

HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE IOWA BLUE



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Edited by Connie Hurley DVM, DACVS

*I dedicate this book to my beautiful wife,
who endured countless nights and endless hours
of Iowa Blue discussion.*

I want to take this time to recognize Glenn Drowns of Sandhill Preservation Center, for without his endless dedication to the Iowa Blue, the breed would have gone extinct before we had the chance to restore it to its former glory.

Also, I want to recognize my fellow Standard Committee members, whose countless hours and late nights produced the beautiful Standard that we have today.

Kari – Thank you for keeping and breeding your Silver Penciled birds and for serving as our first Vice President. Without you much would never have happened.

Connie – Your skills with our website have been fundamental in our ability to get the word out about the Iowa Blue. As Secretary of our Club, you have surpassed all expectation.

Jim – Your eagerness to serve as our first President and enter your birds in the show-ring have served our cause greatly.

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Dr. Lincoln – Thanks to your efforts in our Committee meetings, this Standard would not have been complete.

(Cover photograph by Kari McKay-Widdel of one of her Silver Penciled pullets)

Table of Contents

History of the Iowa Blue.....	1	W.C. Fenton - Cedar Rapids Gazette; 2/2/1955 Article.....	36
Historic Images of the Iowa Blue.....	11	The Associated Press – The Daily Reporter; 2/22/1955 Article.....	38
Modern Images of Iowa Blue – Silver Penciled.....	16	Decorah Public Opinion; 2/28/1955 Article.....	40
Modern Images of Iowa Blue – Birchen.....	19	Kent Whealy – History of the Iowa Blue	42
Iowa Blue Characteristics.....	22	John Logsdon Interview 2/01/2013.....	46
Iowa Blue Body Type.....	25	Michael Moore Interview 2/01/2013.....	47
Standard for Iowa Blue Shape.....	25	Glenn Drowns (Sandhill Preservation Center) Interview 1/25/2013.....	47
Silver Penciled Iowa Blues.....	27	Phil Roe Interview 1/25/2013.....	52
Silver Penciled Iowa Blue Standard.....	28	Phil Roe - Email Regarding Photos of Kari’s Silver Birds; 01/25/2013.....	53
Birchen Iowa Blues.....	29	Phil Roe – Email Regarding Photos of Kari’s Birds 2/02/2013.....	54
Birchen Iowa Blue Standard.....	30	Phil Roe - Email With Photos Of His Iowa Blues; 02/02/2013.....	55
NonStandard Iowa Blue Variation: Silver Duckwing.....	31	Lee Zook – Interview 01/31/2013 (Per email discussion).....	56
Duckwing & Crow-wing Expression on eb Based Iowa Blues.....	33	Lee Zook - Email Regarding Photos of Kari’s Silver Birds; 02/01/2013.....	57
Sensitivity to Laryngotracheitis.....	34	Bobby Lewis - Interview; 03/18/2013....	57
Conclusion.....	34		
Appendix: Other Flocks of Interest	35		
Don Heller (MN)-	35		
References.....	36		

HISTORY OF THE IOWA BLUE

Before the era of industrialization that began its control of our food supply existed the by-gone days where communities supplied their needs through the stable and consistent self-reliance of individual families. This quality of self-reliance not only existed in the men and women who tilled the land and brought forth its fruit, but was bred (by these same men and women) into the livestock that they were to exercise their dominion over. For centuries this union existed between the beasts and their masters, each dependent on the self-reliant nature of the other. Man, by his rugged independence, developed the same character in the beasts under his charge, namely – the ability to merge the domestic nature with the natural instinct in a blend of perfect harmony; to be wild enough to possess the instinct of survival with minimal input, while at the same time domestic enough to mind the natural order of a pastoral life. It was to be this culture which, in the early 1920's, on a north-eastern Iowa farm, the Iowa Blue chicken was borne.

On a farm in Decorah, Iowa, lived a man at the turn of the century named John Logsdon. Mr. Logsdon had a passion for the unusual and was avidly experimented with livestock genetics. With a keen eye for observation of the world around himself, Mr. Logsdon had developed a reputation in his local area, as well as the national stage, for his livestock enterprises. Among those accomplishments existed the largest herd of Dexter cattle in the nation with the largest population of imported stock, his own development of the White Collie, and his special creation.....the *Iowa Blue* chicken.

Surrounded in mystery, the present known history of the Iowa Blue is a compilation of bits and pieces gathered together from the recollections of those who lived in a generation gone by. While it is known that Mr. Logsdon was the originator of the Iowa Blue, and that two of Mr. Logsdon's grandchildren (Michael Moore and John Logsdon) are still alive to pass on their remembrances of the Iowa Blue, it seems little was passed on by the originator as to which breeds constituted the formation of Iowa's only chicken breed. The only existing accounts documenting the creation of the Iowa Blue are a pair of newspaper articles from the year 1955. In each article, a similar description is given of the breed's origin with John Logsdon, recounting the breed beginning from a cross of a Chinese cock pheasant to a Black Minorca hen and to a Rhode Island hen, holding back the best of each generation to create the next.

The first article, which was printed in the Cedar Rapids Gazette on February 2, 1955, showcases an announcement from W.C. Fenton that his hatchery was introducing a new breed of chicken – the Iowa Blue. W.C. Fenton, who owned the Fenton Hatchery in Strawberry Point, Iowa, had just purchased the last of Mr. Logsdon's flock of Iowa Blues and was selling the offspring as the product of Iowa's largest Iowa Blue flock. It appears that W.C. Fenton also had three large flocks of Iowa Blues before he bought out Mr. Logsdon's flock, and a special note is made of W.C. Fenton's four flocks of Iowa Blues.

A second article, published by The Daily Reporter on Feb. 22, 1955, echos the first article and quotes W.C. Fenton, as well.

In a third article, printed by the Decorah Public Opinion on Feb. 28, 1955, much of the same information is listed regarding the origin of the breed. This was accompanied by a description of the appearance and size of the original birds. The source for the information in this article is not listed.

From the article in the Decorah Public Opinion, concerning the Iowa Blue's origin;

“The breed is the result of work begun by Logsdon of Canoe Township 25 years ago. The first year [John Logsdon] mated a Chinese pheasant cock with a Black Minorca hen and Rhode Island hen. He raised only eight birds from those matings – four pullets and four roosters.

The next year he mated what he regarded as the best rooster with the four hens and continued in that manner [...].

Logsdon picked the Black Minorca to start because that breed lays the largest eggs of any breed and the Rhode Island Red because it was, in his opinion, the leading breed of its type. The cock pheasant was chosen because of its hardiness and ability to stand both cold and heat.”

We can only speculate as to the accuracy of such a claim to the breed's origin, but the story is repeated in both articles. While many verbal accounts from individuals acquainted with the breed mention the “legend” of the pheasant as a sire, what is uncertain is whether or not they knew of the pheasant sire before or after W.C. Fenton's account in the newspaper article and hatchery advertisements. It is quite possible these articles introduced the idea that a pheasant sired the progeny we know of today as the Iowa Blue. Add to this reality two other facts that divert our understanding; First, that W.C. Fenton was the last known hatchery to offer the breed and closed its doors in 1972. And second, that most of the testimonials from individuals still living were children or young adults when they experienced their encounters with the Iowa Blue, and their interviews were conducted later in their life. In light of these revelations, it doesn't take long to realize most of the Iowa Blue's history may be lost to time.

Much of our study concerning the Iowa Blue history has been the piecing together of various accounts (both written and verbal) as well as tracing the ownership transactions of the various Iowa Blue flocks that are referenced in the accounts. Our journey recounting the history starts with Mr. Logsdon, and although little is known about Mr. Logsdon's involvement with the breed outside of his creating it, this piece is one of the easiest to confirm. Concerning stock leaving Mr. Logsdon's ownership, we currently have three known individuals who obtained stock directly from Mr. Logsdon (each bringing forth new accounts of the breed and its history);

- 1) The closest source to the original flock was one of Mr. Logsdon's grandsons named Michael Moore. According to Michael, the Iowa Blue was the only breed his parents raised. They obtained their birds from his grandfather, and they were the only breed he ever raised. Unfortunately, by the late 1980's Michael's flock (consisting of 1 rooster and 5 hens) had become so old, they were no longer fertile. Because of this, naturally, there were no offspring produced from this remnant flock, and this source came to an end.
- 2) Our second known source to leave Mr. Logsdon's ownership was a gentleman named Ransome Bolson. Ransome obtained a rooster and nine hens from Dolly Logsdon (Mr. Logsdon's wife) in the early 1960's. (This date contradicts W.C. Fenton's claims that he bought all of Mr. Logsdon's flock in 1955. Either Ransome obtained his stock in the early 1950's or W.C. Fenton did not buy out Mr. Logsdon's flock).

Ransome lived just outside of Decorah, Iowa. According to Ransome, Dolly stated the origin of the Iowa Blue resulted from a white rock hen coming out from under a shed with a clutch of chicks unlike anything anyone had ever seen. Some even resembled pheasant chicks and led some to speculate that a pheasant had sired the clutch. By the late 1980's Ransome's flock had become the last known flock of Iowa Blues that was still fertile. Ransome possessed at that time a flock of about 50 birds with only 20 that were of a productive age. It is unknown what happened to Ransome's flock, however eggs were given to Kent Whealy for hatching and thus, a remnant was preserved.

- 3) Lastly, our third known source to leave Mr. Logsdon's ownership came when W.C. Fenton bought out Mr. Logsdon's flock. W.C. Fenton is also credited with giving the Iowa Blue its name. As W.C. Fenton stated himself, Iowa didn't have a breed of chicken named after it and from a distance the hens looked a blue grey (this appearance is the result of the Silver Penciled pattern as the lacing starts out finely penciled on the breast and slowly becomes a mealy stippling as the pattern progresses toward the tail. This blending of the black and white markings as the lacing pattern becomes "stippled" toward the tail, is what produces a grey blue appearance in the hen from a distance), so he came up with the name Iowa Blue to represent both characteristics of the breed.

Currently, we do not know what happened to W.C. Fenton's flocks of Iowa Blues when he sold out. Fenton Hatchery was bought out by Hoover's Hatchery; however Hoover's did not buy the rights to Fenton Hatchery, and therefore did not have access to documents/advertisements put out by W.C. Fenton. Why Hoover chose not to purchase the Iowa Blue flocks from Fenton Hatchery still remains a mystery. Either they weren't interested in the flocks, or maybe W.C. Fenton wasn't interested in selling Iowa Blues.

Based upon various accounts, the Iowa Blue was sold by many "mom and pop" type hatcheries throughout the 1930's and 1940's. These hatcheries were quite common in an era where self-sufficiency was expected, and many communities possessed their own unique and individual hatchery. Due to the consistency of the accounts referencing multiple small community hatcheries selling Iowa Blues throughout northeastern Iowa, as well as the absence of anyone claiming otherwise, it's safe to speculate that Mr. Logsdon released portions of his flock to individuals/hatcheries other than the three that are currently known.

According to accounts, the Iowa Blue enjoyed much popularity throughout the northeastern part of Iowa from the 1920's through the 1950's. W.C. Fenton's niece was known to have won 64 blue ribbons showing Iowa Blues at a local county fair, and it seemed that the Iowa Blue was here to stay – that is, until the industrial revolution of our food supply. This shift from local, home raised poultry, to supermarket ready birds raised in an industrial environment took its toll on many local (as well as nationally) recognized breeds. It did not take long to convince the public that a store ready bird was easier and more convenient than the labor of producing eggs and meat oneself. As the public began to shift its food mentality, it began to discard the self-reliant flocks created by their ancestors as something obsolete. New questions began to permeate the American thought. Why raise a bird who lays 180 eggs a year when I can raise one that lays 280 eggs? Why raise up a cockerel that takes five months to get to 6 pounds live weight when I can raise one that will take two months to get to 8 pounds live weight? Why raise chickens at all when I can buy my eggs and meat so affordably and at my convenience? And so began the downfall of America's poultry diversity. Like quicksand, time began to sink breeds into oblivion. Within the collection of breeds disappearing into an eternal sinkhole existed the Iowa Blue as it traveled down the quiet road to extinction.

As Americans shifted away from the source of their parents' and grandparents' self-sufficiency, the breeds deemed unfit for commercial production were left to the mercy of the show ring. However, the show ring proved to be a difficult master and many breeds found themselves without support. Those breeds that did find a following were often met with a double edged sword; while a breed may be saved from extinction by the show ring, the birds themselves were no longer raised in the self-reliant, productive manner in which they had been created. They now found themselves under a selective power determined upon the individual ability for a bird to match “perfection” as perceived by a group of breeders. No longer would the breed be selected for the productive traits for which it had been created. In essence the breed lost its original purpose and function. A breed would become transformed from a self-reliant beast capable of supplying the needs of its master to a bird bred to be an artistic example of its master’s abilities.

Without a standard and without admittance into the Standard of Perfection, the Iowa Blue found itself lacking both to be needed (for people needed not a self-reliant creature, because they had forsaken their own individual self-sufficiency) nor acceptance by the fancy because a standard did not exist for competition in the show ring.

Rejected by the industrialized world, and cast aside by the show ring (due to no standard being set forth), by 1989 the Iowa Blue was reduced to two flocks. (If others existed, they have yet to be found.) The two flocks belonged to Michael Moore and Ransome Bolson. As mentioned above, Michael’s flock had advanced to an unproductive age and was rendered infertile. This left the breed’s existence to the flock of Ransome. At this point in the breed’s history a gentleman named Kent Whealy became involved in restoring the breed.

Co-founder of Seed Savers Exchange, Kent Whealy had a long history of preserving heirloom seeds, as well as connecting rare varieties with growers who would perpetuate and expand the genetic availability presented within his extensive collection. Kent caught wind of the Iowa Blue in 1989 and was eager to do his part in saving this breed before it ceased to exist. Kent’s adventures lead him first to Michael Moore’s place where he was unable to obtain stock due to the flock’s minimal size and advanced age. Michael suggested Kent call on Ransome Bolson to see if he was still raising the birds. Below is Kent’s account of his first meeting Ransome’s Iowa Blue flock;

“I’d already noticed Ransome Bolson's place just northeast of Decorah where Locust Road climbs up through the bluffs out of the river valley. It had fallen into despair, but must have been a showplace in its time. There were three long, narrow chicken houses with fancy metal cupolas, one of the roofs had caved in. Half a dozen small, square, brooder huts were also scattered around the property. Ransome's mother and father, who are in their late 80's, still live on that home place. Ransome and his family live across the road.

I asked Ransome if he still had any Iowa Blues, he grinned and said he had about 50. We walked down through the trees past several young woodchucks about the size of guinea pigs that were sunning themselves on some old tires. It surprised me that they didn't scurry away when we walked up. I looked through the chicken window and torn plastic that covered the windows on the south side of one of the houses. Inside, looking back, were three beautiful young roosters and half a dozen hens that looked exactly like Michael's.

Ransome said he had known about the breed for nearly 40 years. About 1960 he bought a rooster and nine hens from Dolly Logsdon, Michael Moore's grandmother. She told him that a White Rock hen hatched out a nest under a building and brought out a clutch of chicks like no one had ever seen. Ten years ago Ransome had 30 Iowa Blue laying hens. Today he has about 30 older birds, that he doesn't have the heart to butcher, although he never told me that. Over the last couple of years a few hens have hatched out nests of eggs, so he also has three roosters and eight hens that are two years old, and two roosters and six hens that are one year old. He agreed to sell me hatching eggs when the young hens started laying in the spring."

Kent did receive hatching eggs the following spring, and the following is his account concerning his hatch;

"Last spring Ransome Bolson sold me seven dozen hatching eggs over a three-week period. He warned me that it might be like playing the Iowa Lottery; he was afraid that the chickens had become inbred and that the hatch might be 20% or less. I took the eggs to my friend Steve Matter, whose family has run the Decorah Hatchery since 1923. Three weeks later I went back in to collect the first batch of chicks. About 65% of the eggs had hatched and there were no crooked toes or other signs on inbreeding. About half of the chicks were solid chestnut brown. The other half also had light yellow, horizontal stripes on their cheeks, a light yellow triangle under their beaks and chins, and two black stripes down their backs. In other words, they looked like pheasant chicks!"

(Excerpts from Kent Whealy's historical documentation of his dealings with the Iowa Blue breed)

Kent took this start from Ransome and collaborated with Michael to put a young rooster over Michael's old hens, unfortunately this proved unsuccessful. Only a few eggs were laid, and none of them were fertile. Kent's enthusiasm for the breed was obvious and he showcased the breed at "Campout" functions hosted at the Seed Saver's Exchange Heritage Farm. This showcasing provided a wonderful opportunity to expose the Iowa Blue to the public, and interest (albeit moderate) was generated. Kent provided chicks to as many interested individuals as he was capable. Although Kent dispersed Iowa Blues to many breeders, we have documentation of only 5 individuals who received stock from Kent. These persons and the state of their flocks are as follows;

- 1) Glenn Drowns of Sandhill Preservation Center has been breeding the Iowa Blue since the early 1990's. When Kent Whealy felt he could no longer keep his flock going, and he gave the flock to Glenn, for his initial flock. Glenn stated that Kent had selected for the least aggressive roosters, and in the process lost the vigor and vitality of his flock. Fertility drastically dropped. When Glenn received Kent's flock, out of every 100 eggs set, only 10 were fertile. Out of the 10 fertile eggs, only four would hatch. It was a very slow process building the flock back up. Inbreeding depression had taken a drastic toll on the breed, coupled with poor breeding selection and Glenn was forced to introduce outside blood to restore vitality.

Glenn crossed a Silver Penciled Rock rooster to Campine and Fayoumi hens. He took these crosses and slowly added them to the remaining Iowa Blues. He then began selecting for type and color in the Iowa Blues and offered them for sale once he thought the birds were consistent in type, color, egg quality, as well as other characteristics that were unique to the Iowa Blue. Over the years, Glenn's flock has been nearly destroyed by predators/disease numerous times. At one point his flock was down to one or two roosters and was fortunate enough to receive some older hens from Phil Roe to rebuild his flock. Glenn still raises Iowa Blues; however his flock size is limited due to Glenn's extensive poultry and plant preservation work.

- 2) Phil Roe from Rock Island, Illinois owned a small flock of Iowa Blues for many years. His first experience with the breed was during one of the "Campout" functions held at Seed Saver's. Phil commented that the Iowa Blue crow was so unique sounding that he "just had to have some". For the first few years, Phil raised Iowa Blues exclusively, but later he added some breeds and introduced a disease that killed off most of his flock. He was left with what he thought was just 3 older hens. He contacted Glenn Drowns and gave those remaining hens to Glenn. Phil lamented that if he had to do it all over again, he'd have never introduced the new breeds and he'd still be raising his Iowa Blues.
- 3) Lee Zook and his wife also obtained stock from Kent at one of the "Campout" functions and raised them for a short while. They were never really in to pure-breeding and over time their flock was assimilated into their mixed flock. Lee was unable to recollect what happened to his purebreds, he speculated that they may have died of old age, but most likely never produced any purebreds on his property.
- 4) Steve Matter of Decorah Hatchery hatched Iowa Blue eggs that were obtained by Kent Whealy from Ransome Bolson's flock. Kent hatched many eggs for a number of years via Steve. Upon discussion with Steve, it was his opinion that the reason Ransome's Iowa Blue eggs didn't hatch well was because he believed that Ransome's flock had pullorium. The flock was never tested, so whether or not the flock had pullorium was left to speculation.

Below are two individuals who obtained purebred Iowa Blue stock; however they did not obtain them directly from Kent;

- 1) Bobby Lewis of Virginia also raised some of this early stock. However, Bobby's stock was not directly from Kent. In 1993-1994 Bobby obtained 1 rooster and three hens from Joe France of Roanoke, VA. Joe had obtained his birds from Glenn Drowns a few years before this time, before Glenn introduced outside blood. Bobby hatched almost all the eggs and had 40 birds at one time. The flock dwindled away and was gone probably ten years ago (around 2003). Bobby did sell stock to individuals in Virginia, but at the present it is unknown if any flocks have remained in existence.
- 2) Jere Gettle (owner of Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Co.) purchased the start of his small flock from Glenn Drowns in the years prior to Glenn introducing outside blood to his gene pool. Currently, it is unknown whether Jere sold any stock to other breeders, or what happened to his flock. Jere no longer raises Iowa Blues.

As we study over the pieces of Iowa Blue history that has been gathered, we notice many situations along the way where the breed experienced genetic bottlenecks. The question that must be asked is whether or not the breed has maintained its integrity as it passed through these bottleneck periods. In order to accurately gauge the answer to this question, the current breeders must compare their flock characteristics to the characteristics that make the Iowa Blue unique among chicken-dom. These individual breed characteristics will be discussed in full later in this history document.

Adding to the confusion that currently surrounds the Iowa Blue, around the year 2008 Ideal Hatchery began selling a bird they called the Iowa Blue. This bird was different in type and color as well as personality from the stock Mr. Logsdon had created. At times they appeared to be two completely different breeds. With Ideal's national market, they produced and sold a Birchen colored bird throughout the United States, and many people unfamiliar with the Iowa Blue naturally formed the opinion that the Iowa Blue was Birchen instead of a Silver Penciled type of bird. Because of little evidence to the contrary, many were unaware to the reality that the Iowa Blue was not originally a Birchen colored fowl.

Upon further investigation the source of Ideal's stock has come to light. In the early 1990's Ideal had purchased some early crosses of Glenn Drown's (Iowa Blues bred to the crossbred offspring of Silver Penciled x Fayoumi/Campine) and bred them to Black Leghorn, solidifying a Birchen pattern. Glenn revealed that when he crossed the Silver Penciled Rock with the Fayoumi, some of the F1 offspring resulted in a Birchen pattern. Through this particular cross, he introduced a genetic combination that required the culling of Birchen types for the next few years. Without a written standard in place, this may have given Ideal Hatchery the freedom of mind to pursue the Iowa Blue in a Birchen pattern. Ideal's involvement with the Iowa Blue has been both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, they have helped to spur interest in this almost forgotten breed and many people have become aware of the Iowa Blue through the promotion of the breed through Ideal's catalog. On the other hand, by promoting a bird vastly different from the original, flocks of Iowa Blues have been established throughout the United States which resemble little (in color and in most cases type) the original bird Mr. Logsdon created. An interesting note about the Ideal line is that a few breeders have experienced, in succeeding generations, some silver penciled offspring that develop into the proper Iowa Blue color. As the Birchen (extended black) is dominant to the Silver Penciled (pattern gene), it's not hard to see why this would be happening. However, these Silver Penciled type birds are not common occurrences when breeding the Ideal Birchen line. They are the exception to the rule so to speak.

One particular struggle concerning the Ideal line is the introduction of Autosomal Red and Gold Leakage in the feathers (which most likely appeared with the introduction of the Black Leghorn). Many breeders have had a hard time establishing a flock of Birchen birds that are pure for silver, and therefore most of the chicks have ended up as culls by the time they mature due to the red and gold manifestations on the feather. Breeders who have been selecting Silver Penciled stock out of their Birchen flocks have been experiencing the effects of the red and gold markings, and therefore, many of these silver birds ultimately end up on the cull list, further limiting the number of pure silver Iowa Blues. Regarding the Autosomal Red and Gold Leakage in the Sandhill line, it appears that most if not all are devoid of this shortfall.

As one can easily see, color had become an exceedingly difficult and confusing situation for breeders. Combining the absence of a standard with the lack of historical information as well as the lack of basic breed information, potential breeders were met with much discouragement and frustration. Should they be Birchen or Silver Penciled? Should they have brassy hackles or silver hackles? Red shoulders or Silver shoulders? Why are they called Iowa *Blue* when the Birchen pattern (which is the most commonly encountered of the two) does not appear blue at all? These questions were honest questions which deserved an educated answer, but who was to be the "final" authority to shed light on these questions? With the lack of a breed club, educating prospective breeders in regards to the original Iowa Blue color and type versus the more commonly encountered color and type, has proven a difficult thing at times. However, the tide has turned.

In 2011, breeders interested in the Iowa Blue came together and began to search and discuss their findings on the Iowa Blue breed. Very little information was available, and most of the breeders individually bred for what they deemed proper in their flocks. By early 2012, these breeders banded together and founded the Iowa Blue Chicken Club. An informational website was constructed (operated and managed by the talented Connie Hurley), officers were selected, and in the period of late 2012-early 2013, much more had been learned about the Iowa Blue. Every lead was followed, interviews were conducted with those persons who had raised or had experience with the original Iowa Blue, and pictures of the original birds had been acquired. This collection of information was compiled together and is presented under the Historical Archive section on the Iowa Blue Chicken Club website. By presenting the findings online, the club has been able to redirect the breeding priorities of the Iowa Blue as well as dispel many of the misconceptions of the Iowa Blue identity, both historically as well as presently.

To help the club establish a strong understanding of breed color and type, a Standard Committee (comprised of Eric Blinney, IA; Curt Burroughs, IA; Trish Dusil, IA; Jim Heinz, IA; Connie Hurley DVM, DACVS, WI; Kari McKay-Widdel, IA; and Lincoln Montgomery DVM, VA) was selected in late 2012, with the primary goal of gathering information on the original Iowa Blue stock and establishing a solid and sound standard that would preserve the Iowa Blue in the form in which it was created. Based on the committee's findings, the original Iowa Blue was in fact a Silver Penciled type of fowl with the Birchen variety being introduced in the early 2000's. The Iowa Blue Chicken Club has reviewed the information gathered, and has made a group decision that the Silver Penciled variety would be the primary color for the breed as well as the first color pursued for admittance into the Standard of Perfection. While the Silver Penciled is the primary color, the Birchen is also recognized by the club and has a strong following. The decision whether or not to keep the Birchen was a hard one for the Standard Committee to solidify. Everyone on the committee recognized the importance of the Silver Penciled variety, however, it was clear that the *vast* majority of the birds in existence labeled 'Iowa Blue Chickens' were of the Birchen color. The committee finally resolved to place the Silver Penciled as a priority, therefore establishing the original color into a position of prominence. By maintaining the Birchen as a recognized color, those who were currently raising the Birchen would be able to both provide superior stock (that could be used to improve the Silver Penciled) as well as enjoy the benefits of an organized club. An additional advantage to supporting both colors is that it avoids a breed club "split". As is seen in other rare breeds, many times breed supporters cannot agree on how the original stock appeared and so each idea goes its separate way. Obviously this is not advantageous to a rare breed whose supporters are limited and stock is limited even more. By including both varieties, it allows the breeders of each variety to work on a unified front to improve, increase, and support the breed. With this understanding, the club supports the Birchen color, and is also supportive of breeders pursuing the addition of the Birchen into the Standard of Perfection once the Silver Penciled is admitted.

During the time period 2010-2011, a fortunate turn of events occurred for the breed when a woman by the name of Kari McKay-Widdel, began to experience a larger than "normal" hatching of Silver Penciled Iowa Blues out of her Birchen colored stock. Kari's flock was predominately of the Ideal line with a small infusion of the Sandhill line in the flock's ancestry. In the course of Kari's discussions with others (who raised Iowa Blues as well as those who did not raise Iowa Blues), she was highly encouraged to cull the Silver Penciled offspring as most people had only experienced the Birchen colored stock. Kari was curious to see how these brown mottled chicks would develop and she ended up with a nice group of Silver Penciled hens. Although she hatched a decent amount of Silver Penciled offspring, many possessed Autosomal Red and Gold Leakage, and therefore after culling, she was left with only the silver hens. Kari maintained this small group of silver hens and gave a couple of silver hens to Jim Heinz, even though she was confronted by some who advised her to remove them from her breeding pens.

Once the Standard Committee had reviewed the information gathered and realized that the Silver Penciled variety was in fact the original color, Kari's group of silver hens became of the utmost importance. Pictures of Kari's silver hens were sent out to those individuals who had been interviewed and who had experience with the Iowa Blue in the decades gone by. Many of these individuals had assumed the original Iowa Blue to be extinct, but upon witnessing pictures of Kari's birds, they were impressed to see examples that looked remarkably close to what they had raised or experienced. Kari's small flock gave the club exactly what it needed; namely, living examples of what the silver hens should look like, along with an unlimited access to pictures. (Glenn also possessed Silver Penciled hens, but operates (for bio-security reasons) a closed preservation center, thereby making picture taking opportunities, as a general rule, inaccessible). By having such unlimited availability to access Kari's silver hens, the club was able to provide the necessary "proof" (via pictures and farm visits) that the silver variety was still in existence, and the club was able to present examples of the silver variety on their website for all to see. Kari was also able to provide interested parties with the means of acquiring a start of the silver variety for their breeding pens.

Lacking a vigorous Silver Penciled Rooster, in 2012-2013 Kari began breeding these hens to a Birchen colored male that carried the genes necessary to produce Silver Penciled offspring when bred to the Silver Penciled hens and Birchen hens who possessed recessive genes for the Silver Penciled pattern. Through the hatching of these eggs as well as selling hatching eggs of this breeding to interested parties, the number of Silver Penciled Iowa Blues is growing.

In recounting the "modern" history of the Iowa Blue, it would be incomplete without discussing the impact Glenn Drowns has had on the breed over the years. Glenn has been the one known link connecting past Silver Penciled Iowa Blue breeding to the present. Without Glenn's dedication and preservation of this breed, the Iowa Blue would surely have eased into extinction. For many years, Glenn was the only individual actively breeding the Iowa Blue in its original form and type. Glenn had mentioned that with the heavy production of Birchen birds by Ideal Hatchery, the common conception in the public mind was that the Iowa Blue should be a Birchen colored bird. Glenn began to receive calls from people saying they wanted to cancel their orders because they found out his birds were Silver Penciled instead of Birchen and they wanted the "right" colored bird. Because of this, Glenn resolved to accept the idea that once his flock came to an end (either through an untimely death of the flock, or his own passing away) that the Iowa Blue as it was created in the Silver pattern would effectively come to an end. Fortunately for the Iowa Blue, breeders realized what had happened before the original Iowa Blue had met its extinction. Another close call averted; however, two things slowed the Iowa Blue's progress at Sandhill Preservation Center.

- 1) Glenn was unable to dedicate the time and space needed to maintain/produce the multiple lines necessary for breed vigor and vitality. Glenn shared that his intent was not to restore the Iowa Blue to its former glory, but to preserve the breed in its original form as best he could until individual breeders came together to take on the task of restoring, developing, and most importantly, improving the Iowa Blue.
- 2) Predator and disease pressures often plagued the Iowa Blue flock at Sandhill Preservation Center (mostly predator) and this often times left Glenn with too few eggs for hatching, and thus, limited the availability for Glenn to pass chicks on to interested parties. Glenn operates a "no kill" hatch policy. What this means is that he will only hatch enough eggs to fulfill his current order list. As a result, any period of time during the hatching season that no order exists for a particular breed, he doesn't hatch out eggs of that breed. This policy (although quite honorable) may have resulted in eggs of the Iowa Blue to go unused for hatching and therefore aided in limiting the breed's overall genetic expression and variability.

With the advent of the Silver Penciled variety's prominence in the Iowa Blue Chicken Club, many breeders have connected with Glenn Drowns to add in the Sandhill line of Iowa Blues into their breeding plans. Hopefully, this will create enough demand to require Glenn to set the majority if not all of his Iowa Blue eggs, and allow individuals to take advantage of Glenn's flock characteristics.

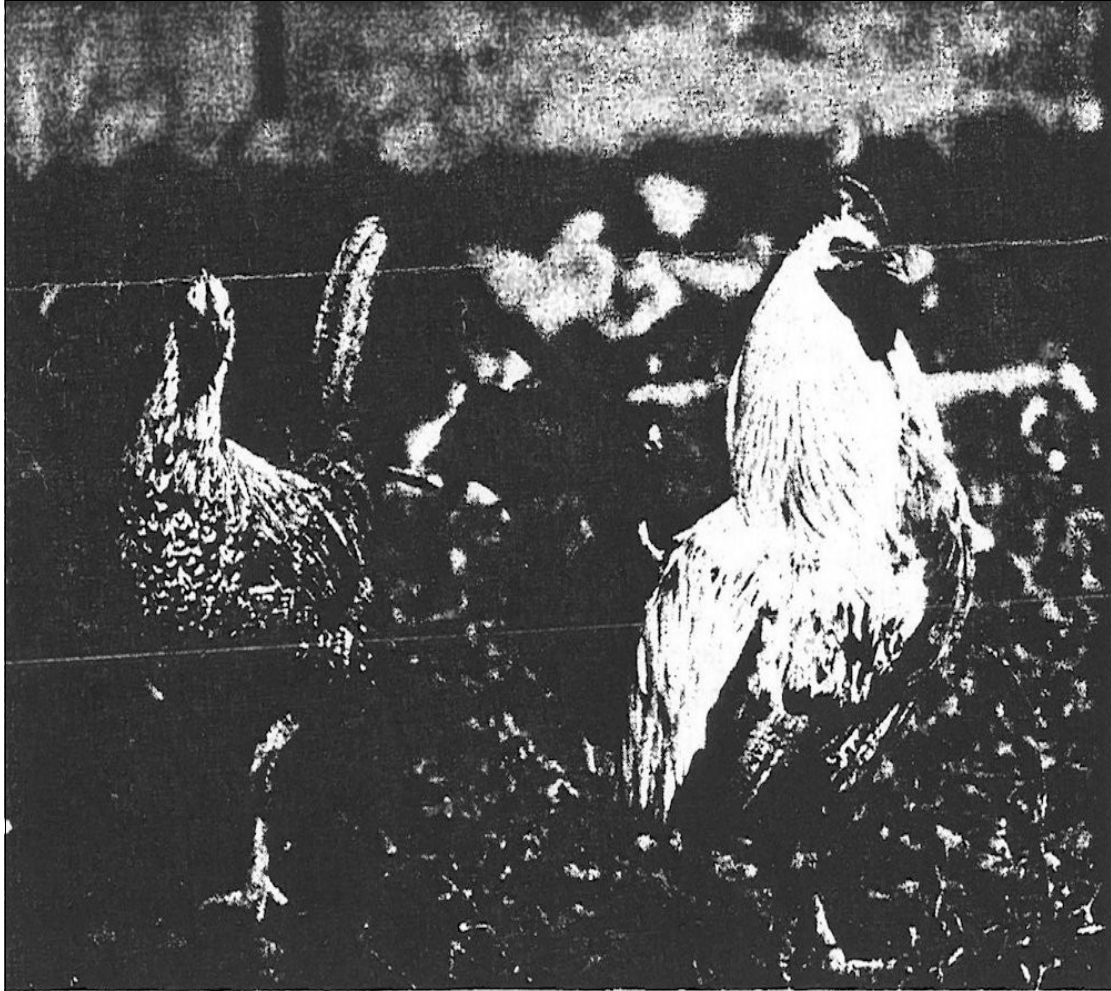
As we study our current flock populations of Silver Penciled Iowa Blues, one will easily realize that all of our known Silver Penciled birds have derived from Glenn Drowns' flock (the Sandhill Line). Below is a listing of current (known) breeders whose flocks contain Silver Penciled Iowa Blues, and are actively working to breed the Silver Penciled variety (a note to keep in mind; everyone on the list (except for Glenn) currently has Birchen colored birds in their flocks with most of the individuals having a flock majority of the Birchen color);

- 1) Glenn Drowns (the Sandhill Line) (IA) whose source was from Kent Whealy (as well as some hens from Phil Roe, who himself obtained stock from Kent Whealy). Glenn was required to add in outside blood to keep his flock from going extinct.
- 2) Kari McKay-Widdel (IA) obtained her stock from Ideal Hatchery (the Ideal Line) who obtained their start from Glenn Drowns (and crossed in Black Leghorn), Privitt Hatchery (who drop ships from Ideal Hatchery and Sandhill Preservation Center), and Glenn Drowns (Sandhill Preservation). Currently Kari has the largest known flock of Iowa Blues.
- 3) Connie Hurley (WI) purchased her stock from Glenn Drowns and Kari McKay-Widdel.
- 4) Jim Heinz (IA) who received stock from Ideal Hatchery and Kari McKay-Widdel.
- 5) Curt & Esther Burroughs (IA) obtained their stock from Kari McKay-Widdel.
- 6) Debbie Phillips (CA) purchased stock from Jim Heinz as well as Glenn Drowns.
- 7) Daniel Peck (WV) whose source was Kari McKay-Widdel.
- 8) Chad Stoner received his stock from Kari McKay-Widdel.
- 9) Kara Lyons (ME) who bought stock from Jim Heinz.
- 10) Kirk (last name unknown) (IA) obtained his flock from Glenn Drowns and Kari McKay-Widdel.

No doubt there are individuals not listed who possess Silver Penciled birds in their flocks of Iowa Blues as both Sandhill Preservation Center and Ideal Hatchery have been selling stock for years. Kari McKay-Widdel and Jim Heinz have also been selling stock, but to a lesser extent than the previously listed organizations. As a result of this, the Iowa Blue Chicken Club will actively strive to connect past, present, and future breeders together in order to prevent any birds of the proper color and type from being lost to antiquity. The Club has as a priority, to educate current and prospective breeders on the original Iowa Blue characteristics and has accordingly put forth a Standard (through the work of the Standard Committee) that accurately aligns itself with the Iowa Blue as the breed was created to exist. While much of the discussion on the Iowa Blue history has been focused on the color of the Iowa Blue, many other characteristics exist which are unique to the breed. These characteristics will be described in full as we proceed on.

HISTORIC IMAGES OF THE IOWA BLUE

Michael Moore's Flock

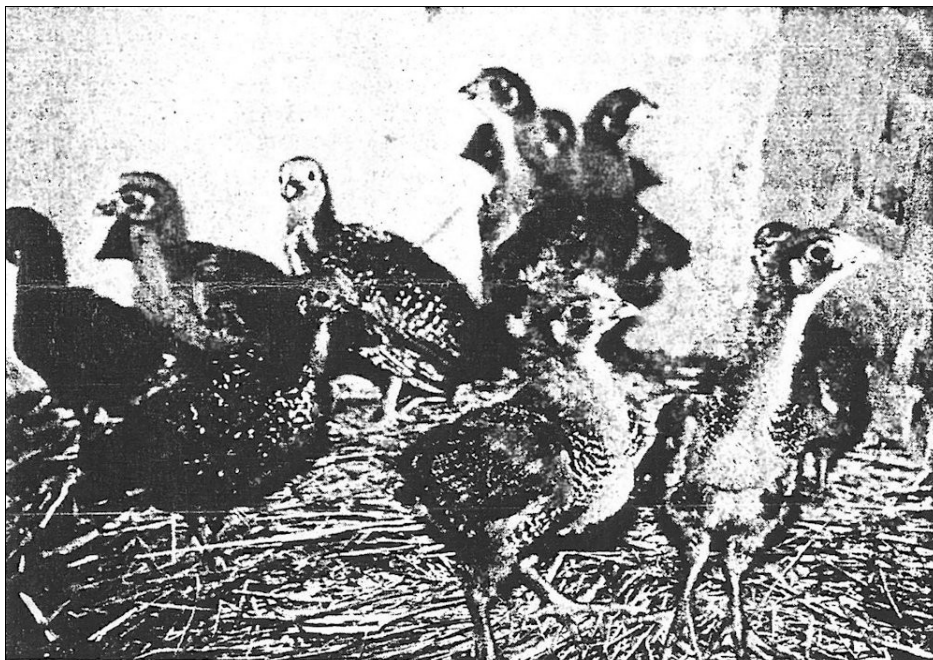


Herman and One of the Old Hens

Ransome Bolson's Flock



Young Iowa Blues



Iowa Blue Chicks

Jere Gettle's Flock



Phil Roe's Flock



[Phil Roe's Flock Continued]



Glenn Drowns' Flock (Sandhill Line)



[Photos from Storey's Illustrated Guide to Poultry]

MODERN IMAGES OF IOWA BLUE – SILVER PENCILED

Kari McKay-Widdel's Flock



[Photos by Kari McKay-Widdel]

Connie Hurley's Flock (McKay-Widdel Line)



(Photos on this page by Connie Hurley DVM, DACVS)

Silver Penciled Iowa Blue Chicks



(Photo by Connie Hurley DVM, DACVS)



(Photo by Curt Burroughs)

MODERN IMAGES OF IOWA BLUE – BIRCHEN

Kari McKay-Widdel's Flock (Ideal Hatchery)



(Photo by Kari McKay-Widdel)

Jim Heinz Flock



Connie Hurley's Flock



(Photos by Connie Hurley DVM, DACVS)

Birchen Iowa Blue Chicks



(Photo by Curt Burroughs – Chicks hatched out of eggs from Kari McKay-Widdel)



(Photo by Connie Hurley DVM, DACVS)

IOWA BLUE CHARACTERISTICS

As an early 1900's type chicken, the Iowa Blue was created at a time when chickens were expected to do more than simply (I use that term lightly) lay eggs and produce meat. In the time period starting in the middle to late 1800's till the 1940's and 50's, breeds were created on the farms which they were expected to provide for. This is quite different from today where breeds (or strains in the case of hybrid flocks) are often times created by corporations or hobby farmers. These early chicken breeds weren't always as "fine-tuned" in type and color as their modern counterparts, but they did possess something more; namely, they provided for the survival of their masters as well as offering the ability for their owners to experience a self-sustaining independence. This required a chicken to be hardy enough to handle to elements of nature; the wind and cold, the rain and heat, threat of a predator while at the same time growing to a good size with minimal human support. Add to this the expectation of eggs and meat as well as procreation, and you had before you a poultry man's dream. Those birds (and breeds for that matter) who were unable to keep up with the rigors of rural life, would find themselves without support or perpetuation (unless they were to find favor within the show ring or were endorsed by the wealthy as a statement of wealth).

Iowa, as a State, is positioned in such a location as to enjoy (or suffer depending on one's perspective) the humid heat of a southern summer while at the opposite end of the calendar, the arctic cold of the Canadian tundra. Such extremes aren't easy on livestock, especially stock that is at the smaller end of the scale. It is in this environment that the Iowa Blue was developed and for which the Iowa Blue was expected to flourish in. When one evaluates and compares the various chicken breeds available (and consider that this list was much shorter at the turn of the 20th century), one easily sees breeds suitable to the summer heat of our southern states, while at the same time recognizing breeds designed to tackle the frigid cold of our northern states. However, none could be found to take on both the Iowa summers and winters with ease. The southern bred breeds would freeze in our winters and at best would be expected to lose their combs and wattles to frostbite, while the northern bred breeds would perish from heat stroke as they suffered in our humidity. For Iowa, no breed could be found to take on with ease and simplicity, our 100+ degree days with 100% humidity only to be expected to bear our -30 degree days with contentment a mere six months later. To this extreme expectation the Iowa Blue was bred not only to survive in, but to perform to the expectations and survival of the farm family. To this expectation, the Iowa Blue would appear to have triumphed victoriously.

Breeders living in the state of Iowa have observed the Iowa Blue foraging as though not a care existed, while birds of other breeds are panting in the shade with wings outstretched as they seek to survive the summer heat. These same breeders have gone on to observe the same birds scratching at the coop floor and actively maintaining their pecking order, while their pen mates of other breeds are hunched in a corner, feathers fluffed, struggling to survive the winter cold. Where the Iowa Blue is found living in the southern states, the breed seems most tolerant and adaptable, no doubt due to his ability to handle Iowa's summer heat. Where flocks are found to exist to the north, the Iowa Blue's cold adaptability serves to accent the bird's ability to thrive without care or worry. Anyone in the nation wishing to raise a breed capable of handling the elements will find the Iowa Blue an easy ward; This is especially true for those individuals who live in the mid-western States that experience the wide range of elements found in that locale.

Survivability is a common trait found in the early 1900's era breeds, and to this ability, the Iowa Blue is second to none. Beyond the ability to make the elements of nature appear as nothing, this breed has mastered the ability to stay alive, well beyond the ability to survive what the weather brings.

From the moment they hatch from the shell, one quickly realizes the Iowa Blue chicks behaving in the most unusual ways, quite unlike anything witnessed by any other breed. Once they are but a few hours old, the chicks will begin their crouching and popping (the term given by breeders to describe their unique hopping). When one approaches the chicks from above, they will crouch down low, observe their handlers actions, then pop if the handler gets too close for their comfort. If the clutch is large enough, the popping will appear like popcorn popping. Some of the chicks will make short to high pops straight into the air, while others will sideways pop in varying lengths and degrees. They are keenly aware of aerial movements, and one is unable to surprise the chicks, even if all appear to be “sleeping”. As the chicks advance into their second to third weeks of age, the popping will cease and will be replaced with deep crouching followed by rapid evasiveness if they perceive one is too close for comfort. An interesting note concerning this crouching and rapid fleeing is that pheasant chicks exemplify this same trait. This trait no doubt rendered support to the claim that the Iowa Blue was “sired” by a pheasant.

Chick down color varies depending on the color variety. On the Silver Penciled chicks, a soft chocolate brown down color combined with light mottling on the face, is the most common. The down has a very unique look to it, almost like a silvery under color to the chocolate down, and gives the chick a very dimensional appearance. On the Birchen colored chicks, one will find a mostly black chick with various amounts of white on the belly, chin, and sometimes the face.

As adults, the Iowa Blue is defiant in its survivability. Not only are they innately aware of their surroundings (especially aerially), but they pair up that awareness with a confidence that they can handle any threat that comes their way. And their confidence is justified. When new owners first witness an Iowa Blue rooster engaged in battle with a hawk, or chasing a raccoon off the property, a new respect and admiration is instantly manifested. They often times are in a state of disbelief, and are somewhat shocked when they recount the incident to another Iowa Blue breeder, only to have the breeder respond with a nodding of the head, and a simple, “That’s what they do.” This determination to not only stand out in the open when other chickens flee for cover, but to proudly strut as if to dare the predator to take them on, and then engage the threat with fierce combat, is but a common occurrence to those familiar with the Iowa Blue. No breed of chicken exists, save for the Iowa Blue, that will rise to the challenge of attacking any and all threats that come their way. Whether it’s a hawk, opossum, raccoon, cat, etc., the accounts of their dedicated protection are numerous indeed, and each breeder will have multiple witnessed testimonies to their protective abilities. No doubt, much more happens than is witnessed. When it comes to pests, the Iowa Blue feels the roll of exterminator belongs to them. Mice, rats, or snakes will soon meet their end if an Iowa Blue gets their eye on it. They will jab at them with their beaks rendering the pest wounded, then grasp the creature within its beak and shake it vigorously; much like a dog shakes its victim.

Although the Iowa Blue possesses an aggressive nature toward those creatures it deems a threat, that same aggression is not expressed toward humans. Regarding humans, the Iowa Blue would rather keep a short distance, blending uniquely the calm and flighty characteristics. When you enter their coop, they will simply walk out of your way, always staying within a few feet’s distance, but should you make an attempt to capture them, they will quickly avert your attempts. It is best to handle one’s Iowa Blues after they have roosted as they are much easier to capture. Once captured however, they respond quite calmly. But do not be deceived by that calm nature, as they will make their escape when they perceive your defenses are down, or your hand has lightened its grip.

Iowa Blue’s like to roam. They like their space and are active foragers. They handle confinement well and without complaint, however, one will find the breed to flourish if given the opportunity to free range. Having a history of surviving with minimal human intervention, it’s not uncommon to witness the breed minding its own from spring to fall with little to no supplemental feed necessary (given they have enough space to glean their needs). This characteristic transforms flock keeping from tending to pastoral observing during these seasons, and add to this the flock’s natural

inclination for self-protection, and one realizes that this breed allows the flock keeper much freedom and independence from the traditional maintenance of the average chicken flock.

Survivability runs deep in the blood of an Iowa Blue, and what would survival be without the inclusion of procreation? In this, the Iowa Blue does not fail. Generally unbroody their pullet year, the hens will develop a strong desire to hatch a clutch as they age, and some flocks are known to have every member broody within a week of the first hen setting her mind to brood. This trait to “group” brood is found in greater numbers from the Sandhill Line than the Ideal Line. Hens are known among some breeders to be persistent in their desire to brood and can be somewhat difficult to break (again, this persistency is more often found in the Sandhill line). Once the clutch has hatched, no other hen can rival the protective Iowa Blue hen. She will willingly give every ounce of strength she has to defend and protect her young. Iowa Blue roosters have a reputation as flock defenders, and it is a common occurrence to witness an Iowa Blue rooster aiding in the protection of his posterity. This is yet another trait unique to the breed, as few (if any) breeds can claim as a whole that the roosters will protect, defend, and aid in the rearing of the offspring. One obvious disadvantage to broodiness is the lack of egg production, and to this end a few breeders have expressed an interest in developing the laying qualities in their flocks. This would of course result in less inclination to brood, and in time we may find individual lines of Iowa Blues who lay more and brood less, while some breeders will maintain consistent broody lines. One can however, induce the hen to resume laying by removing her chicks at a designated time, and therefore increase the egg supply while maintaining the brooding quality.

Egg production has a history within the Iowa Blue, albeit through an early 1900’s perspective and expectation of egg production. At the time the breed was created, the common egg production of the “better” laying breeds was around 150-180 eggs per hen, per year. Compared to our modern hybrids who are laying anywhere from 250-350+ eggs per hen per year, the early era laying breeds initially seem unfit for the job of supplying eggs for the home. When comparing the Sandhill and Ideal lines there is a marked difference in laying abilities as well as laying patterns (with Sandhill Line hens laying a darker tinted to light brown egg and Ideal Line hens laying a lighter tinted egg, often with small white specks on the outside of the shell). The Sandhill line hens are known to lay in “streaks” where an egg a day for weeks is followed by a week or two off, only to repeat the pattern of weeklong laying. Their eggs are a bit smaller than the Ideal line and their egg production is closer to the 150 eggs per hen per year. Observations of the Ideal line show these hens to lay a bit more consistently throughout the year with a production in the range of 180+ eggs per hen per year, with a little larger of an egg (more and larger eggs are no doubt the result of the infusion of Leghorn blood). A seemingly low number of eggs for a bird traditionally raised as a dual purpose provider, but consider this; a hen who broods for 21 days followed by rearing for 3 months, has invested around 112 days to her procreation duties. This leaves her with roughly 250 days to maintain her production duties. In light of this, producing 180 eggs in 250 days isn’t as insignificant as initially perceived. Egg production of these numbers is quite common among the better laying broody breeds, and it may prove somewhat challenging to boost egg numbers while at the same time preserving the hen’s natural inclination to brood.

With extinction ready to grab the Iowa Blue out of existence every few decades of the breed’s reign, few individuals (if any from 1980 to present) have actively and aggressively pursued egg laying qualities into their flock breeding programs – that is, until now. Modern breeders recognize there is room for improvement, and with a group of dedicated breeders, we could expect to see some significant improvements in short order.

As a dual purpose breed, the Iowa Blue was expected to put on a justifiable amount of meat for consumption. In this department it seems the modern Iowa Blue has room for improvement. Historical recollections have presented a disagreement as to the size of the breed. W.C. Fenton listed the roosters as 9-11 pounds with hens weighing in the 8 pound range. His account is the only one listing such weights and is the only one found to be in disagreement. The remaining accounts described the bird as

a medium sized creature, and two individuals (Michael Moore and Glenn Drowns) described the Iowa Blue's size to rest between a Leghorn and a Plymouth Rock. This last size description is in line with what we are experiencing in our flocks today and so it would seem that one of two scenarios have transpired. Either the original Iowa Blue was of the medium size (which would seem the most likely), or the Iowa Blue was originally a larger sized bird but has been reduced in size due to inbreeding. Officially, the club has accepted that the Iowa Blue was originally a medium sized bird (based on accounts as well as pictures of the original birds) and has therefore represented this within the Standard. The recommended weights are as follows;

Rooster – 7lbs

Cockerel – 6lbs

Hen – 6lbs

Pullet – 5lbs

These size recommendations appear to maintain breed consistency and should prove to add value to the breed as a meat supplier. Accounts from past persons familiar with consuming Iowa Blue meat have stated that the carcass was suitable as a table fowl with a pleasant flavor.

IOWA BLUE BODY TYPE

Iowa Blue body type is a unique feature of the breed. When viewed from the side, the overall body shape should be rectangular, similar in some ways to the Rhode Island Red. A full and deep breast is ideal and the breed is set well on the legs. The back should be wide and level. The head has a somewhat upright appearance, and the tail is set at a jaunty angle of 80 degrees. An Iowa Blue tail is quite distinct, putting a “stamp” on all crossbred offspring. Tail set is neither overly full nor elegantly flowing. A careful study of the below listed Standard for type will generate a clear perception in one's mind of an ideal Iowa Blue;

STANDARD FOR IOWA BLUE SHAPE

SHAPE – MALE

COMB: Single; bright red, medium to large, tight to the head, thick at base, with six well defined, evenly spaced points, those in the front and rear slightly shorter than those in the middle, blade not conforming too closely to the shape of the head.

BEAK: Dark horn shading to yellow at point, moderate in length, slightly curved

FACE: Bright red, clean-cut, skin fine and soft in texture, clean face around eyes and cheeks

EYES: Large, round, and prominent; dark brown

SHAPE – FEMALE

COMB: Single; bright red, medium to large, tight to the head, thick at base, with six well defined, evenly spaced points, those in the front and rear slightly shorter than those in the middle, blade not conforming too closely to the shape of the head.

BEAK: Dark horn shading to yellow at point, moderate in length, slightly curved

FACE: Bright red, clean-cut, skin fine and soft in texture, clean face around eyes and cheeks

EYES: Large, round, and prominent; dark brown

WATTLES: Bright red, medium to moderately large.

EAR LOBES: Bright red, medium.

HEAD: Medium in size, somewhat rounded, rather deep, neatly curved.

NECK: Moderately long, mild arch, forward and erect carriage

Hackle: Abundant, flowing well over shoulders

BACK: Medium length, strong, broad, and slightly sloping, blending well into the tail.

TAIL: Medium length, full, carried at an angle of eighty degrees (80°) above horizontal.

Main Tail: Moderately long, broad and overlapping

Sickles: Moderate in length

Lesser Sickles and Coverts: Moderate, abundant, extending onto main tail

WINGS: Medium in length, folded loosely with primaries overlapped but visible, carried close to the body under the saddle.

BREAST: Strong, moderately deep, and well-rounded.

BODY AND FLUFF: **Body:** Full, rectangular in shape, moderately deep.

Fluff: Moderately full.

LEGS AND TOES: Legs set well apart, straight when viewed from the front.

Lower Thighs: Large, medium length, well feathered, smooth.

Shanks: Medium in length, smooth.

Toes: Four on each foot, medium length, straight, well-spread.

WATTLES: Bright red, medium.

EAR LOBES: Bright red, medium.

HEAD: Medium in size, somewhat rounded in shape.

NECK: Moderately long, mild arch, forward and erect carriage, blending well into shoulder

BACK: Medium length, strong, broad, and slightly sloping, blending well into the tail.

TAIL: Moderately long, dense, carried high at an angle of 80° above horizontal.

WINGS: Medium in length, folded loosely with primaries overlapped but visible, carried close to the body.

BREAST: Strong, moderately deep, and well-rounded.

BODY AND FLUFF: **Body:** Full, rectangular in shape, moderately deep.

Fluff: Moderately full.

LEGS AND TOES: Legs set well apart, straight when viewed from the front.

Lower Thighs: Large, medium length, well feathered, smooth.

Shanks: Medium in length, smooth.

Toes: Four on each foot, medium length, straight, well-spread.

SILVER PENCILED IOWA BLUES

Previously, we have discussed which of the two colors (Silver Penciled and Birchen) the original Iowa Blue exemplified. We have noted that Mr. Logsdon created a Silver Penciled type of fowl, and we will begin to discuss first the Silver Penciled type, then the Birchen type. This primary color is unique to the Iowa Blue; while it belongs to the Silver Penciled “family” if you will, it does not follow the traditional Silver Penciled pattern as accepted and described in the Standard of Perfection (example; Silver Penciled Plymouth Rock, Silver Penciled Wyandotte, Dark Brahma, etc.).

To gain an understanding of this breed color, as well as the name, it is best to first understand that the name is derived from the appearance of the hen when viewed from a distance. Because the penciling becomes stippled and “mealy” as the lacing pattern progresses toward the hen’s tail, the black, white, and grey markings become blended and therefore produce a nice blue grey hue when seen from a distance – hence, the name *Iowa Blue*. The head on the hen should be a nice silvery white and her hackles should be predominately white, extending to the outer reaches of the hackle.

It is the Silver Penciled hen (specifically her white head and hackles, coupled with her stippled blue grey appearance) that gives the breed not only its name, but also one of the breed’s color distinctions. On the male one will find another color distinction that defines the Iowa Blue. Upon his coverts and primarily his greater and lesser sickles, one will notice a bluish sheen replacing the universal green sheen found on every other breed recognized in the Standard of Perfection. For a clear and concise understanding of the ideal color, listed below is the Standard for the Silver Penciled variety put forth by the Standard Committee and accepted by the membership on March 31, 2013. This Standard is the product of relentless study, concerning historical information, in order to produce a Standard that will maintain and perpetuate the Silver Penciled variety in its original form, as created by Mr. Logsdon.

Careful study of the Standard listed below will generate in the mind of the reader, a solid foundation and understanding of the Silver Penciled variety. A note of caution; any birds expressing Autosomal Red or Gold Leakage are considered a disqualification and should be severely discriminated against! These modifiers were introduced with the Ideal Line of Iowa Blues, and were not present in the original Iowa Blues.

The following page lists the Silver Penciled Standard as set by the Iowa Blue Chicken Club.

SILVER PENCEILED IOWA BLUE STANDARD

COLOR - MALE

HEAD: Silvery White.

NECK: **Hackle:** Web of feather, lustrous black with wide lacing of silvery white; shafts black.
Front of Neck: Black with white lacing.

BACK: **Back including saddle:** Web of feather, lustrous black with heavy lacing of silvery white, shafting of silvery white permissible. Silvery white predominating on surface of upper back; saddle matching with hackle in color.

TAIL: **Main Tail:** Web, black.

Main and Lesser Sickles: Lustrous black with bluish sheen.

Coverts: Lustrous black with bluish sheen, laced with white.

WINGS: **Fronts -** Black.

Bows: Silvery white.

Coverts: Lustrous black with bluish sheen, forming a distinct wing bar of this color across entire wing when folded. Silvery white markings permissible.

Primaries: Black with narrow edging of white on lower edge of lower webs.

Secondaries : Lower webs, black with lower half white to a point near end of feathers, terminating abruptly leaving ends of feathers black; upper webs, black; the secondaries when folded forming a triangular white wing bay between the wing bar and tips of secondary feathers.

BREAST: Lustrous black with bluish sheen, laced with white. White shafting permissible.

BODY AND FLUFF: **Body:** Black with white lacing.

Fluff: Black, slight tinge of gray permissible.

LEGS AND TOES: **Thighs:** Black with slight to medium silver lacing.

Shanks and Toes: Dark willow.

UNDERCOLOR OF ALL SECTIONS: Slate shading lighter towards base of feathers.

COLOR - FEMALE

HEAD: Silvery white.

NECK: **Hackle:** Black, slightly penciled with gray, heavily laced in white.

Front of Neck: Penciled blending into breast.

BACK: Gray penciling, becoming more stippled toward the tail, giving an overall blue gray appearance.

TAIL: **Main Tail:** Top feathering showing penciling to stippling in the upper web, lower web black, remainder of tail black.

Coverts: Gray with soft penciling to stippling.

WINGS: **Fronts, Bows, and Coverts:** Gray with black penciling.

Primaries: Black with soft gray penciling, stippled on lower webs.

Secondaries: Lower webs gray with diagonal black penciling, upper webs black, stippling toward the end.

BREAST: Silver gray with distinct black penciling.

BODY AND FLUFF: **Body:** Gray with black penciling, becoming stippled toward the tail, giving an overall blue gray appearance.

Fluff: Blue gray, penciled with dull black fading toward tail.

LEGS AND TOES: **Thighs:** Gray with black penciling.

Shanks and Toes: Dark willow.

UNDERCOLOR OF ALL SECTIONS: Medium slate.

BIRCHEN IOWA BLUES

A commonly seen variation in the current modern lines of Iowa Blues is the Birchen variety. Although the Birchen variety is not linked to the creation of the Iowa Blue, and is but a recent introduction to the breed, the club has chosen to recognize it as a variety due to the fact that most flocks currently consist of the Birchen variety and to lose those animals and further narrow the gene pool would be yet another bottleneck the breed cannot afford.

As the Birchen is a new creation and offers no value to the history of the breed, the club (via the Standard Committee) has exercised a greater freedom in defining exactly how the Birchen variety should appear in pattern and practice. Currently, most lines of Birchen roosters and hens experience a great deal of Autosomal Red and Gold Leakage. This is the first thing to be selected against, and any bird expressing these modifiers are not accepted as ideal specimens, and should be met with strong discrimination.

Presently, both the roosters and hens express a much darker body than is preferred by the club. Most notably the head and hackle on the hens, as well as the lack of lacing on the breast of the roosters and hens. As they appear currently, the hens have a black head whereas it should be predominantly white. Hen hackles are currently nearly solid black, where they should appear in a heavily white laced pattern. The breast appearance (both upper and lower) on both sexes are presently solid black (with the exception of a few roosters having some white lacing on the front of neck and upper breast). The breast on both sexes should possess a white lacing starting at the front of neck and extending all the way to the lower breast with lacing on the thighs permissible. By reducing the expression of modifiers (through selection), the desired white headed/hackled birds with heavily laced breasts will begin to appear and will take on a more Iowa Blue look.

As listed in the current Iowa Blue Standard, the Birchen variety differs from other standard Birchen patterned breeds, as stated in the Standard of Perfection, in two distinct ways.

1. The breast lacing extends well beyond the “normal” (example, Birchen Modern Game, Birchen Japanese) Birchen colored birds and resembles closer the pattern found on the Silver Sussex.
2. Staying true to the historical Silver Penciled variety, the sheen on the male is required to exemplify a bluish sheen as opposed to the green sheen present in all other breeds.

The following page lists the Birchen Standard as set by the Iowa Blue Chicken Club.

BIRCHEN IOWA BLUE STANDARD

COLOR - MALE

HEAD: Plumage, White.

NECK: Hackle: Black with heavy white lacing giving an overall white appearance to the hackle.
Front of neck: Black with white lacing.

BACK: White.

Saddle: black with heavy white lacing matching the hackles in pattern. Shafting permitted.

TAIL: Main Tail: Web, black.

Main and Lesser Sickles: Lustrous black with a bluish sheen.

Coverts: Black.

WINGS: Glossy black with bluish luster.

Shoulders and Fronts: Black.

Bows: White.

Coverts, Primaries, and Secondaries: Black.

BREAST: Upper breast: Black with heavy lacing of white.

Lower breast: Black with white lacing.

BODY AND FLUFF: Body: Black.

Fluff: Black, slight tinge of gray permissible.

LEGS AND TOES: Lower thighs: Black.

Shanks and Toes: Dark willow.

UNDERCOLOR OF ALL SECTIONS: Slate.

COLOR - FEMALE

HEAD: Plumage, White.

NECK: Hackle: Black with heavy white lacing.
Front of Neck: Black with white lacing.

BACK: Black.

TAIL: Black.

WINGS: Black.

BREAST: Black with white lacing extending to the lower breast.

BODY AND FLUFF: Body: Black.

Fluff: Black, slight tinge of gray permissible.

LEGS AND TOES: Lower thighs: Black.

Shanks and Toes: Dark willow.

UNDERCOLOR OF ALL SECTIONS: Slate.

NONSTANDARD IOWA BLUE VARIATION: SILVER DUCKWING

In the early part of 2013 Kari McKay-Widdel observed unusual chicks hatching out of a large clutch off eggs she set in the incubator. She had three chicks which were much lighter in color, very yellow with dark stripes, most unlike anything that had been witnessed in the modern Iowa Blue. These three chicks developed, upon adulthood, into a light Silver Duckwing pattern. How these birds arrived is left to speculation; however this is what's believed to have happened, when Ideal introduced the Black Leghorn to the Iowa Blue bloodline, hidden beneath the extended black (E) was the Wild pattern (e+). Once the e+ genes were paired up in the same bird what appeared was a Silver Duckwing pattern expression. In the preceding years leading up to the hatch of these Silver Duckwing chicks, Kari has done *extensive* culling of birds exhibiting Autosomal Red and Gold Leakage. Due to the successful efforts to rid her line of the AR, her Silver Duckwing chicks were able to possess AR free plumage. The AR and Gold leakage are believed to have arrived on the scene via the introduction of the Black Leghorn as well. These traits were (as far as is known) not present in the Iowa Blue population prior to the Ideal line's dispersal to the general public.

The appearance of these birds only adds to some confusion. We know that this color pattern was non-existent until after Ideal introduced their line of birds, however, these chicks resemble the legendary "pheasant" colored chicks closer than anything that has been hatched out in recent years. Clearly, there is more in the lines for breeders to unfold.

Being every bit the type and personality of an Iowa Blue, the Silver Duckwing birds make a stunning new addition to this fascinating breed. Time will tell if breeders will seek to pursue this new color variation. It is speculated that the Silver Penciled birds out of Kari's Birchen cockerel (Rex) carry the e+ gene hidden under the eb gene, and therefore more can be expected to appear in the coming years. Time will tell if this comes to pass and more of these beautiful birds come into existence. Presently, Kari's three chicks have matured into a cockerel and two pullets. She plans on breeding this trio by late summer-early fall of 2013. Current breeders are excited and curious to see the results of this breeding. Below are photographs of this trio.



*Left- Chicks at a couple days old Right- Chicks at two weeks of age
Photos by Kari McKay-Widdel*



Left – Pullet at 2 months Right – Cockerel at 2 months (in front, spangles on the breast)



*Comparison of the e+ Pure Silver Duckwing hen (left) and an eb Silver Penciled hen (right)
Photos by Kari McKay-Widdel*

DUCKWING & CROW-WING EXPRESSION ON EB BASED IOWA BLUES

By the late spring-early summer of 2013 another interesting observation was made by Kari McKay-Widdel in her Iowa Blue flock. Brown mottled cockerels that were hatched in January of 2013 were (as adults) segregating into two distinct color patterns. Some of the cockerels developed the white triangle (called Duckwing) on the closed wing, and others were developing a Crow-wing pattern where the secondaries were solid black (as found on the Birchen).

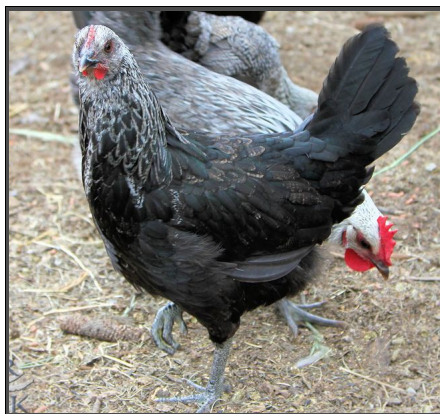
Up until this point it was commonly believed by the breeders that the Silver Penciled Iowa Blues were “built” upon the eb location on the E loci, and the Birchen Iowa Blues were “built” upon the E location on the E loci. As such, it was expected that all brown mottled cockerels would develop the Duckwing pattern on the wings, and the black and white chicks would develop the Crow-wing pattern on the wings.

However, what was being observed was some of Kari's brown mottled cockerels were reaching adulthood with Crow-wing markings. What this means is that some of the brown mottled chicks are E based instead of eb based. While it's not uncommon to have a penciled bird that is based on E (the Fayoumi for example), it is uncommon to have both the eb based and E based brown mottled chicks that not only resemble each other at hatch, but also at maturity. The hens appear the same and indistinguishable from each other, the cockerels exhibit only one difference; namely the Duckwing or Crow-wing which give their E loci base away.



Cockerel on the left exhibiting the solid black wing, the cockerel on the right exhibiting the white triangle coloration. Both birds were brown mottled at hatch.

(Left photo – Kari McKay-Widdel Right and Below photos- Connie Hurley DVM, DACVS)



Another interesting deviation was noted in a brown mottled pullet, that showed some patchiness to the brown pattern as a chick. She showed enhanced melanizer effect as she feathered out and is currently maturing into a mostly birchen pattern, though she started life looking very similar to standard Silver Penciled chicks. The potential exists for additional melanizers in the lines, as well as the mix of different E locus based genes.

SENSITIVITY TO LARYNGOTRACHEITIS

One last characteristic of the breed that begs mention is unfortunately an undesirable trait. It is reported that Iowa Blues are unusually susceptible to Laryngotracheitis. Interestingly enough, those who have experienced the disastrous effects of this disease are those who obtained stock from the late 1980's rescue and stock related to that rescue population.

At the present, breeders with Ideal Line flocks have not observed side effects from this disease. What is unknown is whether the breed originally suffered from exposure to Laryngotracheitis, or whether this developed as a result of inbreeding due to numerous genetic bottlenecks in the breed's history. It is reported that the birds respond well to vaccination against the disease and vaccination is advised to anyone showing Iowa Blues. Breeders are hopeful that in time immunity will become the norm as they hatch large numbers of chicks and cull heavily.

CONCLUSION

With the rise in popularity of homesteading families, and individuals interested in local homegrown foods, the time is ripe for the Iowa Blue to propel itself into the future. What are needed, are dedicated breeders, willing to put forth the necessary labor of producing outstanding examples of the breed and one day producing the desired effects needed to place the Iowa Blue into the Standard of Perfection.

Anyone interested in becoming involved with the rescue, breeding, and promotion of the Iowa Blue, should contact the Iowa Blue Chicken Club (<http://IowaBlueChickenClub.com>) for more details and to connect to breeders in their location.

APPENDIX: OTHER FLOCKS OF INTEREST

This section contains information on flocks of interest that lack proper documentation to be added to the timeline of ownership transfer as listed above in the historical document. Flocks that fall under this category, generally do so because the flock master is unable to recall who or where they obtained the start to their flock. Without the ability to accurately pinpoint where their flock originated (although in some cases a *very* educated guess can be determined), we are left without the certainty needed to include their flock within our ownership transfer timeline.

Don Heller (MN)-

Don got the start of his flock about 15 years ago (which puts the start of his flock around the year 1998). He stated that he got his start from a private breeder, but cannot remember his name. However, he did state that it was not a hatchery, preservation center, or organization of a similar sort. The birds were a dark silver black at maturity. He had hatched both brown mottled chicks as well as black chicks from this line.

Around the same time, Don was in contact with a gentleman who use to work at the Decorah Hatchery (the same hatchery that hatched out Kent Whealy's chicks and was owned by a gentleman named Steve). This gentleman encouraged Don to select the darker birds for his flock, so Don began to select away from the brown mottled chicks in favor of the black chicks.

Years later Don obtained stock from the Nature Conservancy in Baraboo, WI which had some birds that were darker than Don's, so he incorporated those birds into his line, again selecting the darker birds.

Five years ago, Don obtained stock from Ideal as their birds were even darker still. Presently, Don's flock is of the dark Birchen type and he feels that the brown mottled birds have been bred out of his flock. He hasn't had brown mottled chicks appear in this flock for years.

As a side note, it initially appeared odd that a gentleman who witnessed the original Iowa Blue would encourage the darker birds, however it seems there may be logic to this. Upon a closer look at W.C. Fenton's gazette article (page 34), one quickly realizes that the bird W.C. Fenton was breeding was a very white colored bird, much whiter than the original Iowa Blue. The article also mentions that the Iowa Blue is a mostly white bird with blue grey markings towards the tail end of the bird. In light of this, what appears to have happened is this older hatchery worker realized that W.C. Fenton's stock was much lighter than the original type and therefore encouraged Don to select the darker birds. However, there may have been a difference in what "darker" meant to the each party. The older gentleman would have been correct to encourage Don to select a darker bird than what was sold by W.C. Fenton, but at that time Birchen colored Iowa Blues did not exist, and as such there was no threat of pursuing a darker bird. Once the Birchen appeared, breeding for the darker birds brought about a whole new meaning.

REFERENCES

W.C. Fenton - Cedar Rapids Gazette; 2/2/1955 Article

(Copy of Article on Next Page)

STRAWBERRY PT. MAN DEVELOPS POULTRY BREED

By Ethel Zwanziger.

Strawberry Point – A new breed of chicken is being offered this spring by W. C. Fenton, Strawberry Point hatcheryman. Fenton has chosen to name the breed “Iowa Blue” because of its distinctive coloring and also to give the state of Iowa a chicken of its own.

The feathers are basically white with a bluish-grey marking that resemble the markings of a pheasant hen. Generally the birds’ heads show more of the white while the feathers toward the tail bear more dark markings.

The Iowa Blue is a heavy breed, cockerels reaching a weight of seven to eight pounds while the mature cocks reach nine to ten pounds. Pullets weigh six to six and a half pounds while the old hens weigh seven to seven and one-half pounds.

The breed is the result of a program of breeding reportedly begun by John Logsdon of Decorah twenty-five years ago.

Early Matings.

Logsdon says he mated a cock Chinese pheasant with a Black Minorca hen and a Rhode Island hen. He raised only eight birds from those matings – four pullets and four roosters. The next year he mated what he regarded as the best rooster with the four hens and continued in that manner, always keeping the roosters as long as possible and mating them with the previous year’s pullets.

Logsdon says he picked the Black Minorca to start because that breed lays larger eggs and the Rhode Island Red because it was, in his opinion, the leading breed of its type. The cock pheasant was chosen because of its hardiness and ability to stand both cold and heat.

Fenton purchased Logsdon’s flock last February of last year. Fenton now has three flocks in addition to the one at Strawberry Point. These flocks will furnish eggs for this year’s hatch.

Hardy Breed.

Characteristics of the Iowa Blue include an extra-large breast, dark legs, a brown egg and extra hardiness and resistance in disease. The baby chicks when first hatched are varied in color from red or brown to grey or dark blue or smoky blue, but when they feather out they are all alike.

Fenton reports that Leghorn hens mated to Iowa Blue males produce a pullet that will lay a large white egg. He also will hatch some such crosses as well as some Iowa Blue-White Rock crosses.

While the breed is still so new that egg production records are necessarily few, Fenton says that his four flocks have demonstrated during the fall and winter that their production will compare favorably with that of other heavy breeds.



— Photo by Alvin Zwaniger, Strawberry Point.
IOWA BLUE HEN — W. C. Fenton, Strawberry Point hatcheryman, poses with an Iowa Blue hen, a new breed he is introducing this year. The breed is founded on Black Minorca, Rhode Island Red and, reputedly, a pheasant cross many years ago.

* * *

Strawberry Pt. Man Develops Poultry Breed

By Ethel Zwaniger.

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Good rotation and the use of pure seed constitute the most effective and economical means of weed control on farms, say Iowa agronomists.

The Associated Press – The Daily Reporter; 2/22/1955 Article

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IOWA MAN DEVELOPS NEW CHICKEN

By The Associated Press

A new breed of chicken which began with a cross between a Chinese cock pheasant and Black Minorca and Rhode Island Red hes has been developed in northeast Iowa.

The present owner of the flock which was begun 25 years ago by John Logsdon of Decorah is W. C. Fenton of Strawberry Point. Fenton has named the new breed Iowa Blue because of its distinctive coloring and also to give the state of Iowa a chicken of its own.

The feathers of Iowa Blues are basically white but have a bluish-gray marking that closely resembles the markings of a hen pheasant. In most cases the heads of the birds are white while the feathers toward the tail have more markings.

Grow Large

The Iowa Blue is a heavy breed with cockerels reaching a weight of seven to eight pounds while the mature coks reach nine to 10 pounds.

Logsdon, in starting the new breed, selected the Black Minorca because that breed lays large eggs and the Rhode Island Red because he considers it the leading breed of its type. The pheasant was chosen because of its hardiness and ability to stand both cold and heat.

From the first mating of the cock pheasant and the two hens, Logsdon raised eight birds – four pullets and four roosters.

The next year he mated what he regarded as the best rooster with the four hens and continued that in that manner, always keeping the roosters as long as possible and mating them with the previous year's pullets.

Fenton purchased the entire flock of Iowa Blues a year ago and now has four flocks of them.

Characteristics

Fenton says characteristics of the Iowa Blue include a large breast, dark legs and a brown egg. The chicks when first hatched are varied in color and may be red, brown, grey, or blue, but when they feather out they are all alike.

Fenton believes the breed has a bright future because of the large eggs, its suitability for producing capons or heavy springs and its hardiness. Only a few egg production records of the breed have been kept, but Fenton believes they will lay as well as any heavy breed.

Iowa Man Develops New Chicken

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A new breed of chicken which began with a cross between a Chinese cock pheasant and Black Minorca and Rhode Island Red hens has been developed in northeast Iowa.

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Decorah Public Opinion; 2/28/1955 Article

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**NEW BREED OF CHICKEN DEVELOPED
BY JOHN LOGSDON NORTH OF DECORAH
*NEW IOWA BLUE BREED HAS HEAVY BREAST, DARK LEGS,
AND LAYS LARGE BROWN EGGS***

A new breed of chickens has been developed over a period of 25 years by John Logsdon, who lives eight miles north of Decorah on Highway 57.

The breed has been named the Iowa Blue because of its distinctive coloring and also to give the state of Iowa a chicken of its own.

The feathers are basically white but are marked with a bluish gray marking that closely resembles the markings of a pheasant hen. Generally, the birds heads show more of the white, while the feathers toward the tail bear darker markings.

The Iowa Blue is a heavy breed, cockerels reaching a weight of seven to eight pounds while the mature cocks reach nine to ten pounds. Pullets weigh six to six and a half pounds while the old hens weigh seven to seven and a half pounds.

Started 25 Years Ago

The breed is the result of work begun by Logsdon of Canoe Township 25 years ago. The first year he mated a Chinese pheasant cock with a Black Minorca hen and Rhode Island hen. He raised only eight birds from those matings – four pullets and four roosters.

The next year he mated what he regarded as the best rooster with the four hens and continued in that manner, always keeping the roosters as long as possible and mating them with the previous year's pullets.

Logsdon picked the Black Minorca to start because that breed lays the largest eggs of any breed and the Rhode Island Red because it was, in his opinion, the leading breed of its type. The cock pheasant was chosen because of its hardiness and ability to stand both cold and heat.

Characteristics of the Iowa Blue include an extra large breast, dark legs, a brown egg and extra hardiness and resistance to disease. The baby chicks when first hatched were varied in color from red or brown to grey, dark blue or smoky blue, but when they feather out they are all alike.

Last year, Logsdon sold all the eggs from his newly developed breed of chicken to W.C. Fenton of Strawberry Point, Iowa. Fenton now has three flocks in addition to the one at Strawberry Point.

Fenton says that Leghorn hens mated to Iowa Blue roosters produce a pullet that will lay a large white egg, and he expects to hatch some such crosses as well as some Iowa Blue – White Rock crosses.

Bright Future

He believes the breed has a bright future because of the large eggs produced, its suitability for producing capons or heavy springs, and its extreme hardiness and disease resistance.

While it is still so new that egg production records are few, Fenton says his four laying flocks have demonstrated during the past fall and winter that they will lay as many eggs as any heavy breed.

New Breed of Chicken Developed By John Logsdon North of Decrah

* * *

New Iowa Blue Breed Has Heavy Breast, Dark Legs, and Lays Large Brown Eggs

A new breed of chickens has been developed over a period of 25 years by John Logsdon, who lives eight miles north of Decrah on Highway 37.

The breed has been named the Iowa Blue because of its distinctive coloring and also to give the state of Iowa a chicken of its own.

The feathers are basically white but are marked with a bluish gray marking that closely resembles the markings of a pheasant hen. Generally, the birds' heads show more of the white, while the feathers toward the tail bear darker markings.

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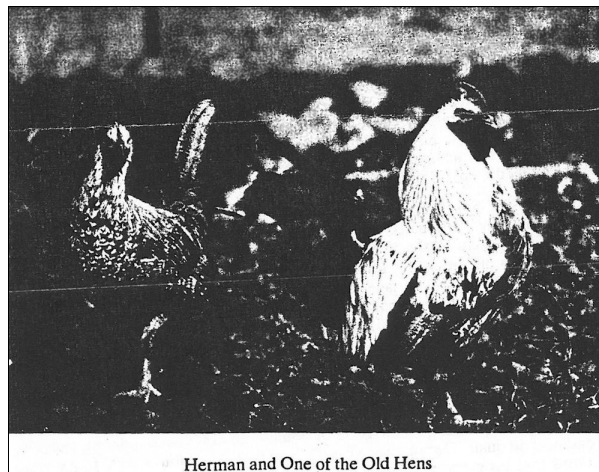
Kent Whealy – History of the Iowa Blue

During the late 1960s, I was still halfheartedly going through the motions at the University of Kansas. Looking back on that period, I heard some of the hottest jazz and blues this side of St. Louis. Nowadays I drag myself out of bed and barely recognize that tired fellow in the mirror. I trudge downstairs for a cup of coffee and sigh, “Diane, I’ve got the Iowa Blues.” She just grins and says, “Take that pail of scraps down to the barn when you feed them.” Maybe I better explain.

Each year Seed Savers holds its Campout Convention on the next to the last full weekend in July. About 200 of our members come together for two days of fellowship that includes speeches, slide shows, garden tours and good food. In 1987 Chris Norman and his family drove all the way from Thunder Bay, Ontario to be with us. Chris is the site manager at Old Fort William, a restored fur trading post. There he maintains historic gardens and several endangered breeds of livestock. During his trip to Decorah, Chris went to meet Michael Moore who lives about five miles northwest of Heritage Farm. Michael, who is probably in his mid-40's, is living on his family's farm. He has continued to keep his grandfather's herd of Dexter cattle.

Michael also keeps a large menagerie of poultry: ducks, geese, guineas, chickens, pheasants, and quail. During their visit Michael took Chris into a shed to see some chickens that his grandfather had developed a half century earlier. Until a few years ago, there had been a fairly large flock, but they got into some bad oats and most of them died. Hogs killed a few more, so a couple of years ago, Michael started keeping them in the shed continually. Only one rooster and five hens remained, all very old. They barely laid each spring and their eggs were no longer fertile. Michael was afraid he was going to lose them. They were called Iowa Blues.

Chris related that story to all of us during his speech at the Campout. That fall I went to meet Michael Moore and got my first look at his Iowa Blues. They were old, but spectacular! The rooster's comb had been frozen off so many times that I couldn't tell what it should look like. He had a white mane; long, narrow, white feathers also covered his back and hung down on both sides of a large, curved, bluish black tail. The feathers on his breast were barred with black and white which made his lower body appear almost grey, not the blue I had expected. He was broad breasted and his legs were olive. The hens were covered with even more finely penciled black and white feathers. Their manes were much more subtle, white feathers edged with black which gives a silver appearance. Their tails were a more solid dark grey, and they had olive legs and small, spiked combs.



Herman and One of the Old Hens

Those five hens laid less than a dozen eggs in the spring of 1987. Michael had tried to hatch them in an antique incubator, but they all rotted. Michael and I schemed about ways to get them out onto some grass the next spring, sock the laying mash, and then take any eggs to a friend of mine who runs the Decorah Hatchery.

But we both knew that the situation looked rather hopeless; those six remaining Iowa Blues were just too old. Michael didn't know a lot about the development of the breed. He did tell me that they were supposedly part pheasant. (Right! And Escondido Gold melon is supposedly part papaya.) His grandfather had once taken two pair to a fair in Missouri and sold them to some people who also bought several Dexter cattle over the years. We followed up that lead, but with no luck. Michael told me to contact a fellow named Ransome Bolson who used to run a hatchery in Decorah. Twenty years earlier, Michael's grandfather had sold Ransome some Iowa Blues. There was an outside chance that he might still have some.

I'd already noticed Ransome Bolson's place just northeast of Decorah where Locust Road climbs up through the bluffs out of the river valley. It had fallen into despair, but must have been a showplace in its time. There were three long, narrow chicken houses with fancy metal cupolas, one of the roofs had caved in. Half a dozen small, square, brooder huts were also scattered around the property. Ransome's mother and father, who are in their late 80's, still live on that home place. Ransome and his family live across the road.

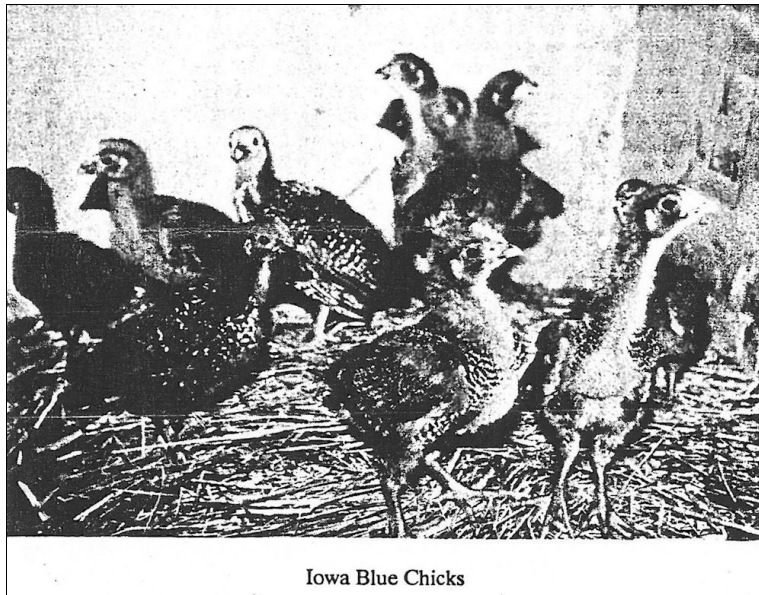
I asked Ransome if he still had any Iowa Blues, he grinned and said he had about 50. We walked down through the trees past several young woodchucks about the size of guinea pigs that were sunning themselves on some old tires. It surprised me that they didn't scurry away when we walked up. I looked through the chicken window and torn plastic that covered the windows on the south side of one of the houses. Inside, looking back, were three beautiful young roosters and half a dozen hens that looked exactly like Michael's.

Ransome said he had known about the breed for nearly 40 years. About 1960 he bought a rooster and nine hens from Dolly Logsdon, Michael Moore's grandmother. She told him that a White Rock hen hatched out a nest under a building and brought out a clutch of chicks like no one had ever seen. Ten years ago Ransome had 30 Iowa Blue laying hens. Today he has about 30 older birds, that he doesn't have the heart to butcher, although he never told me that. Over the last couple of years a few hens have hatched out nests of eggs, so he also has three roosters and eight hens that are two years old, and two roosters and six hens that are one year old. He agreed to sell me hatching eggs when the young hens started laying in the spring.

Ransome also told me to contact W.C. Fenton who used to run the Fenton Hatchery in Strawberry Point. At one time he had sold Iowa Blues through his hatchery and might know of someone down that way who still had some. The hatchery closed in 1972 and Mr. Fenton retired to Elkader. When I called, he sounded quite elderly. From about 1960-1970 he had sold Iowa Blue chicks, but didn't think anyone was still keeping any. He did, however, tell me several interesting stories.

W.C. Fenton named the breed. He told his employees at the hatchery, "Iowa doesn't have a chicken named after it. Let's call them Iowa Blues." According to Mr. Fenton they were developed from the eggs of a Black Minorca pullet and a Rhode Island Red pullet that were locked in a corn crib with a cock pheasant. (As John Withee said with a wink about all the Wild Goose beans, "Sure makes a good story, doesn't it?") Over the years his niece won 64 ribbons with them at the Clayton County Fair.

He had used Iowa Blues to produce two beautiful crosses. An Iowa Blue cockerel on White Rock hens produced greyish cockerels and black pullets. And a cross with New Hampshire pullets produced reddish grey cockerels and blackish grey pullets.



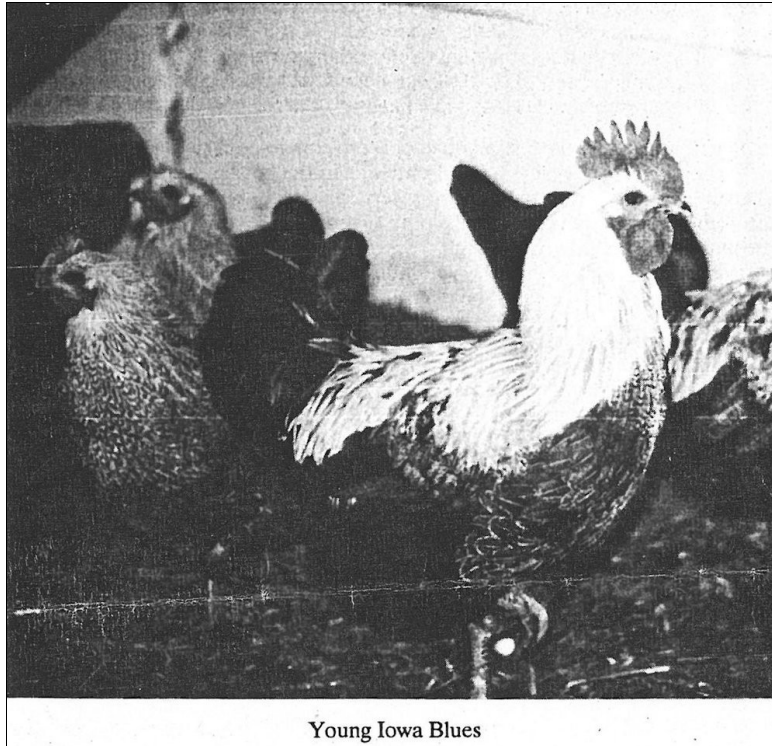
Iowa Blue Chicks

Last spring Ransome Bolson sold me seven dozen hatching eggs over a three-week period. He warned me that it might be like playing the Iowa Lottery; he was afraid that the chickens had become inbred and that the hatch might be 20% or less. I took the eggs to my friend Steve Matter, whose family has run the Decorah Hatchery since 1923. Three weeks later I went back in to collect the first batch of chicks. About 65% of the eggs had hatched and there were no crooked toes or other signs on inbreeding. About half of the chicks were solid chestnut brown. The other half also had light yellow, horizontal stripes on their cheeks, a light yellow triangle under their beaks and chins, and two black stripes down their backs. In other words, they looked like pheasant chicks!

I asked Ransome Bolson if the two color patterns were sex linked; he assured me that they were not. A few of the chicks were quite a bit lighter or darker than the others, but he had seen all of those variations and said they would all end up looking the same. A month later the chicks had feathered out and you could tell the roosters in the oldest batch by their combs. They were starting to get some size to them, but still looked very little like their parents. Ransome agreed to sell me one young rooster and five older hens to display at the Campout.

I especially wanted to show them to Thane Earle, one of our members who is a well-known poultry judge. Thane has kept as many as 300 strains of chickens at one time, and more than 20 species of pheasants. I fully expected Thane to walk in and say "Oh hell, Kent, those are just *Such and Such*." But he had never seen anything like them. He was also surprised that their color pattern was stable and not the result of a cross. Iowa Blues are actually grey, not the blue that poultry fanciers try to achieve.

Last winter two of Michael's old hens died. The three remaining hens laid five eggs last spring. I took the eggs to Steve at the hatchery, but none were fertile. By the time the Campout rolled around, another old hen had died. At that point we were hoping to hatch anything out of them, to cross with our young birds. The two flocks have been separated for 20 years, so we might gain some vigor.



We traded Ransome's young rooster and five older hens plus two of our young roosters and two young hens to Michael for his old rooster and two old hens. Quite a deal. Michael's flock increased from three to ten with five young birds. Aaron and I brought them after dark, but there was a light in the shed. Michael caught his old rooster and held it up to the light bulb; I held Ransome's rooster up beside it. Except for the old rooster's comb, spurs, and a slight yellowish cast to its white feathers, they looked exactly alike. Michael carried the box containing the three old chickens to my van. He handed me the box and said, "Take good care of Herman, you hear." Then he looked sort of sheepish, grinned and said, "Well, that's what we call him."

Aaron and I had fixed up a vacant cattle pen in the barn for the three old birds. The next morning we let them out for the first time in two years; they loved it! We started feeding them laying mash and a few weeks later one of the hens laid two, small, light brown eggs. Glenn came up about that time to spend the weekend with our family. He brought along a round, metal hundred egg incubator and taught me how to use it. We filled its water pan, brought the temperature up to 103 degrees F. and set the two eggs. Three and a half weeks later neither egg had hatched, so we broke them. They were infertile and had not even started to develop. Glenn said that a rooster can become sterile if his comb freezes severely. One of the hens is very old; -her feet look ancient. The other hen is old, but somewhat younger. Next spring I will pen them with the young rooster, hoping to get anything out of the last of Michael's flock.

Last spring Ransome sold me 84 hatching eggs. We lost maybe half a dozen chicks, but still ended up with 28 roosters and 23 hens. Two roosters and two hens went to Michael, along with Ransom's young rooster and five older hens. Eight roosters and eight hens went to our friends Lee and Jan Zook who live about five miles north of Heritage Farm. One of those roosters drowned in a tank and two or three more have probably been butchered by now.

A week before Halloween, Glenn brought us a pickup load of squash for David's pumpkin carving party. Glenn and I selected our seven best roosters and the other eleven were butchered. Those of you who wince at that have probably never kept any poultry. Seven young roosters is actually far too many for our 13 young hens. We only need a couple, but I'm scared something might happen to some of them. So far they aren't fighting or running the young hens ragged; that may happen next spring. Right now Herman still rules the roost and protects his two old hens from the young roosters.

All of us at Heritage Farm are quite pleased with the way things went this summer. As often happens, another piece of our work has fallen perfectly into place, allowing us to rescue an almost extinct local breed. Instead of one breeding flock, now there are four with 36 new young birds. We intend to continue to spread them around. At the Campout I had to discourage several people from taking birds home with them right then. Next spring we should be able to mail hatching eggs to most folks who want them. We could also raise chicks that could be picked up at the Campout. It will probably be illegal for us to mail chicks, since they won't be inspected; I'll have to check on that. Let us know what you want, and we will try our best to help you out. You certainly don't have to live in Iowa to have the Iowa Blues.

(Some excerpts omitted or truncated that did not add to the Iowa Blue knowledge base.)

John Logsdon Interview 2/01/2013

Interview conducted by Curt Burroughs

These notations document John Logsdon's recollections during an interview on his remembrances of his Grandfather's Iowa Blue chickens. John is a grandson to the Iowa Blue's creator of the same name, John Logsdon. John remembers doing chores with his grandfather and recollects his grandfather's daily activities with the Iowa Blue.

John shared that his grandfather enjoyed studying genetics and reports that the Iowa Blue was a result of his grandfather's genetic study. John recollects that his grandfather passed away when he was 11 or 12 years old, so some information may be lost to the past.

John remembers the following key points about his grandfather's birds:

- The hens were a grey-blue color and a light penciled pattern. The color looked like the grey-blue color of a barn pigeon.
- The cocks had a real silver head that was very distinctive. The silver went all the way down their back and into their lesser sickles.
- His grandfather did butcher them and they provided a nice sized carcass.

Michael Moore Interview 2/01/2013

Interview conducted by Curt Burroughs

- Michael's grandfather is said to have created the breed. His name was John Logsdon.
- Michael remembered there were Iowa Blues on the farm since his earliest memories until he gave his flock to Kent.
- He gave all of his stock to Kent, and hasn't had any Iowa Blue's for 20+ years.
- Chicks- brown colored; sometimes a little mottling was present.
- Hens- grey penciled, mostly white/silver heads. Breast was speckled, sometimes laced. Definitely a penciled color, but not distinctly penciled.
- Cock- Silver-white neck, back, and lesser sickles. Rest of body is black. Chest has speckling/lacing of white on it. Tail blue sheen.
- The birds he raised were of medium size. They were dual purpose but not the size of a rock. Bigger than a leghorn, smaller than a rock. Hens were 4-5 pounds, males larger.
- Legs willow colored, couldn't remember what color the eyes were.
- Tail set was not long or flowing. It was medium sized with little to no curve in the male's sickle feathers.
- Body was brick shaped but somewhat upright.
- Michael said that he never saw a black chick, hens, or cocks in all the years his family raised them. He seems shocked that there were black birds being sold as Iowa Blues. He did say sometimes he's end up with a darker grey hen every now and then. But that it didn't happen very often.
- Currently, Michael is 72 years old.

Glenn Drowns (Sandhill Preservation Center) Interview 1/25/2013

Interview conducted by Curt Burroughs

HISTORY

How many flocks were rescued?

“FLOCKS?! There was one flock left in the nation in 1987.” Ken Whealy located the flock. There were around 5 hens and a cock or two. While they were severely inbred, they hatched alright at first. Ken began to select away from the aggressive cocks and in a few short years, fertility had dropped dramatically. When this happened, Ken gave the flock to Glenn Drowns to see what he could do with it. When Glenn received the flock, he said, “If I set 100 eggs, I'd have 10 that were fertile, and only 4 would hatch. They were in desperate need of help and new blood.”

Have you done any outcrossing to bring in new genetics and if so to what breeds?

“I’m 90% sure that the Iowa Blue was created through crossing a Silver Penciled Rock cock over a Silver Campine hen. I made this cross and then crossed the F1 to an Iowa Blue cock.” He said that the SP Rock x S Campine cross will produce a percentage of offspring that will look exactly like the original stock Ken rescued.

Additional Stories/Recollections from elders familiar with the stock?

There was once an older gentleman who was going to visit with me about what he remembered of the Iowa Blue while he worked at a hatchery that sold them when he was a kid. However, he passed away but a few short months before they were scheduled to get together!

Did they ever contain traditional blue dilution genes?

“No, never.”

What do you remember the old birds looking like?

“The pictures in “Story’s Illustrated Guide” are what they should look like in color.” (See photos below.) In type, they were similar to RIRs. Brick shaped.

Glenn said the picture of the male in the Story’s Guide is lacking in size and smoothness, but it was all he had at the time.

What was the size of the original population of Iowa Blues?

Severely limited to Decorah and the NE part of Iowa. They were sold at a time in history when nearly every town had a small hatchery, and these hatcheries didn’t ship chicks regularly. Generally you went to the hatchery and picked up the chicks in person. Therefore it made the spread of new breeds a very slow process. By the time the 40’s came and the chicken industry became industrialized with specialized breeds, the Iowa Blue had only reached the outer parts of the North Eastern part of Iowa. “I seriously doubt any chicks hatched by the hatcheries reached beyond Iowa, save for the rare exceptions for SE Minnesota, SW Wisconsin, and NW Illinois.” If any made it beyond that limited area, it was most likely caused by private breeders. Only Iowan’s wanted to raise *Iowa Blues*.

How did the “old stock” differ from the present “purebred” stock being sold at hatcheries?

“They are completely different. Like two separate breeds.”

What was the overall goal for the breeding of the original Iowa Blue?

“They are a late 1800’s early 1900’s type farmyard chicken. This means, they aren’t super-efficient, they didn’t need to be.” Their value to the farm was not just limited to eggs and meat. They had to be able to fend for themselves most of the year, successfully raise a clutch of chicks to adulthood, and outsmart predators. Breeds like that were bred for so much more than to be egg/meat factories. That’s what makes them so unique.

COCK



What would the ideal cock color be? Crow Wing/Duck Wing?

Doesn't matter, the club should decide what they want.

How far down should the lacing go?

Down the chest and onto the underbelly.

Was there gold present in the hackle or saddle, or always silver?

“NEVER, that’s the surest sign they aren’t purebred.” When introducing new blood from outcrossing to other breeds, one must make sure undesirable traits are bred out. It’s best to outcross to breeds that resemble the breed you’re trying to save. Stay with the Silver Penciled varieties if you want to maintain the traditional color type. But no double lacing!

HEN



What would be the ideal color for the female?

“Like the Story’s Guide picture. She should have lacing on the front half, slowly transitioning into a stippling.”

What are the shortcomings you see in the current population?

Color, Type, and Size.

Is there a preference as to which color is preferred? Silver or Birchen? Is so, which one and why?

“I’m a traditionalist, so I think they should be bred in their original color only. But, I think the birchen is here to stay. If you keep them (the birchen), I’d encourage the club to require lacing on the breast/underbelly on both cock and hen.”

What are your thoughts on birds possessing red feathers or carrying red genes?

“Crossbred birds. Never, never, never should red or anything close to red be present. No to gold, to cream, anything but silver.”

***Images from Storey’s Illustrated Guide to Poultry Breeds;
Cock and Hen from Glenn Drowns***

TYPE

Body:

“Brick shaped. Push for large birds.”

Eyes:

“Dark”

Legs:

“Slate”

Blue Sheen on Feathers:

“Encourage it.”

Ideal Size (Cock/Hen):

“8lb cock/ 6lb hen would be ideal, but don’t know if it will ever happen.”

Skin Color:

“Greyish”

How many points on the comb:

“Never got to a point where I could be picky.”

Tail description:

“They always had nasty looking tails, including the original flock. I would like to see the tails improved some. I would encourage shorter, full tails over long leghorn like tails. Again I’m a traditionalist.”

Down color:

“The perfect color is a light chocolate brown with a small amount of mottling. If you get that, that chick will carry the perfect color as an adult.”

What color of chick should we be selecting for?

“That light chocolate brown. Anything else will be off colored as an adult. If you get a whole hatch that is that color, I will personally come and visit your flock. That’s how hard it has been to produce the right color.”

OTHER INFORMATION

Do you have any photos of birds that are considered to be the appropriate type and color?

I have a couple of black and white photos I'll send you copies of.

If you could write the Standard yourself, how do you see them appearing in a Standard? What necessities are absolutely requirements?

- First I'm a traditionalist, so I would only include the Silver Penciled type, making sure the hens had the type of penciling found in the Story's Guide. *All hens should look a grey/blue from a distance.* This is where the name Iowa *Blue* comes from.
- Slate legs
- Dark eyes
- Brick shaped body

What is your impression of the 2-3 distinct type we are seeing in the breed now?

"Too many people have the wrong type and color of bird. How can a black bird be considered blue?"

Can you give us an idea of the basic E locus genetic makeup? (Black (E), Birchen(ER), Wheaton (eWh), Brown Partridge (eb), wild type (e+), buttercup (ebc))

"I have no idea."

Do you have any guidelines for what direction you would like to see the breed take?

"If I could pick one thing, I'd encourage the club to keep the original color." If you want to add more colors, so be it. But if we lose the blue/grey hen, we lose the breed identity.

Do you have descriptions of Iowa Blues from old hatchery listings or any other source? Old magazines, etc.? If so, could you make copies of them for us?

I'll send you copies of everything I have.

Are you aware of any older breeders that might have strains we should conserve? (There have been rumors about someone in Virginia with "old style" Iowa Blues but we have never been able to find that person)

"To my knowledge, none exist. I highly doubt the Virginia birds. Probably just a rumor. But, you never know." Many of the people I sold chicks to in the early years are now dead. They wanted some Iowa Blues because they remembered having them when they were children, but once they passed away, their families got rid of the flocks.

Would you be willing to contact previous buyers to see if they'd be willing to get in touch with us and share their thoughts/experiences or sell stock, chicks, or eggs?

I sure will, it may not happen till next winter. I'll send anything I come across to you as soon as I can.

Special Note:

Iowa Blues are EXTREMELY susceptible to Laryngotracheitis! If you show them, you must vaccinate them for this! If you don't, you will risk losing your whole flock. I learned this lesson the hard way and had to build them back up again.

Smith Poultry Supply has a nice vaccine for this. You put it in the water. Do not use the nasal spray, it often times damages the eye.

Phil Roe Interview 1/25/2013

Interview conducted by Curt Burroughs

- Phil owned, at one time, stock from Ransome's birds.
- Phil said that the vast majority of the chicks hatched were a solid chestnut color (just like Kent's description of the chicks), only a small minority were of a different type. When asked if he hatched any black chicks, he said “no, that only happened once Glenn added new blood from other breeds to try to improve the vigor of the stock.”
- Phil said that while fertility was an issue with the Ransome/Michael birds, he had some moderate success with hatching when the hens were allowed to hatch a clutch. He'd get above 60% hatch. He felt that new blood wasn't needed, but to rather let the hens brood the clutch and save the most vigorous and active chicks for breeding. Phil mentions that had more breeders done that, there would have been no need to outcross, and in time separate lines would emerge.
- The male's “mane” was very distinctive and made a big impression. His chest had anything from slight barring to heavy lacing. Sometimes a dark brown color could be seen as a slight penciling/specking on the chest. The male's tails had a blue sheen to them.
- The hens had a distinctive grey penciling pattern that was unique to the breed. They had a pleasant, soft greyish blue look to them. Again, sometimes a dark brown would be present as a hue in the lacing on some of the hens.
- Aggressive birds! They had an active and aggressive personality.
- Phil said he has some color pictures of his stock that he'd be willing to share with us, but that he has to first locate them. He thinks he knows where they may be.

- Phil mentioned that he purchased some Iowa Blues from Ideal with Glenn in 2010. He was so disgusted with them that he got rid of them before they finished out. He said he never hatched a black chick from his original birds and neither did the other breeders who chose not to outcross. "When the black chicks came in the mail, I knew right away that these were NOT Iowa Blues. I told Glenn to get rid of his too. Whatever they've got going on is not good."
- He also shared a strong pessimism as to the reality that *real* Iowa Blues exist at all. In his opinion he is almost certain the original Iowa Blue is extinct and what we have left today are just remnants of what use to be.
- He said that from the time he got rid of his flock until now, he's never seen a bird that was claimed to be an Iowa Blue, which actually looked like a real Iowa Blue. I shared with him what Kari had going on and he agreed to look at the pictures of Kari's silver hens and give us an evaluation as to how close Kari's hens resemble the original line of Iowa Blues.

Phil Roe - Email Regarding Photos of Kari's Silver Birds; 01/25/2013

Been a while since I talked to anyone about these. I am very surprised! These girls look pretty darn good! The roosters not bad either, but more shots would be helpful. Yes, I would like to see more pics of the roosters & chicks.

I remember some of the females were more of a very pretty 'silver' penciled color instead of the color on these females & actually would have made more sense naming them "Blue." I always wondered if those were the ones that the chicks were darker & wanted to band those as chicks to follow that thought. Remember banding some birds, but do not think I came to any conclusion. Thought Iowa Silvers would have fit for those too, ha. I don't remember if Glenn even noticed or if he had any thoughts on it.

I would be interested to know how these came to be. Were they from Glenn's birds he had mixed Egyptian Fayoumi blood in? Or did someone still have a few pure ones? These look more compact, more like the original bird than Glenn's that were too lanky & his were way to dark, especially the cocks. Are they breeding true? I assume the eggs are brown?

Yeah, I think it is very wishful thinking on finding any. I had asked the "helpful" (ha!) guy at the Decorah hatchery about it 8 or 10 years ago. He basically thinks they are a waste of time anyway. (By the way, it was the Decorah Hatchery who hatched the chicks we originally received & he did not think too much of them then either) Talked to him about the same time I was sorta pressing Glenn if he knew of any old pure ones left. At that time Ransome Bolson was still alive (He perhaps still is, I have no idea, would be pretty darn old) & he suggested I try him. I did not feel like pestering him, so that was that. Anyone else I knew who defiantly had them no longer keep birds & had not passed on any to others. I have been to Michael Moors farm outside Decorah a couple time and talked to him. ... I know he has not had any since Kent got old "Herman" & hens from him prob. 20 years ago. Should have pics of "old Herman" too, but those will be even harder to find.)

This July will be our 25th consecutive Seed Savers Exchange camp out "Conference." So we have seen the unfolding of all of this and a lot more for a long time. I still remember old "Herman" & his girls with their old scaly legs, but they were still beautiful. We would camp in the valley there & in the early morning fog it was cool to hear that old bird crow. I really wanted those birds bad!

In those days I spoke with several old poultry guys (Thane Earle was one), some would be at the camp out & really none of them thought to much about them & were pretty indifferent about whether the breed survived or not.

I have noticed a big difference in the different breeds I have kept over the years in the sound or the crow, and always liked theirs.

These were the first real flock of chickens I ever kept & prior to that had only a handful of bantams off and on since I was a kid.

So, I had just Iowa blues for maybe 3 or 4 years. Then I stupidly went nuts & got several other breed to work with. Unfortunately, I introduced disease when I bought mature birds from others. Something went through & birds were dropping like flies. It was very sad, disgusting & disheartening.

Glenn helped me through & I saved some birds. I was down to only a few Iowa Blue hens & gave them to Glenn. I think all he had left was a pure cock or so, no hens.

Anyway this was what he had left to work with & "kinda" saved them when he infused the other blood. This has been 19 years ago I believe.

I never distributed birds to anyone other than Glenn. If anyone has a record of a possible pure remnant it would be him from any he distributed prior to the different blood. I would be completely shocked if there were any around from that time. ... I asked him of this possibility several years ago & it seems he had a recollection of a remote chance. I doubt he had time to pursue it. That was at least 8 - 10 plus... years ago.

I did find the pics of my birds & believe they are from the first chicks I received, at probably about a year old, not positive but pretty sure on this. It could have been in the fall, too, though. They are not the best pics, but better than nothing. I will try to get help from my daughters over the next few days to get copies to you.

Do you have any color shots of old "Herman"?

I think so, but as said that will be a long while before I can take the time to hunt that down.

Sorry to ramble so much,
Phil

Phil Roe – Email Regarding Photos of Kari's Birds 2/02/2013

The rooster looks a lot lankier than it should & I think the white/ silver mane drapes down too far across the back. I noticed as the roosters aged the silver seemed to get a lot better looking & go further down the neck & over the shoulder, but not as far over as this one goes. Kinda cool but not the same. They also got a yellowish cast to the old cock's mane & I don't think it was from being soiled / stained. You will notice when I send the pics, because the rooster is younger the mane is not as far down. Any idea how old these birds are?

I would cull those black hens! There was never anything at all like that in any of the birds. The brown chicks look a lot more like the ones I remember than Ideals, but still not as rich of a chocolate color. At least to my eyes these look a little to "red" or too light. There were always a few very dark chocolate almost black, chicks in a hatch, say... 10% tops hard to remember. The striping is a trait Ideal's defiantly did not have. I was really bummed when we got those chicks.

If you recall some of the lore.... says perhaps crossed with a pheasant (Not really possible) from the striping in the chicks, that was very appealing about them too.

It would be difficult if I were doing it to cull all the black chicks. As said, there were some. I think I have color pics from the original chicks we got from the hatchery too, but those too will be challenge to find! Don't think I took any pics of chicks I actually hatched.

Kinda thought some more about the last of my old hens I gave to Glen. They were pretty old, as our youngest daughter who is almost 20 now, does still remember them when we were looking at them last night & she was pretty little. I could never kill them even though all they did was eat. They must have been at least 8 years old & had not laid eggs for years. Glenn did manage to get a few out of the old girls though, or they would probably not have made it at all. He just had so much trouble with a good hatch in an incubator. I had really good success under a broody hen. They were very good moms too.

Unfortunately, then as now I did not have enough time to really do them justice & always felt bad about messing up with them. We sure ate a LOT of Iowa Blue eggs, especially during the winter. I used to keep a light on late in the winter because I got home so late & did not want to spook them & gave them warm water. So they laid pretty well in the winter. Wish I could have those back now to hatch!

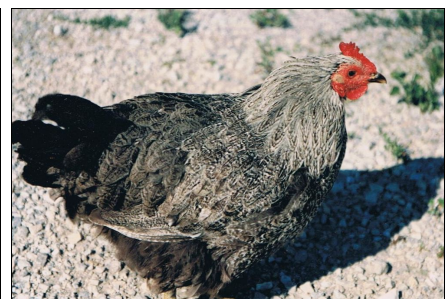
I don't know if Glenn told you but we lived in the middle of town in Rock Island when we had them. Lived on a 3/4 acre lot. We were fortunate, the neighbors loved them. Remember panicking when all those roosters started in & sometimes late at night for no reason. Had to cull them down, which was fine. They were very aggressive & only kept the prime cocks. They would attack, so they became a concern with our then small children. Some of the other breeds we kept were way less human aggressive. So that was another reason I became less enamored with them & got other breeds. Think we had over 50 assorted fowl when we lived in town, LOL! When we moved to our farm, some of the neighbors said they hoped we would sell to someone who would still keep chickens, Ha! Never happened.

Take care,
Phil

Phil Roe - Email With Photos Of His Iowa Blues; 02/02/2013

This should make you happy! Looking at these again, the cock's mane is pretty far down, but different than Kari's. I think he is a little stockier too. The pair pictured are from the original chicks I received & probably about a year to 15 months old. The single hen was from some I raised & was one of the old ones I gave to Glenn. She looks like the more silver color I think.

Enjoy the pics,
Phil



Lee Zook – Interview 01/31/2013 (Per email discussion)

Glad folks are interested in preserving the rare breeds. And I am happy to share with you what I know but frankly I am probably not the person you really want to get information from in regards to specific details regarding the bird. I looked at the survey you attached and did not think I could answer most of those questions with great detail or accuracy. However, here is what I can tell you.

While there was some variation with the bird, I clearly remember that the rooster had a very silvery "mane" which often extended to the back possibly to the midpoint of the body or more. And tail feathers that seemed to extend farther than usual for the size of the bird, often completely black, almost iridescent in hue. Hens seemed to have less of this mane though they typically had a silvery neck and shoulders so to speak. Eggs were light brown, not dark brown, typically small to medium, rarely if ever large. The bird generally was not all that meaty in my view though I never pushed grain and had most of my chickens foraging which may have decreased weight and size. But the breed seemed to have a smallish body though I know some saw it as a "meat and egg" bird.

I was never into breeding for purity and just can't give you any detailed information about much more than the above. I have in some sense lost interest in the rare breeds generally though wish to be supportive of folks who are working on these issues.

I would like to give you information that you may find useful. Clues in a detective case may or may not be important so I just pass them on! I am aware that Bolson has a son who may or may not communicate with you who lives across the street from Mrs. Bolson; his name is Loryl Bolson.

The other person whom you may find helpful is Diane Whealy, Kent Whealy's ex-wife who has recently written a book about the start of Seed Savers entitled "Gathering: Memoir of a Seed Saver". She lives in Decorah though I do not have further information about her address and so forth. I am thinking you can find that at Seed Savers where she continues to be employed. Further, Kent's son Aaron lives in the Madison WI area and he may have some interest in this topic and may know of other folks who have some of the original stock. His whereabouts are not known to me other than that. Of course his mother Diane would know. Kent himself may be happy to know that somebody is continuing this work though he seems to be reclusive and I don't even know in what state he lives though I think it is Michigan.

All the best as you pursue this matter. I will take some time to look and see if I have photos and if I do will send them along.

Sincerely,
Lee

Lee Zook - Email Regarding Photos of Kari's Silver Birds; 02/01/2013

The photos you sent look like they could have been taken in my barn!

These hens and the one rooster, though you can't view his tail, look very much like the birds I had. I did a little search on the web and find there are other photos that look quite like what I remember. And then some that look quite different, too dark, not much of the silvery coloring and so forth. I do remember there was some variation.

And I also remember that the young birds, less than a year old, looked darker but would become lighter in coloring as they aged. And of course there is the issue of photographs which can prove problematic in terms of color issues. But I must say, I found some photos online that didn't look at all what I remembered my Blues to look like.

I'm open to view more photos if that is helpful and even saying this one doesn't look like what I remember if that is helpful. This is getting to be more fun than what I thought it would be and bringing back good memories of living on our acreage!

Glad to be help.

Lee

Bobby Lewis - Interview; 03/18/2013

Interview with Bobby Lewis, Gladstone VA, conducted by Dr. Lincoln Montgomery

Where did you obtain your Iowa Blues?

In 1993-1994 I obtained 1 rooster and three hens from Joe France of Roanoke VA. He had obtained his from Glenn Drowns a few years before this was before Glenn crossed them with anything. I hatched almost all the eggs I got and had 40 birds at one time. The flock dwindled away and was gone probably ten years ago.

Does anybody else have them?

I'll send you all the contact info I have for folks I sent birds to.

What size where they.

Smallish for a regular size bird. Cocks 7 lbs or less.

What did the cocks look like?

No red at all, White laced. Fairly consistent coloring. Not aggressive

What did the hens look like?

Compact, robust, and not very large. Dark brown or brownish-black eye with every pleasant expression. Neck not very long. Breast greyish, Neck and back had silver lacing similar to a silver laced Wyandotte. Tail set like the bun on a woman's head not overly large

Eggs:

Pale brown, Small, roundish. Fairly poor layers. Not noticeably broody

Fertility:

Had about a 50% hatch rate.

Chicks:

Silvery brown like a mink coat. Smaller than a normal chick. Some would pip and need helped to get out of the shell.

Other characteristics.

Legs willow, middle toenail had a white stripe down it. This was consistent across almost all of the birds and fairly unusual.