

Brewer's Blackbird

Rejected 1 vote For, 6 Against

This report was discussed by the Committee at the meeting. Icterid identification is a somewhat unheralded challenge in North America. Much of this is due to a range of artistic interpretation of features as depicted in various general field guides. Furthermore, when a bird deviates from the archetype that we are used to seeing in structure as this bird does with its shortened tail, it makes immediately want to place it in the realm of another species. And Icterid plumage is often described in relative terms of glossiness, and color shading. This difficulty is revealed in the Committee voting with one Member voting FOR this record and another considering a different possible confounding species a likely candidate. Consensus, and unanimous outside expert opinion, considers this a Common Grackle based on plumage and structure.

Committee Member Comments:

CM1: I don't think a male Rusty Blackbird can be eliminated based on the descriptions and photographs. A Rusty Blackbird in mid-December could conceivably already be in breeding plumage.

CM2: The best I could ever give this bird based solely on what was submitted would be Icterid species leaning to Common Grackle based on facial features of the second photo. If one delves a bit deeper it is clearly a Common (Bronzed) Grackle in a stage of molt.

CM3: This is a Common Grackle. Granted the tail, due to molt or loss or whatever, is somewhat short, however this is a straightforward identification. The plumage and head/bill structure rule out every other reasonable possibility. The wing coloration and drastic contrast between the head and back are fairly diagnostic. Rusty Blackbird should show far less head/back contrast and this bird shows absolutely no rusty or pale-edged tertials. A Brewer's Blackbird would never show this combination of head/wing/back plumage. There is also the difference in head/bill shape and proportion among these species which is evident in the original photos more than these copies. The description was compelling however did not accurately describe the bird that was actually observed as represented in the photos.

CM4: After another look, I can see a case for voting against the record. If the pictures were a little better it would be very helpful.

CM5: After reconsideration I believe that the submission of the Brewer's Blackbird (BRBL) does not meet the criteria of "recognizable photographs" (Bylaw V.E.2.). Photographs do not give enough detail to distinguish from similar species of Common Grackle. Written description given identifies as a BRBL, but only provides two sight records which fails the test of "at least

three persons” (Bylaw V.E.4.). Photographs and descriptions do not provide enough detail to identify the bird as BRBL when taken in totality, but the standards are not met set forth in Bylaws V.E. The written submission identifies the BRBL glossy and iridescent plumage but is not distinguishable in the photos. The submission does not meet the standards set in the Bylaws for the State List, therefore, I vote against this record.

CM6: The description is really well thought out and comparisons to the other possibilities are well done. The pics are not the best, but give a general impression.

CM7: I don't feel like the description eliminates all possible blackbirds.