

Middlewestern Prairie Region
(Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio)

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Pine Grosbeak 2. Number: 4
3. Location Hickory Hill Park, Iowa City, Johnson Co. Iowa
4. Date: 12 Jan. 1978 5. Time Bird seen: 0910 for about 2 minutes
0940 to 0950
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field): Two of the birds were found as it was sorting through some waxwings that were flitting about in some pines. I immediately recognized the birds as pine grosbeaks mostly from their silhouettes - the parakeet-like head and beak profile, the long dark tail and rather large bird size. In the poor light in which they were initially seen, their overall lack of color stood out. The wing bars stood out but the olive-rusty color was barely perceived. Later, in better light, the blue ^{on the} neck and head were well seen. The bills were dark and not so large as evening grosbeaks.
7. Description of voice, if heard: —
8. Description of behavior: The birds were first seen as they foraged in some pines. Later they were located in a bush, about 10 feet tall, from which they were eating tender parts.
9. Habitat - general: on edge of small forested areas, mostly deciduous with some pine plantings.
specific: Hickory Hill is about 100 acres of undeveloped park land with a creek + several branches running through it. Forested and grassy areas are interspersed.
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain: Nothing else looks much like the female plumaged pine grosbeaks. Evening grosbeaks have larger beaks + shorter tails. Crossbills have crossed bills. Small purple finches lack wingbars and the olive coloration.
11. Distance (how measured)? about 20 feet (paced) 12. Optical equipment: 8 power binoculars
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): overcast (snowing lightly at times) make color difficult initially. At the closest range, the greenish color was easily distinguished.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: Seen on numerous occasions in the Sierra Nevada of California.
15. Other observers: none at the time.
16. Did the others agree with your identification?
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: Tom Steudt saw the birds ~~at~~ the next morning between 0730 + 0800. He told me that Tom Kent also saw the birds at that time.
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: none in particular.
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 1/2 hour.

Signature

Address:

Date:

City, State:

Richard J. DeCoater

628 Reno St.

12 Jan. 1978

Iowa City, Iowa 52240