

## DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Blue Grosbeak How many? 1Location? 2½ miles W. of Argyle, Ia, at Croton Unit, Shimek F., S.W. Lee CountyType of habitat? Gravel road surrounded with open areas spotted with brush and small trees.When? date(s): June 15, 1984, appx. 7:00 am. time: \_\_\_\_\_ total time, about 5 secondsWho? your name and address: Robert I. Cecil, 327 S. 6th, Keokuk, Iowa 52632others with you: Noothers before or after you: No

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.

At the North edge of the Croton Unit (probably just outside the S.F. border), I was driving down a gravel road when I saw a Cowbird-sized bird sitting in the roadway. Assuming it was a Cowbird (it was overcast and fairly low brightness), I drove on until it flew up and landed ~~x~~ in a low shrub some 15 feet away. As it flew up, I noticed that it was a dull blue and noticed some rust color. I stopped the car and observed the bird briefly with binoculars and noted a dull blue bird with conspicuous rusty wingbars, black about face surrounding bill, a heavy bill, and size noticeably larger than an Indigo Bunting. After just a couple of seconds, the bird flew and I was unable to find it again. I noticed no call or other sound from the bird.

I must admit that a few hours after the sighting and identification, I few doubts arose that maybe I had misidentified an Indigo Bunting. Upon reflection, I recalled that It had never occurred to me that this <sup>might have been</sup> was an Indigo Bunting as I was watching it, and I had seen several that morning. In addition to this bird's much larger size, it clearly lacked the brilliant ~~lx~~ blue of a June Indigo Bunting.

As I am sure you know, Iowa Birds places Lee County out of the normal range of this species; but Peterson (1980) puts it within 50 miles and calls it expanding north, and the National Geographic Society Field Guide puts S.E. Ia. well within the normal summer range. I was also interested to read in the National Geographic Society Guide ~~xxxx~~ after the sighting that "In poor light, Blue Grosbeak resembles Brown Headed Cowbird".

I returned to this location several times over the next week but was unable to find the bird again.

Similar species and how eliminated: Indigo Bunting, see above.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? Yes

If yes, explain: Bob Cecil, see above

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

Light: Overcast, fairly low brightness ; Distance: appx. 15-20 feet.

Optics: 8x Zeiss Binoculars

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Limited, but I have seen and recorded one from N.W. Arkansas about 3 years ago. It was also a male.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Peterson (1980), Iowa Birds (Dinsmore et al), N.G.S. Field Guide to the Birds of North America (1983)How long before field notes made? 3 hours this form completed? This is ~~xxxx~~ generally a copy of notes made the day of the sighting.

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