

Red-throated Loon

Record Number: 85-12

30 Nov 1985

Classification: A-D

Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA

\*S. Dinsmore, \*R. Myers

IBL 55:121; 56:43, Dinsmore 1986 (56:62)

#### DOCUMENTATIONS

Steve Dinsmore

Robert K. Myers

#### REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 55:121

Records Committee: IBL 56:43

Dinsmore, S. 1986. Red-throated Loon at Saylorville Reservoir. Iowa Bird Life 56:62.

#### VOTE: 7-III

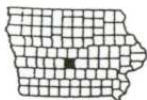
III, size and bill diagnostic.

III, If every body of water was covered as well as Steve covers Saylorville, we might make many changes as to several species status.

III, If I didn't know observers, I'd have some doubts:-ID based almost solely on upturned bill, which can be misleading. The "upturn" is due to the shape of the lower mandible. Need info on presence/absence of "chinstrap," color of crown vs back. Sketch looks like Pacific Loon to me.

✓  
RED-THROATED LOON  
AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

STEVE DINSMORE



At 11:00 a.m. on 30 November 1985, while birding the Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County, I noticed a small loon swimming with several Common Goldeneyes in a narrow strip of open water. I watched the bird until 1:00 p.m. The bird was slightly larger than a Common Goldeneye, but much slimmer. The throat and underparts were all white. The back was black with some white spots visible on the sides. The nape and crown were also black. This black color included the eye, with the remainder of the cheek being white. The forehead was smooth and rounded, not abrupt like that of a Common Loon. The bill was dark, thin, short, and slightly upturned. The bird also held its head tilted slightly upward. From these marks, I identified the bird as a winter-plumaged Red-throated Loon. I then notified Bob Myers of Perry, and we watched the bird until 2:15 p.m. To my knowledge, the bird was not found on later dates. This represents the fifth sighting of a Red-throated Loon in Iowa.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames IA 50010

RED-NECKED GREBES IN CENTRAL IOWA

STEVE DINSMORE



At 12:30 p.m., on 19 October 1985, while scanning a quarry north of Ames, I noticed four large, grebe-like birds swimming together near a single Ruddy Duck. The birds were slightly larger than the Ruddy Duck, with much larger heads and longer necks. All of the birds had white underparts, a white throat, and a dark back and crown. One bird still had quite a bit of rufous on its neck and shoulders. Another bird was similar to the first bird, but lacked the rufous color. The remaining two birds were probably young birds, for they each had some striping on the cheek. In other respects, they were similar to the second bird. From these marks I identified the birds as a family group of Red-necked Grebes. This record represents the largest number of Red-necked Grebes ever seen in Iowa and the first family group ever reported. These birds were seen later that afternoon by Jim Dinsmore, Erik Munson, and Paul Martsching, all of Ames, and by Hank and Linda Zaletel of Colo. The birds were not present the next morning.

The next morning, 20 October, Jim Sinclair and I found a winter-plumaged Red-necked Grebe at Big Creek S.P. in Polk County. After we had watched it for several minutes, the bird suddenly flew, and we were able to see the diagnostic white patches on the leading and trailing edges of the wing.

On 21 October, Bob Myers of Perry found another winter-plumaged Red-necked Grebe near the marina at Saylorville Reservoir. It is possible that this was the same bird that was seen at Big Creek S.P., since these locations are less than two miles apart.

On 26 October, Bob Myers and Francis Moore found yet another winter-plumaged Red-necked Grebe above the dam of the Saylorville Reservoir. This was probably a different bird from the one found earlier near the marina—there were very few birds at the reservoir on the 23 October, but many new birds had arrived by 26 October. This bird had most likely arrived with the latter birds.

On 3 November, Dennis Thompson and I found two more winter-plumaged Red-necked Grebes above the dam of the Saylorville Reservoir. These were probably different birds, for very few birds were present on 1 November, but lots of birds were present on 3 November.

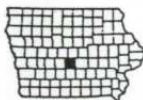
Finally, on 7 November, I found another Red-necked Grebe at the Cherry Glen Recreation Area on the east side of the Saylorville Reservoir. As I watched the bird at a distance of about 100 feet, I noticed that the bird still had some rufous on its neck. I am sure that this bird represents a different individual, since none of the other Saylorville birds showed any rufous coloration.

I find it interesting that these six records of Red-necked Grebes in central Iowa almost double the existing fall records for this species in Iowa. Increased observer awareness and the increasing use of the large reservoirs by water birds, especially loons and grebes, probably account for the numerous reports of Red-necked Grebes this fall. In summary, I believe that there were eight or nine different Red-necked Grebes observed in central Iowa this fall.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames IA 50010

RED KNOT IN POLK COUNTY

STEVE DINSMORE



At 4 p.m. on 19 September 1985 I found a Red Knot at Fisher's Lake in Polk County. The large size as compared to a Sanderling, plump appearance, gray back, white underparts, and short, black, slightly drooped bill led to the identification. The bird also showed a prominent white wing stripe when it raised its wings. Light edging on the scapulars indicated that the bird was in juvenal plumage. The bird was similar to the bird I found at Hendrickson Marsh in 1984. While under observation, the bird fed continuously with several Long-billed Dowitchers. After these initial observations, I contacted Bob Myers of Perry, and we watched the bird until sunset. Eugene and Eloise Armstrong found the bird early the next morning, but Jim Sinclair could not locate the bird later that afternoon. This represents the fifth sighting of Red Knot in Iowa and the third in two years. All of the recent records fall between 10 and 19 September.

4024 Arkansas Drive, Ames, IA 50010



## DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Red-throated loon How many? 1Location? Saybroville Reservoir, Polk Co.Type of habitat? open patch of water on large, frozen reservoirWhen? date(s): 30 Nov, 1985 time: 11:00 AM to ~~1:00 PM~~ 1:45 PM to 2:15 PMWho? your name and address: Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames IA 50010others with you: Bob Myers, Perry

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, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

The long, thin body, black and white coloration, ~~the~~<sup>thin</sup> pointed bill, and body posture identified the bird as a winter-plumaged loon.

The bird was not too much larger than the Mallards and Common Goldeneyes that were swimming nearby. The throat and underparts were white. The crown, nape, and back were black, except for a few white spots on the sides of the back. The black on the crown extended down to just above the eye, forming a clear-cut line across the cheek between the white and black colors. The bill was short, dark, rather thin, and definitely upturned. The forehead was flat, not steep and abrupt. The bird also held its head tilted slightly upward.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Common loon eliminated by overall size, bill shape and size, and white spots on back.  
Arctic loon eliminated by bill shape and black of crown not reaching eye.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NoIf yes, explain: ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:  
Light was ok. except for some reduced visibility due to snow. Estimated viewing distance of 300+ yards. I used a BIL 20-40x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

The only Red-throated loon I have ever seen was the one at Cedar Lake in Spring 1984.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

NGS Field Guide to Birds of North America

How long before field notes made? immediately this form completed? 6 hours

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

What species? Red-throated Loon (Gavia stellata) How many? 1

Location? Saylorville Reservoir - Polk Co.

Type of habitat? One few remaining open (ice-free) pools - many ducks, gulls + some geese were also in these pools

When? date(s): Nov. 30, 1985 time: 1:50 P.M. to 2:30 P.M. we left  
bird stayed

Who? your name and address: Bob Myers R.R. 2, Box 153 Perry, Iowa 50220

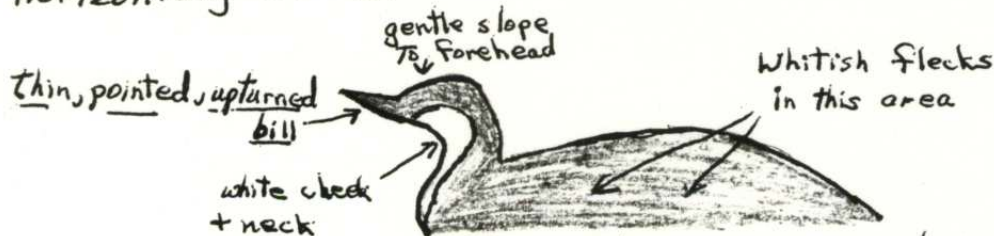
Others with you: Steve Dinsmore

Others before or after you: Steve found bird and phoned me.

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.

Bird was a very small loon being a little larger than the Common Goldeneyes swimming with it and almost same size as Mallards in same pool. Basically coloration was dark <sup>(grayish)</sup> above + whitish below. We could not see white spots on back but with 40x we could see some whitish specks ~~about~~ on bird's side about 1/2 way up from water line. The slope of the forehead did not seem as steep as typically on Common loon. The bill was very slender and seemed quite short ( $\frac{2}{3}$  of head length) and was very pointed. The bill was definitely upturned - it seemed to point at 10:00 while bird was looking horizontally (9:00 <sup>o'clock</sup>). The cheek <sup>area</sup> and throat were white. A small slim loon

that almost reminded me of a <sup>small</sup> Western Grebe with a short neck and shorter upturned bill.



Similar species and how eliminated: The small size and slender angled-up bill eliminate the Common + Pacific loons.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: Overcast - light snow and occasional freezing rain - Before freezing drizzle began viewing wasn't too bad. Distance = 150-200 yd. - used 25x + 40x scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I saw the bird (almost identical to this one) that was in Cedar Rapids several years ago.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

How long before field notes made? \_\_\_\_\_ this form completed? 1 day

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240