

1997-105

INITIAL VOTE 5-2

RECIRC VOTE 5-2

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

PAINTED BUNTING

*Passerina ciris*ACCEPTED by Committee
vote 12/11/99

Location: Lake Hasty Campground; Lamar, Bent County, Colorado

Date: May 17, 1997

Background:

I was birding with Brandon Percival and Bob Dickson. We were walking through Lake Hasty Campground when I spotted this female bunting on the ground. We naturally assumed it was an Indigo or Lazuli at first but it was vaguely green toned above and very plain. We only observed it on the grassy lawn for about 30 seconds. Then it flew to a small shrub and landed on an exposed branch about 6" off the ground. It perched here for a few seconds and then flew off. We never re-found the bird. We realized after we had observed it so briefly that the bird was indeed a female Painted Bunting. While I did consider this identification possibility initially, I would like to say that I / we were more aware to call out the ID right away. This was a quite brief view, from about 50', but with good light. We found the bird about 11:15 a.m. I watched it with B & L Elite 10x42 binoculars.

Description:

This was a dull female-plumaged bird ("gray" phase female or "gray-green" phase first nuptial male). It struck me as a lot less green and green-yellow than the bird that Brandon and I saw last year at Ft. Lyon Wildlife Easement. This was small and plump sparrow-like bird, very plain and dull colored. It was about the same size and shape as a Lazuli Bunting, about 6" long with a rather short, square tail. It had a small, pale grayish bill that was short, stout and clearly conical. It was a quite uniform bird, completely lacking wingbars or other obvious field marks. I noted the plainness of the breast, which entirely lacked any streaking, and mentioned this aloud while we were watching. Above, it was a plain, vaguely olive tinged brown color. Underneath it was tan. I did not note any real greenish tones, nor did I note a small eyering (if one was present). It clearly did not have any bluish on the rump, either on the ground or in flight. The bird struck me as more greenish in flight and I noted this, again out loud, when it flew from the lawn to the branch. We were only able to briefly view it again before it flew off.

This was a very brief encounter with a very plain bird; however we were all confident that this was a female-plumage Painted Bunting.

Similar Species:

The plainness and olive upperparts of this bird was very distinctive. Female tanagers (Summer and Scarlet) are longer, slimmer and with a heavier, less conical bill. Female Varied, Lazuli and Indigo buntings are browner, not olive. A female Indigo Bunting would show some streaking across the throat, breast or flanks and would have pale edges to the wing coverts. A female Lazuli Bunting is more similar but has a bluish rump. Both lack the olive tone to the upperparts of this bird. Oberholser in The Bird Life of Texas describes a gray phase female plumage or a gray-green phase first nuptial male plumage that matches quite well with this bird that we saw.

Experience with Species:

I have seen quite a few Painted Buntings in other areas (Big Bend, coastal Texas, southern Florida) as well as a female in Colorado on May 12, 1996.

This report is prepared from notes made immediately after observation.

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