

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Printed: 11/24/00

Pine Grosbeak

5 Nov 1997

Holstein, Ida Co., IA

\*Curtis L. Rector

IBL 68:17, 86, Rector 1998

Record Number: 97-47

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Curtis L. Rector, 1531 Harvest Ave., Holstein 51025-8117

[2/15/98]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 68:17

Records Committee: IBL 68:86

Rector, C. L. 1998. Pine Grosbeak in Ida County. IBL 68:104.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, "Strong, thick beak" eliminates other candidates.

A-D, Enough details for identification. Would be nice to see photos.

A-D, Very good and careful description. Observant observer!

The tail was short, white and slightly forked, and the legs were black. The hood was dark gray with indistinct white splotches, and the bill was all dark which led me to conclude that this was a first-summer bird in alternate plumage.

Sabine's Gull is a casual fall migrant in the interior United States and, according to *Birds in Iowa*, the few birds to be found in spring and July are presumed to be migrating adults. A first-summer bird and a first summer date for Iowa made this sighting particularly significant. This was the second sighting of a Sabine's Gull in Dickinson County with the first being an immature bird photographed by Ed Thelen on 2 October 1996.

For me and the group of people attending the July Audubon chapter meeting, it was a rare summer gull experience times two!

518 W 4th Street, Spencer, IA 51301

## PINE GROSBEAK IN IDA COUNTY

CURTIS L. RECTOR

At 2:15 p.m. on 5 November 1997, while driving my bus route, I saw a chunky, pinkish colored bird in a fruit tree near Somerset Apartments in Holstein. Its wings were black with white wingbars, and the beak was dark-colored, strong, and thick, suggesting that it was a grosbeak. The bird appeared to be quite tame as it continued consuming fruit from the tree. Due to the nature of my job, I could only watch it for a moment. After I finished my route, I checked a field guide and confirmed the bird's identity as an adult male Pine Grosbeak.

The next day, at 2:10 p.m., I saw the bird again in the same location and watched it for about five minutes as it ate fruit from the tree. This time I noticed a very bright patch of crimson on its rump near the base of the tail feathers. I saw the bird again at 3:45 p.m. and returned at 4:15 p.m. with my camera. I parked my car at the curb near the tree where the bird was feeding. I stayed in my car, rolled the window down, zoomed in at 210 mm., and took eight photos of the Pine Grosbeak, some as close as about 15 feet from where I was sitting. Fortunately, all eight photographs came out well and helped confirm my identification of the bird.

I saw the bird again several times on 7 November. It was still at the same location, feeding on some very small apples with fruits about 3/4 inches in diameter. This appears to be the first report of a Pine Grosbeak in Ida County and one of the few reports of the species in Iowa during the 1990s.

1531 Harvest Avenue, Holstein, IA 51025-8117

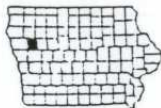


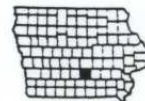
Fig. 1. Pine Grosbeak in Ida County.  
6 Nov. 1997. Curtis Rector.

97-47

## COMMON EIDER IN MARION COUNTY

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 27 January 1995 I received a call from Tim Schantz about a female eider along the Des Moines River below the Red Rock Reservoir dam in Marion County. Jim Dinsmore and I arrived at 1:45 p.m. and quickly found the bird. We were able to study it at fairly close range until 3:05 p.m. with several other birders. When we left, we concurred with Schantz's conclusion that the bird was an adult female Common Eider.



The following description was written during the observation. The bird was a very large duck; it was longer, broader, and larger-headed than a Mallard. The bird had a pale head and sides and a dark back. The head was tan-colored with a dark line extending from the base of the upper mandible over the crown and down the back of the neck. There was a faint pale line above the eye. The cheek was pale-colored. The bill was longer than the length of the head, thick, and dark. The upper mandible had a flat surface. The upper surface of the bill was nearly flat with top of head, although there was a slight "bump" on the forehead. The bill had a slightly bulbous tip. Feathering extended down the sides of the upper mandible to a point just posterior to the nostril. The eye was dark and positioned near the top of the head. The throat and chin appeared pale tan-colored. The breast was tan with darker (black/dark brown), narrow, horizontal barring. There was a sharp line of contrast between the pale throat and the barred breast. The flanks were also tan with darker vertical barring. This vertical barring was continuous, unlike the darker chevrons that mark the flanks of female and immature King Eiders. The back and upperwings were very dark brown/black. When the bird flapped its wings, I noted that both surfaces of the wing were dark and had no visible wingbars or patches. The axillars were white. The vent was also barred, the pattern appearing similar to that on the flanks. The rectrices were dark brown/black, with at least the central two feathers appearing worn. Based on these features, the bird was identified as a Common Eider in female or immature plumage. The prominent dark barring on the flanks and breast, coupled with the molt

pattern of the tail and lack of pale tips to the wing coverts, indicate the bird was an adult female in eclipse plumage. Based on the very pale color on the head and flanks, we identified this bird as the pacific subspecies *v-nigra*. The eastern subspecies *nigricens* typically shows a large amount of reddish-brown color on the head and flanks, very unlike the color of this bird.



Fig. 1. Common Eider at Red Rock Reservoir, 29 Feb. 1995. Reid Allen.

The eider remained at this location through 7 April 1995 (*Iowa Bird Life* 65:71, 1995) and was seen by many. This represents the second confirmed record of a Common Eider for Iowa. The other record is of a specimen taken on 1 November 1901 near Sioux City, Woodbury County (DuMont 1934). There are a few earlier reports that lack adequate descriptions.

612 1/2 W. Magnolia, Fort Collins, CO 80521



5 November 1997

Tom Kent  
211 Richards St.  
Iowa City, Iowa 52246

97-47

Dear Tom:

On the afternoon of November 5, 1997, at 2:15 P.M., I sighted a large, full-bodied bird in a fruit tree near Somerset Apartments in Holstein, Iowa, while driving my bus route. As I got closer, I saw the colorful pink plumage over most of the bird, and could also see the beak was a dark-colored, strong, thick beak. From these features, I could tell it was a Grosbeak. The black and white wing bars next caught my attention. The bird appeared to be quite tame as it continued consuming fruit from the tree. Due to the nature of my job, I could only watch it for a moment; however, I had taken a mental picture of this bird in that time. After my route, I checked back around 5:00 p.m., but was not able to locate it at that time. I checked my Field Guide to the Birds of North America where I confirmed the bird's identity as an adult male Pine Grosbeak, which I could not recall seeing before.

The next day, which was November 6, 1997, at 2:10 P.M., I sighted the bird again in the same location. This time I watched it for about 5 minutes as it ate fruit from the tree. This time I noticed a very bright patch of crimson on the rump of the bird near the base of the tail feathers on the top side which I hadn't seen the day before due to the position of the bird. I continued on my route. At 3:45 P.M. I was back at that location and the bird was still feeding. I watched for only a moment, and continued my route. Afterwards, I returned at 4:15 P.M. with my camera. I was in luck. I parked my car at the curb near the tree where the bird was feeding. I stayed in my car, rolled my window down,

zoomed in at 210 mm, focused, and started shooting photos of the Pine Grosbeak. He came closer - now about 15 feet from where I was sitting. I knew I had to limit my shots to what I thought to be the best possible positions with what sunlight was available. Ten minutes later I squeezed off my last photo - that was 8 I had taken. I was very happy to have gotten one, let alone eight. I just hoped that when I had them developed I would be just as happy.

Sincerely,  
Curtis L. Rector  
1531 Harvest Ave.  
Holstein, Iowa 51025-8117

Copy: Pete Erzen  
James Dinsmore