

Confusing Grosbeaks

Sept 8, 1979

Wilson farm: T73-N, R-41W, Sec 26, NE Mills County, Ia.

Description: Brown above. White line over eye, fainter one below cheek. White bar on shoulder. Breast very buffy, ~~is~~ almost orange, + streaked. (For a moment I tried to make them young robins, but the bills are very thick). Belly white and streaked. White breast + sides orangest on one. The other was like this too, but the center of the breast was darker than the sides. No obvious crests in wing during flight.

Later I found one, closer <sup>but in poor light, which may be not</sup> but in poor light, which may have been one of the same birds: Dark brown on crown + wings. Breast buffy with center darker + dull orange. Breast + sides streaked. Belly white + not streaked. Throat buffy, with sharp contrast between it + breast. Broad white eye stripe. Buffy line around cheek below. Cheek dull brown. Back warm brown (dull rusty). ~~is~~ Upper back streaked w/ black, lower back + rump duller. Broad white patches in wings where upper wing bar would be, + scattered other spots. Under wing covert red.

Voice: the 2 birds were making calls I recognized as ~~Fringillid~~ Fringillid calls, but not the high, then Grosbeak call I know. More mellow.

Similar species: these are Rose-breasted Grosbeaks or Black-headed Grosbeaks. Or hybrids. Unfortunately, the identification depends on things I do not know.

Ruth Green informs me that some Rose-breasted Grosbeaks in early September are so orange on the breast one would think them Black-headed. Are these young Rose-breasted? What about the call?

## Grosbeaks

Do Rose-breasted Grosbeaks make a lower-pitched call, more mellow than the distinctive high-pitched call that is the only one I know for them? If you know, please tell me. These were odd-looking grosbeaks but I can't really identify them.

Light, etc.: First 2 birds were seen in the morning, ~~seen~~ about 8:45. Sunny. Birds NW of me w the top of a dead tree, little more than the full width of a road right-of-way away from me. ~~2~~

The later individual was in a leafy hawthorn tree,  $\pm$  20 feet NW of me in the afternoon. The alternating bright sun + patchy shade made observation tricky.

8.5x binoculars used.

I've seen a number of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks before + never saw one that resembled a small Robin. I've seen few Black-headed Grosbeaks (w Oregon).

Books: none in the morning I consulted Birds of North America + both Petersons before going out in the afternoon.

Written: this written Nov 30 from notes Sept. 8. The earlier notes ~~was~~ were written while the birds ~~was~~ <sup>were</sup> there, the other notes within 15 minutes of the birds' departure.

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