

February 22, 2005

Ron French
3469 Limekiln Pike
Chalfont PA 18914

Thank you for sending the description of the Brewer's Blackbirds you found on Bucks Co. Christmas count on Dec. 16, 2001. After going 2 rounds with the committee it ended up a split decision with 3 members accepting the records and 4 not accepting it. The one character that those who did not accept the report felt was insufficient was the lack of a clear description of the bill which would have ruled out a cowbird (either Shiny or Brown-headed) more conclusively.

Thankfully Brewer's Blackbird was removed from the review list in 2003. This is a species familiar to birder's and which poses more of a problem in the description than in the identification. It is a rare but regular fall-early spring visitor to the state and has a fairly predictable pattern of occurrence. The records committee felt that there was not much else to be gained from reviewing additional documentation of the species.

Sincerely

Matt Sharp
Chair: Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee.

861-02-2001

12/16/01 - Approx. 1 pm to 1:10 pm

Weather: Clear and sunny. About 40 degrees.

Location: Area #2 - 2770 Dahl Road, Milford Township, Steinburg, Bucks Count, PA.

Sighting: Brewer's Blackbird- female - probably an immature bird

During our annual Christmas Bird Count John Yerger and I sighted a Brewer's Blackbird in a tree by some cornfields on Dahl Road at the location above. When first seen I dismissed the bird as just a Starling but with John's insistence I looked more closely and realized it indeed was not a Starling but rather a female blackbird. I quickly got my scope and I noticed first that it had a dark eye, was rather plain in color with an olivish wash down the breast and belly.

This bird also had an olivish supercillium and submoustachial stripe. This had me thrown at first. The back of the bird was not visible when perched but in flight it was a dark brownish gray. The size reminded me of a Rusty Blackbird but it did not have any rust on it and had a dark eye. It did have the shorter bill of a blackbird and also the right length of tail and no wing bars. It was rather plain-looking overall. The bird flew to a second tree and then on to a third. I watched it closely with my Kowa turned up to 50 power and had the best looks possible at each tree that it perched in. We were about 100 to 150 feet away from the bird when it was closest to us on first sighting it. John and I were calling out our observations to each other as we looked at the bird and agreed on all of the field marks mentioned above. We took turns looking at it through the scope.

The bird moved slightly about the branches in a very blackbird-like way (walking, not hopping). The legs appeared dark. I decided to look in the book we had with us in the car although I leaned towards Brewer's Blackbird at this point. Luckily we had the PetersonGuide with us, "A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies". The plate in this book best illustrates the supercillium and submoustachial stripes that I mention above. I believe that the bird we saw is an immature female Brewer's Blackbird.

Kaufman's And Sibley's Guides were also checked when I got home but neither has a plate showing this plumage. I had been in Ventura, California in September for a week and observed this species daily. Red-winged Blackbird, female Common Grackle, and even the various species of Cowbirds were considered but none except Brewer's meet the criteria for this species.

Ron French
3469 Limekiln Pike
Chalfont, PA 18914

John Yerger
11710 Colman Rd.
Phila., PA 19154

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round Two

Species: Brewer's Blackbird (Euphagus cyanocephalus)

Date of Sighting: 16 December 2001 to 16 December 2001

Location: STEINBERG

County : BUCKS

Observer(s): Ron French, John Yerger

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: Ron French, John Yerger

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

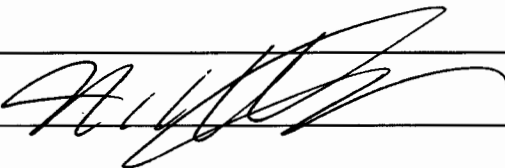
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
G. Armistead								
D. Heathcote			X					
P. Hess				X				
J. Stanley			X	X				
E. Witmer			X					
R. Leberman				X				
M. Sharp			X					
TOTALS			3	3				
DECISION				X				

Comments: 3/3

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

2/10/04

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round One

Species: Brewer's Blackbird (Euphagus cyanocephalus)

Date of Sighting: 16 December 2001 to 16 December 2001

Location: STEINBURG

County: BUCKS

Observer(s): Ron French, John Yerger

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: Ron French, John Yerger

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

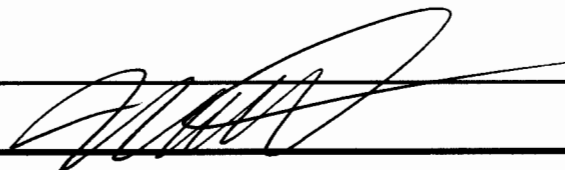
Specimen: No

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. Heathcote			X					
P. Hess			X					
J. Stanley			X					
E. Witmer			X					
R. Leberman			X	X				
M. Sharp			X					
TOTALS			5	2				
DECISION								

Comments: 5/2 low to 2nd round

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 8/25/03