

Pacific Loon

23 Oct 1988

L. Manawa, Pottawattamie Co., IA

*B&L Padelford, *Grenon, *Bray

IBL 59:9, 76, Padelford/Padelford 1989

Record Number: 88-09

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Babs Padelford/Loren Padelford, 23 Oct

Babs Padelford, 24-28 Oct

Allan G. Grenon, 23-24 Oct

Tanya Bray, 23 Oct

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 59:9

Records Committee: IBL 59:76

Padelford, L., and B. Padelford. 1989. Pacific Loon at Lake Manawa. IBL 59:87

VOTE: 6-A-D, 1-NA

A-D. Strong set of documentations of a bird seen at close range.

A-D. Excellent description of Pacific/Arctic Loon by all observers. small size, chinstrap, rounded head, shape and size of bill, and contrast between front and back of neck (separated by dark line) all eliminate other loon species. Identification as a Pacific Loon based only on probability. Bird was described as an adult by one observer, but given the light feather edgings or "crescents" on the back, the bird was probably a juvenile.

A-D. well-observed with good size comparisons and complete description of basic plumage. Grenon description gives very good details and analysis.

A-D. All documentations mention three-toned neck pattern with chin strap pattern on throat seems to rule out other species of loon except Arctic. Size description also helps eliminate Common Loon.

NA. Don't feel Red-throated completely ruled out. White spotting on Red-throated hard to distinguish even at 50 yards, one documentor mentions "paler gray crescents on back."

A-D. Descriptions clearly eliminate other possibilities, by chinstrap and bill descriptions.

REVOTE 7-A-D

A-D. Close study of docs, available references, and Goetz letter allow easy elimination of Red-throated Loon.

A-D. If back color was all that was presented there would be a problem with accepting this record, but all other reported characteristics strongly support Pacific Loon.

A-D. Excellent description of a juvenile Pacific Loon. Description of bill, chinstrap, and neck pattern eliminates other loons, esp. Red-throated. The "paler gray crescents" on back described by one observer are consistent with juv. Pacific Loon.

A-D. Lack of spotting is not the critical feature for identification. The neck pattern is diagnostic and other features are supportive.

A-D. All documentations do mention areas that do eliminate Red-throated Loon: straight looking bill held on a level plane,

no white spotting or broken crescents on back. Light gray barring or paler gray crescents eliminates Red-throated.

A-D. NA ignores diagnostic chinstrap.

CONSULTANT (Ron Goetz, Webster Groves, MO.)

"...1988-09 is a perfectly described juvenile Pacific. The documenting observers for these records are to be congratulated for doing a fine job!"

SENT TO: Loren & Babs Padelford, 1405 Little John Rd., Bellevue, NE 68005; Alan G. Grenon, Neale Wood Nature Center, 14323 Edith Marie Ave., Omaha, NE 68112; Tanya Bray, 9708 Grover, Omaha, NE 68124.

Orchard Oriole: The first was 1 on 27 Apr at Big Creek S.P. (B. Ballard fide SJD)[ties 2nd earliest].

Northern Oriole: The first was 1 on 23 Apr at Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. (SJD)[ties 2nd earliest]. Many others were reported in late April.

Pine Grosbeak: A pair on 27-28 Mar at Decorah (*DR/AR)[record latest] is an unusual spring record.

Purple Finch: The last was 1 on 8 May near Princeton (PCP).

House Finch: This species was everywhere this spring with reports from 16 counties statewide. Nesting was reported from Cerro Gordo, Kossuth, Story, and Warren counties. The first record for Sioux County was 4 at Sioux Center on 25 Mar (*JV).

Pine Siskin: The only reports were 1 on 14 Apr, 2 May at Ames (JJD), 1 on 27 Apr n. of Iowa City (JLF), and 1 on 30 Apr at Davenport (PCP).

COMMENT

I thank all contributors for sending in their reports on time. This made my job easier. Most reporters included details of unusual sightings. Reports of rare birds that are out-of-season need to include details in order to be included in the report. For example, Peregrine Falcons from mid-April to early May probably do not need details because this is the peak migration interval; however, birds seen before or after this should be described.

Reports were received from observers living in all parts of the state except for noticeable gaps in northeast and northwest Iowa. Observers should report birds that they see, even though they may be common. For common birds, report early and late dates and peak numbers. For uncommon birds, report all sightings. Make a note drawing attention to birds that are common in the state, but rare in your area. Otherwise, they may get left out of the report.

I thank Jim Dinsmore who helped write this report.

CONTRIBUTORS

* = documentation only

Pam Allen (Des Moines); Reid Allen (Des Moines); Eloise Armstrong (Booneville); Eugene Armstrong (Booneville); Dick Bierman (Cherokee); Tanya Bray (Omaha, NE); Marion M. Brewer (Cherokee); Robert I. Cecil (Des Moines); David J. Conrads (Cedar Falls); Raymond L. Cummins (Centerville); James J. Dinsmore (Ames); Stephen J. Dinsmore (Ames); Andrew S. Fix (Ames); James L. Fuller (Iowa City); J. Donald Gillaspay (Lamoni); James L. Hansen (Clear Lake); Douglas C. Harr (Larchwood); Mary Jo Hartogh (Elma); L. Paul Hertzler (Ames); Richard J. Hollis (Iowa City); Daryl Howell (Des Moines); Laura S. Jackson (Madrid); Ann Johnson (Norwalk); Jack Jones (Sioux City); Matthew C. Kenne (Algona); Thomas H. Kent (Iowa City); Sharon R. Laub (Rippey); Fred Leshner (La Crosse, WI); *Mark Lund; Paul W. Martsching (Ames); Robert K. Myers (Perry); *Curt Nelson; Babs Padelford (Bellevue, NE); Loren Padelford (Bellevue, NE); Marietta A. Petersen (Walnut); Peter C. Petersen (Davenport); Diane C. Porter (Fairfield); Beth Proescholdt (Liscomb); Mark Proescholdt (Liscomb); Thelma Reetz (Waukon); *Arnold Rohm; *Delores Rohm; Douglas L. Rose (Glenwood); W. Ross Silcock (Tabor); Jim Sinclair (Indianola); Tex A. Sordahl (Decorah); Ed Thelen (Spirit Lake); Dennis E. Thompson (Des Moines); Douglas E. Trapp (Sioux City); John Van Dyk (Sioux Center); Jan L. Walter (Mason City); Harold W. White (Estherville); Barbara L. Wilson (Hastings); and Hank Zaletel (Colo).

OTHER OBSERVERS

Carl J. Bendorf, Brian L. Blevins, Bery Engebretsen, Phyllis Harris, Donald W. Moeller, Francis L. Moore, Roger Rose, and Richard Tetrault.

NOTES

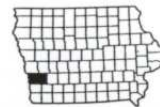
PACIFIC LOON AT LAKE MANAWA

LOREN PADELDFORD AND BABS PADELDFORD

On 23 October 1988, we observed a Pacific Loon on the southwest corner of Lake Manawa, Pottawattamie County, in a cove east of Boy Scout Island. We observed the bird for almost two hours at 50 to 150 yards as the bird fed with Double-crested Cormorants back and forth over a 100 yard area about 15 yards from shore. The following description is a composite of documentations by Alan Grenon, Tanya Bray, and the authors. The bird was seen on one occasion by one observer as close as 50 feet. The first time the bird was seen on 23 October there was only a Pied-billed Grebe and a Double-crested Cormorant for size comparison. The loon was smaller than the cormorant and larger than the grebe. The following day the bird was seen in company with three Common Loons and on 27 October with one Common Loon. It was clearly smaller than the Common Loons with a slimmer, shorter bill, and more rounded head. Bill, eyes, and legs were dark. The webbed feet were placed at the rear of the body (seen when stretching). The thin, straight bill was held level. Belly, breast, throat, and cheeks were white with the white coming up to just below the eye. One observer noted that the white came up to and around at least the bottom third of the eye. Cap and hindneck were solid light-gray, paler than the back. A faint, pale-gray chinstrap was visible against the white throat. There was a dark gray vertical line down the side of the neck between the gray hindneck and the white throat. The back was dark gray to brownish-gray with some paler barring or crescents. The Pacific Loon spent most of its time floating on the lake or diving repeatedly, usually quite close to shore. Occasionally, it preened, flapped its wings, and rolled on its side. The Pacific Loon was last seen at Lake Manawa on 28 October.

Red-throated Loon was eliminated by the three-toned neck markings, the chinstrap on the throat, and the straight bill without any apparent upward bevel. As mentioned earlier, the bird was seen with Common Loons on two occasions. Arctic Loon was eliminated based on range. The last sighting of Pacific Loon in Iowa was November 1986 when three individuals were documented at Saylorville Reservoir, Polk County (Dinsmore, S. 1987. Pacific Loons at Saylorville Reservoir. *Iowa Bird Life* 57:62).

1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, NE 68005.



88-09

Loren & Babs Padelford
1405 Little John Rd.
Bellevue, NE 68005

Documentation of Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)

Date: October 23, 1988 Time: 10:15 am - 12:00 pm

Location: Lake Manawa State Park., Pottawattamie Co.
Southwest corner of lake, in a cove east of Boy Scout Island.

Description of Bird: Larger than a Pied-billed Grebe and smaller than a Double-crested Cormorant the only other species present in immediate area for direct comparison. Head was a solid light gray from forehead to back of neck; faint, pale gray chinstrap against white throat and breast; there was a dark line running down the side of the neck between the white throat and the gray neck. There was a white patch behind the bill. The dark eye was difficult to see, as it was surrounded by gray feathering. The grayish bill was slender and narrowed to a sharp point at the tip. The bill was held straight. The back was dark gray with some light gray barring across it. The lighter gray hindneck contrasted with the darker gray back. Below the water line the belly and flanks were white. Tail did not stick up above the water.

Distance from bird: 150 feet to 150 yards

Viewing Conditions: Clear sky, bright sunlight. Sun shining from our right side. 25mph northwest winds.

Behavior of bird: Most of the time was swimming in the water about 150 yards from us. From 11:00 - 11:30 it was feeding with cormorants back and forth over a 100 yard area about 50 feet from shore.

Separation from similar species: Was smaller and overall not as massive as Common Loon. Bill was smaller and thinner, and head more rounded than Common Loon. The straight bill and lack of white spotting on back rule out Red-throated Loon.

Optical equipment: Bushnell 25x spotting scope.

Book consulted in the field: National Geographic, 1st edition.

Other observers: Tanya Bray, Alan Grenon.

This documentation being written on 10/23/88 from notes taken in the field with bird in view.

Babs Padelford

Loren Padelford

I also observed the bird on 10/24, 25, 27 & 28. On 10/27 Mark & Ed Brogie were with me. We were able to study it for about fifteen minutes with a Common Loon for comparison. It was much smaller overall, the head was more rounded and the bill was slimmer & smaller than the Common Loon.

Babs Padelford

Location: Lake Manawa State Park, Pottawatomie Co. Northwest corner of lake, in a cove east of Boy Scout Island.

Description of Bird: Larger than a Pied-billed Grebe and smaller than a Double-crested Cormorant the only other species present in immediate area for direct comparison. Head was a solid light gray from forehead to back of neck; faint, pale gray chinstrap against white throat and breast; there was a dark line running down the side of the neck between the white throat and the gray neck. There was a white patch behind the bill. The dark eye was difficult to see, as it was surrounded by gray feathering. The grayish bill was slender and narrowed to a sharp point at the tip. The bill was held straight. The back was dark gray with some light gray barring across it. The lighter gray hindneck contrasted with the darker gray back. Below the water line the belly and flanks were white. Tail did not stick up above the water.

Distance from bird: 150 feet to 150 yards

Viewing Conditions: Clear sky, bright sunlight. Sun shining from our right side. 15 mph northwest winds.

Behavior of bird: Most of the time was swimming in the water about 150 yards from us. From 11:00 - 11:30 it was feeding with cormorants back and forth over a 100 yard area about 50 feet from shore.

Separation from similar species: Was smaller and overall not as massive as Common Loon. Bill was smaller and thinner, and head more rounded than Common Loon. The straight bill and lack of white spotting on back rule out Red-throated Loon.

Optical equipment: Bushnell 25x spotting scope.

Book consulted in the field: National Geographic, 1st edition.

Other observers: Tanya Gray, Alan Grenon.

This documentation being written on 10/23/88 from notes taken in the field with bird in view.

Babs Padelford

Pacific Loon, Gavia pacifica

one adult

Bill, eyes, and legs dark; feet webbed, placed at rear of body (seen when stretching); bill thin and straight, held level, shorter and thinner than Common Loon's (eventually by direct comparison); cheeks, throat, breast, and belly white, with the white coming up to and around at least the bottom third of the eyes; a thin dark line crossing the throat where it turns from horizontal (coming back from the bill) to vertical (dropping down to the breast); a more diffuse darker band crossing the lower throat, this paler than any upperpart colors; back dark brownish-grey with slightly paler feather tips on some of the back; cap and back of neck paler grey than back, with a thin area on the sides of the neck darker grey (vertical lines) where the grey bordered the white; tail short, usually not noticed; wings long, thin, and pointed, paler below, like back above; one small area above and behind the left eye was white, as if a few feathers were missing or disarrayed.

no vocalizations heard

This bird spent most of its time under observation floating on the lake, sometimes diving from the surface. When diving, it was usually close to a shore. Occasionally, it preened, flapped its wings, and rolled on its side. At dusk on the 24th, it moved to an area farther from shore and joined three Common Loons. Habitat at all times was open water.

The thin, pointed bill, long, narrow wings, rearward placement of the webbed feet, low-floating position on the water, and size (smaller than Common Loon), together with general conformity to body form of Common Loons place it as a loon. Common Loon was eliminated by the smaller size, slimmer, shorter bill, and the head and neck markings of this bird, specifically, the line on the upper throat, dark sides of the neck, pale cap and back of neck. Red-throated Loon was eliminated by the dark back without prominent spots, the neck markings mentioned above, and a bill held level, without any apparent upward bevel, plus the eye being partly within the dark portion of the head. Arctic Loon was not eliminated.

I have seen numerous Pacific Loons along the coast of northern California in late winter and spring, 1987, but most of these were in alternate plumage, at least partially. I have seen many Red-throated Loons, all in basic plumage, on both the east and west coasts of the U. S. I have seen many Common Loons in many parts of the country, in various plumages. I have handled skins of all five loon species, and freshly dead specimens of Common and Red-throated Loons.

This bird was at Lake Manawa, in various areas in the western part of the lake, Pottawattamie County, Iowa. I observed the bird from noon to 12:15 October 23rd, 8:45 to 9:30 (approximately) and 5:30 til dusk (about 6:30) October 24th. Distance varied from 50 feet to hundreds of feet, lighting was often excellent, with the bird lighted from the side or from behind the observers.

I used a 22 x 60 spotting scope, mostly. Other observers included Loren and Babs Padelford, Tanya Bray (these observers will probably submit separate documentations), Elizabeth Grenon, Ruth Green, Dave Starr, Jim and Sandra Kovanda, Clyde and Emma Johnson, Bruce Wetteroth, and probably others I did not see watching the bird. I am not aware of any photographs. Field guides consulted included the National Geographic Society field guide to Birds of North America, Peterson's birds of the eastern U. S., Robbins, et al., Birds of North America, and others after having left the field.

This report was prepared from notes made on the evening of the 23rd, supplemented by noted features on the 24th. Identification was agreed to (having been suggested already) with the bird in view on the 23rd.

Today's date is October 26, 1988.

Alan G. Grenon
 Neale Woods Nature Center
 14323 Edith Marie Avenue
 Omaha, NE 68112

Alan G. Grenon

PACIFIC LOON

October 23, 1988

Lake Manawa,
Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County

Description:

In general, a small sleek looking loon in winter plumage but this is purely subjective as no other birds were present for comparison. The forehead sloped smoothly over the eye. Bill straight and entirely dark gray. Crown gray. Chin and front of neck white but not "snowy". Chin strap was obvious. A thin dark line between the white of front and gray of the hind neck was sometimes visible, but it was not very distinct. Hind neck and back gray. Paler gray crescents on back. Breast and belly white. Flanks were charcoal. Feet dark gray.

Behavior:

While we watched, the loon dove repeatedly in the breakwater quite close to shore. It moved out toward the lake and gradually back to shore by a series of short dives several times.

Other species eliminated: Red-throated Loon eliminated by straight bill and chin strap. Common Loon eliminated by chin strap and crescent-shaped spots on back. Arctic Loon eliminated only by range!

Distance from Bird: 100-300 yards

Equipment: 25 power scope

Others who observed loon: Allen Grenon, Loren & Babs
Padelford, m.op.

Written from notes taken with bird in view.

Tanya Bray
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