

Bewick's Wren – Randolph County

Rejected for the State List (2 For and 5 Against)

Committee Member Comments:

CM1: In this case, it would have been helpful to have a photograph of the bird in question, especially since it could be easy to confuse an odd-colored Carolina Wren with a Bewick's Wren. Given that however, full description was thoroughly written and is good for Bewick's Wren. Furthermore, the observer has had many years of experience with Bewick's Wren out west.

CM2: This record presents some challenges for decision without a photograph of the actual bird. The description provided by the observer touches on most of the salient features of Bewick's Wren; long tail and lack of cinnamon or rufous on the chest, belly, flanks and lateral neck, and gray brown color of the crown, nape, back and wings. The white at the tip of the lateral tail feathers is more obvious in Bewick's Wren, but can also be seen to a lesser degree in Carolina Wren. There is no discussion of juvenile Carolina Wren, which can be browner than adults, but have some cinnamon on posterior flanks. The comment about grayer birds in Colorado doesn't apply here as interior western Bewick's Wrens are generally grayer than birds in Texas and Arkansas. It is also worth noting the extensive experience of the observer with this species. It is worth mentioning that the last Bewick's Wren reported on eBird west of Chattanooga, TN was in 2017 in Canada. Most West Virginia records on eBird are historical and lack photographs. However, western birds continue to regularly show up in West Virginia.

CM3: This reviewer votes against the inclusion of the Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*) reported in Randolph County on the state list for the following reasons: A Bewick's wren won't typically show up in West Virginia while vagrant sightings are always possible. This seems like the wrong time of year for a western vagrant. No physical evidence was presented such as photograph or audio recording to support the identification. A September date of Carolina Wren may be confused with the similar-sized Bewick's Wren when CAWR underparts of juveniles and adult are paler. This coupled with the observation that the bird's gray-brown color was different from the Bewick's Wren of his 25 years of experience in Colorado. The observer's report is detailed and the reviewer does not believe there is enough in the write-up to substantiate a Bewick's vote. Kevin J. McGowan of Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, created a report concerning recent confusion of a possible Bewick's Wren in New York State. (<https://www.birds.cornell.edu/crows/Wrentails.htm>). Providing more information on the separation of Bewick's and Carolina Wrens.

CM4: Not enough evidence to support this ID. No photographs, no corroborating individuals.

CM5: I had a tough time with this one wanted to see a photo or have another "smoking gun" clue. Since this is just a review species and has been in the state in the past the writer's excellent write up along with extensive experience with more western sub-species of Bewick's Wren convinced me to go along with the proposal. Are there light-colored Carolina Wrens? Yes. Could this just be a lighter colored Carolina? Sure, but the overall description and noting of the "end" white spots on the outer rectrix give it a basis to be a Bewick's. Had this been a first state record I would have required a photo and more sightings.

CM6: The description was very good for the species, and I applaud the observer for recording the bird. I think that in the end though, the evidence does not rule out the much more expected Carolina Wren.

This may indeed be a Bewick's Wren, but there is just too much uncertainty for me to recommend approval. The coloration of Carolina Wrens can also be rather grayish, and the bird's white markings on the tail may also be observed on Carolina Wrens at times. I hope it was a Bewick's, and while I do not rule that out, I just do not think there is enough here to approve with a single observer and no media.

CM7: Based on the description of the bird with gray-brown color, outer tail spots and no rufous on the breast or flanks, the bird fits the description of a Bewick's Wren. The person who submitted the report also has experience with western Bewick's Wren in Colorado. The description fits the species but was only seen by one individual who took no photographs and the very similar Carolina Wren is ubiquitous with a great deal of variability in its markings. Bewick's Wren is already on the Official Review List, so it doesn't require full photographic documentation, but this species has not been seen in decades in the state. Given the rarity of the species, I feel that more than just someone's word will be necessary to add a sighting to the State List. Thus, I am voting against adding this sighting to the State List.