

Mrs Martha Grigsby
970 Amber Dr
Hummelstown, Pa 17036

November 14, 2008

Martha,

Thank you for your submission of your sighting of a Black-headed Grosbeak in Hummelstown from May 3,4 & 5, 2008. The Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee appreciates the time and labor involved in submitting your record.

After one round of voting, the sighting was unfortunately not accepted. Although the committee members felt that the bird could have been a Black-headed Grosbeak, and that the description was suggestive of one, some members thought that there were still some reasonable doubts about the identification.

Your sighting could very well be correct, unfortunately the committee has to go by the written description and some members felt that description fell a little short of a positive identification. There was no mention made of bill color, or streaking on the breast or lack thereof which would have helped to separate your bird from a 1st year male Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Thanks again for your report and please don't let this discourage you from future submissions. The committee depends on reports like yours to further the knowledge of Pennsylvania ornithological studies.

Sincerely,

Al Guarente
Chairman

Record # 788-01-2008

cc: Richard Williams
3 Parkside Dr
Hummelstowns, Pa 17036

PENNSYLVANIA RARE BIRD REPORT FORM

This form is presented as a convenience and guide. It can be used if desired, but is not necessary for submitting a report. Species requiring documentation are those on the Review List or not on the Official List of Birds of Pennsylvania. Send documentation to:

Nick Pulcinella, Secretary
Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee
613 Howard Ave.
West Chester, PA 19380
nickpul@bellatlantic.net

SPECIES (common and scientific name) Black-headed Grosbeak (Phenacurus melanocephalus)
Subspecies, if known _____

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS 1 SEX(ES) male

AGE(S) AND PLUMAGE(S) (e.g. immature, adult in breeding plumage; year for gulls; basic or alternate if you prefer those terms; state of molt if applicable):

DATE OF OBSERVATION May 3, 4 & 6 TIME 2008 mid-afternoon each day

LOCATION (city, borough, township) Hummelstown, PA

EXACT SITE (e.g. name of park, lake, road) Amber Drive

OBSERVER REPORTING:

Name Martha Grigsby
Address 970 Amber DR
City Hummelstown State PA ZIP 17036
e-mail (optional) grigsby.family@comcast.net phone (optional) _____

OTHER OBSERVERS (only those who saw and identified the bird with you):

Kevin Grigsby (husband) Emily Grigsby (15 yr old daughter)

HABITAT (e.g. mowed field, woodland edge, any other details)

backyard habitat with bird feeders

DISTANCE TO BIRD 22' from picture window to sunflower seed feeder

VIEWING CONDITIONS (sky, weather, position of sun relative to you)

clear, sun overhead

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED binoculars

DESCRIPTION (Include as much detail as you observed – size relative to other species present; "jizz"= e.g. posture, body shape, and proportions; colors and patterns of plumage; bill, eye, and leg characteristics; other features relevant to this individual): (taken from phone conversations and two emails, which are attached)

brilliant orange/tangerine breast and sleek black head.

Unlike Batt. Oriole the black on this bird's head did not extend down the back + wings but rather formed a separate "cap".

The bill was not slender or long enough to be a Batt. Oriole.

BEHAVIOR (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)

On each of the three visits it spent a few minutes feeding on sunflower seeds in the company of one or more Rose-breasted Grosbeaks.

VOCALIZATIONS None indicated

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE IF ANY:

Photograph _____ Video recording _____ Audio recording _____ Drawing _____

Photographer/recorder/illustrator:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

e-mail (optional) _____ phone (optional) _____

Please include a copy of the photograph or recording with your report, and accompany it with a complete written documentation if the identification is obvious to you. If you made a drawing, please include it.

IF THIS IS A DEAD BIRD:

General condition N/A

If collected (by permit), location of specimen if known _____

SEPARATION FROM SIMILAR SPECIES (how you eliminated others)

Eliminated Bath. Oriole (see Description section)

In Martha's 2nd email she makes size comparisons to a number of common year birds.

In our phone conversation she mentioned size of bird and bill as being same as Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

DISCUSSION - Anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:

(Please use an additional page if necessary)

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND/OR SIMILAR SPECIES

Experience with both male & female Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Baltimore Oriole

ARE YOU POSITIVE OF YOUR IDENTIFICATION? (why or why not)

In our phone conversation Martha expressed confidence in their identification. On one visit they actually held

REFERENCES CONSULTED:

During observation _____

After observation _____

Sibley's Guide to Birds up to their window border to match their visitor with the picture of the Black-headed Grosbeak

DATE OF THIS REPORT: 6-20-2008

SIGNATURE OF OBSERVER:

Richard Williams - Compiler for
Dauphin Co.

7-10-08

Greetings Nick,

Enclosed is a Rare Bird Report that I filled out for Martha Grigsby based upon one phone conversation and two emails, copies of which are enclosed.

I was notified a few days after the last sighting when the visiting Black-headed Grosbeak was mentioned in a conversation between Martha and Jan Getgood (Tom Johnson's mother). I contacted Martha and our phone & email conversations began. She seemed very familiar with her "backyard" and "feeder" birds and, consequently, aware of a different visitor. Making, at least, three visits in the course of a few days gave her, her husband Kevin, and daughter Emily opportunities to discuss and compare possible species. According to Martha they are positive with their ID as a male, adult Black-headed Grosbeak.

Dick

From: Martha Grigsby <grigsby.family@comcast.net>
To: Rwpuffin@aol.com
Subject: Re: Black-headed Grosbeak Sighting
Date: Sun, 11 May 2008 4:13 pm

Hi Dick,

I enjoyed our conversation as well. Here is the information you requested.

I observed a single Black-headed Grosbeak at my sunflower feeder Saturday May 3, Sunday May 4, and Tuesday May 6, 2008, mid-afternoon each day. My husband, Kevin, witnessed the weekend visits and my daughter, Emily (age 15) saw the bird with me Tuesday.

The bird's brilliant orange/tangerine breast and sleek black head attracted our attention. Unlike the Baltimore Oriole, the black on this bird's head did not extend down the back and wings but rather formed a separate "cap." Since I am familiar with the male and female Rose-breasted Grosbeaks which frequent our feeders, and their relatively short, blunt bills, I recognized that our new guest's bill was not slender or long enough to be that of a Baltimore Oriole's. I used The Sibley Guide to Birds as a reference to identify the Black-headed Grosbeak.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can provide any further information. I will, of course, contact you and take a photo if there is another sighting.

Sincerely,
Martha Grigsby
970 Amber Drive
Hummelstown, PA 17036
566-8350

----- Original message -----

From: Rwpuffin@aol.com
Greetings Martha,
Just thought I'd make email contact as well.
I enjoyed our conversation and look forward to receiving your written account of the Black-headed Grosbeak. It would be great if it would show up a couple more times this season.

Dick Williams
3 Parkside Dr.
Hummelstown
566-6562

Wondering what's for Dinner Tonight? [Get new twists on family favorites at AOL Food.](#)

From: Martha Grigsby <grigsby.family@comcast.net>
To: Rwpuffin@aol.com
Subject: Re: Black-headed Grosbeak Sighting
Date: Thu, 22 May 2008 5:56 pm

Hi Dick,

Please forgive my delay replying to this email. I have two high schoolers, one graduating in two weeks, and "life" got ahead of me.

1. The Black-headed Grosbeak stayed less than 5 minutes each of the 3 visits.
2. I was 22 feet from the black sunflower feeder, at eye level, looking through a large picture window in a wall of picture windows 3 stories above ground when I saw the bird. I used binoculars to improve visual acuity, especially regarding the black head to determine whether black continued down the bird's back or was a separate "cap" from the body. It was the latter.
3. I admit I am not a very good judge of bird size. However, considering the birds that frequent our feeders, this bird was larger than Goldfinches, Nuthatches, Black-capped Chickadees, and Tufted Titmouses; smaller than Blue Jays, Mourning Doves, and Pileated Woodpeckers; and about the same as Red-bellied Woodpeckers (only with a rounder rather than elongated body) and Cardinals.

I hope this is somewhat helpful. Of course, since I have been ready with the camera at the window the Black-headed Grosbeak has not returned. I will mark my calendar for the first week of May 2009 in case this one chooses to return.

Sincerely,
Martha Grigsby

----- Original message -----

From: Rwpuffin@aol.com

Some other information that would be helpful to include on the Rare Bird Report that I will complete for you.

1. About how long did it stay at the feeder each day?
2. What is the distance to your feeder? Did you use binoculars or scope or was it close enough for just visual observation?
3. Knowing how much detail the Ornithological Review Committee expects it would be beneficial to include more on your description, including relative size to other species present.
I'll "cut and paste" your info to a Rare Bird Report and submit it to the appropriate persons. One happens to be Tom Johnson, Jan Getgood's son, who is a member of the PA Review Committee.
Dick Williams

'Wondering what's for Dinner Tonight? [Get new twists on family favorites at AOL Food.](#)

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**Voting Tabulation – Round One**

Species: Black-headed Grosbeak Pheucticus melanocephalus

Date of Sighting: 3 May 2008 to 6 May 2008

County : DAUPHIN

Location : HUMMELSTOWN

Observer(s): Martha Grigsby, Kevin Grigsby, Emily Grigsby

Date of Submission: 2008

Submitted by: Richard Williams

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

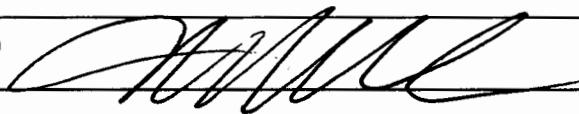
Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
R. Wiltraut			X					
A. Guarente					X			
T. Johnson				X				
B. Coulter				X				
C. Rutt					X			
J. Heller			X					
G. Malosh				X				
TOTALS			2	3	2			
DECISION				X				

Comments:

2/5

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

10/30/08