

Great Gray Owl
17 Feb 1996
east of Wellsburg, Grundy Co., IA
James Dinsmore, Kevin Williams
IBL 66:57, 82, P-0573

Record Number: 96-37
Classification: A-S

DOCUMENTATION

James Dinsmore [4/6/97]

PHOTOGRAPHS

James Dinsmore, 17 Nov 1997 at Morrison, Iowa, P-0573

REFERENCES

Grundy Register, 29 Feb 1996
Field Report IBL 66:57
Records Committee: IBL 67:82, 68:87

VOTE: 5 A-S, 2 A-D

A-S, Is this an accredited collection? If not I would revote.

A-D, This does not quite meet criteria for A-S.

A-D, Description adequate for ID.

RE-VOTE 6 A-S, 1 A-P

A-S, The specimen was verified and photographed by a designee of the Records Committee.

A-S, Not sure of the definition of "accredited collection", but I would think this could also fall under #3 of our guidelines.

A-S, I'm assuming Jim undertook this "mission" at our request as we had discussed at our last meeting. I'll leave possible rewording to others.

A-S, The photos, although not taken at an angle that shows the face well, are sufficient for identification.

A-S, A photo of a specimen is still a specimen and as long as the specimen is available so the committee, or someone designated by the committee, can locate it and get a good photo of the specimen and vouch for its authenticity.

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James Dinsmore, 13 Nov 1997 at Morrison, Iowa

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A-S, Is this an accredited collection? If not I would revote.

A-D, This does not quite meet criteria for A-S.

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DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species Great Gray Owl How many? one

Location? section 17, Colfax Township, Grundy Co. (ca 3 miles east of Wellsburg)

Type of habitat? roadside, open farmland

When? date(s): 17 Feb 1996 Time: .

Who? your name and address

Dead bird viewed by James Dinsmore on 10 October 1996. Bird in freezer at Grundy County Conservation Board, Morrison, IA

Others with you alone

Others before or after you

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.

In short, viewing the bird in hand and having also handled other Great Gray Owls, there is no doubt that this bird is that species.

It is a very large owl, perhaps 20-25% longer than either a Great Horned Owl or Barred Owl, both of which were on display in the museum at Morrison. The bird was largely gray in color with some dark and light markings on it.

Noticeable characteristics noted, besides its large size, were:

1. Very large facial discs with concentric rings inside the discs.
2. No evidence of ear tufts.
3. Relatively long (for an owl) tail.
4. Despite its size, the smallness of the carcass itself; that is, much of the bird is feathers and the body is relatively small. This is typical of the Great Gray Owl.
5. Obvious white horizontal line across the front of the body below the facial discs.
6. Large needle-sharp talons with extensive feathering on the tarsus.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Barred Owl-size, relative length of tail, gray rather than brownish gray as predominant color.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification?

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: In the hand

Previous experience with this species and similar ones: I saw the Big Marsh bird and stuffed the Des Moines specimen.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Looked briefly at Robbins et al guide.

How long before field notes made?

this form completed? Form completed next day

GRUNDY REGISTER 2-29-96

Rare Owl Found Dead Near Grundy Center

A Great Gray Owl was discovered along Highway 14 north of Grundy Center, apparently a roadkill victim. The dead bird was observed by Doris Van Deest of rural Dike as she was traveling home Saturday morning, February 17. Mrs. Van Deest hurried home and notified Kevin Williams, Conservation Board Director, of the bird's location and that she believed it to be the rare bird.

The bird was picked up and Mrs. Van Deest's suspicions were confirmed. "We are extremely fortunate that Doris spotted the owl and called to report it," stated Williams. "Although she was very excited at the possibility of it being such a rare find, she resisted the urge to pick it up and instead followed the law by reporting the bird to authorities."

Williams added that all migratory birds are protected by Federal law that prohibits the possession of even the feathers of such birds.

Williams holds the necessary Federal and State Salvage Permits which will allow the bird to remain in the possession of the Grundy County Conservation Board for mounting and display at the Grundy County Museum in Morrison. Great Gray Owls are the largest owls in North America and live in the forested northern areas of the United States and Canada. Experts believe that the deep snow conditions found up north this winter forced Great Gray Owls to move this far south in search of food.

This uncommon visitor has had the Iowa birdwatching community in a real stir the past couple of weeks with the confirmed sighting of a Great Gray Owl at Big Marsh near Parkersburg. Francis Moore of Waterloo saw the owl near the

marsh on Saturday, February 9, just one week before this bird was found at the intersection of Highway 14 and D-25. Moore's was the first confirmed sighting of this species in Iowa for over twenty years. The last report of a Great Gray Owl in Iowa was February 15, 1994.

There is a "rest of the story" to be told. When reporting the bird's demise to Dr. James Dinsmore, Ornithology Professor at ISU, Williams was surprised to learn that Dinsmore had viewed a Great Gray Owl near Big Marsh on Monday, February 19, two days after this bird was found dead. What everyone was treating as a single bird apparently was really two. Good Luck to Number 2 on a safe trip north!

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