

DOCUMENTATION OF SINGLE-OBSERVER SIGHT RECORD

Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) -- 1 female

DATE: 22 October 2000 TIME: 0900

LOCATION: Moraine State Park, Butler County, Pennsylvania

HABITAT: trees at woodland edge near shore of a Lake Arthur cove

OBSERVER: Paul Hess, 1412 Hawthorne St., Natrona Heights, PA 15065

OBSERVATION CONDITIONS: cloudless sky with low sun to my left as I faced south. I watched the bird for about 30 seconds through Leica 8 x 32 binoculars as it perched in the crown of a tree about 50 feet up and 50 feet away, conveniently right next to a female Rusty Blackbird. Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles were flying and perched nearby.

DESCRIPTION, from brief notes made at the time:

* Obviously a blackbird, with slightly slimmer and longer-tailed appearance than the adjacent Rusty.

* Plumage plain, dull grayish-brown. The tint seemed a slightly "warmer" brown in the low early-morning sun than a Brewer's female usually appears, but still rather drab compared to the female Rusty's beautiful light rust in the low sun.

* Bill sharply pointed and medium length (longer than a cowbird's would be, for example, but slightly shorter than the directly compared Rusty's bill).

* Eye was dark, in notable contrast to the Rusty's light eye.

SEPARATION FROM SIMILAR SPECIES: Comparisons with the adjacent Rusty were as noted above. The unmarked dull hue contrasted with the warmer and well marked female Red-winged Blackbirds. The much longer tail, slimmer appearance, and longer bill contrasted with what a Brown-headed Cowbird would show (none were present). The bird was smaller overall and its general shape was conspicuously slimmer, shorter-tailed, and smaller-billed than the nearby Common Grackles.

Perhaps two other dull gray-brown dark-eyed female "blackbirds," Shiny Cowbird and Bronzed Cowbird, should be separated (as I have not thought to do in the past) -- especially because of the Shiny's range expansion). The Bronzed female, which I have seen often in sw. New Mexico, has a much heavier bill and stouter appearance than Brewer's. I have not seen a Shiny, but several authoritative references (Jaramillo & Burke, Howell & Webb, Pyle, Sibley) point to a smaller and shorter-tailed bird than a Brewer's, with a jizz less long and slender than a Brewer's because of the shorter tail.

Brewer's Blackbird (continued) --

COMMENTS: I spotted it during an Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania outing. Unfortunately it flew away an instant after I was satisfied distinguishing it from the Rusty and yelled for others to come and look. One observer next to me said she "thought it looked different" from the Rusty, but couldn't really support the ID. It did not reappear during the 10-15 minutes before the group left the site.

Interestingly, this bird was present almost exactly one year after two were seen at Moraine S.P. on a Society outing 24 October 1999.

EXPERIENCE WITH SPECIES: Brewer's Blackbird was the most abundant resident bird in my yard, neighborhood, and region when I grew up in suburban Los Angeles. I saw thousands there over more than a decade, and have seen hundreds since then in the West and Midwest.

This report is written 23 October 2000 from notes taken just after the sighting.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul Hess". The signature is written in dark ink and is located in the lower right quadrant of the page.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form- Round One

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

Date of Sighting: 22 October 2000 to 22 October 2000

Location: MORaine STATE PARK

County: BUTLER

Observer(s): Paul Hess

Date of Submission: 2000

Submitted by: Paul Hess

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

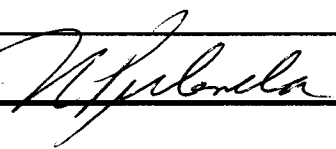
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead			X					
D. Couchman			X					
P. Hess								X
R. Jones J. Stanley			X					
B. Reid			X					
B. Lebermann P. Rodewald			X					
M. Sharp			X					
TOTALS			6					1
DECISION								

Comments: 6/0/1

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 11/4/01