wife, had seen the jay nearby a couple of weeks earlier (before the Decorah bird was first seen?). Mr. Ewers had no doubt that the bird was the "meat robber" familiar to him from many hunting and fishing trips to Canada.

The other Gray Jay was seen by Marilyn H. Lilja at Cedar Falls, also in November 1976. She observed it from about 20 feet as it made several trips to her feeder. Next day it was found dead, but the specimen was unfortunately not preserved. It did give her an opportunity to verify the bird's identity. She states that she was familiar with the species from time spent in Colorado.

In April 1977, Mr. George Schrimper, Curator for Natural History at the University of Iowa Museum, called my attention to a Gray Jay specimen in the collection of the museum (no. 32540). The skin is cataloged as having been collected in Linn Co. on December 2, 1918 by George Berry, but bears a tag with a somewhat cryptic note in the hand of John Rohner, late Curator of the museum, which seems to question the site in which the specimen was obtained. The reason for this must be that Mr. Berry, an excellent naturalist in his prime, by 1918 was the victim of progressive mental deterioration, possibly caused by an infection contracted in the tropics, and was no longer deemed reliable (Meyer, IBL Vol 29, p. 74, 1959). In view of this uncertainty about the specimen's provenance, the Decorah Gray Jay of 1976-77 must still be considered the first authenticated individual of this species in Iowa. N. S. HALMI, R. No. 6, Iowa City.

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1 Species Gray Jay 2. Number: 102?

3. Location acres, Cedar Falls, Ia

4. Date: November 1976 5. Time Bird seen: 8 to 8:30 AM - 1 day

6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):

Blue jay size, gray color, white forehead + black nape

7. Description of voice, if heard: etc

8. Description of behavior: Flew to + from feeder area several times. Next day I found it (or another) dead in yard.

9. Habitat - general:
specific:

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:

11. Distance (how measured)? 20 feet - distance from house to woodpile by feeder 12. Optical equipment: none

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): sunny, 8 AM.

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: Familiar with bird from time spent in Colorado

15. Other observers: no

16. Did the others agree with your identification?

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:

Peterson's Field Guide to the birds
No doubt it was a gray jay after examining dead bird.

Signature Marilyn A Silja Address: 6401 Van Wert Rd

Date: 3/5/77 City, State: Cedar Falls, Ia 50613

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