

Pacific Loon

1 Nov 1986

Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA

*S. Dinsmore

IBL 57:13, 77, Dinsmore 1987

Record Number: 86-07

Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Steve Dinsmore

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 57:13

Dinsmore, S. 1987. Pacific Loons at Saylorville Reservoir. IBL 57:59-60.

Records Committee: IBL 57:77, 64:70

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

Tom Kent to Records Committee, 13 Sep 1993

LETTER AND COMMENTS

Ronald E. Goetz to Thomas H. Kent, 1 Apr 1988,

VOTE: 6-III, 1-V

III, Excellent description including key features of size comparison, bill shape, neck coloration, and necklace or chinstrap.

V, He only described the bird as slightly smaller and slimmer than the Common Loon, should be smaller than that. Crown and nape color are consistent with Pacific Loon as is a light gray necklace across the throat. The "necklace" could be an extension of the darker area of the neck as it wraps around on the upper neck. I have seen a few basic plumage Common Loons that appear to have a "necklace" across the upper throat. This was nearly a smudge across the upper throat that extended from the side of the neck. There was not a description of the tan-colored look of the head and neck, a diagnostic mark in basic plumage of this species.

III, The chinstrap, when present, is diagnostic for Pacific Loon.

III, Chinstrap diagnostic. Other features consistent with Pacific Loon.

III, I am assuming the bird is Pacific rather than Arctic Loon, but I don't know how to tell.

Same is true for the next two sightings.

REVOTE (by mail): 6-III, 1-IV

III, Bird was "in company" with Common Loon. This allowed comparison and key field marks were seen.

III, I think the description fits and the observer seemed to be aware of the pitfalls.

IV, Size comparison to Common Loons still bothers me, there should be more size divergence between the two species, at least those individuals of Pacific Loon that I have seen, 15 to 20 different birds. Tri-coloration of the neck was not mentioned. The necklace as described is important but NGS only described it as distinctive, not diagnostic. I have seen some small Common Loons that have a mark resembling what is described in this documentation as a necklace. A drawing would be helpful. Some important details were left out. I will come up to a VI [sic] on this record but without more details or a drawing I can go no further.

III, Some common loons do show a smudge on the throat but I wouldn't call it a "necklace" as described against a white chin and throat. The chin strap in combination with other marks indicate a Pacific loon.

III, Doubts about "neckstrap" unfounded, I believe. Rest of description is good.

REVOTE (1993): 2 A-D, 5 NA

A-D, I do not have enough evidence to not accept. Only one man's opinion.

NA, Discrepancies between the documentation and later article in IBL raise some doubts.

NA, In view of the outside review and the inconsistency in descriptions, this record should be rejected.

NA, Based on conflicts in documentation and article and outside review.

86-07

13 September 1993

To: IOU Records Committee
From: Tom Kent
Re: Request for reconsideration of record

Record: 86-07 A-D, Pacific Loon, 1 Nov 1986

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. His opinion differs from the previous action of the committee, who had not seen his review.

86-07

909 S. Gore Ave.
Webster Groves, MO 63119

1 April 1988

Thomas H. Kent
211 Richards Street
Iowa City, IA 52240

Dear Tom:

Thank you very much for the mass of material on loons. It must have taken some time to put together, and I am very grateful. I have enclosed my comments on the records, at least on those for which some description was provided.

For the Pacific/Arctic records, my comments will show some differences with prior judgments. First, the 8 Dec 1948 specimen seems to me to warrant rejection because of a contradiction in the description (called an immature, while the description can only pertain to an adult), and otherwise not enough detail. Has an attempt been made to locate this specimen? Second, I think that 81-02 can safely be called a Pacific rather than Pacific/Arctic. Third, I was not pleased with the descriptions of 86-07, 86-08, 86-09 and 86-19: my judgement is that the evidence does not indicate that more than one individual Pacific (or, realistically, Pacific/Arctic) was there, and the documentation for the first sighting in particular is not acceptable. For each of these sightings, there are some confusing and/or contradictory points, and reliance on the first edition of the National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America may have caused some further inaccuracies (see below). Finally, I feel quite confident that 87-18 was not a Pacific Loon (most likely a juvenile Red-throated).

I don't think there are any surprises in my analyses of the Red-throated Loon records.

As for the identification of Pacific Loons, some information can be gathered from the enclosed comments. I have also enclosed a poor copy of a sketch I made of the heads of two fresh juvenile Pacific Loon specimens, which may help. Although I do not wish to go into too much detail here, Arctic Loons can be best separated from Pacific by the flank patterning: the former species apparently always has the white coming up high on the sides at the rear end of the bird (above the thigh) (reminiscent of a Violet-Green Swallow), and often shows white along the entire waterline when the birds are riding high on the water. This pattern is apparently never shown by the Pacific Loon. (See paintings in Harrison, Seabirds, 1985 (revised edition), and photos in Harrison, A Field Guide to Seabirds of the World, 1987).

An article on loon identification is going to appear in Birding shortly, and I will otherwise supply you with a copy of my manuscript when it is completed. In the meantime, I would urge observers to be very careful in studying the back pattern; pattern of light and dark around the eye and near the base of the upper mandible; the coloration of the lower flanks; the bill coloration; and especially the patterning of the side and front of the neck for any unusual loon they encounter. Much of this detail is visible only at close range, but it is extremely valuable in identification of loons. Also, loons are most often seen at a distance only, and it is important to keep in mind that many of the relevant features shown in the field guides can disappear under these circumstances. Thus the apparent absence of certain markings (e.g., the spotting on the back of a Red-throated Loon) means rather little unless the bird is relatively close.

The question of small Common Loons is an interesting one. I have found no specimens or references showing actual overlap in the measurements of the bills of Common and Pacific Loons, but there is considerable variation in Common Loons, and these differences are sometimes great enough to be appreciable in the field if two birds from either extreme are in close proximity. Juvenile Pacific are relatively easy to separate from Common Loon once one knows the right field marks, but identification of basic adult Pacifics is quite tricky, since it is based largely on the absence of several characters of Common Loons (Pacifics have no white indentation into the side neck, no spotting on the back, no whitish above the eye), combined with the presence of a few characters which are very difficult to see (the chinstrap and the white spotting on wing coverts). Although experienced observers can identify Pacifics at great distances based only on silhouette and apparent size (with quite near 100% accuracy), I feel that Pacific Loon remains a rare enough bird in the midwest that I would not sanction identifications based entirely on these subjective features. In most situations observers should still be able to obtain enough plumage detail to support their identification.

Finally, I have to say something about the unfortunate "Arctic Loon" illustrations in the first edition of the NGS Guide, since observers apparently picked up some erroneous ideas from these paintings (arguably the most egregious error in the book). First, the "winter" bird is not in any way a basic plumaged adult: if anything, it is just another juvenile. Second, even assuming that both the "winter" and the "immature" drawings are of juveniles, they are still full of errors: the bills are far too dark; the plumage overall is much too pale, especially the forehead and loreal area; and the dark stripe along the side of the neck never extends to the eye (let alone widening above the eye, as shown). The shape of the heads and bills also misses the mark in my opinion. Fortunately, these paintings have been almost completely corrected in the new edition (1987). The "winter" bird is now a legitimate basic plumaged adult (although the spotting in the wing coverts isn't completely accurate), and the "immature" shows the correct patterning for a late fall juvenile: the nape of this bird could have been paler, and most juveniles do show more of a chinstrap than the illustration (fortunately), but I otherwise have no complaint with the painting. Notice that the bill colors of both birds have been corrected.

Some of the 1986 sightings contain details which in my opinion almost had to come from the first edition NGS Guide: dark bills, side neck stripes going to the eye (or even the base of the bill), etc. Of course we all tend to see only what we look for, but such details do not strengthen the case for these sightings.

By the way, you should notice some other improvements in the loon illustrations in the second edition: the winter Common is now a very good basic adult (instead of a bad juvenile); the "immature" Red-throated is greatly improved; and the "immature" Yellow-billed has been improved (but still does not show the right head patterning; it was formerly closer to a basic adult).

Well, that will do it for now. Let me know if you have any other questions or comments regarding these records, and thanks again for all the information.

Sincerely,



Ronald E. Goetz

Comments on Iowa Loon Records

I. Pacific/Arctic Loons

1. Specimen UI 10175. As indicated in previous correspondence, this specimen is a juvenile Red-throated Loon.

2. 15 (or 16) Nov 1895. Mississippi R. near Sabula, Clinton Co. J.Giddings, W.Eldridge, C.Hart Merriam. (Giddings 1986; Anderson 1907; Hersey 1917; DuMont 1933; DuMont 1934).

I am not certain yet that the measurements given eliminate *arctica* completely. However, the bird was at least not a Common or Red-throated Loon. Apparently the plumage characters which can support separation of *pacifica* from *arctica* were unknown until very recently and in any case were not described here. This was a young bird, since feathers of upperparts were margined with grayish. I may be able to say more about this bird after I do some research on measurements. Any chance that the specimen still exists?

3. 26 Nov 1899. Mississippi R. near Sabula, Clinton Co. H.J.Giddings. (Anderson 1907).

Almost no detail.

4. Dec 1902. Polk Co. Lester P. Fagan. (DuMont 1931).

No details provided to make judgement from.

5. 8 Dec 1948. Glendale Cemetary, Des Moines, Polk Co. Jack Musgrove. (Musgrove 1949).

Does the State Historical Museum still have this specimen? He says the bird was in immature plumage, but this is not consistent with his description. He states that the back is black with no spotting except on the wings and scapulars. Immature loons of all species except Red-throated have conspicuous wide gray margins to the feathers of the entire upperparts. Hence this bird must be an adult Common or Pacific (or conceivably Arctic) Loon. He also says that there was a distinct brownish-gray band across the throat. Does he mean across the base of the throat (in which case adult Pacific is far less likely than adult Common) or across the top of the throat (i.e., a chinstrap, in which case the bird was a Pacific)? Since size is not described, I would recommend treating the record as hypothetical unless the specimen can be located.

6. 11-12 Dec 1948. Des Moines Res., Polk Co. Berkowitz, Musgrove, Peasley, Stiles. (Berkowitz 1949).

Clearly a diagnostically described Pacific/Arctic Loon, yet it seems quite exceptional that it was in full Definitive Alternate plumage so late. I have data from only three specimens of fall adult Pacific: The Missouri specimen, taken 23 Oct, was in almost complete Definitive Alternate, but shows white feathers molting into the auricular region, the chin, and the throat; one of the Field Museum specimens, taken 16 Nov, was in Definitive Basic except that it showed remnants of the black throat patch and a few of the white squares left on the mantle; and another specimen taken 20 Dec was in Definitive Basic except that it still had a few of the scapular squares (less than the 16 Nov specimen). In addition, I have

descriptions of three Missouri and Illinois sight records from Nov of adults, all of which were apparently entirely in Definitive Basic. In general, the retention of some Alternate scapular feathers into winter (in addition to the always retained Alternate wing coverts) is not exceptional (see Palmer, Handbook of North American Birds, Volume 1), but I found no indication that full Definitive Alternate was ever retained so late. I suppose, however, that with so many observers there is no chance of error?

7. Winter 1951-2. Mississippi R., Scott Co. A.W.Housman. (Baily 1954).

Any chance that the specimen still exists? (Davenport Museum?). No information given to allow judgement.

8. 6-11 (or 20) Jun 1964. Des Moines Res., Polk Co. A.Berkowitz, W.H.Brown. (Brown 1964, Audubon Field Notes 1964).

No details.

9. 22 Oct 1965. Des Moines Res., Polk Co. W.H.Brown. (Brown 1971).

No details.

10. 11 Nov 1970. Des Moines Res., Polk Co. W.H.Brown. (AB 1971).

No details.

11. 6 May--3 Jun 1972. Des Moines Res.-Moffitt L., Polk Co. D.Mooney, W.H.Brown. (Iowa Bird Life 42:37 & 69).

No details.

12. (1981-02) 28-29 Apr 1981. Amana L., Iowa Co. C.Bendorf*, M.Newlon*, T.Kent*, Shires. (Bendorf, 1981).

Fine details of a Definitive Alternate Pacific/Arctic Loon. Bendorf mentions black sides and back of bird (presumably he would have noticed white sides and flank patch), and Kent describes the back of head and neck as light fluffy gray. These points favor Pacific Loon so heavily as to essentially preclude any thought of Arctic Loon.

13. (1985-13) 13 Oct 85. Saylorville Res., Polk Co. B.Engebretsen*. (IBL 56:44).

Not much detail for a fall bird. Identification seemingly based only on bill shape and size, but no Common Loons seen in juxtaposition?

14. (1986-07) 1 Nov 86. Saylorville Res., Polk Co. S.Dinsmore*. (Dinsmore 1987).

Reported as Winter Adult. There are some points that I do not care for here. First, the back is described as medium gray, slightly lighter than a Common Loon. This makes it certain that the bird was not an adult Pacific, which have very dark backs. It does not even sound good for juvenile Pacific, which are still at least as dark as juvenile Common. Second, the crown and nape are described as light gray, lighter than the back. Adults in basic plumage usually have napes slightly paler than back,

but not much paler, and the nape is never pale gray in Definitive Basic plumage. Pale gray would be appropriate for a juvenile. Third, the location of the "necklace" across the throat is not specified (between chin and foreneck or between foreneck and breast?). Fourth, the bill of juvenile (and I think Basic adult) Pacific Loons is clear blue-gray with dark only along the culmen. I do not know what he means by bill entirely dark, but it does not sound right.

The details for this bird given in his article (1987) differ significantly from those in the documentation. The back and sides are now black/brown (rather than medium gray for the back with no description of the sides, as in the documentation), there was "no obvious chinstrap" (and no mention of the "necklace" mentioned in the documentation) and he describes a dark stripe "from just behind the eye to the shoulder" down the side of the neck, a feature entirely lacking in his documentation. These don't even sound like the same birds.

In sum, I don't think there is sufficient evidence presented here to ascertain the bird's identity.

15. (1986-08) 22-23 Nov 1986. Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co. S.Dinsmore*, R.Myers*, L. & B. Padelford*, B.J.Rose.

Based on R.Myers sketch, this bird was almost certainly a juvenile or possibly second Basic Pacific Loon. Notice that he illustrates the dark area on the side of the neck more accurately than the portrayal in the first edition of the National Geographic Guide. Although no markings were noted on the back (except that Dinsmore says "mostly unmarked back") I still would not be surprised if these were missed by the observers (back markings generally almost impossible to see at over 200 yards, very difficult until within 100 yards). If there really were no back markings, then the bird could have been a second Basic rather than a juvenile, since these can show the juvenile head pattern together with wholly blackish back and more prominent chin strap than juveniles. The other documentations are not as specific as Myers' (Padelfords) and/or have some interesting slight contradictions to Myers'. I'm somewhat surprised the observers could see a chinstrap at this distance with certainty, as I have been unable to see one on juveniles unless the bird was within about 100 yards (this could lend support to possibility of second Basic). In any case, the chinstrap is variable, and it may be that this bird was a particularly well-marked juvenile. The chinstrap may be the only feature noted separating the bird from Arctic Loon (although this needs more research).

16. (1986-09) 30 Nov 86. Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co. S.Dinsmore*, P.Martsching*.

Reported as winter adult. The size and shape sounds good, and the lack of white indentation is a good clue, but there are a few problems. First, the description contains an interior contradiction: he says that the back, back of neck, and crown were a uniform black color, but then he later mentions the narrow dark line separating back of neck from white throat, producing the "three-toned neck pattern." I don't see how both of these are possible. Again, adults do not show the three-toned pattern to any notable degree. Generally, adults are more difficult to identify than juveniles, and I don't think I would accept a record of one seen at such a distance. Without better views of the back pattern, determination positively of the presence of a chinstrap, and a better explanation of the neck pattern, I could not accept this sighting.

17. (1986-19) 6 Dec 1986. Saylorville Res., Polk Co. *F.Moore.

Although this sighting is probably correct, the description and especially the drawing are so very much like the First Edition National Geographic Guide illustration that I have to wonder how much influence this had (see cover letter).

I suppose I would be tempted to lump the three sightings 1986-08, 1986-09 and 1986-19 together, depending on the circumstances of the intervening periods. I do not feel that the evidence is strong enough to indicate that more than one Pacific/Arctic Loon occurred at Saylorville Reservoir in 1986. In particular, Dinsmore in his article relies heavily on the relative color of head and neck in deciding that three different birds were involved, but I have watched the same bird give quite different appearances in the colors of the upperparts depending on lighting and distance, and really close views are often necessary to see a chinstrap or the back pattern.

After I wrote the above paragraph, I checked to see how Peterjohn dealt with the situation in American Birds: his solution was to print a record of only one bird (an immature) at Saylorville Reservoir 22-30 Nov 1986 (and lingering to 6 Dec in the subsequent issue). This strikes me as reasonable.

18. (1987-18). 5 & 7 Nov 1987. Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co. S.Dinsmore*, M.Proescholdt*, B.Proescholdt, B.Engebretsen.

This bird is almost certainly not a Pacific Loon, and both descriptions sound much more like a juvenile Red-throated to me. First, the back patterning on a juvenile Red-throated can only be seen at very close range, so it is not surprising to me that Dinsmore thought the back was unmarked (he does not say how far away the bird was in his description). On the other hand, Pacific Loons in molt out of Basic should probably show some of the conspicuous large white squares on the scapulars (these linger longer than any remnant of the throat pattern, according to the evidence available to me). Second, the head as described is perfect for juvenile Red-throated Loon, including the gray "throat patch", contrast between head and back, and lack of any darker patterning within the head. Once again, this description fails to be consistent with adult Pacific Loon, which should always have at least blackish lores and forehead, not mentioned here.

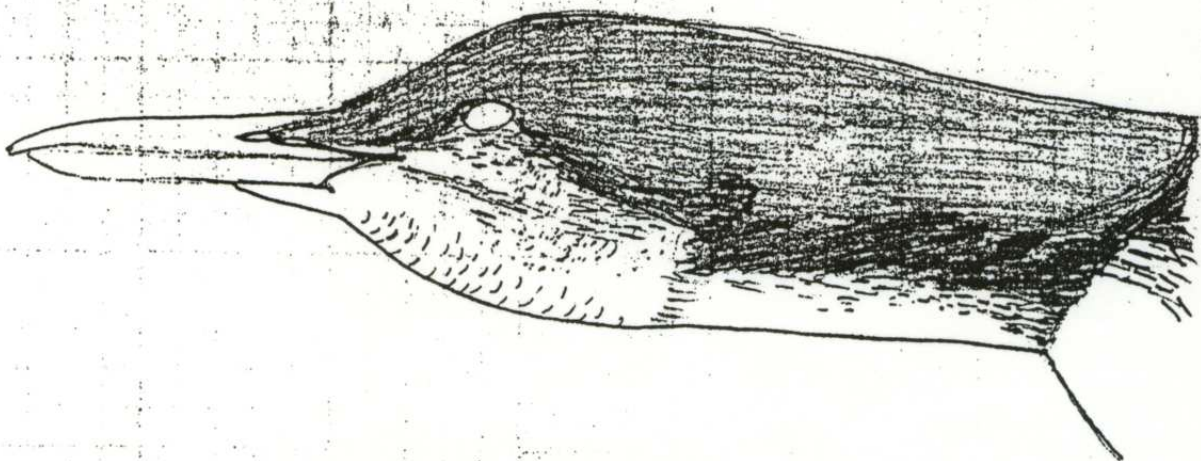
Finally, the posture while actively fishing as described by Proescholdt is very suggestive of Red-throated. I am not bothered by the later disappearance of this posture: See The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds Western Region, photo 171, for an example of the resting posture, and of a bill which looks neither dramatically thin nor upturned.

Is there enough evidence to accept the bird as a Red-throated? Probably not, given the confusion over the bird's identity and the lack of really specific description of the head pattern, back pattern, or bill shape. I think this should probably be thought of as one that got away.

II. Red-throated Loons. (I have listed below only those records for which some description was available. The numbering comes from the list of records sent me by Tom Kent).

FMNH 156015
13 Sep 1929 ♀
Pt. Barrow, AK
Juvenile

Note: relative lack of contrast between forehead and crown; dusky feather tips on chin, streaking on side neck and across base of foreneck, cutting off abruptly in a "choke." "Chinstrap" reminiscent of a 4-day mustache. Blackish at side neck mottled with brownish



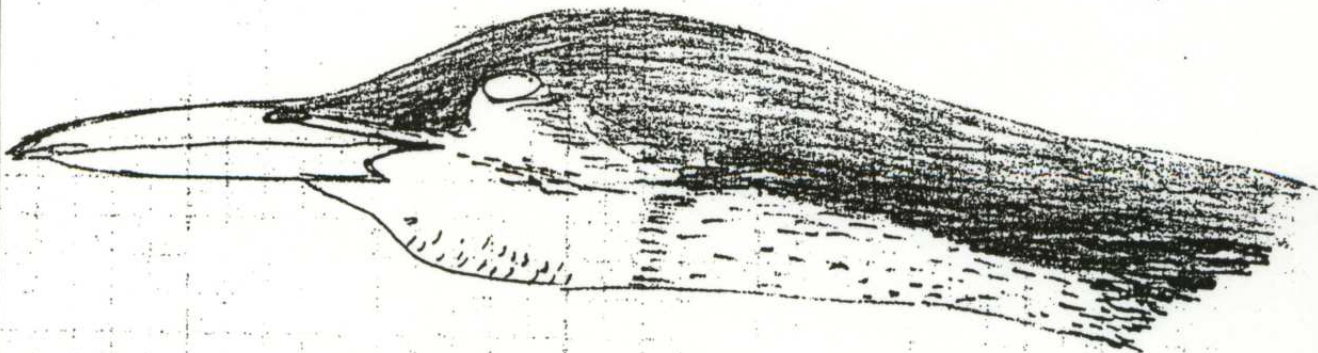
ANSP 37638
16 Sep 1927
Pt. Barrow, AK
Juvenile

Notes: Largely as above, but more brownish, less black in side neck, some spotting (not drawn well) in center of fore neck, and somewhat more darkish area in lores. Head folded over back in specimen so difficult to draw.

Some feathers in lower scapulars with white lateral edges:



Vent band narrow, barely joined in middle.



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

6-07
Summary of Review of an Ornithologic Observation

86-07

by the Records Committee

of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

SPECIES: *Pacific Loon*

DATE SEEN: *11-01-86*

SITE OF OBSERVATION: *Saylorville Res.*

OBSERVERS: *S. Dinsmore*

DATE OF REVIEW: *5-30-87*

METHOD OF REVIEW: *Vote*

CLASSIFICATION OF RECORD: *III*

COMMENTS: *Excellent description with chin strap being a key mark.*

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? Pacific Loon

How Many? 1 winter adult

Location? Prairie Flower Recreation Area, Saylorville Reservoir

Habitat? large body of water

Date? 1 Nov 1986

Time? 3:00-3:20 P.M. and 3:40-4:10 P.M.

Observers Name and address: Steve Dinsmore, Ames

Others who saw bird: none

Description of bird: The bird was with a large group of 300+ Common Loons. The slim body, relatively long neck, slender bill, and overall profile identified the bird as a loon. The bird was slightly smaller and slimmer than the Common Loons. The back was a medium gray and slightly lighter than a Common Loon. The crown and nape were light gray, lighter than the back. The chin and throat were white except for a light gray "necklace" across the throat. The bill was dark (not pale like a Common Loon's bill usually appears), straight, and about 2/3 the length of a Common Loon's bill. Incidentally, the bird was in the company of a small Common Loon which had a larger bill, a darker nape and crown, a noticeable bump on the forehead, and the characteristic white mark at midneck.

Similar species and how eliminated: Common Loon eliminated by the more rounded forehead, the smaller, darker bill, the paler nape and crown, the gray necklace on the throat, and by the overall smaller size (a small Common Loon should still show the features of a normal Common Loon). Red-throated Loon was separated by the straight (not upturned) bill, the dark, unspckled back, and the gray necklace.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Estimated viewing distance was 175-250 yards. I used a Bushnell 20-45x scope. Sky was cloudy and sun was mostly behind me.

Previous experience with species: I have never seen a Pacific Loon, but I have seen both Common and Red-throated Loons in Iowa.

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? 2 days