

Pacific Loon  
22 Nov 1986  
Saylorville Res., IA  
\*S. Dinsmore, \*Myers, \*B&L Padelford  
IBL 57:13, 77, Dinsmore 1987

Record Number: 86-08  
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Steve Dinsmore  
Bob Myers  
Babs/Loren Padelford

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 57:13  
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-II, 1-III

II, perfect description and sketch (by Myers) with all key  
fieldmarks: size compared to Common Loon, hindneck lighter  
compared to plain back; dividing line between hind and foreneck;  
and chinstrap.

II, Good drawing by Myers.

II, A very good and convincing description of Pacific Loon  
from Dinsmore and Myers. Padelford description not as good but  
consistent with the other two. Together they adequately describe  
Pacific Loon in basic plumage.

II, This was an excellent opportunity to compare side by side  
a Pacific and Common Loon and make direct comparisons of size,  
shape, and markings.

II, saw bird.

II, Nice drawing. Myers documentation especially is very  
clear. Size as R-b Merganser.

REVOTE (1993): 7 A-D

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

A-D, Myers sketch and Goetz review leave no doubt.

86-08

13 September 1993

To: IOU Records Committee

From: Tom Kent

Re: Request for reconsideration of record

**Records:** 86-08 Pacific Loon (see also 86-09, 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. The committee has not seen his review. He only considers the first record (86-08) acceptable, but would lump the others (86-09, 86-19).

## 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

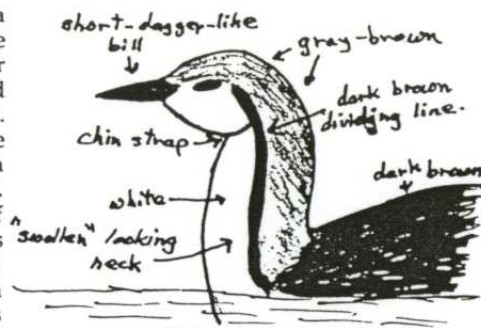
STEVE DINSMORE

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

## Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

by the Records Committee

of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: Pacific Loon

DATE SEEN: 11-22-86

SITE OF OBSERVATION: Saylorville Res.

OBSERVERS: Babs + Loren Padelford, S. Dinsmore, Myers

DATE OF REVIEW: 4-03-87

METHOD OF REVIEW: Vote via mail

CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: II

COMMENTS: A combination of all documentations for this bird provided very acceptable evidence.

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.

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

86-08

by the Records Committee

of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: *Pacific Loon*

DATE SEEN: *11-22-86*

SITE OF OBSERVATION: *Saylorville Res*

OBSERVERS: *Steve Dinsmore, Myers, B+L Pade/Ford*

DATE OF REVIEW: *Vote via mail on 4-03-87*

METHOD OF REVIEW:

CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: *II*

COMMENTS:

*Documentations left little doubt as to bird's ID.*

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

## DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species?Pacific Loon

How Many?1

Location?Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.

Habitat?large reservoir

Date?22-23 Nov 1986

Time?11:15-11:30 A.M. and 11:45 A.M.-12:30 P.M. on 22 Nov and  
8:00-8:35 A.M. on 23 Nov

Observers Name and address:Steve Dinsmore, Ames

Others who saw bird:Bob Myers, B.J. Rose, Loren and Babs Padelford

Description of bird:When I first spotted the bird, it looked like a small loon with a long neck. As Bob Myers and I watched the bird for the next hour, we noted the following marks. The bird was only slightly larger than a Common Merganser and about 1/3 smaller than a Common Loon with which it was swimming. The back was a uniform dark black color with some very faint barring on the flanks. The crown and back of neck were also dark, but noticeably lighter than the back. The throat was white except for a dusky chin strap across the mid-throat. The white throat was separated from the dark crown and back of the neck by a dark line, about 1 cm wide. This dark line extended from the base of the bill to the shoulder. The bill was short (about half the length of a Common Loon's bill), dark, and held very slightly upward. In direct comparison to a Common Loon, the bird's bill was shorter and of more uniform color, the forehead was more rounded, and the neck was proportionately longer and thicker. when the bird was diving, it would extend its neck straight forward before each dive.

Similar species and how eliminated:Common Loon eliminated by the small bill, rounded forehead, clear separation between the throat and back of neck, smaller size, chin strap, and dark, mostly unmarked back. Red-throated Loon eliminated by thicker, straighter bill, dark back, chin strap, and 3-toned neck pattern.

Viewing conditions and equipment:Viewing conditions were good with the sun mostly behind us and the sky partly cloudy. Estimated viewing distance varied from 150-250 yards. I used a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species:The only other Pacific Loon I've seen was at Saylorville on 1 Nov 1986.

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?24 hours

## DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Pacific Loon How many? 1Location? Saylorville Res.Type of habitat? lakeWhen? date(s): Nov. 22, 1986 time: 11:15 AM to 12:30 PMWho? your name and address: Bob Myers RR 2, Box 153, Perry, Iowa 50220others with you: Steve Dinsmoreothers before or after you: Jim Dinsmore, Gene + Eloise Armstrong and more

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.

Small loon approx.  $\frac{1}{3}$  smaller than common loon also present. (as length of pied-billed grebe there)  
 Fairly short pointed bill - held level or slightly above horizontal. (thin bill)

Thick neck - "puffy" almost swollen looking neck - color of neck <sup>back of neck + top of head</sup> was gray-brown with a velvet-sheen. (soft appearing)

Throat, chin + front of neck were white. A dark brown <sup>on blackish</sup> line distinctly separated the front from back of neck.   
 ↗ a clean, sharp division

Bill had thin dark chin strap as shown in drawing.

Bill was dark. (gray? - not jet black)

Back was dark brown - darker than back of neck - and showed no white markings.

Head shape was smoothly rounded - no knob on forehead as in common loon.

This loon held its neck out stretched as it dove - a characteristic of Pacific loon

This bird <sup>was</sup> with (within a few feet of) a common loon and detailed comparison could be made.



Similar species and how eliminated:

Size, bill + head shape, chin strap, neck pattern eliminate common.

Neck pattern and posture of head + bill eliminate red-throated.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:  
 Good sunlight from behind or from right. Closest dis. was approx. 250-300 yd.

Used 22x, 25x + 40x scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: this was my first Pacific and have seen

two red-throateds and many common loons.  
 References and persons consulted before writing description:

How long before field notes made? on spot this form completed? same day

MAIL TO: F. J. Spring, Field Reports Editor, RR 2, Box 153, Perry, IA 50220

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

Documentation of Pacific Loon (Gavia pacifica)

Date of Sighting: November 22, 1986      Time: 2:15-2:30 p.m.

Location: Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.

Distance from bird: The loon was feeding close to the west shore of the lake, about 175 yards north of our observation point on the dam.

It was a small loon with small head and bill. Bill was held horizontal with the water. Uniformly gray on top of head, hindneck, wings and back. Cheeks, chin and foreneck were white. When it turned its neck a certain way it was possible to see a very faint pale gray chinstrap. Sharp contrast between dark hindneck and white foreneck and throat. It was approximately the same size as some Red-breasted mergansers that were swimming nearby. We had watched a Common loon earlier and its head and bill were larger than those of the Pacific.

Previous experience: all observers had a close study of a Pacific loon in winter plumage one week earlier at Branched Oak Lake, Lancaster Co., NE. Also, we saw them in Churchill, Manitoba in 1981.

Light conditions: Sunny, with sun behind us.

Optical equipment: Bushnell Spacemaster II 25x scope and Meade 40x scope.

Other observer: B.J. Rose

Field guide used: National Geographic Birds of No. America.

This documentation being written 11/23/86 from notes taken in the field at time of sighting.