

Gray Jay
30 Oct 1976
east of Decorah, Winneshiek Co., IA
Koenig, others
to Jan 1977; P-0012, Koenig 1977, Halmi 1977

Record Number: 93-EV
Classification: A-P

PHOTOGRAPH

P. C. Petersen, 15 Jan 1977, P-0012, IBL 47:23
O. M. Hovda, [Des Moines Register?], 10 Feb [1977]

REFERENCES

Koenig, D. 1977. First Gray Jay record for Iowa. IBL 47:23.

VOTE: 5 A-P

A-P, The photograph shows a gray passerine with gray on the forehead and blacker top of the head and lower face. The bill appears small. /thk



Gray Jay P-0012
ne of Decorah, Winneshiek Co.
15 Jan 1977 P. C. Petersen

93-EV

Gray Jay

Koenig, D. 1977. First Gray Jay record for Iowa. Iowa Bird Life 47:23

First Gray Jay Record for Iowa -- A Gray Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*) has been a regular visitor at a feeding station six miles east of Decorah at the summer home of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Walker of Decorah. The Walkers first observed the jay on October 30, 1976 and it was still present in the area during late January. It has been observed and photographed by numerous observers and it was also recorded on the Decorah Christmas Bird Count. This is probably the first record of the Gray Jay in Iowa as neither Anderson (1907), DuMont (1933), nor Brown (1971) include it in their compilations of Iowa birds.

The Gray Jay is a permanent resident in the coniferous forests of the north, sometimes wandering during fall and winter, but apparently rarely far from its breeding range. In looking at some past Christmas Bird Counts, published in *American Birds*, from Minnesota and Wisconsin it appears that the Gray Jay is seldom found south of 46 N in Minnesota or 45 N in Wisconsin during winter. Green and Janssen (1975) state that in Minnesota the Gray Jay is "Usually very rare in fall and winter beyond normal range as far south as the Twin Cities . . ."

It is appropriate that the first Gray Jay in Iowa should be found at the Walker residence, for it is located adjacent to one of the largest remaining tracts of native White Pine (*Pine strobus*) in Iowa and is, therefore, in keeping with the jays preference for a coniferous forest habitat.

LITERATURE CITED

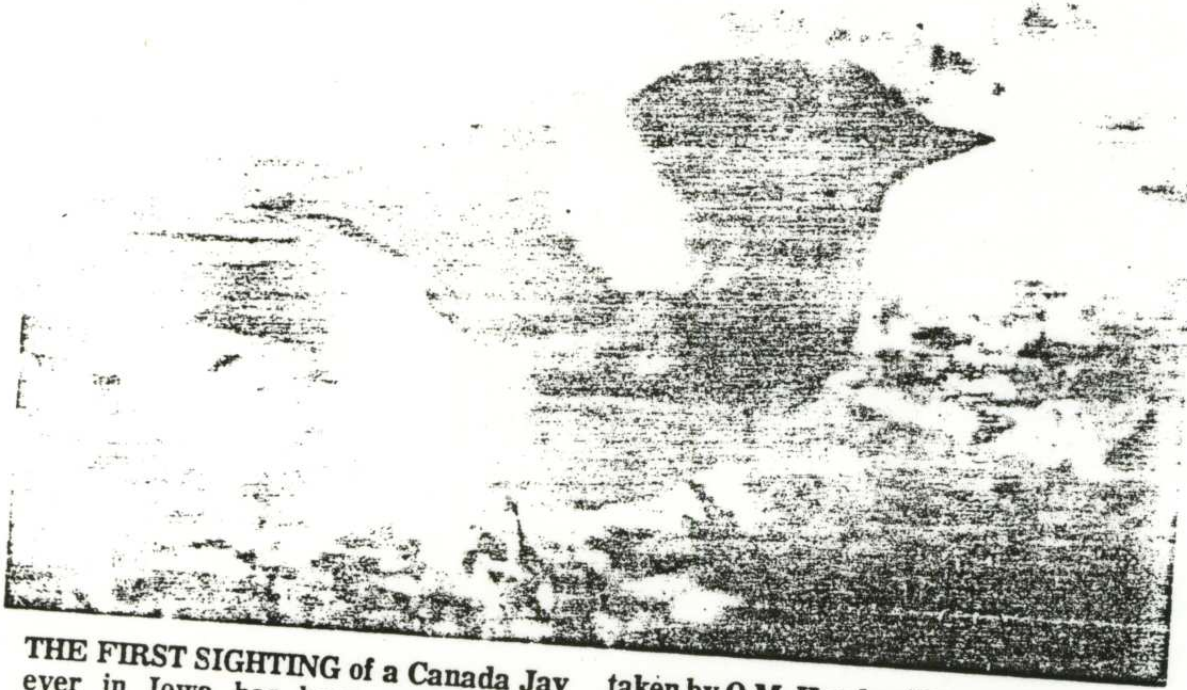
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- Green, J. C. and R. B. Janssen
1975 *Minnesota Birds: Where, When, and How Many*. U. of Minn. Press, Minneapolis. 217 pp.

DARWIN KOENIG, R.R. 4, Decorah



Gray Jay
Photo by Peter C. Petersen

93-EV
Thurs., February 10, 1



THE FIRST SIGHTING of a Canada Jay ever in Iowa has been made at the summer property of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Walker, located north of Freeport. The bird's usual habitat is the spruce forests in northern Minnesota, Michigan, New York and New England, but last fall this lone bird took up residence at the feeders at the Walker home. The gray and white bird is larger than a Robin and with its black cap set on the back of its head and white forehead, it suggests a huge, overgrown Chickadee. The picture was

taken by O.M. Hovde of Decorah. Besides local bird watchers, "The Bird" also has attracted visitors from LaCrosse, Davenport, Iowa City and Marshalltown, and Friday has an appointment to pose for Des Moines Register photographer Larry Stone. That the gray Jay has been faithful to this one area is probably due to the Walkers, who, though living in town in the winter, have faithfully kept the feeders stocked for their rare guest in spite of the bitter weather.

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.