

Red-throated Loon

1 Dec 1986

Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA

*Steve Dinsmore

IBL 57:52, 77

Record Number: 86-18

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Steve Dinsmore

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 57:52

Records Committee: IBL 57:77

VOTE: 7-III

III, This record barely achieves requirement of being convincingly documented. 1) To say, "The shape, posture, and dark-light coloration identified the bird as a winter plumaged loon" is not helpful description--it simply begs the question. Why not simply describe the shape, posture, and coloration? I am being slightly facetious. Of course, I know this observer can accurately recognize a basic plumage loon. Our job, however, is not to judge the skills of the observer. Instead, we have only a piece of paper to judge. If you took the name of the observer off this documentation, one might be tempted to be more skeptical. 2) No comparison was available with Common Loon. 3) The bill shape, uptilted head and back speckling are sufficient to make positive id. I guess I just prefer to see accidental species described in greater detail. I've seen too many instances of misidentifications caused by an initial error in placing a bird into wrong family, or by misidentifying a reference bird. I would like to see more attention given to basic description of a bird's size, shape, and habits.

III, Well done documentation, necessary field marks noted to describe Red-throated Loon.

III, The overall posture, shape, coloration and neck pattern would seem to confirm the I.D. I am somewhat concerned tht this bird and the following record to be considered (the Pacific Loon 12/06/86) were at exactly the same spot and only 5 days apart. Did one observer or the other miss or mistake some field marks?

III, Somehow the description seems lacking, but the necessary info is there to ID as RTLoon Dark bill bothers me, and dependance on judgement for many features. I could be convinced not to vote III, but IV.

36-18

Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

86-18

by the Records Committee
of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: *Red-throated Loon*

DATE SEEN: *12-1-86*

SITE OF OBSERVATION: *Saylorville Res.*

OBSERVERS: *Steve Dinsmore*

DATE OF REVIEW: *5-30-87*

METHOD OF REVIEW: *Vote*

CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: *III*

COMMENTS: *The necessary info was included in documentation to confirm the 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
- 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.

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species?Red-throated Loon

How Many?1 winter ad.

Location?Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co. (Cherry Glen Recreation Area)

Habitat?swimming in open water off rock jetty

Date?1 Dec 1986

Time?3:26-3:50 P.M.

Observers Name and address:Steve Dinsmore, Ames

Others who saw bird:none

Description of bird:The shape, posture, and dark-light coloration identified the bird as a winter-plumaged loon. The bird looked too small (about the size of a Common Merganser) to be a Common Loon. The bird also held its head slightly upturned, like a cormorant. The bill was dark, short, and slightly upturned. The throat and front of neck were pale white and included the eye. The sides were also pale white with some dark speckling. The back looked dark brown (it didn't seem as dark as the back of a Common Loon) with conspicuous light speckling throughout. The crown and back of the neck were medium gray and definitely lighter than the back. From a distance, the bird appeared very white-headed. The head was very evenly rounded and lacked the abrupt forehead of a Common Loon. The neck appeared longer and slimmer than the neck of a Common Loon.

Similar species and how eliminated:Common Loon eliminated by smaller size, head posture, shorter, upturned bill, speckling on back, more rounded forehead, and sharp contrast between throat and back of neck. Pacific Loon eliminated by bill shape, head posture, speckling on back, two-toned (not three-toned) neck pattern, lack of chinstrap (not definitive, but helpful), and crown color not including the eye (should include the eye on Pacific Loon).

Viewing conditions and equipment:Viewing conditions were good with the sun to the side and the sky mostly overcast. Estimated viewing distance was 150 yards. I used a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species:I have seen two other Red-throated Loons in Iowa (Cedar L., 7 Apr 1984 and Saylorville Reservoir, 30 Nov 1985)

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?5 hours