

By the Wayside...



Louisiana Heron in Ashland and Bayfield Counties

On May 3, 1976, at 10:20 a.m. I (and five members of my Ornithology class) had a positive sighting of a Louisiana Heron in Prentice Park in Ashland, Wisconsin.

The heron was first sighted when it flushed from cattails near the road. It landed about 50 yards from the van we were in. I identified it as a Louisiana Heron through 10x50 Jason field glasses (Model #192). After observing it for about 3 minutes I set up the Questar telescope and further observed the bird for about 7 minutes.

The bird was a dark color when comparing it to the Great Blues which were near by. The bill was bluish and the plumes on the head and back were very visible. The bird didn't stand still but rather walked along the shore line--it did not feed. When it flew, the white belly and white under the wings were very visible. It landed in a marsh but out of sight.

My students were unaware of the identity of the bird but correctly identified it by comparing it with pictures in *Birds of North America* - Robbins, et al.

Although this was my first sighting of this species, I feel very positive about its identification

Richard Verch
Northland College
Ashland, Wisconsin 54806

Date: May 3, 1976

Place: Fish Creek Marsh, Bayfield County

Length of Observation: 12:30 P.M. to 1:45 P.M. CDT (One hour and 15 Minutes)

Habitat: Freshwater marsh consisting mainly of cattail and *Sagittaria* species and bordered by willow and alder species.

Distance from Bird: Approximately 800 feet

Field Glass Power: Bausch and Lomb 20x spotting scope: Bausch and Lomb 7x35 binoculars.

Weather: Partly cloudy and sunny throughout observation period: 46° F; Winds blowing from the WNW to NW (generally inland off Lake Superior) at 8-12 mph at beginning of observation. The winds were

increasing during the observation and by 1:45 p.m. the wind speed had increased to 12-18 mph making conditions very cold and uncomfortable in exposed and open areas. The Louisiana Heron as well as the Great Blue Herons disappeared from the open areas at this time. These latter conditions prevailed throughout the remainder of the day.

Description: A single adult bird roosting alongside two adult Great Blue Herons in the roots of a large downed tree on a narrow strip of higher ground within the marsh. The birds were 2-4 feet off the ground; below was a narrow exposed muddy beach adjacent to an open water channel about 200 feet wide. Rest of the area between me and the birds was cattail and *Sagitaria*. The Louisiana Heron was much smaller than the Great Blue Heron, almost half their size. The bill was pale bluish-white; entire front of neck, breast and belly was white; head was blue-gray with a narrow white stripe around eye area, but due to the great distance it could not be determined if it was a plume or just a stripe through the head; the sides and back of neck blue-gray (more to bluish side); back and wings appeared blue-gray in the sun, but brownish-gray when the bird would turn its back to me; legs were orange to orange-yellow in color. Neck appeared extremely long in relation to body size. No streaking or barring in white of neck, breast or belly.

Observers: David A. Bratley, Washburn, Wisconsin
Doris Leppla, Ashland, Wisconsin

Remarks: This was the same bird observed earlier that day in Prentice Park, Ashland County, by Richard Verch. My observation placed the Louisiana Heron only 0.25 miles west of the Ashland County sighting, but well within Bayfield County.

David A. Bratley
Box 518
Washburn, Wis. 54891

Two Louisiana Herons seen in Winnebago County

Date: May 15, 1976

Size: Smaller than Great Blue [Heron]

Shape: Similar to Great Blue [Heron]

Plumage: Blue-gray head with white plumes, reddish neck with white frontal line, White belly, buffy patch on back.

Voice: None

Traits distinguishing from similar species: White belly, buffy back, white head plumes.

Place and length of observation: Observed daily (12:00 to 3:00) for about two weeks (Tom Ziebell)

Habitat: Ditch or pond along Rush Creek

Distance from bird and glass power: Up to 100 feet, 7x - 40x.

Other Comments: Discovered by Tom Ziebell; also observed by Dr. Kaspar, Bettie Harriman, Katherine Rill and others (Bob Jansen, etc.). Pictures were taken.

Bruce Parfitt
806 Scott St.
Oshkosh, Wis. 54901

Louisiana Heron in LaCrosse County, April 24, 1976

[The] bird was first found by Howard Young on [the] preceding day in a marsh off County Hwy. ZN in LaCrosse County. I observed it with a 30x scope at about 50 yards while [the] bird was standing on a patch of mud. The morning was overcast and visibility was somewhat poor. I saw a heron somewhat larger than a green heron. Dark body with a white belly. A skinny white plume. I watched it for 10 or 15 minutes.

Jerome Rosso
2523 S. 30th St.
LaCrosse, Wis.

Chestnut-collared Longspur in Ashland County

One male in breeding plumage was observed from 30 and 50 feet at 6:00 p.m., 27 May for 2 to 3 minutes, at the south end of Outer Island where a sand point protrudes into the water. The bird flushed from grasses where the point was 70 yards wide and had fairly thick grasses with scattered driftwood. The bird landed in full view on the ground, flew, relanded in another easily observable ground location, then flew south down the point. I then went for my camera but could not locate the bird again.

Sparrow-sized - I quote here from my notes taken at the time: "Underparts black, ending in horizontal line on chest; chest/face tan, with dark line through eye, light line above and black cap. Chestnut back of neck, brown streaky bars; tail center black; noticeable white on both sides of tail, wide at middle on each side - didn't notice if white extended all the way to end of sides; center of tail dark."

I have never seen a Chestnut-collared Longspur before. I know all plumages of Lapland Longspur well, with experience in Wisconsin, Massachusetts and two summers on that species Greenland breeding grounds.

James Harris
7983 Maurer Rd., R.R. 2
Cross Plains, Wi. 53528

House Finch in Waukesha

Seen on feeder in suburban yard, 15 feet distant, 8x glasses, 7:30 p.m., May 8. A single bird, at first taken for a siskin, but bill heavier, more conical; bird slightly larger than a siskin, though similarly marked (brown stripes above and below), and with longer, nearly unnotched tail. Head plain, definitely not a purple finch - facial pattern lacking. Bird recognized ample experience in California and northern New Jersey, as female House Finch. Observed for 5 minutes in adequate light.

Linda Safir
18925 Lower Luthmoor Dr.
Brookfield, Wis. 53005

A Snowy Egret in Fond du Lac County

On April 16, 1967, at about 5:00 in the afternoon, by father, Rockne Knuth, and I were birding along CTH "N" at the north end of Eldorado Marsh in Fond du Lac County. We saw a small white heron feeding along the edge of a small dugout pond on the north side of the highway about 75 yards away from us. Thinking it may be a Cattle Egret we looked through our 7x35 binoculars to see if we could see a yellow or orange bill. The bill appeared to be dark and we noticed that the bird had a crest. We suspected that the bird might probably be a Snowy Egret. We approached it more closely. When we were about 30 yards away from it, it took off and flew in front of us. We looked at the legs carefully as it flew past us and saw that its legs were black and its feet were yellow. We could also see its thin black bill and knew it was a Snowy Egret.

Kevin Knuth
80 N. Berger Pkwy.
Fond du Lac, Wi. 54935

An Immature Black-legged Kittiwake in Fond du Lac

On April 26, 1976, at about 6:30 pm, my son Kevin and I were driving along the Supple's Marsh road that runs between the marsh and Lake Winnebago. We saw a gull sitting on the road which I at first took to be a Bonaparte's Gull still in winter plumage. We were able to drive up next to the bird and I was puzzled by the birds yellow bill and relatively large size (as compared to a Bonaparte's Gull). I got out of the car and walked up to the bird. It made no attempt to escape and I was able to pick it up. The bird was obviously either very ill or exhausted.

In the hand it was identified as an immature Black-legged Kittiwake by the following characters: Bill-yellow with a faint dark ring; Legs - black or very dark brownish; Tail- notched with a dark band across the tip; Lead primaries dark, forming a dark triangular pattern; a dark diagonal line from the shoulder to the posterior base of the wing; a dark spot on the cheeks and a crescent-like ring on the nape of the neck.

The bird was kept overnight in an attempt to revive it. It was dead, however, by morning and the specimen retained to be turned over to the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. Photographs of the bird are available.

Rockne Knuth
80N. Berger Pkwy.
Fond du Lac, Wi. 54935

Mute Swan in Waukesha County



Enclosed is photo of Mute Swan, presumably wild, seen in April by Mrs. Walter Guse by her home on Okauchee Lake in Waukesha County (one of two present).

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia misisippiensis*) sighted at Crex Meadows

On May 27, 1976 at approximately 1:00 p.m. the ornithology class from the University of Minnesota, Duluth, sighted a Mississippi Kite near the rest area in the northeast corner of the refuge. The species was first observed by a student, Howard Kuusisto, who drew our attention to the bird. Our initial reaction was a male adult Harrier due to its size, erratic flight, and gray coloration. Upon more careful examination, we failed to see any white on the rump, noticed the falcon-like wings, and its hawking of insects in mid-air. By this time we were both quite convinced the species was a kite since it did not fit the characteristics of any falcon. As we continued to observe the bird another student, Joann Hanowski, began to read the description of kites from C.S. Robbins' **Field Guide To The Birds of North America**. The elimination process was quick since the potential range, size, plumage, and behavior fit this species only.

The length of the initial observation was approximately five continuous minutes during which the bird repeatedly made a loop from the rest area south to the marsh-open water and then back again. The bird flew out of view for about five minutes, then it returned for an additional two minute observation period. The distance to the bird for the majority of the period varied from about 25 to 150 meters. The light obviously varied during the period depending on the bird's position relative to the sun, but at times was perfect to note the plumage coloration accurately. The following characteristics formed the basis of identification: 1) size was slightly smaller than a Harrier; 2) plumage was a uniform gray with the lining of the wing slightly darker than the secondaries and primaries, and narrow alternate dark gray - light gray barring on the tail noticeable only when the bird banked and spread its tail under bright sunlight; 3) the long, narrow, falcon-like wings; 4) the habit of snatching insects in mid-air, and 5) the erratic swallow-like flight. The sighting may represent an expansion attempt northward since Minnesota has two recent observations of the species by Litkey (**Loon** 45:131) and Janssen (**Loon** 47:130).

Dr. Pershing B. Hofslund, Professor and Gerald J. Niemi, graduate student, University of Minnesota, Duluth, Biology Department, Duluth, Minnesota 55812.