

Three-toed Woodpecker
13 Jan 1998
north of Iowa City, Johnson Co., IA
Joan Thompson

Record Number: 98-04
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Joan Thompson, 14 Woodland Heights, Iowa City 52240 [6/13/98]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: none

Records Committee: IBL 69:90

VOTE: 7 NA

NA, This bird may be correctly identified, but imm. sapsucker shares many features with the bird described. This would be an extraordinary record if correct.

NA, The bird may have been a juvenile Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Juveniles retain their brownish plumage until their first spring, have a white streak under each eye, and have a heavily barred back. The Three-toed Woodpecker would have a black head, not brown. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers regularly occur in Iowa in winter, while Three-toed Woodpeckers are typically a very sedentary species whose range is far to the north and west of Iowa.

NA, Description is good for Yellow-bellied Sapsucker imm., esp the "brown" head and sides. Sapsuckers often seen at suet feeders while 3-toed is not.

NA. This is a reluctant vote. More description, such as flanks and head pattern, would have helped, as would a comparison to Downy or Hairy. The description sounds as if this bird may well have been a juvenile (brownier) Three-toed of the western sub-species (more spotting and streaking on the back), but I feel we need a more complete description for such a vagrant.

NA, Brown head and sides says juvenile sapsucker to me, as does the barred back.

NA, I can't identify this woodpecker from the description. Brown head does not fit Three-toed. No mention of yellow on crown.

NA, Extralimital sighting which may be correct. Very unfortunate that no photo obtained. Non-return also suggestive of vagrant, rather than resident species. Not clear from doc, but seems observer wrote description after looking at field guide.

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa 98-04

What species? Three-toed Woodpecker How Many? one female
 Location: 14 Woodland Heights North of Iowa City IA, off N Dubuque St, off Stewart Road

Type of habitat?: suet feeder in heavily wooded lot with much woodpecker activity of all common Iowa species.

When? Date(s): January 13, 1998 time: 9 AM
 Who? your name and address:
 Joan Thompson, 14 Woodland Heights, Iowa City IA 52240 ph: 319-351-0738

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, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

The bird was about 8 inches long with a typical woodpecker shape. I had never seen a bird like it so I looked at woodpecker pictures in "the Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds" because it was really gulping the suet in the suet feeder in my front yard. The picture on ~~page~~ number 342 was EXACTLY the way it looked. Brown head and sides with white breast and a streak down the back ~~it~~ ^{which was} barred and spotted all over. It had a typical long pointed bill, a white streak under each eye, dark eyes, white throat, and a rather long tail. I didn't hear it make a sound as I saw it from inside my house.

Similar species and how eliminated: I have not seen any similar species.

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance, and optical equipment: I saw it about 12 feet away from my house on the suet feeder which it was really working on. It was daylight & I went to get my camera to take a picture & when I returned to the kitchen window the starlings had apparently chased it away.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: None.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Jim Scheib (via Tom Kent message)

How long before field notes made? 2 days

How long before this form completed? 2 days

MAIL TO: T.H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240