

CFO-ORC-FILE# _____

Submitted by: P. Gaede

ACCEPT 6-1

Rec'd 12/31/99
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COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS SIGHT RECORD FORM

Species: **EASTERN TOWHEE**, *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*Date: **19 December 1999**

One adult male

Locality: Along the Riverwalk in Canon City. From the parking area accessed at Rio Grande Rd. off of MacKenzie Ave., the trail follows the Arkansas River northwest. The Eastern towhee was found approximately .75 miles from the parking area just past a barbed wire fenced-in area for holding cattle on the left side of the trail.

Elevation: 5330 ft.

Nearest town: Canon City.

County: Freemont.

Time observed: 1430 hrs.

Duration of observation: 7 minutes.

Other observers with you: Paul Hurtado (PH), Lisa Marchet (LM), Bill Maynard (BM).

Other observers who saw the bird independently: None.

Light conditions: 20% cloud cover, bright sun.

Optical equipment: Leica 10x42 binoculars.

Distance from bird: 20 feet.

Describe the bird's behavior: The Eastern towhee was observed foraging on the ground in fairly dense cover of small forbs and shrubs under a larger deciduous tree. The bird exhibited a scratching and pecking feeding behavior typical of *Pipilo* and occasionally perched higher on branches of the larger tree 1-3 feet from the ground. The bird was active and appeared unconcerned of our presence at close distance (20 ft). Other sparrow species (mostly White-crowned) were also foraging at the base of this tree. The towhee gradually moved up the hillside and out of view away from cover of the larger tree.

Describe the bird: I noticed a towhee perched up about 2 feet off the ground on a dead branch. The bird was facing me and I saw a strongly demarcated black hood with rufous sides and contrasting white underparts. The bird turned to the side and the first thing I noticed was a limited amount of white spotting on the back and wings. I began studying the back and wings more closely, and saw white extending about 2-3 inches from the base of black primaries. I also saw three large white "windows" just below the lower back on the wing. These were very obvious and contrasted sharply with the back, wings, hood and tail which were black or nearly black. I described this to PH and LM and all of us obtained very good views of the wing and back pattern at close range. The bird moved back to the ground and resumed foraging. We continued to study the back and wings and as the bird scratched on the ground, I was able to see both wings simultaneously (rear view) both folded and partially open (as the bird flew a short distance to perch up again). The back was completely dark and there was no

other white feathers on the wing with the exception of the tertials and inner primaries. Both Paul and I commented on eye color, and agreed that the color we saw was a deep shade of red-brown, darker than most male Spotted towhees (SPTO) that we have seen. About this time, BM came and we all watched the bird move up the hillside and out of view. This was the first time I noticed the tail partially open as it moved away from us. I saw a black or nearly black tail with white flashes restricted to the outer tail feathers.

Describe the bird's song and call if heard: No vocalizations were heard.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird: Hillside with low shrubs interspersed with forbes. Larger trees occurred in the area providing dense cover and higher perches. This location was approximately 30 feet from the Arkansas River.

How did you eliminate similarly appearing species: SPTO was eliminated by the white feathers (spotted appearance) on the back, scapulars and wing coverts which would be present on this species.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species: Earlier that morning (19 Dec), I observed a male Eastern towhee present at Jim and Rosie Watts' feeder in Penrose. I am more familiar with SPTO.

List books if they helped in your identification: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America, 3rd. edition, 1999.

This report was written from memory on 20 Dec 1999.

Reporting observer:

Peter Gaede

Signature:



Address:

852 Nobel Dr.
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
surfbird@cats.ucsc.edu