

ACCEPTED (7-0)

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS
SIGHT RECORD FORM

RESULTS: _____

rec'd 7-21-98

SPECIES: PHAINOPEPLA
(COMMON NAME)Phainopepla nitens
(SCIENTIFIC NAME)

DATE(S) OF OCCURRENCE: at least July 23-26, 1998 DATE OF THIS OBSERVATION: July 23, 1998

NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN: 1 SEX: probable female PLUMAGE: adult (?)

EXACT LOCATION: Prewitt Reservoir State Wildlife Area (below the dam near the outlet canal)
COUNTY: Washington NEAREST TOWN: Merino (Logan Co.) ELEVATION:

LENGTH OF OBSERVATION: approx. 15 min. total TIME(S) OF OBSERVATION: 10:35 - 11:20 am

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO SAW AND INDEPENDENTLY IDENTIFIED THE BIRD(S):

The bird was initially found and identified by Chris Wood earlier in the morning on 7/23. Later in the morning (before 11:30 am) there were 5 other observers who saw the bird. These were: Joey Kellner, Warren Finch, Norm Erthal, Tony Leukering, and myself. Many other birders saw the bird subsequently.

LIGHT CONDITIONS [QUALITY; DIRECTION RELATIVE TO BIRD(S); POSITION]:

Weather was overcast, with gray skies.

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED:

Bushnell 10x binoculars.

DISTANCE FROM BIRD (ESTIMATED UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED): approx. 50 feet closest.

WAS THE BIRD PHOTOGRAPHED? don't know. IF SO, HAVE YOU SUBMITTED PHOTOGRAPHS?
WHO TOOK THE PHOTOGRAPHS?

GENERAL AND SPECIFIC HABITAT IN WHICH THE BIRD(S) OCCURRED:

Semi-open pasture with scattered trees (locusts?) and wooded "windbreak" (mostly Russian olives) adjacent to outlet canal below dam of large irrigation reservoir.

BEHAVIOR (FLYING; FEEDING; HABITS; BEHAVIORS USED IN IDENTIFYING THE SPECIES OR IN SUPPORTING THE IDENTIFICATION):

The Phainopepla was quite active during the observation period seldom staying in one place more than a few seconds, but at least once it sat on an exposed perch for several minutes. Its flight between perches was not strong or direct, but appeared "fluttery" and somewhat erratic. It seemed to prefer exposed perches, usually at least 15 ft. above the ground (but when first observed it was perched only 4 or 5 ft. above the ground). Posture when perched was quite erect with the crest raised.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE BIRD(S) [INCLUDE OVERALL SIZE AND SHAPE; PLUMAGE DETAILS INCLUDING HEAD, THROAT, UNDERSIDES, NAPE, BACK, WINGS, AND TAIL; AND COLOR AND SHAPE OF BILL, LEGS, EYE, ETC. THAT WERE IMPORTANT IN MAKING THE IDENTIFICATION. GIVE PARTICULAR EMPHASIS TO MARKS USED TO IDENTIFY THE BIRD(S)].

Overall impression was of a slender, long-tailed, uniformly slate-gray bird with a conspicuous long, but slender, "spikey" crest. It appeared to be smaller and less "bulky" than nearby Western Kingbirds (*Tyrannus verticalis*); I would estimate it to be between 7" and 8" long including the tail. The head and body appeared to be almost uniformly gray. The wings were dark gray with an indistinct light gray "patch" at the base of the primaries on the upper surface of each wing that was visible only in flight. The tail appeared to be darker gray (almost blackish) than the body and, in flight, appeared "flared" toward the tip. The bill appeared dark and slender, and looked "petite". The eyes were reddish-brown. There was no eye ring. Based on appearance, this was either an adult female bird or a juvenile bird (sex ?). After returning home, I checked all the references I have looking for

differences between adult female and juvenile plumages that corresponded with what I saw, but came up with nothing conclusive.

SIMILAR SPECIES AND HOW THEY WERE ELIMINATED:

With its overall drab gray plumage, prominent "spikey" crest, slender bill and reddish eye, this was a distinctive bird unlikely to be confused with any other species when well seen. The most-similar species include:

Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*): is much browner overall with a yellow belly, white undertail coverts, and a yellow-tipped tail. Juveniles have streaked underparts and yellow-tipped tail.

Northern Cardinal (female) (*Cardinalis cardinalis*): larger; overall buff brown with red tint on crest, wings and tail; heavy cone-shaped red bill

Pyrrhuloxia (female) (*Cardinalis sinuatus*): is larger, has massive yellow parrot-like bill, shows some red at tip of crest and in wings

Juniper (and Tufted) Titmouse (*Baeolophus ridgwayi*): much smaller and "chunkier", shorter tail, eye dark (not red), crest shorter and more compact.

Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*): no crest, prominent white eye ring and outer tail feathers, buff wing patches.

PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILAR SPECIES:

Phainopepla: I have seen this species many times in Arizona and one time in Texas (El Paso, 3-4 birds). This is the first one I have seen in Colorado.

Similar species: I have extensive field experience with all of the listed "similar" species.

BOOKS, GUIDES, RECORDINGS, OR OTHER SOURCES CONSULTED AND HOW THESE INFLUENCED IDENTIFICATION (DURING AND AFTER OBSERVATION):

NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America, 2nd ed. (pp 344-345) - after observation to try to determine plumage differences between adult female and juvenile birds.

A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America. Howell & Webb. Oxford Univ. Press, 1995. - after observation researching plumage differences.

(I also checked several other books and field guides for the same purpose)

THIS REPORT WAS MADE FROM NOTES MADE DURING _____ OR AFTER X OBSERVATION,
OR LATER FROM MEMORY _____

DATE OF THIS WRITTEN REPORT: July 31, 1998

REPORTING OBSERVER: Dick Schottler
25 S. Indiana Place
Golden, CO 80401

SIGNATURE: 

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - Rarity Report Form

Common Name: Phainopepla

Scientific Name: *Phainopepla nitens*

Number of Individuals: 1

Sex: ? **Age:** SY (?)

Locality: **Colorado:** Prewitt Reservoir, Washington **Counties:**

Date(s) Seen: 23 July 1998 **Time:** 6:15 - 8:30am

Reporting Observer: Christopher L. Wood.

Other Observers: None with me. Tony Leukering, Joey Kellner, Norm Erthal, mob.

Light Conditions: Clear, morning light from east.

Optical Equipment: B&L "Elite" 15x-60x scope, B&L 10x42 "Elite" binoculars

Distance to Bird: 8-100 meters.

Duration of Observation: 1.5 hours

Habitat: Open deciduous woodlands below the dam at Prewitt Reservoir

Behavior: While looking for cuckoos as part of a Colorado Bird Observatory study, I found this bird sitting high in a cottonwood around 6:15am. It seemed very wet, probably from the heavy rains the night before. It was actively preening for the first few minutes, until I flushed it about 100 meters away. The bird spent all of the time I saw it in the top 1/4 of the trees. It seemed alert most of the time, frequently preening, and occasionally hawking insects. I did not observe it hover gleaning.

Description:



Figure 1



Figure 2

As can be seen from figures 1 and 2, the bird is a slim, fairly small-headed bird with a spiky crest and long tail. The bird was smaller than a Northern Flicker (direct comparison), probably slightly larger than a Cedar Waxwing, though more sleek. The bird was uniformly slate gray, with conspicuous white flashes in the primaries in flight. Greater coverts appeared to be edged lighter, but this may have been caused by wear. Eyes red. Bill and legs black. The extremely worn flight feathers seem to suggest a second calendar year bird.

Vocalizations: None.

Photographs? Yes. Included as figures 1 and 2.

References (After observation):

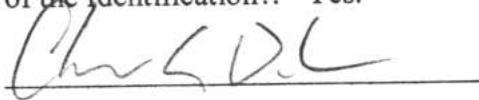
Pyle, Peter. 1997. *Identification Guide to North American Birds, Part 1*. Bolinas, California: Slate Creek Press.

Description from: Contemporaneous notes; xx Later notes; Memory.

Experience with Species: In the past ten years: 50+ in California, 200+ in Arizona. Most recently in Arizona, August 1997.

Are you Positive of the Identification?: Yes.

Signature:



Date:



Chins Wood

1998-110

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