

Morningside College

SIOUX CITY, IOWA

November 19, 1933

Dear Mr. DuMont:

The advance copy of your revised Iowa list came in today, as you advised it would. I have spent about three hours this afternoon in looking through. However, this short time has only allowed me to skim through it. I will send this copy in the morning to Ann Arbor, although I hate to part with it so soon. It will get a more critical examination there, and no doubt a fairer one, too. Prof. Swenk is preparing a review of the new Missouri list.

It is going to take a pretty fine comb to gather up enough criticisms to make up a review of even medium length. Encomiums will be easy and plentiful. However, you are to be congratulated on the completion of a fine piece of work, and I want to be among the first to offer my congratulations. Of course, now the fun for the rest of us will be to try find some flaws in it. You can be sure that it will be read critically by many. And, those of us in Iowa will wait with much curiosity to see just what criticisms will be made.

I am a little surprised at the rather short length of your bibliography. I won't have time until later to check up to see whether you have left out any county lists.

As I skimmed through it I jotted down a few thoughts or questions that arose in my mind--just impressions which, of course, I have not had time yet to verify. Thus:

Holboell's Grebe. I do not know of any specimen for Woodbury County, and am skeptical. I know that Dr. Rich listed it, and so did Bennett, but on what ground?

Cory's Least Bittern. Field observation was published in I.O.U. Bulletin, but should that establish it?

Western Mourning Dove in western Iowa. This gives me a hard jolt, but maybe it is so.

Say's Phoebe. Rather slender evidence.

Rock Wren. Dr. Rich once told me that he had picked up a tail feather (possibly more than one) near the nest of his Rock Wren nest, and that he had submitted this feather to some authority (perhaps R.M. Anderson) who verified the identification. Otherwise I would be quite skeptical here. However, I believe Youngworth said that he had recently found the Rock Wren in the vicinity of Yankton, S.D. But it does seem strange that this bird would get away over to the northeast corner of Iowa.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Bennett quotes me as authority for it in the Sioux City region. I found this bird across the Missouri river in Nebraska, but never in Woodbury County, Iowa. I don't know what Mrs. Bailey's record was. It is certainly rare. Since the publication of Miss Weir's note on this bird at Hawarden, Iowa, I have almost regretted that we published it. The nest was abnormal, but we found several other cases in the literature of a pendant nest of this species. Miss Weir gave a very full description of the coloring and behavior of the birds. But Swenk, in editing the note, deleted all this description as

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superfluous; now that copy and evidence is lost. The admission of the note to publication was based mainly on this descriptive account of the bird. Now, at this short time later I can't help entertain some doubt about the correct identification, and the evidence is lacking. Of course, the only other thing it could have been was a Warbling Vireo, which is common.

Prothonotary Warbler. I guess you overlooked my note on nesting of this species in Dickinson County. (Wilson Bull. 1914)

Oven-bird. Am surprised that Bennett and Youngworth report this species breeding in Woodbury County. Maybe so, but I'd like to know what the evidence is.

Louisiana Water-Thrush. I think I would now repudiate my former estimate of the status of this species around Sioux City. As a matter of fact, I know less about it now than I did in 1914.

Canada Warbler. This is all right. I have made at least a couple of definite field observations of this bird in Woodbury County. I don't know what list you quoted me from on this species. Within my experience, however, it is rare here.

Western Meadowlark. I am glad that you did not assign magna definitely to this part of the state. There has been more or less argument about that, and I have always maintained that it wasn't here. I think Spiker claims to have found it here. And some of the Nebraska people claimed to have heard in Dakota Co., Nebraska, just across the river from Sioux City. But all these claims have been based on song, I think.

Have not had the time yet to study your distribution of the Red-wings in the state. They seem to be a puzzling lot, as to distribution.

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That's enough for one sitting.

I do not hesitate to say that you have made a real contribution to Iowa ornithology.

I might add that I am not at all convinced that the common Nighthawk in northwestern Iowa is sennetti. This may breed here, but I think the dark subspecies is the common one. Of course, time will have to tell about this.

Sincerely yours,

T. C. Stephens

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