

Pacific Loon

28 Apr 1981

Amana Lake, Iowa Co., IA

*Bendorf, *Newlon, *Kent

also 29 Apr; Bendorf 1981, IBL 51:63. 52:42

Record Number: 81-02

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Carl J. Bendorf

Michael Newlon

Thomas H. Kent

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 51:63

Bendorf, C.J. 1981. Arctic Loon at Amana Lake. IBL 51:76~~77~~. *rc*

Records Committee: IBL 52:42

VOTE: 6-II, 1-abstain

abstain, should be III because all observers were in contact.

American Midland Naturalist 24:585-593.

Thomsen, L. 1971. Behavior and Ecology of Burrowing Owls. *Condor* 73:177-192.
HANK & LINDA ZALETEL, 667 Pammel Ct. & SUSAN COATS, 1015 Roosevelt,
Ames.

Arctic Loon at Amana Lake -- In the late afternoon of April 28, 1981, I had searched the area near East Amana where a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher had been found two days earlier. Apparently the bird was gone so I decided to quickly scan the nearby Amana Lake, two miles west of Amana in Iowa County. At about 5:30 p.m. I spotted two loons about 400 yards out in the water. The two birds were swimming together and as they slowly moved closer to shore it was clear that one bird was a Common Loon (*Gavia immer*). The second was somewhat smaller and with a 20X scope the following details were noted: dark and straight bill, throat and lower cheek area appeared solid black with a sharp delineation between the dark throat and a white breast. The top and back of the head and the back of the upper neck were solid gray in color. The back of the bird was black with four patches of white flecking on the back. There was one horizontal patch of flecking above each folded wing and two smaller patches in the middle of the back.

I quickly called Lanny Haldy of East Amana and Mike and Carol Newlon of Iowa City. Upon arrival, they confirmed that the bird was an Arctic Loon (*Gavia arctica*) in full breeding plumage. The bird continued to swim slowly in company with the Common Loon thus providing an excellent plumage and size comparison. Both loons occasionally dove briefly and rode in the water with heads tucked under their wings.

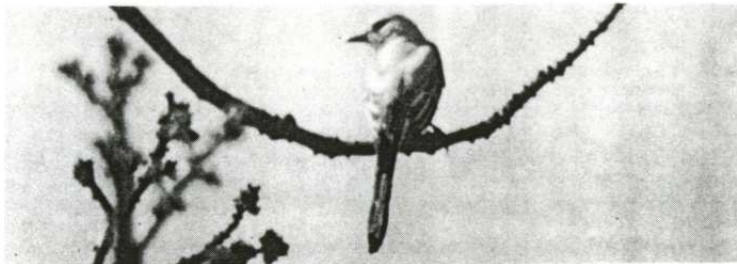
Tom Kent and Jim Sandrock arrived from Iowa City to view the bird and Tom Shires later had a very close view as the two loons continued to drift toward the shore of the lake. Another group from Iowa City glimpsed the bird through the fog the next morning. As they drove around the lake for a closer look, they spied two loons winging their way toward the horizon.

The normal range of the Arctic Loon in winter is along the Pacific Coast from southern Alaska to northwest Mexico. It strays casually to the Atlantic coast and is accidental in the inland states. There are fewer than a dozen previous records in Iowa. Most of the sightings in Iowa and surrounding states have been in the fall. -- CARL J. BENDORF, 825 7th Ave., Iowa City.

Immature Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Amana -- On April 26, 1981, Lanny Haldy, Joan Sniewzewski, and I were birding several miles east of East Amana in northeast Iowa County. At approximately 1 p.m. we drove down a dirt road next to a pasture area with scattered trees. We were hoping we might find a mockingbird and when we spotted a slim gray long-tailed bird on the wire fence we thought we had found one. But, a quick second glance revealed this bird to be one none of us had previously seen.

As we trained a 20X scope on the bird we observed a slender graceful body about the size of a catbird. The bill was dark and straight and of medium size. The throat, breast, and belly were white and without any markings. The head and back were solid gray, the wings were blackish, and the dark tail was as long as the body of the bird itself. When the wings were raised, the bird showed pale scarlet or crimson wing linings. Consultation with our field guides, especially Robbins, indicated that this bird was an immature Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Muscivora forficata*). The possibility that this was a Western Kingbird was eliminated by the length of the tail and the scarlet wing linings. An adult scissor-tail should have had an even longer tail and some indication of scarlet or red near the shoulder of the folded wing.

We raced to the nearest phone and within sixty minutes Randy Graesser and Marcia Schutterle of East Amana, and Tom Kent, Tom Shires, and Rick Hollis of



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, East Amana, Iowa

Photo by Tom Kent

Iowa City had all arrived on the scene. Everyone achieved very good views of the bird as it sallied forth in typical flycatcher fashion from various perches. On several occasions, the scissor-tail would suddenly dart 50-75 feet straight up in the air, catch a large insect, and then swoop downward as two long black tailfeathers with white outer edges "scissored" open and shut.

Several other birders found the bird later that same day and very early the next morning, but it has not been seen since.

The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is a casual species in Iowa and has been reported in approximately half of the last 20 years with one reported nesting near Ames in 1979 (Burns, Thierman and Zeletel).

Literature cites

Burns, G., Thierman, A., and Zeletel, H. 1979. The first nesting of Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in Iowa, *Iowa Bird Life* 49:77-78.

CARL J. BENDORF, 825 7th Ave., Iowa City.

BOOK REVIEWS

Harper & Row's Complete Field Guide to N. Am. Wildlife -- Henry H. Collins (Eastern Vol.) and Jay E. Ransom (Western Vol.) -- Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., N.Y. -- 824 p., 110 plates (E.) and 928 p., 129 plates (W.) -- 1981 -- \$12.95 each vol., flexible cover, \$17.50, hard cover.

These two books are an update of Collins's *Complete Field Guide to American Wildlife* published in 1961. This time consultants were engaged in rework the earlier material. Lester Short worked on the bird sections and five artists produced the bird plates. A description, illustration, voice data and range are provided for each species, and for some, habits, similarities, eggs, and remarks are included. About half of the plates are in color. In summary the books seem in bringing together under one cover a broad mass of identification information for all naturalists. ed.

Stories About Birds and Bird Watchers from Bird Watcher's Digest -- Mary B. Bowers, ed. -- Atheneum, N.Y. -- 234 p. -- 1981 -- \$12.95.

This collection of 38 articles spans the subject of birds from specific individual species accounts to dedicated listing stories. If you have been a subscriber to *Bird Watcher's Digest* you will know the *Reader's Digest* type approach. The book would make a nice gift for a casual bird watcher looking to expand their horizons. ed.

Yellow-legs -- John Janovy, Jr. -- St. Martin's Press, N.Y. -- 192 p. -- 1980 -- \$9.95.

Janovy is a nature writer who uses a "stream of consciousness style" of sorts. He hits many key points of the struggle between nature and development. He

1. Species ARCTIC LOON 2. Number 1
 3. Location Amana Lake-- near Amana, IA. in Iowa County
 4. Date 4-28 1981 5. Time bird seen: 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM

6. Description of size, shape, and color pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what was actually seen in the field).

SEE BACK SIDE

7. Description of voice, if heard:

8. Description of behavior: Bird was slowly swimming in water in company with Common Loon. Very similiar behavior. Occasionally dove momentarily. Tucked head under wing and rested for intermittent periods.

9. Habitat--general: On water of Amana Lake. Man-made lake and very shallow-specific: less than four feet anywhere.

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6,7,&8. Explain. Common Loon is eliminated. No neck ring was present. Distinct lighter color on back of head and upper neck is not like solid head color of loon. Red-throated Loon is eliminated by presence of distinctive light patches on back.

11. Distance (how measured). At first about 400 yards away, later moved to about 200 yards. estimated with reference to a topographic map.

12. Light conditions (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): gray uniform sky. No real effect of sun position. No heat waves.

13. Optical equipment: 20-45X scope and 7X35 binos

14. Previous experience with this and similar species: No previous experience

15. Other observers: Lanny Halcy, Mike and Carol Newlon, Tom Kent, Tom Shires, Jim Sandrock.

16. Did other agree with your identification? Yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: Cal and Bernie Knight, Tom Staudt, and James Huntington all of Iowa City.

18. Books, illustrations, and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: Robbins and Peterson both compelled me to check for the shape of the bill and the configuration and location of the white patches on the back. The gray on the back of the head was shown very clearly in both guides.

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? five hours

Your Name Carl J. Bendorf Address 825 7th Ave.

Date 5-28-81 City, State: Iowa City, IA. 52240

6. Same general shape of Common Loon swimming ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ right next to bird. Somewhat smaller in size. Bill was dark and straight. Top and back of head and upper back of neck was gray. Throat and lower face and cheek area was solid black. Sharp delineation between black throat and white breast. Breast and chest white. Sides and back of bird was black. ~~Two~~ Four white patches on the black back. One horizontal narrow white patch above each folded wing and two smaller similar patches more towards the middle of the back. These patches were actually made up of a collection of small white flecks which, on the black background of the back, looked like a white patch.

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

81-02 (12)

1. Species Arctic loon 2. Number 1
3. Location Amawa Lake, Amawa, Iowa Co., IA.
4. Date: 9-28-81 5. Time Bird Seen: _____ to _____
seen for 1/2 hr.

6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):

Generally similar in build to the common loon with which it associated, but slightly smaller and with a smaller straighter bill.

Head + nape pale grey, throat black, breast pale. Back + sides dark with two patches of pale spots separated by a dark diagonal bar. These spots larger than spots on back of common loon. Side of face dark.

When flapped wings, wing-linings pale with narrow dark anterior + posterior borders.



curves of pale spots
sep. by dark diagonal bar
(tracing of original in
field notes)

7. Description of voice, if heard: —

8. Description of behavior: associated with 1 common loon; swam, slept with head in back feathers, rolled onto side to preen belly.

9. Habitat - general: lake set in river valley, surrounded by farmlands, forest.

specific: large lake

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:
build definitely indicates loon. head/throat pattern eliminates all but this species.

11. Distance (how measured)?
150 - 300 yds (est)

12. Optical equipment:
8x40 binocs
25-90x60 scope
60x150 scope

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):
light rather dim, cloudy evening, sun at 95° angle to obs-bird line

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: have seen all N. Am. loons in MA, WA, AK.

15. Other observers: C.S. Newlon, T. Kent., C. Bendorf, J. Sandrock.

16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: C. Bendorf sighting

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?
Notes made on spot - transcribed 5-23-81

Signature: Michael Newlon Address: 408 Wales St

Date: July 23 1981 City, State: Iowa City IA 52240

1. Species Arctic Loon 2. Number 1
3. Location Amana L., Iowa County, IA
4. Date: 28 Apr 1981 5. Time Bird Seen: 6:55 to 7:20

6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):

Same size as Common Loon with it. Back of head and neck light fluffy gray. Throat quite black with black extending up in front of eye. Breast bright white. Wing black with fine flecking on upper surface between wing and back. No white on wing below. Head shape slightly different than Common Loon. The Common Loon by contrast had a dark head, a light ring around the neck, a white breast. The wings had a lot of horizontal white streaks on upper edge and back separated by a dark area from more white flecking on the lower part of the wing. Both Arctic and Common had dark thick, non-upturned bills.

7. Description of voice, if heard: N/A

8. Description of behavior: swimming, both loons in same field most of time.

9. Habitat - general: Large flat lake (shallow, open)

specific: Seen from north and west sides of Amana L.

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:
as above

11. Distance (how measured)?

100 yards, closest (est)

12. Optical equipment:

20x Bushnell scope, Celestron 750mm, Questar

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):

Overcast

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:

seen in Washington and Alaska

15. Other observers:

Carl Bendorf, Mike and Carol Newton, James Sandrock

16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:

Thomas Shires

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:

none

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?

Dictated at end of observation. Copied 2 hours later

Signature: Thomas H Kent Address: 211 Richards St

Date: 28 Apr 1981 City, State: Iowa City IA 52240