

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING IN IOWA

Species Black-throated Blue Warbler

How many One male

Location 908 E. Briggs, Fairfield, IA (Jefferson County, SE Iowa)

Type of habitat In my yard in town, a residential area with many mature trees. Near Chautauqua Park, which has a grove of large oaks. The bird was in a ginnala maple in my front yard.

When October 31, 1987 (Halloween)

Who Diane Porter, 908 East Briggs, Fairfield, IA 52556 (515) 472-7256

Others with you Michael Porter, who heard me describing it. He did not see the bird.

Others before or after you None

Description

At first I thought it was a junco, as it was dark above and light below, with a hooded appearance, and it was perched about 3 or 4 feet up in a tree, where juncos frequently sit between feeding sessions at my feeders. However, as soon as I really looked at it, I saw it was much smaller than a junco and had the small beak of a warbler. In fact, it was a warbler.

Unstreaked **blue** on top

Black throat

Distinctive white wing patch on each wing, but no wing bars

No white on face

The bird hopped from branch to branch for about 30 seconds. He moved fairly quickly. Then he was gone.

Similar species; how eliminated The bird really does not resemble other warblers. It looked more like a junco than any other species, but the bill size and shape, the bird's small size, the white wing patches, and the blue color all told against that.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? No. I was the only one deciding, and I was quite certain.

Viewing conditions: lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment It was a bright but overcast day. I was indoors in my office. I saw the bird through a large, closed window. The bird was about 8 to 10 feet from me. I am estimating this distance. I viewed the bird with my naked eyes. I have excellent vision at a distance, though I am far sighted and need glasses to read. I doubt that my binoculars would have focussed so close, had I had them handy, which I did not.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I have seen the female of this species on three occasions, all in the summer of 1986. I had never seen the male, and I've been on the lookout for one for years. Its field marks were quite well impressed on my mind, so that I knew instantly what I was seeing.

References and persons consulted before writing descriptions: I called out the field marks as enumerated above as I observed the bird (shouted them, actually - although this was not a life bird, it was my first view of the male, and I was pretty elated). Then I looked it up in one of the standard field guides. Then I called the Iowa bird line and reported it, mentioning the field marks. Then I rather belatedly jotted them down in my notebook. I did not add features that I had not said out loud while viewing the bird, even though I thought I remembered them when I looked in the book (such as black cheeks).

How long before field notes made? About 10 minutes *This form completed* Two months

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life)