

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Printed: 11/28/00

Brown Pelican

22 Sep 1999

Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA

*J. Fuller, *Kent, *J. Dinsmore, *Edwards

IBL 70:33, 144

Record Number: 99-24

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Jim Fuller (22 Sep), 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City 52240

Thomas H. Kent (22 Sep), 211 Richards St., Iowa City 52246

Jim Dinsmore (22 Sep)

Chris Edwards (25 Sep), 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty 52317

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 70:33

Records Committee: IBL 70:144

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, unmistakable bird seen by many and well described.

A-D, Great bird!

99-24

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

SPECIES: Brown Pelican (Subadult)

LOCATION: Saylorville Reservoir, off Campground #4 of Jester Park (Polk Co.)

DATE & TIME: 22 September, 1999 (11:15 AM-12:10 PM)

OBSERVER: Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City, Iowa, 52240

OTHERS: With me were Tom Kent, James Huntington, Tom Staudt. Mob later.

DESCRIPTION: As I was scanning the White Pelican flock with the telescope, I saw this bird drop in and land on the mudflat amidst the White Pelicans. It took just a second to realize what I had seen, and then I relocated the bird. We watched the bird with telescopes, off and on for much of the next hour. It was obviously smaller, estimated to be 25%, and it was much darker than the White Pelicans. It had the characteristic bulky body, short tail, long neck, and very large bill of a pelican. Specifically, the short tail and body were mottled or streaked dark gray and white. The hindneck showed a rich chocolate brown color. There was a relatively narrow white line on the side of the neck between the brown and the dark gray of the foreneck and lower part of the head. The white widened on the side of the head. The bill was immense, nearly as long as the neck, and a dark gray color. The eye appeared dark.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Only other North American pelican is White, and size, body color, and bill color alone eliminate it.

OPTICS & VIEWING CONDITIONS: It was late morning on a sunny fall day. A KOWA TSN-4 telescope was used, looking to the east at an estimated 250 yards.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have previously seen an adult and a juvenile of this species in Iowa, and numerous birds in all plumages on east, gulf, and west coasts.

FIELD NOTES & REFERENCES: National Geographic Field Guide, Edition III was seen during the viewing period. Field notes were made in the evening, and this form was typed on 24 September.

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Species: Brown Pelican; **Number:** 1

Location: Jester Park, Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co., IA

Date: 22 Sep 1999; **Time:** 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Name and address: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246.

Others before/with/after: Jim Fuller, James Huntington, and Thomas Staudt with me; others later.

Habitat and circumstances: large expanse of reservoir with mud flats

Description of bird: Jim Fuller saw the bird fly in and land amongst a large flock of American White Pelicans that were resting on the south end of the spit on the west side of the reservoir. It was about two-thirds the size of white pelicans. The overall color was dusky brown with white on the face extending down the side of the neck, rich brown top of head down the back of the neck, and dark bill. At times the bird was completely hidden amongst the other pelicans.

Voice: not heard.

Similar species: None. Summer adult.

Any one have reservations?: no

Light: high sun, looking south-south east; **Distance:** about ¼ mile; **Optics:** zoom scope.

Previous experience: I have seen one in Iowa; many on the coasts.

References before/after viewing: looked at National Geographic Guide while viewing.

Time of notes: during observation; **Final typing:** 20 hours.

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species Brown Pelican **How many?** one

Location? Saylorville Reservoir off Jester Park

Type of habitat? mudflat on large reservoir

When? date(s): 22 Sept 1999 **Time:** 4:20-4:30

Who? Jim Dinsmore

Others with you Aaron Brees; several naturalists of Polk Co. Cons. Board

Others before or after you Tom Kent, Jim Fuller, Eloise Armstrong, others?

Describe the bird(s) Unmistakable. Large, mostly brown bird seen both perched in shallow water near white pelicans and in flight. In flight, the slow labored wingbeat, broad wings, short tail, and flap-flap glide flight pattern were characteristic of thousands of Brown Pelicans I have seen.

While perched, I noted the mostly brown plumage with distinct white patch on top of head, extremely large bill with gular pouch suspended from it, large webbed feet (seen when it preened) made it easy to identify. Compared to nearby white pelicans it was perhaps 25% smaller and clearly looked small compared to them.

Similar species and how eliminated: Not much you can confuse it with.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? no

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: seen from several hundred yards, with 20x spotting scope. Good light from behind me. Good look at bird.

Previous experience I have seen thousands of brown pelicans in Florida, West Indies, and elsewhere.

References & persons consulted before writing description: none need

How long before field notes made? Notes taken in field while viewing bird. Written up next morning.

DOCUMENTATION FORM

For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species: Brown Pelican**Number:** 1 (sub-adult)**Location:** Saylorville Reservoir, as viewed from Jester County Park.**Habitat:** Grassy flat in middle of reservoir.**Date and time:** September 25, 1999, 4:45 p.m. – 6:15 p.m.**Name and address:** Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty, IA 52317**Others with you:** Chris Caster, Ann Johnson.**Others before or after you:** many observers.**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 was loafing on an island in the middle of a dense flock of American White Pelicans. It was visible only during brief periods when it stretched, preened, and walked around. It was similar in shape to the many American White Pelicans present, but was approximately 2/3 as large. The bird appeared entirely mottled dark brown, except for a dirty white area running from the forehead to the sides of the face and down the sides of the neck. The eye was dark. The bill was brownish gray. The legs and feet were not seen.

Similar species eliminated: American White Pelicans are not brown in any plumage and are much larger.**Did anyone disagree or have reservations about the identification?** No.**Viewing conditions:** Estimated 800 yards, sunny, viewed with 20x-60x telescope.**Previous experience with species and similar ones:** I have seen several Brown Pelicans in Texas and Washington.**References and persons consulted before writing description:** *National Geographic* field guide.**How long before field notes made:** 4 hours.**How long before this form completed:** 4 hours.