

WV BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE REPORT FORM
Please Type or Print Legibly

Species: Brewer's Blackbird Number: (leave blank)
Location: Beard WV, Pocahontas Co. Date: Dec. 14, 2016 Time: 11:30 a.m.
Bird Seen: Dec 10, 2016 To: Dec 14, 2016 Age/Sex: Unknown

Description: In lieu of physical material substantiating a record (e.g., specimen, diagnostic photograph, vocal recordings) a complete written description can serve as verification for the biological record. Please be as thorough as your field notes allow. Do not feel constrained by the space provided. Additional supporting descriptions/illustrations may be attached. Note that photographs or recordings WILL NOT BE RETURNED but become part of the permanent record for the observation.

Structure: (Overall size and shape plus details on the head, feet, tail, etc.)

- Medium-sized black bird
- Smaller than a common grackle. Larger than a cowbird.
- Short tail relative to a grackle, and perhaps even a little shorter than one might expect for a bird of that size.
- Dramatic yellow eyes
- Black legs and beak

Plumage: (e.g. markings, coloration, molt)

Glossy black with a more dramatically iridescent head and neck. No brown observed at all.

Description of any vocalizations, if heard:

None

Description of behavior:

Not seen on the feeders above the ground. Seen feeding on the ground on (presumed) bits of seeds under the black oil sunflower feeder and to a lesser extent on the safflower feeder. Also foraged in the leaf litter where it walked about, tossing leaves. Gait not that of previously

observed common grackle or cowbird. Not like a rusty blackbird (seen previously in a nearby wetland area)

Leaf litter is allowed to accumulate and a couple of brush piles provide additional shelter.

Habitat: (General and Specific)

Mountainous river valley with open pastureland bordered by mature mixed hardwood forest. The horse feeder areas where observed are on the forest edge with a yard of 3-4 acres, a small pond and adjacent pastureland with horses. The feeder area is roughly 1/4 acre scattered around the horse shrubs and includes stands for birds and trees.

Circumstances of observation: (Include details of distance to bird, optics employed, lighting in relation to observer and the bird)

First observed the morning of Dec 10 at the base of a safflower feeder. Appeared intermittently in the morning hours about 20-30 feet away. (Queries made to others and report to eBird filed Dec. 14, 2016.)
Used Swarovski EL 8.5x42 binoculars. (Unable to fix a scope due to transient nature of the bird.) Pictures taken with Apple iPhone.

Previous experience with this species:

Limited. May have seen in Arizona < 10 years ago.

Experiences with similarly appearing species which are eliminated by your description: (Please be specific)

Often see Brown-headed cowbirds, common grackles, and Redwing blackbirds at this location. Within a mile or so also have seen Rusty blackbirds. I immediately knew this bird was different from the others.
- see page 3 -

Other observers: (Names, Addresses, E-mail please)

If the others agree with your identification they can sign this form here. If they care to provide additional details they can submit their own report.

[Redacted area]

Additional observer signature:

[Redacted signature box]

Additional observer signature:

[Empty signature box]

Additional observer signature:

[Empty signature box]

Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and especially how did these influence this description:

- Shared pic on Facebook in "What's this Bird?" and "Mountain State Birders" with mixed comments for Rusty/Brewers/Common Grackle. Made decision based on my experience with birds in the heard area.
- iPhone app "iBird Pro" (Guide to Birds) Mitch Waite Group
- All About Birds (and Birds of North America)
- Crossley's Guide

How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?

Dec. 14, 2016 report to eBird

Name:

Address:

Date:

Signature:

Mail to: WV Bird Records Committee

Attn: Wil Hershberger

170 Stallion Ct.

Hedgesville, WV 25427

Or E-mail to:

wilhershberger@mac.com

Please use the space below to add any appropriate details you feel were missing from the above form or to expand on any answers whose allotted space was insufficient for a complete response:

Experiences (cont.)

Opinions

Not a Common grackle: True, it had a yellow eye- but the bird was smaller and had a "two-toned" appearance. Did not have a characteristic Grackle tail and foraged differently in that it was more deliberate, had a more measured gait, and overall seemed slower.

Not a Rusty blackbird (also seen in a wetland area ~ a mile away previously). Did not have any brown/tan "rusty" appearance.


Not a Brown-headed Cowbird because of plumage and behavior. Also, the bird in question was larger.

Attachments:

- ① Copy of Dec. 14 eBird report. (Note additional information was provided to Mike Slaven.)
- ② Two pics - enlarged.
- ③ March 11, 2017 eBird report of additional sighting

Addendum:

Beard location is near Hillsboro WV. Location of sighting is our home "Ravens' Roost" @
Lat. 38.0823 ; Long. -80.2292.



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Location

Beard WV, Pocahontas County, West Virginia, US (Map)

Date and Effort

Wed Dec 14, 2016 11:30 AM

Protocol: Traveling

Party Size: 2

Duration: 3 hour(s), 15 minute(s)

Distance: 3.0 mile(s)

Observers:

Species

29 species total

[Hide Media](#)

8 Canada Goose

25 Mallard

1 Northern Harrier

"Brown" female or juvenile hunting in the prison pond field.

4 Wilson's Snipe

Slumbering and feeding in the eastern shallows of the prison pond.

6 Mourning Dove

1 Belted Kingfisher

at Joel's pond

Age & Sex

	Juvenile	Immature	Adult	Age Unknown
Male				1
Female				
Sex Unknown				

1 Red-bellied Woodpecker

1 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

3 Downy Woodpecker

1 Northern Flicker**1 Pileated Woodpecker****1 American Kestrel**

Hunting in the area of the barn across from the Shaw's.

1 Eastern Phoebe

At the prison pond.

4 Blue Jay**9 American Crow****1 Common Raven****5 Black-capped Chickadee****8 Tufted Titmouse****1 White-breasted Nuthatch****2 Carolina Wren****1 Golden-crowned Kinglet****1 Northern Mockingbird****20 Dark-eyed Junco****1 White-throated Sparrow****4 Song Sparrow****2 Northern Cardinal****1 Brewer's Blackbird**

Sighted in the vicinity of house feeders (for at least 4 days) feeding on the ground and in the leaf litter where it walked about, tossing leaves. Ruled out Common Grackle because of smaller size and short tail. Ruled out Rusty Blackbirds (also seen in the Beard area - but not at the house feeders in the past) because of absence of brown/tan/"rusty" appearance. Showed pic on Facebook in "What's this Bird?" and "Mountain State Birders" with mixed comments for Rusty/Brewers/Common Grackle. Made decision based on my experience with birds in the Beard area. Precise location in Longitude/Latitude of the bird can be provided.



Macaulay Library

The yellow eye is clearly visible in the individual although not as clear in the attached picture. The dark-iridescent "hood" is also evident in the individual.

2 Purple Finch

20 American Goldfinch

Are you submitting a **complete checklist** of the birds you were able to identify?

Yes





March 11, 2017

From: ebird-checklist@cornell.edu
Sent: Saturday, March 11, 2017 9:01 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: eBird Report - Beard WV, Mar 11, 2017

Beard WV, Pocahontas, West Virginia, US

Mar 11, 2017 4:50 PM - 6:30 PM

Protocol: Traveling

2.5 mile(s)

Comments: Sunny, no wind, late in the day, low 30s. Walked from Ravens' Roost to the prison pond and return.

22 species

Canada Goose 17

Wood Duck 11 On the prison pond. 5 females/6 males

Black Vulture 2

Turkey Vulture 30 Vultures were gathered around two cow carcasses placed in Hanley's "cow cemetery."

Mourning Dove 3

Red-bellied Woodpecker 1

Downy Woodpecker 1

American Crow 3

Common Raven 2

Black-capped Chickadee 2

Tufted Titmouse 2

White-breasted Nuthatch 2

American Robin 35 Saw two large flocks. Could have been the same one of 30+ individuals.

European Starling 5

Fox Sparrow 5 Observed together in close proximity in the brushy area about MP 39 before the prison pond.

Dark-eyed Junco 4

White-throated Sparrow 1

Song Sparrow 4

Swamp Sparrow 1

Northern Cardinal 1

Red-winged Blackbird 30

Brewer's Blackbird 1 Observed in a horse paddock near Beard (exact location can be provided). First sighted among a mixed flock of 5 European Starlings and two dozen Red-winged blackbirds all grouped together. A flock of about 30 robins were nearby, too. Dramatically distinguished from the others by it's size, behavior, consistent solid iridescent black, yellow eyes, and a non-grackle tail and smaller size than a grackle. The individual then left the mixed flock and roamed in the grass near the scattered robin flock giving me a better look. It's behavior gave another distinction in that it's manner of foraging varied from the other noted birds.

I may have seen a second individual near the prison pond. Heard his call note, but was unable to get a recording.

In December, I reported a Brewer's Blackbird at our feeders at our house across the road from the horse paddock noted in the current report. I am in the process of preparing a report for the Brooks Bird Club record committee on that observation. The bird I sighted today looked just like the bird reported in the Dec sighting.

View this checklist online at [REDACTED]

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