

Pacific Loon 1
10 Nov 1990
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA
A. Johnson
IBL 61:17, 62:21

Record Number: 90-25
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Ann Johnson

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 61:17
Records Committee: IBL 62:21

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D: Description of bird is adequate. Loon was viewed by many other observers.

A-D: Conclusively described.

A-D: Good description.

A-D: Good description.

A-D: Adequate description for this species.

A-D: Good descriptions and size comparison with Ring-billed Gulls. Key field marks well observed.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species: Pacific Loon

Location: Jester Park, Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co., IA

Habitat: Open water

Date: November 10, 1990

Time: 12:10 pm to 12:30 pm

Name and Address: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Avenue, Norwalk, Iowa 50211

Other observers: Eugene and Eloise Armstrong; Reid and Pam Allen; other members of Des Moines Audubon

Description of bird: The bird was obviously a loon by virtue of its rounded head, thick neck, and posture of riding low in the water. I initially had passed it off as a Common Loon as the distance prevented any idea of size. Generally the upper parts were dark and the underparts were white. As I continued to look at this bird, the first thing to really bother me was the distinct and abrupt line differentiating the dark and light parts. This line seemed to go from the upper mandible, through the eyeline, and split the neck approximately in half, going down to the waterline. The bill also seemed small and thin for a Common Loon, was just not as evident as in a Common, and was held at a horizontal angle. At one point several Ring-billed Gulls lighted near the loon and it was only slightly larger than the gulls, giving me the first indication of size. As the bird drifted closer and the light got a bit better, a chin strap was evident, thereby clinching the identification of Pacific Loon.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Red-throated and Yellow-billed Loons could both be eliminated by the horizontal head and bill. This bird also showed a more rounded head and definite black/white contrast which was lacking in the Red-throated Loon I had observed six days earlier. Common Loon was eliminated by combination of size, smaller bill, distinct line separating white and black feathers, and ultimately by the chinstrap.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions (lighting, distance, optics): The bird was viewed across the water at a distance of 200-400? yards through a scope at 25x-45x. At first the sky was overcast, but during the time of observation the lighting kept improving which probably allowed for clearly seeing the chinstrap.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: First Pacific Loon was seen last year, but I have considerable experience with Common Loons.

References and persons consulted before writing description: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America was consulted during observation.

How long before field notes made? some notes dictated during observation
How long before this form completed? evening of observation