

## WEST VIRGINIA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Number: WVBRC 2023-11 Species: Brewer's Blackbird – Mason Co

**Vote (select only one)**  For State List  Hypothetical List  Against  Exotic

### **Reasons voting FOR the record:** *(attach more pages if necessary)*

- CM1) Male Brewer's Blackbirds are very similar to Rusty Blackbirds in breeding plumage, and it can be very difficult to tell the two species apart. There are subtle differences that are not addressed in this description or depicted in the photographs. I would be very reluctant to call this a Brewer's Blackbird if it was not observed in November. At that time of year, Rusty Blackbirds should exhibit at least some rusty plumage, and the research done by the observer does support that. Unless this is a Rusty Blackbird whose molt is out of whack, the evidence suggests that this is indeed a Brewer's Blackbird.
- CM2) There are three potential species that this bird could be: Rusty Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird and Common Grackle. Grackle can be ruled out by the reported size (smaller than a Red-winged Blackbird), short tail and bill size from the photos provided. In November, both Rusty and Brewer's can have some "rusty" feathers, although Rusty Blackbird has much more extensive rusty coloration. The bird in the record doesn't appear to have any rusty coloration, which would favor Brewer's Blackbird at this time of year. Brewer's Blackbird shows a more distinctly "greenish" cast to the body than Rusty Blackbird. As noted in the record, body iridescence could not be observed as the bird was primarily in the shade, which makes it difficult to distinguish between the two species with this field mark. However, the photographs show a distinct purplish cast to the head which is more pronounced in Brewer's than Rusty Blackbird if a Rusty Blackbird was in breeding plumage. Overall, the description and photos are more supportive of Brewer's Blackbird than the other two species.
- CM3) Pictures and description are consistent with this species.
- CM4) Based on the time of year and photos I'm good with a male Brewer's Blackbird. The only other bird to be confused with this is a Rusty Blackbird. Male Rusty's during the fall exhibit some form of rusty feathering and lighter head patterns. Brewer's males are black all year round.
- CM5) The overall shape of the bird, its GISS, and the startling eye narrow this down to two possibilities: The Brewer's or the Rusty Blackbird. I have seen RUBL on many occasions, and this bird seems. Little bit different. I researched the moult stages, and I agree with the observer the plumage is wrong for a RUBL in late November.
- CM6) Observer provided good descriptions along with photograph evidence highlighting diagnostic characteristics, and conferred with other experienced birders prior to submittal. Purple sheen on head is visible. Smaller size and shorter tale relative to COGR, lacks coloration consistent with RUBL.
- CM7) 1. Details in description along with the photos provided for this submission supports my voting to add this sighting of the Brewer's Blackbird to the WV State List.  
2. The previous observations listed by the submitter.  
3. Additional verification by consulting with other resources and birders. 4. The purple sheen of the head that I could detect from the photos along with the season of the year the observation was made helped me to decide Brewer's versus Rusty. Reviewed the submitter's suggestion to view (<https://rustyblackbird.org/wp-content/uploads/Sinclair-Rusty-Blackbird-Moult-and-Aging.pdf>).