

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

SPECIES: Lesser White-fronted Goose (Adult)

LOCATION: Northeast corner of the south arm of Lake MacBride (Johnson County)

DATE & TIME: 11 June, 1998 (5:55-6:15AM)

OBSERVER: Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City, Iowa, 52240

OTHER OBSERVERS: Discovered by James Huntington on 10 June, and also seen by Tom Kent and Dick Tetrault on 11 June.

BACKGROUND: James Huntington reported finding a bird of this species at Lake MacBride on the evening of 10 June. I arrived at the location early the following morning, and found the bird loosely associating with Canada Geese. It was on the grass with the Canada Geese near a boat ramp, and I was able to scope the bird from the car. Quite soon, it got into the water and swam out into the lake 50 yards. The Canada Geese stayed on the grass. The bird was seen in the cove across the lake starting about 6:30 AM by Tom Kent, and was seen by Dick Tetrault late that same day on a peninsula nearby. Despite searching, it was never relocated after the evening of 11 June.

DESCRIPTION: This was a relatively small goose, and appeared to be about half the size of the nearby adult Canada Geese. It was generally gray, had a small rounded head and a very short, stubby pink bill. Specifically, the back and folded wing were dark gray with white feather tip markings. The breast and belly were a lighter gray, but there were black mottled streaks on the lower breast and upper belly. The remainder of the underparts (lower belly and undertail) were white. The tail was short and black above. The neck was gray with dark vertical streaking. The head seemed small, and was rounded. The pink bill appeared very short and there was a vertical white area from the forehead to behind the lower mandible. The eye was dark, and there was a very noticeable yellow eye-ring. The legs and feet were a yellow-orange color. The bird seemed quite wary, certainly compared to the Canada Geese. I did not see it fly, nor did I hear any vocalization.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Greater White-fronted Goose is larger with a larger head and longer bill, and lacks a yellow eye-ring.

OPTICS & VIEWING CONDITIONS: It was quite early on a clear morning and I was viewing the bird at 20 yards on the grass to 50 yards on the lake, looking to the south at all times. I was using a window mount and KOWA TSN-4 telescope (20-60X).

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: None.

FIELD NOTES & REFERENCES: I made field notes in the car as I watched the bird, and the only reference seen was Madge & Burn "Waterfowl" and that after I had returned home.

ORIGIN: There has been only one accepted record of this Eurasian species in North America, that at Attu Island, Alaska, in June, 1994. There are also a handful of sightings in the U.S., all unaccepted due to origin. This bird acted wild during my observation. Is this a bird that is kept in captivity in Iowa, or the Midwest?