

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Printed: 11/24/00

Pacific Loon

15 Apr 1997

West Okoboji, Dickinson Co., IA

*Ed Thelen, *Schoenewe, *Harr

P-0554, IBL 67:85, 68:85, Thelen 1998

Record Number: 97-07

Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Ed Thelen, 15362 250th Ave., Spirit Lake [*10/1/97]

Lee A. Schoenewe, 518 W. 4th St., Spencer

Douglas C. Harr, Box 65, Larchwood 51241

PHOTOGRAPH

Ed Thelen, P-0554

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 67:85

Records Committee: IBL 68:85

Thelen, E. 1998. Pacific Loon in Dickinson County. IBL 68:68.

Field Reports 51:875, 1997, P-0554

VOTE: 7 A-P

A-P, Cinnamon hind neck shows well (also feature of Yellow-billed Loon).

midwestern prairie region



KENNETH J. BROCK

It was another cold, late spring for the Middlewestern Prairie Region. Mercifully, conditions were not as harsh as those experienced during spring 1996, but they were far more persistent. March temperatures were near normal, April was cold, and May was colder. Indeed, May was one of the coldest on record, with several correspondents reporting average temperatures more than 10°F below normal. Consequently, vegetation development was retarded throughout the Region, and was 10–15 days later than normal in the northern reaches. In addition, much of the Region was plagued by an insistent north wind throughout almost the entire spring season.

The effect of these inhospitable conditions on the spring flight was predictable; most birds arrived late and many lingered well beyond normal departure dates. In Chicago, Paul Clyne estimated that 22 species fewer than normal had arrived by the end of April, and in Fort Wayne, Indiana, Jim Haw reckoned that 30 species were behind schedule at the same point. To avoid

the persistent headwinds, migrant hawks circumnavigated most of the Region; the only significant flights were recorded in extreme northeastern Ohio.

Consequences of the cold spring were most extreme in the western states, where a late storm dropped two feet of snow in mid-April. Chris Hobbs reported that in northern Missouri hundreds of Killdeer were surprised by the freak blizzard and were able to land only in tire tracks along the roads. In keeping with the “every cloud has a silver lining” spirit, Tom Kent pointed out that Iowa’s first and second White-winged Doves appeared on the heels of the storm, and that snow cover forced hard-to-find Chestnut-collared Longspurs into the plowed roads of northwestern Iowa.

Abbreviations: H.B.S.P. (*Headlands Beach S.P., OH*), L. Cal. (*L. Calumet, Chicago*); Jax.P. (*Jackson Park on the Chicago lakefront*); S.C.R. (*Squaw Creek N.W.R., MO*); R.E.D.A. (*Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area, MO*), Spfld. (*Springfield, IL*).



Five Red-throated Loons were reported across the northern part of the Middlewestern Prairie Region during the season, including this one at Pleasant Creek Lake, Iowa, on May 2, 1997. The extensively white face and thin, upturned bill are obvious in this view. Photograph/T.H. Kent

LOONS TO IBISES

It was a good spring for loons. Five Red-throated Loons were reported across the 4 n. states; one, discovered May 23 at Tampier L., Cook, IL, lingered through June 14 (†MN, †JL, m.ob., ph.). An imm. Pacific Loon was at West Okoboji, IA, Apr. 15–May 26 (†ET, †LS, †DHk, ph.). Common Loons occurred in unprecedented numbers on the Indiana lakefront, where 743 were counted Apr. 5 (JMc, SB, CF). The season saw a better-than-normal Red-necked Grebe flight, with singletons in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, plus four in Iowa. Thirteen Eared Grebes were found e. of the Mississippi R.; the southernmost report came from McElroy L., KY, where one–three were seen during April (Kentucky Ornithological Society).



Pacific Loon at West Okoboji, Iowa, on April 15, 1997. The bird remained at this location for some six weeks. Photograph/Ed Thelen

pool that attracts warblers and other songbirds in migration. The bunting, a male in resplendent breeding plumage, was visiting a sunflower feeder. A number of people were able to see the bird which was coming to the feeder for the second day in a row.

One year later, on 1 June 1996, my wife Nancy and I were hiking a trail along the Little Sioux River approximately five miles east of the Heine acreage. At a spot where a small creek flowed through the wooded floodplain and into the river, a small bird popped up from the forest floor. It had a turquoise blue head, rusty colored breast, and a white belly. The tail and back were dark, and the wings were dark with white wingbars. There was turquoise on the rump also. The bird sang from an exposed perch at eye level, and the song was faster and more like a goldfinch when compared to that of an Indigo Bunting.

These sightings were the sixth and eighth accepted Lazuli Bunting records respectively in the state. To have them in consecutive years and located so close together makes it easy to speculate that the same bird was coming back to a stretch of Little Sioux River valley. Although the male in 1996 was found singing in appropriate open riparian woodland habitat, no evidence of nesting was confirmed.

518 West 4th Street, Spencer, IA 51301

✓ PACIFIC LOON IN DICKINSON COUNTY

ED THELEN

On the morning of 15 April 1997 I saw a Pacific Loon at the north end of West Okoboji in Dickinson County. I was approximately 20 yards from the loon in my boat when it first appeared. It soon dove and reappeared about 20 yards away on the other side of the boat. It then stayed on top swimming without diving for approximately 20 minutes.



Pacific Loon, Dickinson Co.,
15 April 1997. Ed Thelen.

During this time I noted the following characteristics: small straight bill, rounded light-colored head, and prominent chinstrap. It had a dark back with some light flecks which were visible only when viewed at close range. Its eyes were in the dark part of the loon's head. The lower part of the loon's head, chin (except the chinstrap), throat, and chest were white or light colored. It had a dark forehead with a lighter colored nape and back of neck. The loon appeared somewhat smaller overall when compared to some nearby Common Loons. The loon was observed off and on by many people and was last seen on 26 May 1997. Only once did I see the loon in flight.

On 2 August 1997 I observed another Pacific Loon on Spirit Lake which I believe was the same bird seen the previous spring on West Okoboji. This bird was in the company of two Common Loons and observed approximately 100 yards off the west shore at the area known as Buffalo Run. Its plumage was identical to the bird found on West Okoboji. Perhaps it was pushed off West Okoboji by the high boat traffic after Memorial Day and found refuge during the summer on Spirit Lake. Spirit Lake

is the largest lake in Dickinson County with less shoreline development and less boating activity than West Okoboji. I also saw this bird on the morning of 5 August 1997 near the swimming beach off the south shore of Spirit Lake at the town of Orleans. This loon was also seen off Crandall's beach at the northwest corner of Spirit Lake on 11 August 1997 by Lee Schoenewe. As far as I know this was the last sighting of this loon.

According to *Birds in Iowa* (Kent and Dinsmore, 1996) this is the 19th record of Pacific Loon in the state and only the second spring record. It is also the first record for Dickinson County.

15362 250th Ave., Spirit Lake, IA 51360

WESTERN Tanager AT LACEY-KEOSAUQUA STATE PARK

JIM FULLER

May 3, 1997 was planned as a morel mushroom hunt to Lacey-Keosauqua State Park. For most normal people, success in such a venture is contingent on keeping your eyes on the ground. But birders are by no means normal, and so it was that I spotted a bright yellow bird amongst the pink of a blooming redbud tree. For the next five minutes, I kept my eyes and binoculars up as I focused on a male Western Tanager just 30 feet away gleaning bugs from the blossoms.



No other bird was nearby so as to compare size, but I judged it to be a little larger than a House Sparrow. The bird had entirely yellow underparts with black back, wings and tail. It had not acquired a complete red head, as only the crown was bright red, and the sides of the face and throat showed a red blush. The eye was dark, and the short and stout bill was gray. The black wing exhibited two yellow wing bars, of which the top one was larger in size. The legs were dark. I did not hear the bird sing or call.

Western Tanager winters mainly from Mexico to Panama, and breeds in the western United States and Canada from southeastern Alaska to western Texas, with the closest area to Iowa being the Black Hills. It ranges widely as a vagrant, with records from virtually all states and provinces. In Iowa, it is considered casual, with the first record in 1969. Since that time, there have been eleven documented sightings, of which eight occurred in the spring from late April to mid-May. The other records were from June, October, and November. All records save one were of males, and all records were from different counties which were scattered throughout the state.

6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City, IA 52240

I.O.U. BUSINESS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ames, 16 May 1998, 4:05-4:10 p.m.

Mark Proescholdt, presiding, Mary Kuhlman, secretary

Present: Dan Dorrance, Rick Hollis, Maridel Jackson, Ann Johnson, Mary Kuhlman, Curt Nelson, Mark Proescholdt, Jim Scheib, Carol Thompson.



Pacific Loon P-0554
West Okoboji, Dickinson Co., IA
15 Apr 1997 Ed Thelen 97-07

< >007 41+02 GRICNN-18PU 529

Pacific Loon P-0554
West Okoboji, Dickinson Co., IA
15 Apr 1997 Ed Thelen 97-07

< >002 41+02 SHCINN-29PU 512

What species? Pacific LOON How many? 1 immatureLocation? N. End of West Okoboji - Dickinson CountyType of habitat? 3800 Natural Lake with developed shorelineWhen? date(s): 4-15-97 thru 4-26-97 time: 10:45am to 12:30pm (1st time spotted)Who? your name and address: Ed Thelen 15362 250th Ave Spirit Lake

others with you: _____

others before or after you: Doug Harr, Tim Walz, Lee Schonewec

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. (See photo)

Approximately 10:45 AM on 4-15-97 I observed a Pacific LOON on the N. Bay of West Okoboji. I was in a boat approx. 20 yards from the LOON when it first appeared off the starboard side of the boat. It then dove and reappeared about 20 yds on the other side of the boat. It then stayed on top swimming without diving for 20 min. During this time I noted the following; small straight bill, rounded light colored head and prominent chinstrap. It had a dark back with some light flecks visible only when close-up. Its eye was in the dark part of the LOON's head. Lower part of head, chin (except for chinstrap) throat and chest were white or light colored. Dark forehead with lighter colored nape and back of neck.

Similar species and how eliminated: Common LOONS were also nearby and were larger with a flatter head, no chin strap and also white above the eye. Saw LOON fly only once.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

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

GOOD - LOON was seen off and on with the last time seen on 5-26-97 Always seen at NORTH end of Lake

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I've seen common LOONS before

References and persons consulted before writing description:

How long before field notes made? same day this form completed? 1 monthMAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City, IA 52240

97-07

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species How many? PACIFIC LOON 1 BASIC
 Location? WEST LAKE OKOBOZE, DICKINSON COUNTY
 Type of habitat? OPEN WATER
 When? date(s): 4/15/97 Time: 11:45 AM - 12:30 PM

Who? your name and address

LEE A. SCHOENEWE 518 W. 4th ST. SPENCER, IA.

Others with you ED THELEN, DOWD HARR, TIM WALTZ

Others before and after you

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also describe voice and behavior. OBSERVED A LOON FLOATING ON THE WATER, THE BILL WAS SMALL AND STRAIGHT AND HELD HORIZONTALLY OR SLIGHTLY DOWN-TURNED; THE BODY WAS DARK AND THE BREAST, NECK AND THROAT WERE WHITE, WHEN VIEWED STRAIGHT ON A CHIN STRAP WAS NOTICEABLE. THE DARK COLOR EXTENDED FROM THE BILL UNDER THE EYE TO A WHITE CIRCULAR PATCH BELOW AND BEHIND THE EYE AND DOWN THE SIDE OF THE NECK WITH A DISTINCT CONTRAST BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARK. THE CROWN, BACK OF THE HEAD AND BACK OF THE NECK SHADED TO A LIGHTER GRAY, SUGGESTING TRANSITION TO ALTERNATE PLUMAGE.

Similar species and how eliminated: COMMON LOON - BILL SIZE & OVERALL SIZE
 RED-THROATED LOON - BILL CURVATURE & SHAPE; DARK COLOR THROUGH EYE, NECK & BACK; CHIN STRAP
 ARCTIC LOON - DARK FLANKS

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: OVERCAST DAYLIGHT; 100 - 300 YDS; 8X40 BINOCULARS
 20x-60x SCOPE

Previous experience with this species and similar ones:

COMMON LOONS ONLY

References and persons consulted before writing description:

PETERSON FIELD GUIDE

How long before field notes made? IMMEDIATELY

this form completed? 5 HOURS

Mail original form to field editor for this season.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

97-07

What species? Pacific Loon How many? 1

Location? N. end of West Okoboji Lake, Dickinson Co., IA.

Type of Habitat? Open water lake

When? date(s): April 15, 1997 time: 11AM to 12:05 PM

Who? your name and address: Douglas Harr, Box 65, Larchwood, IA 51241

Others with you: Ed Thelen, Lee Schoenewe, Tim Waltz

Others before or after you: Ed Thelen

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.

Small loon, apparently in transisition (early) from base to breeding plumage. Small, straight bill. Tope of head and back of neck a moderate gray color; front of neck (throat) basically whiteish. Back charcoal gray, w/some mottling. Possible faint indications of vertical stripes beginning to show on sides of neck.

Bird spent most of time seimming on surface, but in last 20 minutes of observation it began actively diving (feeding?) for up to 2-3 minutes of submersion each time.

Similar species; how eliminated:

Red-throated Loon -- bill angles upward and holds head at upward angle; plain gray back with no inidcations of mottling, stripes or bars; red throat in breeding plumage. Loon observed had none of these features or habits.

Common Loon: Several Common loons, larger and in full plumage were seen nearby and were readily diferentiated.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? No
If yes, explain:

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

Overcast but moderately bright. Distance estimated varied from 50 to 400 yards as bird swam and dove. Viewed w/8x40 binocs, 20x scope & 20-60X zoom scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Grew up on lake in Minnesota on which Common Loons were regular residents. Viewed many Pacific (then Arctic) Loons on Cape Chrrurchill While doing goose research in 1983. Also saw a few Re-throated Loons ther

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Common field guides (still listing as Arctic Loon)

How long before field notes made? 5 hrs this form completed? 24 hrs.

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).