

Rock Wren
21 May 1984
northeast of Stone Park, Woodbury Co., IA
*T. Kent, *R. Silcock
IBL 54:47; 55:57, Kent and Silcock 1984

Record Number: 84-09
Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Thomas H. Kent
W. Ross Silcock

PHOTOGRAPHS

Thomas H. Kent, P-0402 (IBL 54:38)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 54:47
Kent, T. H., and W. R. Silcock. 1984. Rock Wren in Woodbury
County. IBL 54:37-38.

Photographs: IBL 54:38 (P-0402), AB 38:919 (P-0402)

Records Committee: IBL 55:57

VOTE: 2-I-P, 1-II, 2-III, 2-abstain

I-P, The clean looking throat, belly, and sides are good marks
for the Rock Wren. My experience with Rock Wrens is similar to
the observers description: the corner tail marks flash in flight;
the streaking on the breast is not always evident; long bill;
rusty rump is not easy to distinguish. Other marks the observers
noted are the incessant bobbing, and the 'cha-ring' call. Also,
to me, Rock Wrens appear tan to light brown, not distinctly gray.

III, (I know there are photos and they do show wrens).

NOTE: The other III and the II voters did not comment.

REVOTE (at meeting, 8 Sep 1984): 7-I-P

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Rock Wren (1), 21 May 1984, 0.6 mi. n. of NE entrance to Stone P.
Woodbury Co., Iowa
Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Other observer: W. Ross Silcock

Time: 8:55-9:00 AM

Habitat: Road cut in loess hill.

Notes dictated at 9:05: "On the bank we spotted a wren. The wren was brownish, quite light underneath, brownish on the back. We immediately noticed that it was a long, thin wren, larger than a House Wren--longer and thinner; faint white eye-stripe, long bill which drooped slightly at the tip, and a bobbing behavior--bobbed frequently. The outer feathers on the tail flashed light when it flew across the road and went into the grass along the embankment on the other side; it bobbed up and down. It then made a few metallic-like sounds and lit on the fence post. I took at least two pictures, one against the dirt and 1 or 2 silhouetted against the sky while on the fence post. The bird flew off down the hill along a grassy pasture and was lost."

Notes made at 9:20 after looking at the National Geographic and Master Guides: "The bird was similar to what we saw. The slight flecking on the wings is a feature that I noted when I observed the bird, but in looking at the field guides it seems to be a distinctive feature from the House Wren. The slight streaking on the front of the breast I did not see, but I was concentrating on taking pictures. The book shows the outer tail feathers as buffy, but I thought they flashed white in flight. The book describes the note as 'tick-ear' which is not unlike what we heard--a two noted metallic sound to me. I did not see the contrast between the back color and the rump. Ross described the back as gray, I described it as slightly brown; the bird was against a buff colored clay bank, which may have influenced my perception. It was not the rusty-brown of a House Wren."

Song: song not heard, note as above.

Conditions: Light at 45 degree angle when first seen, later seen in shade of bank and back-lit on fence post; 10x binocs at 30-50 feet (est).

Similar species: Size, uncocked tail, slight eye-line, bobbing, and note eliminate other wrens.

Previous experience: Have seen in Arizona and Kansas; experience with other wrens.

References/time used: see above.

Time of notes/typed: dictated at 5 & 20 min., written out 10 hours.

What species? ROCK WREN How many? 1Location? TALBOT ROAD, ne of STONE PARK, SIOUX CITY, WOODBURY CO., IA.Type of habitat? ROAD CUT IN LOESS HILLS; ^{BRUSH} ~~WOODS~~ ONE SIDE, FIELD OTHER.When? date(s): MAY 21, 1984 time: 9 am to 9.10 amWho? your name and address: W. ROSS SILCOCKothers with you: THOMAS H. KENT

others before or after you: _____

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.

FIELD NOTES TAKEN AT TIME:

- ⊗ WREN - LONG, DECURVED BILL (BILL AS LONG AS HEAD)
- ⊗ GREYISH ABOVE, NOTICEABLE BARRING ON PRIMARIES. EYESTRIPE APPARENT, BUT NOT CLEARLY DEFINED.
- TAIL GREYISH ABOVE, DARK THEN LIGHT BANDS AT TIP OF TAIL.
- UNDERPARTS OFF-WHITISH, WITH MARKED BUFFISH WASH ON FLANKS (LIKE TUFTED TITMOUSE)
- CONTINUALLY BOBBING UP & DOWN
- CALLED - "CHIP-RINK" WITH "RINK" METALLIC SERIES OF CHIPS. NOT VERY LOUD.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY TOM KENT ON POST. POST MEASURED ACROSS:-

EXACT LOCATION: 6/10 MI N. ON TALBOT FROM TALBOT-MEMORIAL JCT. AT ENTRANCE TO STONE PARK.

Similar species and how eliminated:

GREYISH COLOR, TAIL MARKINGS, CALL NOTE, BOBBING BEHAVIOR ELIMINATE OTHER WREN SPECIES.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

PERFECT LIGHT AT FIRST, ABOUT 50' DISTANT, 10X50 BINOCULARS. THEN MOVED INTO ~~THE~~ SHADED SIDE OF ROAD CUT, BUT STILL GOOD CONDITIONS. THEN FLEW AWAY.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

HAVE SEEN THIS SPECIES MANY TIMES (AZ, KS) & OTHER SIMILAR SPECIES.

References and persons consulted before writing description: NONEHow long before field notes made? ON SPOT this form completed? SAME EVENING

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

84-09

Kent, T. H., and W. R. Silcock. 1984. Rock Wren in Woodbury County. Iowa Bird Life 54:37-38.

Rock Wren in Woodbury County

Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City, Iowa 52240

W. Ross Silcock, Box 300, Tabor, Iowa 51653

At 9 AM on May 21, 1984 we left the northeast entrance of Stone Park and traveled north on Talbot Road for 0.6 miles where we encountered a Rock Wren in a 15 foot road cut through the top of a loess hill. The bird was first seen in bright sunlight on the west bank of the cut; after about a minute it flew to the shaded east bank; after about five minutes it flew to the top of a fence post silhouetted against the sky. It then flew off over a brome pasture into a small ravine, and we could not find it again.

When the bird was first seen we both instantaneously exclaimed "Rock Wren." During the next seven minutes we attempted to delineate the features of the bird and to photograph it. A composite of our individually prepared descriptions is as follows: a bird considerably larger and longer than a House Wren with uncocked tail; long bill slightly decurved at tip; light gray underparts with medium gray-brown upperparts; faint white eyestripe; lightly flecked wing coverts and fine dark barring on flight feathers; long straight tail; buffy brown corners to tail separated from proximal tail by thin black band (seen when it flew); buff-washed lower flanks; dark legs and bill. We did not discern streaking on the breast. At all times the bird displayed a vertical bobbing action. Just before it left, the bird uttered three or four two-syllable call notes.

The size, long bill and tail, faint eye-stripe, bobbing behavior, and call note are all characteristic of Rock Wren. We did not hear the song, but the "tick-ear" call note is considered distinctive.

In the 1890s and up to 1910 there were several reports of Rock Wrens in the loess hills of the Sioux City area with evidence of nesting (Anderson 1907, Bennett 1925). Since 1910 there have been only two Iowa reports of this species: 3 birds near a gravel pit 3 miles east of Hornick, Woodbury County, on August 10, 1941 (Laffoon 1942) and a singing male near an abandoned shale pit 4 miles north of Sioux City in Plymouth County on June 16, 1958 (Youngworth 1958).

The range of the Rock Wren extends eastward to western Kansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota; few vagrants are reported east of this range.

Iowa records have been clustered near Sioux City in the loess hills. Perhaps the habitat there simulates their normal dry rocky habitat and attracts vagrant birds. We examined the gravel pit near Hornick and it still looks like reasonable habitat for Rock Wrens. We did not locate the site where Youngworth found a bird in 1958, but Highway 12 north of Stone Park in Plymouth County borders some rocky outcroppings in the loess hills. Perhaps dry cuts are more important than rock, as we saw no rocky areas in the immediate vicinity of the current sighting.

Although our trip to northwest Iowa was specifically undertaken to look for vagrants and the possibility of Rock Wren was discussed, we had no realistic expectation of finding one. We did look at a few quarries, but when we encountered the bird in the road cut it was a complete surprise. Perhaps the prophetic statement in Iowa Birds (1984) should be taken seriously: "A systematic search of appropriate habitat such as quarries and rock outcroppings between Apr and Oct might produce more records of this species."

REFERENCES

Anderson, R. M. 1907. The birds of Iowa. Proc. Davenport Acad. Sci. 11:125-417.

Bennett, W. W. 1925. The Rock Wren in Iowa. Wilson Bull. 37:93.

Dinsmore, J. J., et al. 1984. Iowa Birds. Ames: Iowa State University Press., p. 226.

Laffoon, J. 1942. Some recent bird records in the Sioux City area. Iowa Bird Life 12:61.

Youngworth, W. 1958. Rock Wren near Sioux City. Iowa Bird Life 28:60.

84-09

Kent, T. H., and W. R. Silcock. 1984. Rock Wren in Woodbury
County. Iowa Bird Life 54:37-38. (cont)

38

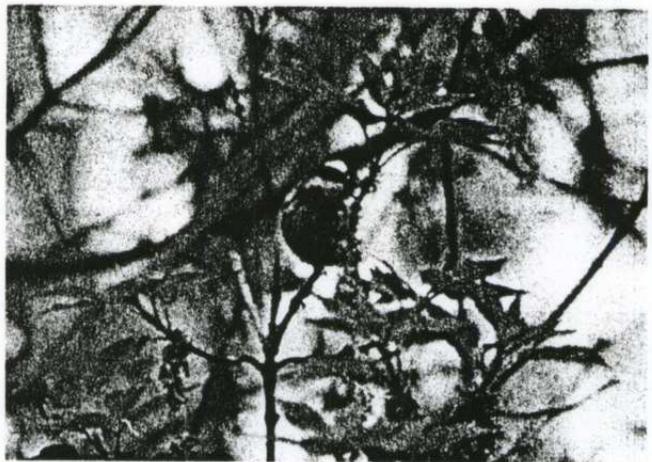
IOWA BIRD LIFE - 54, 1984



Rock Wren in grass of loess cut and silhouetted on post.
NW Woodbury County, May 21, 1984. Photo by T. H. Kent.



Rock Wren, n.w. Woodbury Co., Ia., May 21, 1984. Third record for Iowa. Photo/T.H. Kent.



Female Black-throated Gray Warbler at Chicago, May 10, 1984. Fifth Illinois record. Photo/Joe Milosevich.

WRENS THROUGH SHRIKES — Iowa's 3rd Rock Wren record was provided by one photographed in Woodbury May 21 (†T, †RS). Bewick's Wrens improved slightly with one-to-three at 5 locations in Kentucky and Illinois, 2 w. Missouri reports plus singles in Iowa at Oakville May 2 (P) and Waubonsie S.P., May 24 (†TB, †BPa). Sedge Wrens remained scarce in the e. states while Marsh Wrens received mixed reports without any apparent pattern to their distribution. A late Golden-crowned Kinglet remained in Marshall, Ill., May 12 (LA). While Golden-crowns were rather scarce, Ruby-crowned Kinglets were locally numerous with a maximum of 90 along L. Erie. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers remained in good numbers with an exceptional 106 in Massac, Ill., May 5 (DR).

Good numbers of E. Bluebirds continued to be reported from most areas. A Townsend's Solitaire was observed near Greenville, Mo., Apr. 24 (†A & LC); this species is a casual visitor to the w. states. With the exception of Hermit Thrushes, the *Catharus* thrushes passed through the Region in generally good numbers. Veeries and Gray-cheekeds were plentiful during the first half of May including a remarkable 52 Gray-cheekeds at Giant City S.P., Ill., May 12 (DR). The peak Swainson's Thrush movement occurred during the last half of May and into early June. This winter's Varied Thrushes lingered later than normal, into March at Indianapolis (*vide* CK), through Mar. 31 at Reynoldsburg, O. (*vide* JF), and Apr. 19 at Davenport, Ia. (*vide* P). Water Pipits were widespread with maxima of 30-150 except for thousands in Ottawa, O., May 7 (JP). The Cedar Waxwing migration was fairly typical with small numbers scattered across all states during March and April plus a strong Regionwide movement during the latter half of May which brought 1370 past Michigan City, Ind., during 70 minutes on the morning of May 19 (KB *et al.*). Northern Shrikes were discovered at 3 localities in the n. states with the latest Apr. 3 in Porter, Ind. (KB *et al.*). Loggerhead Shrikes appeared to be stable in portions of Kentucky and Missouri but remained scarce in Ohio, Illinois and Indiana where one-to-three were reported from a total of 5 locations.

VIREOS, WARBLERS — When they finally arrived, vireos generally appeared in relatively good numbers. While some of the resident birds returned by late April, the bulk of the movement occurred in mid- to late May. An early White-eyed Vireo returned to Springfield, Mo., Mar. 24 (CBo *et al.*). A total of 62 White-eyed in Giant City S.P., Ill., May 12 (DR) was remarkable even for the s. portions of this Region. Normal numbers of Bell's Vireos were reported from every state. Singles in Allen, Ind., May 7 (*vide* Haw) and at Headlands S.P., O., May 26 (†LR, J) were locally unexpected. Good numbers of Philadelphia Vireos were generally observed during the last half of May.

The warbler migration was disappointing, especially when compared with last year's exceptional numbers. Along L. Erie, this spring's flights produced the following concentrations: 50 Black-throated Blues, 300 Yellow-rumpeds and 50 Black-and-whites May 11; 150 Bay-breasteds May 18; and 120 Magnolias May 22 (VF, D & JH). However, these numbers were not representative of Regionwide trends. In addition,

many species exhibited very localized patterns of distribution, being relatively abundant in one area and scarce in another.

A total of 17 Golden-winged Warblers in Wayne and Union, Ind., May 12 was exceptional (*vide* BB). Five Brewster's and two Lawrence's warblers were noted from Indiana, Ohio and Missouri this spring. In the w. states, Cape May Warblers were found at one Missouri and 4 Iowa sites while the only Black-throated Blue was reported from Hoene Springs, Mo., May 5 (PG). An "Audubon's" Yellow-rumped Warbler was observed at DeSoto N.W.R., Ia., Apr. 26 (TB *et al.*). This spring's most unusual warbler was Illinois' 5th Black-throated Gray Warbler discovered at Chicago May 2-10 (RB, †m.ob.—ph.). An early Black-throated Green Warbler returned to Horseshoe Lake W.M.A., Ill., Mar. 31 (†JRo) while a Pine Warbler at Dunes S.P., Apr. 5 was very early for n. Indiana (*vide* KB). Three Cerulean Warblers were unusual in w. Missouri at Van Meter S.P., May 5 (KH). Swainson's Warblers were restricted to their normal haunts near the Mississippi R. in w. Kentucky and s. Illinois. *Oporornis* warblers returned to normal numbers this spring. As many as three Connecticut were reported from scattered localities in all states while Mournings were also widespread with maxima of four to eight.

TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES — Since there were few overflights this spring, the appearance of Summer Tanagers at 31 locations n. of their normal breeding range was unexpected. Most noteworthy were 2 sightings from n.w. Iowa, at Storm L., Apr. 30 (MPT) and near Spirit L., May 12 (DH). Accidental anywhere in the Region, a ♂ Western Tanager was closely studied near Subula, Ia., May 15 (†LJ). Blue Grosbeaks returned to most traditional locations while overflights were reported from Willow Slough W.M.A., Ind., May 17 (KB), Braidwood, Ill., May 18-23 (JM) and Rockford, Ill., May 27 (LJ). A ♂ Lazuli Bunting was reported from St. Louis May 10 (†RK *et al.*) at a different location than last spring's sighting. Painted Buntings returned to 2 s.w. Missouri sites where they breed in small numbers.

The sparrow migration was also late and generally unimpressive. The only Bachman's Sparrow was discovered in Calloway, Ky., May 28 (BP *et al.*). It was a good spring for Clay-colored Sparrows with a maximum of 30 at Independence, Mo., Apr. 20-23 (KH), 7 Illinois sightings, and Indiana singles at New Market May 7 (AB) and Dunes S.P., May 11 (†KB). Lark Sparrows remained scarce in the e. states although as many as 50 migrated through w. Missouri. The only Lark Bunting appeared in n.w. Iowa in Sioux May 24 (†T, †RS). Grassland sparrows elicited few comments with small numbers of Henslow's Sparrows noted in every state. Small numbers of LeConte's Sparrows were also reported e. to n.w. Indiana this spring. A very late Fox Sparrow lingered in Allen, Ind., through May 15 (BWA). Lincoln's Sparrows appeared in fairly good numbers although 100 at Euclid, O., May 11 (DC) was not representative of the smaller numbers found elsewhere. Harris' Sparrows peaked with 60 in Cherokee, Ia., May 9 (MBr). Farther e., there was one sighting in Illinois, plus Indiana singles in Noble May 2 (TH, FH) and Michigan City May 15 (*vide* KB). The main