

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Printed: 11/24/00

Red-throated Loon

Record Number: 97-06

13 Apr 1997

Classification: A-P

Pleasant Creek L., Linn Co., IA

*J. Fuller, *C. Edwards

P-0551, IBL 67:85, 68:85, Edwards 1998

DOCUMENTATIONS

Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City 52240 [*10/1/97]

Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty 52317

PHOTOGRAPH

T. H. Kent, 2 May 1997, P-0551

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 67:85 (P-0551)

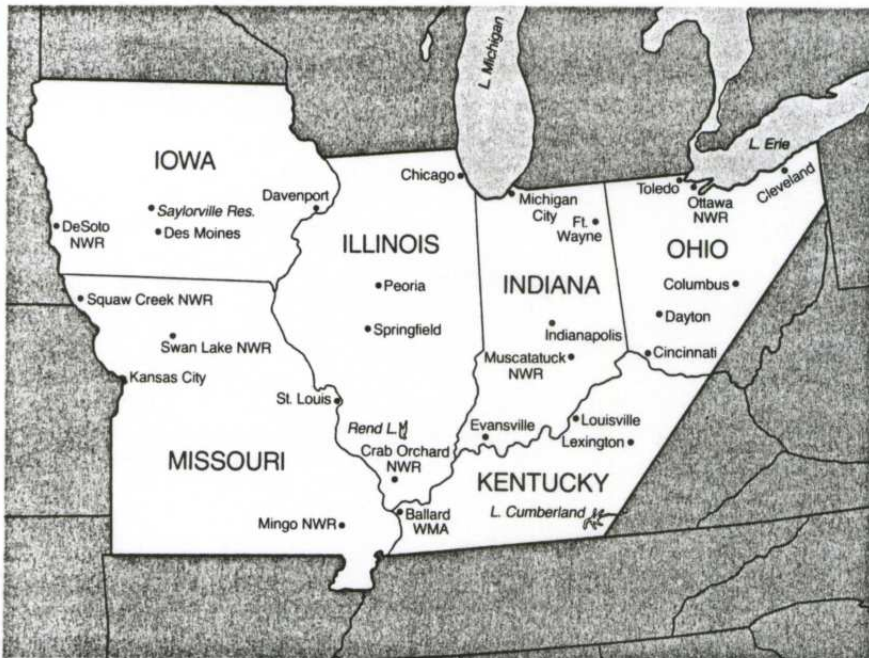
Records Committee: IBL 68:85

Edwards, C. 1998. Red-throated Loon at Pleasant Creek. IBL 68:98.

Photo: Field Notes 51:975, 1997, P-0551

VOTE: 7 A-P

middlewestern prairie region



KENNETH J. BROCK

It was another cold, late spring for the Middlewestern Prairie Region. Mercifully, conditions were not as harsh as those experienced during spring 1996, but they were far more persistent. March temperatures were near normal, April was cold, and May was colder. Indeed, May was one of the coldest on record, with several correspondents reporting average temperatures more than 10°F below normal. Consequently, vegetation development was retarded throughout the Region, and was 10–15 days later than normal in the northern reaches. In addition, much of the Region was plagued by an insistent north wind throughout almost the entire spring season.

The effect of these inhospitable conditions on the spring flight was predictable; most birds arrived late and many lingered well beyond normal departure dates. In Chicago, Paul Clyne estimated that 22 species fewer than normal had arrived by the end of April, and in Fort Wayne, Indiana, Jim Haw reckoned that 30 species were behind schedule at the same point. To avoid

the persistent headwinds, migrant hawks circumnavigated most of the Region; the only significant flights were recorded in extreme northeastern Ohio.

Consequences of the cold spring were most extreme in the western states, where a late storm dropped two feet of snow in mid-April. Chris Hobbs reported that in northern Missouri hundreds of Killdeer were surprised by the freak blizzard and were able to land only in tire tracks along the roads. In keeping with the “every cloud has a silver lining” spirit, Tom Kent pointed out that Iowa’s first and second White-winged Doves appeared on the heels of the storm, and that snow cover forced hard-to-find Chestnut-collared Longspurs into the plowed roads of northwestern Iowa.

Abbreviations: H.B.S.P. (*Headlands Beach S.P., OH*), L. Cal. (*L. Calumet, Chicago*); Jax.P. (*Jackson Park on the Chicago lakefront*); S.C.R. (*Squaw Creek N.W.R., MO*); R.E.D.A. (*Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area, MO*), Spfld. (*Springfield, IL*).



Five Red-throated Loons were reported across the northern part of the Middlewestern Prairie Region during the season, including this one at Pleasant Creek Lake, Iowa, on May 2, 1997. The extensively white face and thin, upturned bill are obvious in this view. Photograph/T.H. Kent

LOONS TO IBISES

It was a good spring for loons. Five Red-throated Loons were reported across the 4 n. states; one, discovered May 23 at Tampier L., Cook, IL, lingered through June 14 (†MN, †JL, m.ob., ph.). An imm. Pacific Loon was at West Okoboji, IA, Apr. 15–May 26 (†ET, †LS, †DHk, ph.). Common Loons occurred in unprecedented numbers on the Indiana lakefront, where 743 were counted Apr. 5 (JMc, SB, CF). The season saw a better-than-normal Red-necked Grebe flight, with singletons in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, plus four in Iowa. Thirteen Eared Grebes were found e. of the Mississippi R.; the southernmost report came from McElroy L., KY, where one–three were seen during April (Kentucky Ornithological Society).



Pacific Loon at West Okoboji, Iowa, on April 15, 1997. The bird remained at this location for some six weeks. Photograph/Ed Thelen

97-06

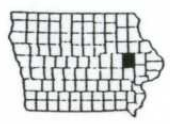
(BE), Des Moines; Peter Ernzen (PE), Ida Grove; Carolyn J. Fischer (CJF), Mason City; James L. Fuller (JLF), Iowa City; Rita Goranson (RGo), Mason City; Robert Gruenewald (RGr), Sanborn; Douglas C. Harr (DCH), Larchwood; Dennis Henrickson (DHe), Estherville; Bill F. Huser (BFH), South Sioux City, NE; Maridel Jackson (MJ), Ankeny; Thomas N. Johnson (TNJ), Mystic; Jack Jones (JJ), Sioux City; *Tim Julison (TJu), Wapello; Matthew C. Kenne (MCK), Algona; Thomas H. Kent (THK), Iowa City; Fred Leshner (FL), La Crosse, WI; Francis L. Moore (FLM), Waterloo; Wolfgang Oesterreich (WO), Ames; Babs K. Padelford (BKP), Bellevue, NE; Loren J. Padelford (LJP), Bellevue, NE; Marietta A. Petersen (MAP), Walnut; Diane C. Porter (DCP), Fairfield; Beth Proescholdt (BPr), Liscomb; Mark Proescholdt (MPr), Liscomb; Russell Reisz (RR), Missouri Valley; *John A. Schmitz (JAS), Le Claire; Lee A. Schoenewe (LAS), Spencer; Jim Sinclair (JSi), Indianola; Peder Svingen (PS), Duluth, MN; Ed Thelen (ETh), Spirit Lake; Dennis Thompson (DT), Johnston; John Van Dyk (JV), Sioux Center; Connie Van Ervelde (CV), Grinnell; Robert Van Ervelde (RV), Grinnell; Jan L. Walter (JLW), Mason City; and Hank Zaletel (HZ), Nevada.

211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246

RED-THROATED LOON AT PLEASANT CREEK

CHRIS EDWARDS

On 13 April 1997, John Daniel and Ken Lowder reported a Red-throated Loon at Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area in Linn County. Eager to see this species for the first time, I drove to Pleasant Creek the next morning. After a quick search, I located the bird swimming and diving in a small inlet about 50 yards from shore.



The loon was in basic (winter) plumage. The crown was blackish, fading to a narrow gray strip down the hindneck. The crown and hindneck were noticeably lighter colored than the back, which was black with many small white spots. The face, including the area immediately above the eye, was white. The throat and the front and sides of the neck were white. The division between the dark hindneck and white neck was indistinct and not sharply defined. The sides were mostly white mottled with black. The bill was relatively short and thin, dark gray, had a slightly upturned lower mandible, and was held just above the horizontal. The eye appeared dark, and the legs and feet were black. There were no other birds nearby for a size comparison.

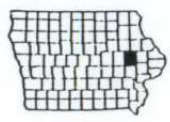
The bird was seen by many observers and was last reported on 10 May. The Red-throated Loon is currently classified as Casual in Iowa. This represents only the sixth spring record and the twentieth accepted record overall. The majority of sightings have occurred from late October to early December. Because of its lengthy stay, this bird was the second earliest and the record latest spring record.

85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty, IA 52317

IMMATURE FEMALE RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD AT CEDAR RAPIDS

THOMAS H. KENT

This hummingbird first appeared at the feeder of Barbara and Nick Stark at 238 24th Street in Cedar Rapids in Linn County on 27 October 1995 (Stone 1995). It was reported to Weir Nelson on 4 November and reported to the Birdline by Jim Durbin the same day (fide Jim Fuller). From 4 to 25 November it was said to have been seen by at least 150 people (Stone 1995). Documentations were submitted by myself, Jim Fuller, Chris Edwards, and Pete Petersen. Photographs were submitted by myself, Jim Durbin, and Rob Bradley.



This average-sized hummingbird was generally gray below and green above with rufous coloration from the bend of the wing down the flanks to the undertail area. The bill was straight, thin, and black. The face had a small white patch behind the eye. The throat was delineated by fine rows of streaks with a larger central spot that was occasionally perceived as red. The tips of the outer tail feathers were white. The bird made high-pitched metallic chip notes, singly or in series. It spent most of the time sitting in bushes along the edge of the yard with intermittent visits to the hummingbird feeder. During the time the bird was present, temperatures fell into the teens and snow was on the ground.

On 25 November the bird was mist netted and photographed by Rob Bradley and taken to the greenhouse at Kirkwood Community College. These photographs, along with documentations and a photo taken on 5 November in the yard (Figures 1, 2), were sent to an outside expert for evaluation (Newfield 1996).

On 22 April 1996, I learned that the bird had appeared to be doing well in the greenhouse until 22 December 1995, when it was found dead. It was placed in a freezer by Jodeane Cancilla, who later delivered it to me. I had contacted Jim Dinsmore concerning instructions for depositing the specimen at Iowa State University. Before delivering the specimen to Dinsmore, I took the measurements and photographs that would be critical for identification.

The rufous on the sides and undertail coverts easily placed this bird in the genus *Selasphorus*, and the bright rufous undertail coverts excluded two members of that genus: Broad-tailed and Calliope (Newfield 1996). The other two species, Rufous and Allen's, are very similar in appearance to each other and only adult males are readily separated in the field. Adult males have red gorgets and differ in back color (rufous in Rufous, green in Allen's).

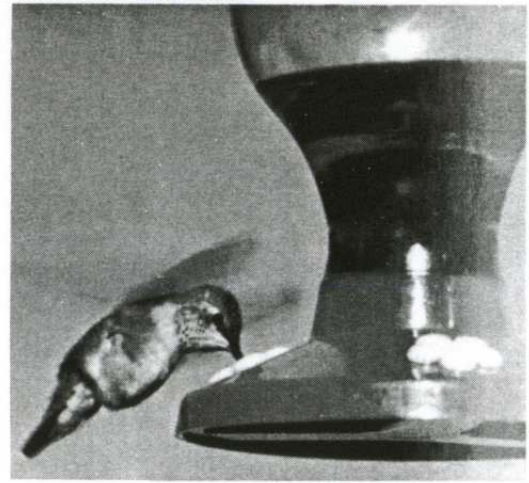


Fig. 1. Rufous Hummingbird at feeder, Cedar Rapids. Jim Durbin



Red-throated Loon P-0551
Pleasant Creek L., Linn Co., IA
2 May 1997 T. H. Kent 97-04

>007 41+63 NCLNN-23BU 144

97-06

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

SPECIES: Red-throated Loon (Basic plumage)

LOCATION: Pleasant Creek Recreation Area (Linn County)

DATE & TIME: 13 April, 1997. (2:37-2:54 PM)

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

OTHERS: Discovered and reported by John Daniel and Ken Lowder. While I was there, Dale Fye. Later were MObs.

DESCRIPTION: The bird was first located very close to shore near the west end of the dam. I was able to walk to where I could set up the scope and view the bird from 150-250 feet. It was diving, but not regularly. It spent most of the time drifting. There were no other birds to compare it to except Ruddy Ducks, and this bird seemed almost twice their length. The bird was quite light in appearance, with generally light gray upperparts and white underparts, with a small head and bill. One very noticable feature was the way it kept its gray bill "tipped up". The culmen was straight to even slightly concave, but was pointed up from the horizontal. The top of the head and hindneck were gray and clearly cut off from the white of the front and sides of the neck, and side of the face. The white completely surrounded the eye, which in the right light was red. The top of the head was rather flat, but did have a point well distal to the eye. The back was darker gray with white spots, and the white of the underparts at the waterline had dark marks. When the bird dove, it seemed like it jumped up slightly first, rather than just sliding under the surface. It was not seen to fly, and it was not heard.

SIMILAR SPECIES: The other smaller loon, Pacific has darker gray upperparts and minimal white marks on the back, gray surrounding the eye, a straight bill, black eye, a more rounded top of the head, and often displays a chin strap, all features which differ from Red-throated Loon.

OPTICS & VIEWING CONDITIONS: It was a sunny day, and I was using a KOWA TSN4 telescope (20-60X) looking mostly east at distances of 150-250 feet.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen five previous birds in basic plumage in Iowa, and several in alternate plumage in Alaska.

REFERENCES & FIELD NOTES: Field notes were taken at the time of the sighting. The same evening, I reviewed Kaufman's "Advanced Birding" and the National Geographic guide. This form was typed the same evening.

97-06

DOCUMENTATION FORM

For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species: Red-throated Loon

Number: 1

Location: Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area, Linn Co.

Habitat: Lake.

Date and time: April 14, 1997, 9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Name and address: Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty, IA 52317

Others with you: John Rutenbeck.

Others before or after you: John Daniel, Ken Lowder, Jim Fuller (before).

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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

The bird was in basic (winter) plumage. There were no other birds nearby for size comparison, but the bird appeared to be much smaller than several Common Loons seen on other parts of the lake. The bill was relatively short and thin, approximately 2/3 of the width of the head; dark gray; held slightly above horizontal; and with a slightly upturned lower mandible tip. The eye was dark. The crown was blackish, fading to a narrow gray strip down the hindneck. The crown and hindneck were noticeably lighter than the back. The face, including the area immediately above the eye, was white. The throat and the front and sides of the neck were white. The division between the dark hindneck and white neck was indistinct and not sharply defined. The back was black with many small white spots. The sides were mostly white mottled with black. The legs and feet were black. The bird was actively swimming and diving. No vocalizations were heard.

Similar species eliminated: The bill shape is distinctive. Pacific Loon has a straight bill, lacks white above the eye and has a sharp vertical division between light and dark on neck. Common Loon has a much larger straight bill, has a darker crown and neck and a heavily patterned side of neck.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? No.

Viewing conditions: Approximately 50 - 150 yards away with full sunlight behind me; viewed with 8 x 40 binoculars and 15-45x telescope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: No previous experience with this species; very familiar with Common Loon; one previous sighting of Pacific Loon.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Kaufman's *Advanced Birding*.

How long before field notes made: During observation.

How long before this form completed: Eleven hours.