

Pacific Loon  
30 Nov 1986  
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA  
\*S. Dinsmore, \*Martsching  
IBL 57:13, 52, 77, Dinsmore 1987

Record Number: 86-09  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Steve Dinsmore  
Paul Martsching

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 57:13, 52  
Dinsmore, S. 1987. Pacific Loons at Saylorville Reservoir. IBL  
57:59-60.  
Records Committee: IBL 57:77

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

Tom Kent to Records Committee, 13 Sep 1993

LETTER AND COMMENT

Ronald E. Goetz to Thomas H. Kent, 1 Apr 1988 [see 86-07]

VOTE: 6-III, 1-IV

III, Description by Martsching was quite sketchy but did include the distinctive dividing line between fore and hindneck. Dinsmore's description was not conclusive, e.g., uniform back, neck and crown color and no chinstrap (not always present anyway). He did mention dividing line on neck and good general size and shape features.

IV, Not as well seen as previous sightings--2 min and 20 seconds by the two observers. Distance not optimal. Probably best not to accept such brief views at a distance.

III, Description by Dinsmore is good and I believe does eliminate all other possibilities but Pacific Loon. Martsching description does not conclusively identify this bird as Pacific Loon; poor documentation to prove Pacific Loon.

III, With the lack of a chinstrap, the sharp dividing line on neck and head shape would seem to confirm the sighting.

III, Not as good as above, but acceptable.

III, Dark line on side of neck diagnostic of the Actic/Pacific loon complex.

REVOTE (by mail): 6-III, 1-IV

IV, I agree that this sighting much briefer and less well described than other two reports of this species from same location. I also agree that it is probably best to err on conservative side on accidentals, so I change my vote.

III, I agree that this bird was less well seen, but am still willing to accept.

III, I still believe the Dinsmore documentation is adequate to describe this species.

III, Short viewing time probably limited gathering more details but the description (at least Dinsmore's) are acceptable for Pacific Loon.

III, If assumption correct that this is same bird as 80-08 seen 8 days prior. I think this is a fairly safe assumption. However, description by itself only warrants a IV.

REVOTE (1993): 5 A-D, 2 NA [4 NA required to change status]

A-D, Accept 86-08 and 86-09 as one.

NA, In view of the outside review, this record should be rejected. I agree with Goetz's speculation that there may have been only one bird seen under different conditions.

NA, Possibly same bird as 86-08 but conflicting details do not allow this record to stand alone.

A-D, 86-08, 09, 19 same bird.

86-09

13 September 1993

To: IOU Records Committee

From: Tom Kent

Re: Request for reconsideration of record

**Records:** 86-09 Pacific Loon (see also 86-08, 86-19)

**Reason for request:** Outside review not previously considered by committee.

**Comment:** Ron Goetz reviewed this record in the process of reviewing Midwest records of Red-throated and Pacific loons. His opinion differs from the previous action of the committee, who had not seen his review. He only considers the first record acceptable, but would lump the three records.



## CONTRIBUTORS

Eloise Armstrong (Booneville); Eugene Armstrong (Booneville); Ann Barker (Davenport); Carl J. Bendorf (Iowa City); Dick Bierman (Cherokee); \*Marion M. Brewer (Cherokee); \*Gene Burns (Jamaica); Robert Cecil (Keokuk); Raymond L. Cummins (Centerville); Mark Dietzenbach (Fort Atkinson); James J. Dinsmore (Ames); Steve Dinsmore (Ames); Timothy L. Dwyer (Muscatine); Rita Efta (Auburn); \*Bruce Ehresman (Boone); Thelma Fromm (Mason City); James Fuller (Iowa City); Douglas C. Harr (Larchwood); Ronald V. Harms (Laurens); Bill Huser (S. Sioux City, NE); Thomas N. Johnson (Centerville); Thomas H. Kent (Iowa City); \*Vernon Kleen (Athens, IL); N. A. Kubik (Tama); \*Bill Kupka (Mason City); Sharon Laub (Rippey); \*Paul Martsching (Ames); \*Chet McCarty (Aledo, IL); Francis L. Moore (Waterloo); Eric Munson (Ames); Robert K. Myers (Perry); Babs Padelford (Bellevue, NE); Peter C. Petersen (Davenport); Carl Priebe (Sidney); Beth Proescholdt (Liscomb); Mark Proescholdt (Liscomb); Doug Rose (Glenwood); \*Gil Sandvick (Davenport); \*Randall D. Strough (Moravia); John Van Dyk (Sioux Center); Barbara L. Wilson (Hastings); and Hank Zaletel (Colo).

## PACIFIC LOONS AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

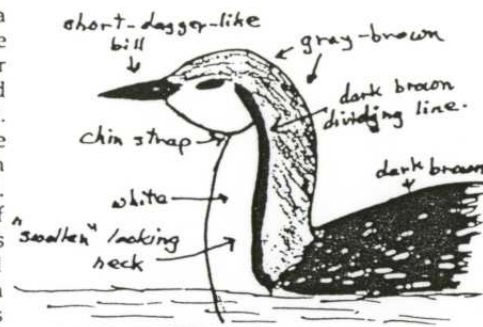
STEVE DINSMORE

In 1985, the American Ornithologists' Union split the Arctic Loon into two species: the Arctic Loon of Siberia and probably western Alaska, and the Pacific Loon, the more widespread form in North America. The two species are virtually inseparable in winter plumage, and it is not yet well known what field characters separate them in breeding plumage. There are seven previous Iowa records: six fall/winter birds and one breeding plumaged bird in April (Dinsmore et al. 1984). There are no known documented sightings of Arctic Loon in North America (Lehman 1986), and all the Iowa records are presumed to be of Pacific Loons.

During November 1986, I saw three different Pacific Loons at Saylorville Reservoir, Polk County. On 1 November 1986, I found a winter-plumaged Pacific Loon with a group of more than 300 Common Loons. The back, wings, and sides were uniformly dark black/brown and unspeckled. The crown and back of the neck were medium gray. The foreneck and chin were white. The foreneck and back of the neck were clearly separated by a narrow, dark line extending from just behind the eye to the shoulder. The dark color on the crown included the eye. The forehead was evenly rounded, not abrupt like the forehead of a Common Loon. Compared to a Common Loon, the bill was shorter, stouter, and darker. I saw no obvious chin strap. Common and Yellow-billed loons can be eliminated by their larger size, larger, heavier bills, and their lack of a three-toned neck pattern. Red-throated Loon can be eliminated by bill shape, lack of a three-toned neck pattern, and prominent speckling on the back.

On 22 November 1986, Bob Myers and I found another winter-plumaged Pacific Loon above the dam. The bird was approximately one third smaller than the Common Loon which was swimming next to it. The back, wings, and sides were uniformly dark with no speckling. The head and neck pattern on this bird was very well marked (see drawing). The bill was short, straight, and fairly dark. The crown and back of the neck were gray-brown and slightly lighter than the back. The chin and foreneck were white. The bird showed a distinct thin, dark chin strap. The white foreneck was distinctly separated from the darker back of the neck by a narrow blackish line.

The whole head and neck had a swollen, puffy appearance, unlike the slimmer neck of a Common or Red-throated loon. The forehead was smooth and evenly rounded. The bird also had a distinctive diving method. Just before each dive, the neck was fully extended. Apparently, this is characteristic of Pacific Loon. I am sure this was not the same bird that I saw on 1 November because it had a chin strap and the color of the head was quite a bit darker. This bird was seen by several people through 23 November.



Drawing of Pacific Loon from documentation of Bob Myers.

On 30 November 1986, Paul Martsching and I briefly watched a winter-plumaged Pacific Loon at the Cherry Glen Recreation Area. The bird was swimming alone, so no direct size comparisons could be made; however, my general impression was that the bird was smaller than the average Common Loon. The overall description for this bird is the same as that for the 1 November bird, except that this bird showed less contrast between the back and the head. I think that this bird was probably a third individual for the following reasons: first, it is highly unlikely that the 1 November bird (the bird it most closely resembled in plumage) would have remained undetected at the reservoir for a month; second, I believe that this bird had a slightly darker head and neck than the 1 November bird, although not as dark as the 22 November bird. For these reasons, I believe that there were three different Pacific Loons at Saylorville Reservoir this fall. These records represent the eighth, ninth, and tenth reports of Pacific Loons in Iowa.

## LITERATURE CITED

Dinsmore, J. J., et al. 1984. Iowa Birds. Ames: Iowa State University Press.  
Lehman, P. 1986. The Changing Seasons. American Birds 40:1178.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010

## LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL AT KEOKUK

BOB CECIL

At noon on 20 October 1986, I went to Lock and Dam 19 at Keokuk to check on the presence of a late Common Moorhen. After finding it, I scanned the area below the dam with a telescope to identify the gulls present. There were about 100 gulls, mostly Ring-billed with a few Herring. After a few minutes, I discovered a large gull with a dark mantle. The entire mantle was a uniform dark gray with a prominent white trailing edge to the wings. The wing tips were jet black with a white mirror just before the tip of the

86-09

86-09

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

by the Records Committee  
of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: *Pacific Loon*

DATE SEEN: 11-30-86

SITE OF OBSERVATION: *Saylorville Res*

OBSERVERS: *S. Dinsmore, Martsching*

DATE OF REVIEW: 5-30-87

METHOD OF REVIEW: *Vote*

CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: III

COMMENTS:

*The description of the sharp dividing line on the neck convinced committee members even though a chinstrap was not present.*

The opinions expressed here are based on the information available to the Committee and should not necessarily preclude an alternate interpretation by those who observed the bird firsthand.

Any action may be re-reviewed upon submission of additional evidence.

Explanation of Classification:

- I = labeled, diagnostic specimen, photograph, or recording available for review by the Committee
- II = acceptable sight record documented independently by 3 or more observers
- III = acceptable sight record documented by 1 or 2 observers
- IV = probably correct record, but not beyond doubt
- V = record with insufficient evidence to judge
- VI = probably incorrect identification, escapee, or otherwise unacceptable record

Classification is based on the highest category agreed upon by six of seven committee members.



## DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species? Pacific Loon

How Many? 1 winter adult

Location? Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co. (Cherry Glen Recreation Area)

Habitat? large reservoir

Date? 30 Nov 1986

Time? 8:43-8:45 A.M.

Observers Name and address: Steve Dinsmore, Ames

Others who saw bird: Paul Martsching

Description of bird: My initial impression when I saw the bird was that it was too small, had too short a bill, and was too long necked to be a Common Loon. The back, back of neck, and crown were a uniform black color with no obvious spotting. The throat was white and was separated from the crown and back of neck by a narrow, dark line. I could not see a chin strap. The bill was dark and very short. The forehead was more rounded than a Common Loon's forehead. The bird was quite long necked and initially reminded me of a Western Grebe's profile. The bird lacked the abrupt forehead and white mark on the neck of a Common Loon.

Similar species and how eliminated: Common Loon was eliminated by bill size, more rounded forehead, unspeckled back, and by the neck pattern. Red-throated Loon was eliminated by bill shape, lack of speckling on the back, and three-toned neck pattern.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were good but brief. Estimated viewing distance was 200 yards. I used a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: I have seen two other Pacific Loons at Saylorville this fall.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

How long before field notes were made? immediately

How long before this form was completed? 11 hours

What species? Pacific Loon How many? oneLocation? Saylorville Reservoir

Type of habitat? \_\_\_\_\_

When? date(s): 30 Nov 1986 time: at 8:45 ~~XXO~~ AM 20 secondsWho? your name and address: Paul Martsching 1120 Marston Ames, IA 50010others with you: Steve Dinsmore

others before or after you: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

very dark longish necked loon with small slender straight beak. back all dark. strong dividing line between white and dark of head and neck.

*white throat & front side of neck*

Similar species and how eliminated: Common and Yellow-billed have large-long-thick bill. Red-throated has upturned bill and lite speckles on back in winter.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? no

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting; distance (how measured), and optical equipment:  
overcast; distance??; spotting scope

Previous experience with species and similar ones: have never seen Pacific Loon before.  
Have seen Common Loon a few times.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Nat'l Geographic Field Guide, Robbins, & Peterson.

How long before field notes made? immediately this form completed? next day.

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240