

Pacific Loon
22 Oct 1989
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA
S. Dinsmore, Myers, Johnson, Cummins
through 10/29; IBL 60:11, 61:84

Record Number: 89-23
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Steve Dinsmore, 22 Oct
Bob Myers, 22 Oct
Ann Johnson, 24 Oct
Ray Cummins, 29 Oct

PHOTOGRAPHS

Reid Allen, 22 Oct, P-0364

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 60:11
Records Committee: IBL 61:84

VOTE: 6 A-D, 1 abstain.

A-D: Good description for basic plumage adult or juvenile. If bird seen by Cummins on 29 Oct was same as bird described by others it is interesting that Cummins reported seeing a chinstrap not seen by others.

A-D: Despite general inability to see chin strap, this bird was convincingly documented by all observers. Key features including dividing line between throat and nape, general comparisons to nearby Common Loon, back color darker than nape which was lighter brown, and bill description. Nice, and probably diagnostic, description of diving behavior by Dinsmore.

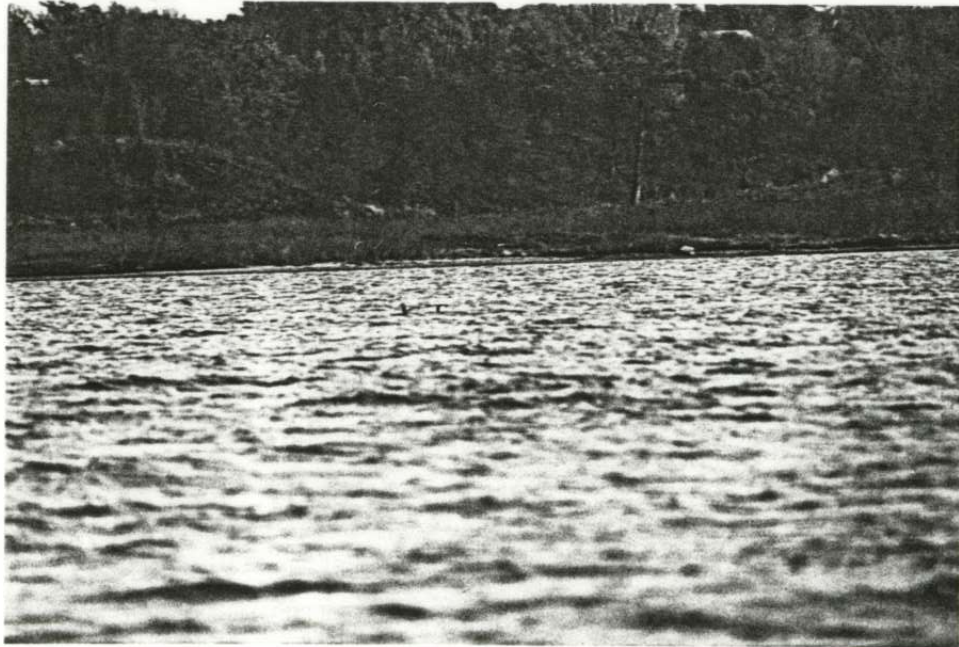
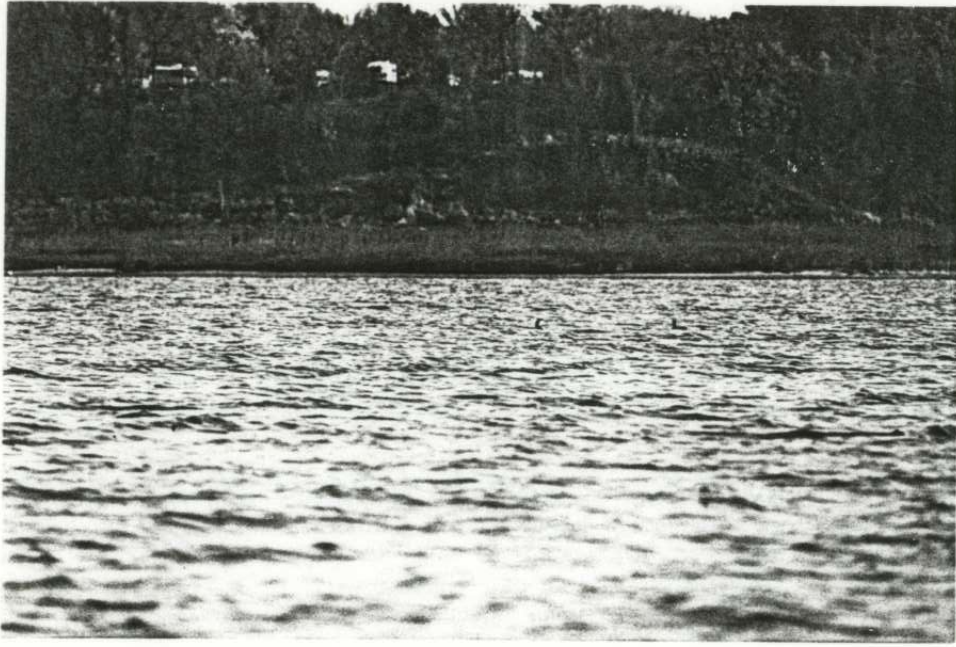
A-D: All documentations consistent except Cummins. The bird he describes appears to have a chin strap while others do not. This could possibly be a different bird than those described in the other documentations. All also consistent for Pacific Loon.

A-D: Good descriptions of the loon.

A-D: I believe Cummins bird was different to first 3 documentations (Oct 22-24) as chinstrap was seen even at 500 yds whereas Oct 22-24 bird had no discernible chinstrap. Should records be separated, or does it matter?

REVIEW OF PHOTOS (at meeting of 29 July 1990): Image in 3 prints small and inconclusive. No action taken.

89-2-3



DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species? Pacific Loon

How Many? 1 winter adult

Location? Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co. - off dam and Cherry Glen Rec. Area

Habitat? large reservoir

Date? 22 Oct 1989 - also 23, 29 Oct 1989

Time? 7:46-11:56 a.m.

Observers Name and address: Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames

Others who saw bird: Eugene & Eloise Armstrong, Reid & Pam Allen, Bob Myers

Description of bird: At 7:46 a.m. while birding from the Saylorville dam, I noticed a loon flying down the lake. After a couple of minutes the loon landed a hundred yards off the dam in front of me. The bird was easily identifiable as a loon because of the long, slender body, low profile in the water, long neck, and black-and-white color pattern.

For the next 4 hours I studied the bird from the dam and approached closer with my boat. The loon was an estimated 20% smaller than a Common Loon with which it sometimes associated. The back and wings were black. The underparts were white, as seen in flight. The head pattern was what set this bird apart from other loons. The back of the neck and crown were very pale gray, much lighter than the rest of the upperparts. The front of the neck and throat were white. This bird did not have an evident chinstrap. Some white extended to around each eye on the cheek. A darker line clearly separated the darker back of the neck from the white foreneck. The head had a very rounded appearance when compared to the Common Loon. The eye was dark. The bill was dark, straight, and at least 1/3 shorter than the bill of the Common Loon. The Pacific Loon also had a unique diving method, arching its neck straight up in the air before plunging headfirst into the water.

Similar species and how eliminated: The combination of smaller size, short, straight bill, neck pattern, and contrast between the head and rest of the upperparts eliminates other loons.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were excellent with the sun to my rear. Estimated viewing distance was often as close as 75 yards. I used a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope and Bushnell 7x35 binoculars.

Previous experience with species: I have seen four other Pacific Loons in Iowa and am very familiar with Common and Red-throated loons.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

89-23

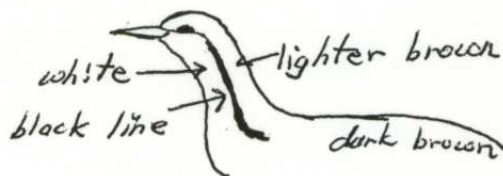
How long before field notes were made? during initial observations of the bird and updated later

How long before this form was completed? 10 hours

What species? Pacific Loon How many? 1Location? Saylorville Res.Type of habitat? waterWhen? date(s): Oct. 22, 1989 time: 10:45am to 11:30amWho? your name and address: Bob Myers RR2, Box 153 Perry, Iowa 50220others with you: Steve Dinsmore, Becky Myers (daughter)others before or after you: Genet + Eloise Armstrong, Pam + Reed Allen

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.

1. Small loon - as compared with common loon nearby.
2. Short - thin - very pointed bill.
3. Smooth rounded head - no forehead bump like in common loon.
4. Back was very dark brown - almost blackish.
5. Back of neck was much lighter brown - very noticeably lighter than back.
6. From the side the neck had a black dividing line ~~from the~~ which divided the white throat and front of neck from the light to medium brown back of neck



Similar species and how eliminated:

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

Closest we could get was about 100', by boat. - used 10x40 binocs - good lightPrevious experience with species and similar ones: Have seen one before at same location several years ago.References and persons consulted before writing description: NoneHow long before field notes made? None this form completed? same day

DOCUMENTATION FORM
Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

89-23

Species: Pacific Loon

Location: Cherry Glen boat ramp, Saylorville Lake, Polk County, IA

Habitat: Man-made reservoir

Date(s): 10/24/89

Time: 11:30 am to 11:50 am

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

Other observers: none

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 behavior and voice.

I immediately recognized this bird as a loon because of its relatively stout neck, not much thinner than the head, and its posture of sitting low in the water. The first impression was of a bird which was gray above and white below. A common loon was nearby and this loon was discernibly smaller and less bulky. The bill was thinner than the common's and very straight. Lighting precluded picking up much color, but the bill was lighter than the body. Lighting and heat waves also made it difficult to determine subtle shading from head to back as all looked gray. The most distinguishing field mark, other than size, was the crispness of separation from gray to white - reminiscent of a western grebe. It was almost as if a line had been drawn from the top of the bill, through the eye and curving around to follow the neck down to the water line. The bird preened for awhile but I could not see a chinstrap. After preening it started diving and began surfacing further out in the lake making further observations more difficult.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Immature cormorants were eliminated by neck, bill and tail shapes

Grebes eliminated by head/neck shape

Red-throated loon eliminated because of straight bill and level-headed posture

Common loon, even small ones, eliminated by size, thinner bill, and distinct clean-cut white to gray on face and neck, even cleaner than a first year common

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? NA

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: Sun was high and to the left. Lighting was not optimum from the lower parking lot because of reflections off the water. Even though I was further away, the upper lot provided the best views. The bird was an estimated 150 to 500 yards away and was observed through a scope at 25x - 60x. Heat waves became a problem as the bird moved further out into the lake.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Life bird. Considerable experience with common loons in basic plumage

References and persons consulted before writing description:

All major field guides and Harrison's Seabirds were consulted prior to completion of this documentation. Basic description was written during and immediately after observation with NGS guide used during observation

How long before field notes made? immediately How long before this form completed? 10 hours

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

89-23

What Species? Pacific Loon How Many? 1

Location? Saylorville Res. Polk Co.

Type of Habitat? middle of lake

When? date(s): October 29th, 1989 time: 10:30am to 10:50am/approx.

Who? your name and address: Ray Cummins Centerville, Iowa 609 S. Main St

Others with you: Steve Dinsmore Centerville IA 52544

Others before or after you _____

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, undertail, legs, & feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

The bird is around 500yds away about max distance for me to identify anything, but we did get to study this bird in good light. The body length was the same as Mallards at the same distance away. I noted the following features: 1) bill appeared small compared to the head, 2) Head color at least at this distance appeared brownish compared to blackish-gray back, 3) the bird appeared to consistently have a chin strap which was the color of the back, 4) the chin cause the head to appear to be pointed slight up, but the bill was held straight, 5) the cheek was pure white.

Similar species: how eliminated: Other waterfowl by the low profile, short thick neck, and white black pattern. Common Loon by light back of neck compared to body, bill size, and white cheek. Red-throated Loon by bill posture and shape, plus chin strap.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification? no
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. Good light with sun at back from an estimated 500yds. Equipment was a 20x-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: none, seen Common loons the same day.

Reference and persons consulted before writing description: NGS was used during observation to insure all field marks were sighted.

How long before field notes made? immediately This form completed? 18 days