Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union Printed: 04/25/96

Pacific Loon 13 Jul 1994 Record Number: 94-21 Classification: A-P

Anderson L., Hamilton Co., IA

\*S.& \*J. Dinsmore, \*B. & \*M. Proescholdt

P-0430, IBL 64:107; 65:10, 81

## **DOCUMENTATIONS**

Stephen J. Dinsmore (13 July), 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014 [3 Nov 1994\*]

James J. Dinsmore (13 July), 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014

Beth Proescholdt (13 July)

Mark Proescholdt (13 July), Box 65, Liscomb 50148

Thomas H. Kent (5 Aug)[not reviewed]

## **PHOTOGRAPH**

Steve Dinsmore, 29 July [2nd review], P-0430

## REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 64:107; 65:10 Records Committee: IBL 65:81

Dinsmore, S. J. 1995. First summer record of a Pacific/Arctic Loon for Iowa. Iowa Bird Life 65:55-56.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Sharp defining line on neck, chinstrap, and small bill leave no doubt. I believe the last observation of this bird was 15 September. We sould be sure this date is recorded in the literature.

A-D, This bird seems to be mostly in basic plumage. Photos?

A-D, The only possibility not eliminated is Arctic Loon. Following our precedent set with the ibises, should these birds be listed as Arctic/Pacific? I would submit, however, that, based on present knowledge, a reasonable assumption based on known distribution of Arctic Loon tends to eliminate the possibility of Arctic Loon. (An assumption, of course, that may be proven inaccurate as futher knowledge becomes available.)

REVOTE (with photo): 7 A-P

A-P, Photo supports documentation; dark line down neck noticeable.

A-P, The vertical division between dark and light of neck is apparent in the picture.

A-P, Photo OK along with description.

rump/tail color and the underwing pattern. Kamchatka Gull, a highly unlikely occurrence in Iowa, could be eliminated by the Red Rock bird's light underwings and mantle more nearly the color of Ring-billed Gull. First-winter Mew Gulls are primarily brown and would appear darker than our bird, particularly on the head, belly, rump, tail, and underwing. The similarity of the Red Rock bird to Ring-billed Gull, especially the whiter rump and tail and light underwings suggest that this was the European subspecies.

Table 1. Comparison of first winter plumages of Ring-billed Gull and three subspecies of Mew Gull.

Body Area	Ring-billed	Mew	Common	Kamchatka
Mantle	medium gray	brown to gray; darker than Ring-billed	darker than Ring- billed; lighter than Mew	dark gray
Head	streaked and mottled	heavy brown wash; streaky	sharply defined streaks; crown, nape whiter than Mew	heavily streaked
Rump	brown spots	heavily barred	bold white; some- times faint markings	coverts mottled
Tail	white with broad tailband	solid brown with some light mottling	white with dark tail- band; outer rectrices white	incomplete tailband
Underparts	fairly white; some mottling	extensive brown mottling	mostly white; some mottling on breast and flanks	whiter than Mew Gull
Underwing	whitish with some darker mottling	brownish	white with limited mottling	dark brown to brownish gray; mottled with white
Bill	variably bi-colored	dark with lighter base	bi-colored; close to Ring-billed	sharply bi-colored

Recent gull records for Iowa have shown that vagrant birds have come this way from both east and west. California and Slaty-backed gulls have certainly come from the West. Great and Lesser Black-backed, Little, and Common Black-headed gulls are seen with regularity on the East Coast. Consequently, a species such as the Mew Gull, which has several recognizable subspecies, should be scrutinized for clues to its origin.

#### LITERATURE CITED

Grant, P. J.1986. Gulls: A Guide to Identification. Buteo Books, Vermillion, South Dakota. 352 Pp. 532 120th Avenue, Norwalk, IA 50211

# FIRST SUMMER RECORD OF A PACIFIC/ARCTIC LOON FOR IOWA

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 13 July 1994, I was birding Anderson Lake, east of Jewell, Hamilton County. At 5:25 p.m., I noticed a loon swimming near the south end of the marsh. I was surprised to see a loon here since the marsh has an average depth of less than 2 feet. With the bird in view in my spotting scope, I noted the dark



back, contrasting lighter nape, seemingly small, straight bill, and distinct neck

pattern, and identified it as a Pacific/Arctic Loon in basic plumage.

I studied the bird in great detail from distances as close as 75 meters until 8:15 p.m. There were no other birds for direct size comparisons, though the bird was clearly much larger than several nearby Wood Ducks. The shape and posture were those of a loon, with a long neck and slim body that rode low to the water. I noted that the bird appeared stockier and thicker-necked than a Common Loon. The back, upperwings, and tail were black, with no light spotting or pale edgings to the feathers. The bill was dark, straight, and short. The length of the bill was about equal to the length of the head from the base of the bill to the posterior edge of the crown. The bird had a dark mask that included the eye, with the dark color extending across the forehead. The cheek and auricular area were white. The chin, throat, and foreneck were also white. When the bird was preening, a faint chinstrap was visible, but was broken on the throat. Remnants of the chinstrap were most evident on the bird's left side. A thin black line extended from the shoulder to a point just below and behind the eye. The rear portion of the crown and nape were an off-white color, not as white as the foreneck. The three-toned neck pattern was distinctive. Several times, when the bird preened, a few thin black stripes were visible on the lower foreneck, and extended vertically from the water line to the shoulder. The underparts were white, as seen when the bird rolled over to preen. On several occasions, the bird flapped its wings. I noted that the upperwings were black, except for a small white patch at the base of the inner primaries, similar in size and shape to the patch on the wing of an immature Golden Eagle. The primaries were very worn, indicating that the bird may have been close to beginning the wing molt. The bird lacked the paler tips to the scapulars and wing coverts of a first-summer bird. Based on these features, I concluded the bird was an adult in basic plumage.

Identification of basic-plumaged loons can be very difficult. I carefully considered the possibility that the bird was another species of loon, especially the more likely Common Loon. However, the bird was clearly a Pacific or Arctic Loon, but which one? Unfortunately, separation of these two species in basic plumage is difficult, if not impossible. Based on specimen records from the interior United States, Pacific Loon is the most likely species.

The bird remained through at least 17 September, and was seen by numerous birders. Pacific Loons are considered casual in Iowa (Kent and Bendorf 1991), with about 23 records through 1994. The majority of the records have been in the last ten

years. There is one record from April (Bendorf 1981), with the remainder during the fall (October to December), especially between 20 October and 20 November. There are five summer records of single birds from the upper Midwest: 13 June-1 August 1976 at Lake Harriet in Minneapolis, Hennepin Co., Minnesota (Janssen 1987), 17 July 1979 at Box Butte Reservoir, Dawes Co., Nebraska (Rosche 1982), 25 June 1981 in Jackson Co., Minnesota (Janssen 1987), 5 June 1982 at Upper Rice L., Clearwater Co., Minnesota (Janssen 1987), and a subadult from 21-30 June 1991 at Sun L., Lake Co., Illinois (Kleen 1992, America Birds 45: 1120,1181). The occurrence of this species in Iowa during summer was totally unexpected, and occurred at an unexpected location.

#### LITERATURE CITED

Bendorf, C. 1981. Arctic Loon at Amana Lake. Iowa Bird Life 51: 76.

Janssen, R. B. 1987. Birds in Minnesota. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Kent, T. H., and C. J. Bendorf. 1991. Official checklist of Iowa birds-1991 edition. Iowa Bird Life 61: 101-109.

Kleen, V. M. 1992. Field notes. 1991 breeding season. The Meadowlark 1:25-39.

Rosche, R. C. 1982. Birds of Northwestern Nebraska and Southwestern South Dakota. Published by the author. Chadron, Nebraska.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014

## I. O. U. BUSINESS

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Otley, 6 November 1994, 10:00 a.m.-2:10 p.m. MARY KUHLMAN, SECRETARY

Present: Ann Barker, presiding, Pam Allen, Beth Brown, John Fleckenstein, Jim Fuller, Bud Gode, Ann Johnson, Matt Kenne, Mary, Kuhlman, Tim Schantz.

Minutes for the 9 April 1994 board meeting were approved as published in lowa Bird Life.

Treasurer Pam Allen reported that the organization continues to be in good financial shape and dues are coming in well

Committee Reports

Records: The committee nominated Tim Schantz for a six-year term beginning in 1995 and ending in 2001. It was moved (Fuller, seconded by Gode) that the nomination be approved. Passed.

Membership: Membership information is being sent to bird feeder survey participants. The committee recommended that a press release be sent to local papers prior to each I.O.U. field trip to encourage beginning birders to attend. The field trip committee would select a leader for the beginners group. The membership committee will do the press releases.

Publications: Ann Barker's term has ended and will be discussed at the next meeting.

Library-Historical: Expired terms still need to be filled on this committee.

Big Day: After discussion of possible reasons why participation has decreased, the board suggested that the committee consider rules changes that might increase participation such as regional awards, awards for second and third places, and/or that the winner of the previous year be ineligible. The board would like the event to continue. This year \$197 was collected by the four participating teams. Education Booklet Promotion: Plans to revise and reprint the booklet continue.

Breeding Bird Atlas: It was moved (Allen, seconded by Kenne) to provide \$8,981.50 to purchase 781 copies of the atlas to distribute to each public and private middle and high school library in Iowa and to each county conservation board. Passed. This money is in addition to the \$1,009 carryover for photography work already in the fund. The committee was asked to decide how the I.O.U. should be described in the acknowledgements section of the book. The committee should also work with the newsletter editors to promote pre-publication sales and adopt-a-book programs. Ann Johnson volunteered to design a label to place in each donated book saying it was donated by the I.O.U.

Spring Count: The 1995 count will be held on 13 May.

Field Trips: The 12 November field trip starts at 8:00 a.m. at Lake Manawa. The following field trips are planned: southeastern Iowa-29 April; Green Island and Goose Lake-8 July; Brushy Creek-27 August; and northeastern Iowa-2 December. A camping trip is scheduled at Stephens State Forest 17 and 18 June. The committee will explore the possibility of out-of-state field trips.

Nominating: The committee proposed the following slate of nominees for the 1995 election:

President

Vice President Director (three positions) Carol Thompson Ann Johnson

Ann Barker, Bud Gode, Matt Kenne

#### **Old Business**

Upcoming meetings: The spring meeting will be in Ida Grove. The program is set, and the local group should look for a student to attend on scholarship. The fall 1995 meeting will be in Dixon on 8-10 September. The program is being planned.

After discussion concerning the spring 1996 meeting, the board suggested a joint Iowa, South Dakota, and Nebraska meeting in Sioux City. The other two states will be contacted, and a planning

committee may be appointed later.

#### **New Business**

Wildlife Diversity Program: Laura Jackson presented information concerning funding of the Wildlife Diversity Program. A public meeting will be held I December in Des Moines. It was moved (Gode, seconded by Schantz) that the president appoint a representative to attend the December meeting and a letter be sent in support of the program. Passed. Together the board filled out an opinion response card to be sent. The board thanked Laura Jackson for her years of service to the state of

Commercial sales of checklists: It was moved (Allen, seconded by Gode) to allow commercial sales of the checklist with the minimum order of 100. Passed. Allen will contact ABA about sale of our checklist

Iowa Environmental Center: Correspondence has been received concerning the formation of an environmental coalition. The board felt that it needed more information before deciding whether or not to be involved. Jane Clark will be asked to find out more and report to the board.

Proposed Budget for 1995: It was moved (Fuller, seconded by Kenne) to approve the budget. Passed. The next board meeting will be held Sunday, 2 April 1995 at 10:00 a.m. at the home of Tim Schantz.

#### Announcements

Jim Fuller reported that Jim Scheib has investigated America on Line and a bulletin board will be set up for I.O.U. at no cost to us. It will be publicized in the newsletter,

Jim Fuller also informed the board that City Line has discontinued using the Birdline information and we no longer receive \$15 per month.

Cutting of trees at Otter Creek Marsh was discussed. Jim Fuller will write a letter of concern to Richard Bishop of the Iowa D.N.R. and will submit information for the newsletter.

Information was distributed from the Minnesota Omithologists' Union about rare bird issues. Jim Fuller suggested that the I.O.U. think about publishing information similar to this.

Beth Brown reported that Iowa is losing bird rehabilitators. This puts more pressure on those remaining. Money is a major concern. It was suggested that she submit information to the newsletter.

## TREASURERS REPORT--1994, PAM ALLEN, TREASURER BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 1994

#### **CURRENT ASSETS**

Cash in bank (Note 1) 18,648.11 Cash in bank, (Note 2) 194.23 Certif. of Deposit (Note 3) 23,591.19 Certif. of Deposit (Note 4) 3,480.68



Pacific Loon P-0430 Anderson L., Hamilton Co., IA 29 Jul 1994 Steve Dinsmore 94-21

## DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Pacific/Arctic Loon

Number: I adult

Location: Anderson L., Hamilton Co., IA

Habitat: shallow marsh

Date: 13 July 1994 (last seen by me on 1 August 1994)

Time: 5:25-8:15 p.m. on 13 July

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

Others who saw bird: James J. Dinsmore, Mark Proescholdt, Beth Proescholdt, m.ob.

Description of bird(s): On 13 July 1994 I was birding Anderson Lake, east of Jewell, Hamilton County. At 5:25 p.m., I noticed a loon swimming near the south end of the marsh. I noted the dark back, contrasting lighter nape, seemingly small, straight bill, and distinct light/dark/light pattern on the side of the neck, and identified it as a Pacific/Arctic Loon in basic plumage. I watched the bird for less than five minutes then left to notify other birders. I returned to the marsh at 6 p.m. and studied the bird from the railroad tracks at the south end of the area. I observed the bird at fairly close range for several minutes, during which time I began to have doubts about the initial identification. The size and especially the length of the bill seemed to change depending on whether the bird was feeding or resting. And when the neck was wet (from diving), the neck pattern became less distinct. Jim Dinsmore, Mark Proescholdt, and Beth Proescholdt soon arrived and confirmed my initial identification as a Pacific/Arctic Loon in basic plumage.

I was able to study the bird in great detail from distances as close as 75 m until 8:15 p.m. The following is a description of the bird, most of it written during the initial observation with additional notes written on my return to Ames that evening. There were no other birds for direct size comparisons, though the bird was clearly much larger than several nearby Wood Ducks. The shape and posture were those of a loon, with a long neck and slim body that rode low to the water. I noted that the bird appeared stockier and thicker-necked than a typical Common Loon. The back, upperwings, and tail were black, with no light spotting or pale edgings to the feathers. The bill was distinctive: dark, straight, and short. The length of the bill was about equal to the length of the head (base of bill to posterior edge of crown). The bird had a dark mask that included the eye, with the dark color extending across the forehead. The cheek and auricular area were white. The chin, throat, and foreneck were also white. When the bird was preening, a faint chinstrap was visible, but was broken on the throat. The remnants of the chinstrap were most evident on the bird's left side. A thin black line extended from the shoulder to a point just below and behind the eye. The rear portion of the crown and nape were pale, though not as white as the foreneck (more of an off-white color). This three-toned neck pattern was distinctive. Several times when the bird preened, a few thin black stripes were visible on the lower foreneck, and extended vertically from the water line to the shoulder. The underparts were white, as seen when the bird rolled over to preen. On three or four occasions, the bird flapped its wings. When doing so, I noted that the upperwings were entirely black, except for a small white patch at the base of the inner primaries (similar in size and shape to the patch on the wing of an immature Golden Eagle). I could also see that the primaries were tattered and pale brown in color, indicating that the bird may have been close to beginning the wing molt. Based on these features, I concluded the bird was an adult in basic plumage. I considered the possibility that the bird may have been in first-summer plumage, but the dark back seems to rule this out.

Similar species and how eliminated: The size and shape of the bird were those of a loon. The lack of a dark auricular patch, contrasting neck pattern, dark back and upperwings, and dark bill color all ruled out Yellow-billed Loon. Red-throated Loon was eliminated by bill shape, neck pattern, the dark back and upperwings, and dark area around the eye. Common Loon was eliminated by the dark back and upperwings, shorter, thicker bill, dark area around the eye, evidence of a chinstrap, neck pattern, and contrast between the pale nape and dark back. The bird was clearly a

Pacific or Arctic Loon, but which one? Unfortunately, exact identification was not possible, though it was likely a Pacific Loon.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were excellent with good light. Estimated viewing distance was 75-125 m during most of the observation. I used a 20-60x spotting scope for much of the observation.

Previous experience with species: I have seen several Pacific/Arctic Loons in fall in Iowa, plus single birds in Massachusetts and North Carolina.

References consulted:

NGS <u>Field Guide to the Birds of North America</u> Kaufman <u>Advanced Birding</u>

How long before field notes made: written with bird under observation How long before this form completed: 14 July-updated after more recent sightings

## DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species Pacific Loon How many? one
Location? Anderson Lake, Hamilton Co.
Type of habitat? freshwater marsh
When? date(s): 13 July 1994 Time: .6:45-7:15 p.m.
Who? your name and address
Jim Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Drive, Ames
Others with you Steve Dinsmore, Mark and Beth Proescholdt
Others before and after you after me, a cast of dozens

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

Obviously a loon in winter plumage

Didn't get a good feel for size but it didn't appear especially large. I did note that the bill was straight (not upturned) and not esp. massive.

Back of body and neck and top of head mostly dark brown, front of neck and unside of body white.

The dark of the top of the head extended down on side of head to include the eye.

The brown on the neck and head was somewhat lighter in color on the back of the neck and head and was darker along the side of the neck where it met the white color. On one side of the bird I could see a faint brown chin stripe extending out into the white of the neck (see my dismal diagram).

There were faint but distinct black and white stripes at the front corner of the wing (see diagram).

Similar species and how eliminated:

Bill shape and size would separate it from both Common and Redthroated loons. Also the markings on the head and neck would separate this bird from those two species.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? no If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: estimated about 150 yards, light from side but no real

glare off water so lighting was good. Viewed through Kowa scope (power up to 60X).

Previous experience with this species and similar ones: limited, only seen one before

References and persons consulted before writing description: NGS field guide; Advanced Birding by Kaufmann had diagrams that closely matched what I saw on this bird.

How long before field notes made? notes made that evening, also drawing of the bird

this form completed? several weeks later, based on drawing and notes taken at the time

Mail original form to field editor for this season.

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa
What species? Pacific Loon How many? 1
Location? Anderson Lake, Hamilton County, near Jewell
Type of habitat? open marsh
When? date(s): July 13, 1994 time: 6:50 PM to 7:50 PM
Who?your name and address: Beth Proescholdt
others with you: Mark Proescholdt, Steve + Sim Dinsmore
others before or after you: many observers
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.
After Steve called we harried to the marsh walked down the tracks to good sharp viewing of bird, in open water, near by,
The loon was in basic plumage, a small bill held out straight
(eliminating bills of other loons). The face: black covered
the eve with regular rounded marine seganting black &
white ( both eminally a common boom ) - + was not ingred
margin (as Common), There was a definite darker margin
between white undersides + solid black back (not speck)ed
like Common), lighter gray of nape + back neck, and a thin-strap that was quite noticeable at time s. not seen
on Red-throated or Common)
a really good look at a Pacific Loon in basic plumage,
Similar species and how eliminated: Common Loon, Red-throated Loon -
Similar species and how eliminated: Common Loon, Red-throated Loon bill too small for Common, + held straight out (so not Red-throated See above for more
Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification?
If yes, explain: :
Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:  Good light from side, 50-60 yards, Nikon 8x30 binocs,  21 X Bushnell scope, KOWA scope  Previous experience with species and similar ones: I have seen many Common  Loons, to few Pacific to Red-throated.  References and persons consulted before writing description: I checked all our guides  on the way to marsh to review what I need to lock for  How long before field notes made? At once this form completed? July 24, 1994

on July 14

## DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Species: Pacific Loon; Number: 1

Location: Anderson L., Hamilton Co., IA

Date: 5 August 1994; Time: 7:45 to 8:00 a.m.

Name and address: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246.

Others before/with/after: found by Steve Dinsmore, seen by many

Habitat and circumstances: marsh with open water

Description of bird: The loon was swimming in open water and appeared to be about 30% larger than a Wood Duck swimming next to it. The bird was over all gray and shaped like a loon. The bill was small and relatively thin (compared to my conception of the bill of a Common Loon) and straight. The upper and lower mandibles appeared to be about equal with no upward curvature of the lower mandible. The bill appeared gray to me and tapered uniformly to a point. It was held horizontally. The very light gray underparts were sharply demarcated from the dark gray upperparts by a straight line down the neck. I detected a smudged chin mark. The crown and back of the neck were lighter and softer gray than the back. The rounded head extended to the prominent thick posterior neck. The wing coverts had a smudged lighter gray edge.

Voice: not heard

Similar species: The relatively small, slender, pointed, straight bill and the bulging soft gray neck were the most striking features. The straight line separating fore and hind neck and suggestive hint of a chin strap also helped distinguish this bird from a Common Loon. The head and bill shape were not that of a Red-throated Loon. This bird appeared to be mostly in basic plumage.

Any one have reservations?: none that I know of.

Light: Looking north in early morning light; Distance: 100 yards (est); Optics: 20x scope.

Previous experience: I have seen many in breeding plumage at Churchill and in Alaska and several in basic plumage in Iowa and on the West Coast.

References before/after viewing: None.

Time of notes: while viewing; Final typing: 2 days