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Below is what you submitted to obrc@ofoc.ca on Friday, March 21, 2003 at 19:47:53

If you want, please print it out for your records

Species: Black-billed Magpie

Number: 1

Age: unknown

Sex: don't know

DateYouSawIt: 2003/03/18

Time: 750 AM

Duration: 10min

DatesKnownInArea: 2003/03/18

ExactLocationSeen: The bird was seen on the west hand side of the road just north of the Old Hwy#6/Lowes St. Intersection on Old Hwy#6 into Guelph. Approximately 5-10min south of the University of Guelph. For those that know the area, the bird was in a property just south of the Esso Station in this area.

GPS: NAD 83 17T 0564997 4817682

Habitat: Somewhat Rural/urban transition setting, first seen in a front yard

Weather: Sunny, Warm, minimal cloud cover beautiful spring day

KindOfLighting: Bird was backlit from the rising sun

ObserverDistance: Max 200m Min 10m

OpticsUsed: eyes

DateThisReportWritten: 2003/03/21

CircumstancesOfTheObservation: I was driving to school at around 10 to 8 the morning of the 18th of March. Just 2 minutes from my house driving North on old Hwy#6 (Gordon St.) into Guelph I noticed a number of Grackles about, and flying through somewhat open ruralish urban area along the side of the road was a large blackish bird with distinct patches of white in the primaries, and along the tertials. At

first glance due to the amount of Grackles in the area, I thought it was a partial albino Grackle. However I quickly realized the much larger size of the bird as it perched on a tree in the front yard of the house just south of the Esso Station which is just north of the Gordon/Lowes St. Intersection heading into Guelph. After negotiating traffic I turned around and watched the bird for about 5 minutes. It flew a bit further to the North where there weren't as many houses and hung out in a field mixed with small trees inbetween two lots, now north of the Esso station. The bird then flew further to the west and out of my view behind a number of houses.

Description: Large patches of white in the primaries were evident but not extending all the way to the peripheries as there were still black tips. The tertials were also white and stood out quite well against the dark back. Both of these features were first seen as the bird was flying away from me leading to perch in a medium size tree. As the bird landed, it seemed to be about a third bigger if not a little more than many of the Grackles in the area. The entire belly was white with black undertail coverts. The head, chest and the to the top part of the back was black, there was some shine off the the black portions but real colour was distinguished. The wings and tail were much more colourful, depending on the lighting, sometimes displaying a brilliant array of blues, greens and purples. General shape and "gist" of the bird resembled that of a big Blue Jay/Grackle mix having wing shape of a jay with body colouring and the long wedge shaped tail resembling a Grackle. The bird flew and behaved much like a Blue Jay and the surrounding Grackles.

SimilarSpecies: Grackles were eliminated by the larger size and the white on the primaries, tertials, and belly and broader shorter wings. Yellow billed Magpie was eliminated

ExperienceWithSpecies: Observed many in and around Calgary, in the mid 90's. Also viewed a bird a few times in the Winona Rd. to Fifty Rd. area of Winona, once Stoney Creek, Now Hamilton! This was presumed one of a pair escaped from St. Catherines I believe around 12 years ago.

ReferencesConsulted: none

AdditionalCommentary: I have no real confidence in the validity of the birds origin. The probability of being an escapee are high, although with the strong warm front that pushed through the day before and on the day of the sighting brings a slight chance of the bird being a wild straggler. From where I don't know. The bird did not seem too tame as I approached it, flying away from me as I approached within 10-15m, but who knows. I have looked in the area, along with a few of my colleagues from Guelph both on the day of the original sighting and days following but with no other sightings other than the morning of the 18th. The main reasoning for the report was to document the bird as opposed to seeking approval.

DescriptionMadeFrom: Memory

OriginalFinder: Stuart A. Mackenzie 1459 Baseline Rd. Stoney Creek, L8E 5G4

OtherObservers: Andrew Walker 44 Roehampton Crst. Guelph ON N1L 1M8

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Submit: Submit Report

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The Ontario Field Ornithologists