

PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE
210 Welcome Ave. Norwood, PA 19074

8 February 2001

Hart Rufe
c/o Ken Kitson
Bucks County Compiler
704 Headquarters Rd
Ottsville, PA 18702

Dear Hart,

Thank you for submitting documentation on the Brewer's Blackbird observed on 19 December 1998 during the Southern Bucks County CBC (or perhaps the documentation was passed along to us from the CBC or county compiler). After careful review, the committee regrets that it cannot accept this record. A majority of members felt that it was very likely a Brewer's but that the description, resting on the bird's general and bill size plus shorter and rounded tail, was not sufficient to eliminate a Common Grackle. The shortest Common Grackles' tails in winter are only a few millimeters longer than a Brewer's tail.

The committee emphasizes that non-acceptance does not mean that the bird was not the species reported, but rather that the committee believes the documentation submitted does not support the identification conclusively.

We hope that this will not discourage you from submitting documentation on any rarities you may find in the future.

Finally, the committee apologizes for the unacceptably long delay before all members were able to vote on the record. Circumstances beyond our control caused the problem, and we believe that we are back on a timely track.

Sincerely,

For the Committee:
Paul Hess, Chairman

P.S. Beginning this year observers will receive postcards acknowledging that the committee has received their documentation. In addition, whereas observers formerly were notified only when reports were not accepted (in disappointing or irritating letters like this one), they will now receive cards announcing that their records *have* been accepted.

Record #861-04-1998

Unusual Bird Report Form for Christmas Bird Counts

Bucky

CBC Name (not bird club name): SOUTHERN BUCKS COUNTY CBC Date: DEC. 19, 1998

Species (include number, age, sex etc. as appropriate): BREWERS BLACKBIRD (1)

Observer: HART RUFÉ Other observers who saw bird: DIANE ALLISON

86-1-198

Description (Describe size, color and pattern above and below, head, bill, tail, wings etc. as needed. Use this space for a drawing if helpful. Include photos if available.):

The bird was a shiny blue/black, smaller than a grackle and larger than a redwing blackbird. The bill was slightly smaller than a grackle's bill, but most significantly, its tail was shorter than the grackle's, and round, not the "keel-hull" tail of the grackle.

When the bird left the flock of starlings, red-wings blackbirds and grackle it was travelling with, it flew off alone, and completely left the area.

Sounds made, if any: None

Conditions of observation (Time of day, weather, duration of observation, distance to bird, optics used, etc.):

Bird seen early afternoon, cloudy. We followed the bird for 15 minutes as it moved with the flock, with binoculars. It perched in a tree and we

Behavior and Habitat (What was the bird doing while you watched it? What habitat was it in?): The bird was travelling with a mixed flock of starlings, redwings and a grackle. watched it through the Observer for about

Similar Species (What similar species might be in your area in winter? How did you eliminate them from consideration?): 5 min.

The only similar species it might possibly have been confused with would be a Rusty Blackbird. However, it did not have any of the brown markings on it that a Rusty would have in the winter. Both observers have previously seen numerous Brewer's Blackbirds.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round One

Species: Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)

Date of Sighting: 19 December 1998 to 19 December 1998

Location: SOUTHERN BUCKS COUNTY

County: BUCKS

Observer(s): Hart Rufe, Diane Allison

Date of Submission: 1998

Submitted by: Hart Rufe

WRITTEN DESCRIPTION YES PHOTO NO SPECIMEN NO RECORDING NO

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
D. Couchman				X	X			
T. Floyd								X
P. Hess			X					
R. Ickes				X				
J. McWilliams				X				
B. Reid					X			X 1
P. Rodewald			X					
TOTALS			2	2	2			2 1
DECISION				X				

Comments: 2/4/0

Signature (Secretary):

Date: