

Painted Bunting  
30 May 1956  
Fort Defiance State Park, Emmet Co., IA  
M. L. Jones  
Jones 1956

Record Number: 81-EX  
Classification: NA

REFERENCE

Jones, M.L. 1956. Storm-driven birds at Fort Defiance State Park. IBL 26:69-70.

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

Tom Kent to Records Committee, 13 Sep 1993

VOTE (1981): 5-III, 1-IV, 1-V

III, competent observer, easy to identify, 'expected accidental', description not adequate for only state record.

V, no details.

IV, Sight record - close distance - late May. No description given.

III, Well seen by reliable observer at very close range for some time. Should be unmistakable.

REVOTE (at meeting, 1 May 1981): 5-III, 2-IV

REVOTE (1993): 4 A-D, 3 NA

NA, A document such as 81-EX would not be accepted, I do not think, by the standing records committee.

NA, Even a glorious and totally distinct bird needs to be described!

A-D, Even more reluctantly. However, the Secretary makes a good point here.

A-D, Sometimes the detail of a sighting are more confirming than the description. I think this is the case on this easy to identify bird.

A-D, Merle Jones taught me a lot about birding years ago and I have no doubt this is a good record. Although criteria for acceptance may be weak, it's probably as good as some other records.

81-EX

13 September 1993

To: IOU Records Committee  
From: Tom Kent  
Re: Request for reconsideration of record

**Record:** 81-EX Painted Bunting

**Reason for request:** A species that missed the state list by one vote.

**Comment:** The only description given by Jones, an experienced observer who saw the bird at close range for a long time, was that it was a male in glorious plumage. The date and location are reasonable for the Midwest vagrancy pattern of this species. I have no doubt that Jones saw a Painted Bunting and that it was a natural vagrant, although I was probably one who voted against it because of the lack of details. I think this record is just as good as some of the records based on undescribed specimens seen by an expert. It may not be correct to reopen this record, but the reviewers did ignore that it was a male in "all its glorious plumage." Can we argue that such a unique bird seen at the proper time and place with good viewing conditions for a long time is no better than the modest details of an accepted record of Sprague's Pipit. I for one have more faith in the bunting than in the pipit, despite what my previous vote may have been.

Jones, M. L. 1956. Storm-driven birds at Fort Defiance State Park.  
IBL 26:69-70.

**Storm-driven Birds at Fort Defiance State Park.**—While at the breakfast table on Memorial Day morning, 1956, I was attracted by a movement of color among the poppies just outside the window. My wife thought I was not yet awake when I told her there was a Painted Bunting out there. A rush for bird books made short work of verifying the identification for it was an adult in all its glorious plumage. The bird was not over 6 feet from our heads, perching on a dandelion not 3 feet from the house. All its activity was directed toward getting dandelion seeds, which it ate constantly while we watched it for the next half hour.

As soon as we recovered from the shock of seeing a bird we certainly had never expected to see in Iowa, much less in Minnesota (we are only 10 miles from the Minnesota line), we phoned Mr. and Mrs. B. O. Wolden, Estherville, and Doctors Everett and Eunice Christensen of Spencer. The Woldens got into a Memorial Day traffic delay, but the Painted Bunting returned to our lawn and gave them every opportunity for observation. For the Christensens to fly to Estherville and be driven to the park from the airport took longer, however. The Bunting had apparently become filled with dandelion seeds for it was not again seen on the ground. When we flushed it from the shrubs and low trees where we had found it twice, it flew into the higher trees. That fleeting glance was our last. We had hoped that Dr. Christensen might get a photographic record of the bird, but while it had been patient and allowed us to watch it for over two hours, it would not oblige by posing for a portrait.

A week after the Painted Bunting observation we added another bird to our life list. We were going by car toward the west gate of the park when we saw a bird which looked like a young shrike at first glance. I knew the shrikes were nesting a half mile away but had never seen them in the park. And this bird seemed to have too much of a tail. As we drove back the bird flew toward the house but farther from us. I rushed for the binoculars and bird book while Mrs. Jones kept watch of the bird. We were fortunate enough to have it stay around for half an hour while we watched it make many a flight into the grass and the air in the manner of a flycatcher.

We had never seen a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher but this seemed nearest like one. We thought at first of the Arkansas Kingbird, but the breast and

underparts were not yellow. Then, too, the tail didn't seem right. Finally, after by-passing all the colored pictures and referring to black and white sketches and descriptions, we found that the sketch and description of the immature Scissor-tailed Flycatcher fit our bird exactly. It had a deeply forked tail but not as long as most pictures show it.

Referring back to weather conditions, both of these observations followed a day of terrific south winds preceded by storms of tornadic force in the South and Southwest. Surely these were storm-driven birds.

Seeing that gorgeous Painted Bunting at the edge of the poppy bed deliberately eating dandelion seeds still seems like a dream, but what a pleasant one!—M. L. JONES, Fort Defiance State Park, Estherville, Iowa.