

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

SPECIES: Pacific Loon (Winter Adult)

LOCATION: Red Rock Reservoir (Marion County) Off Whitebreast Boat Ramp

DATE & TIME: 3 November 1999 (About 1:30 PM for 15 minutes).

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

OTHERS: With me was Tom Kent.

DESCRIPTION: There were Common Loons in the same area, but not in the same telescope view, so no direct comparison of size was possible. This bird appeared to be smaller, with a much smaller bill than the Common Loons. Another feature that differed was the rounded head and neck. The bird was dark above and light on the foreneck, breast, and the lower part of the side of the face. The dark on the head and hindneck appeared to be a brownish-gray, while the back was darker, more of a brownish-black. The back also lacked any light streaking or flecking. The eye appeared to be included in the dark portion of the side of the face. The small, straight bill was held horizontal and was a light gray color. There was a very identifiable chin strap, otherwise, the dark of the hind neck and white of the foreneck were straight and distinctly separated.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Common Loon is larger with a much larger bill, lacks a chin strap, has some flatness on the top of the head, and an uneven dark-white line on the side of the neck. The crown and hindneck are also darker than the back. The Red-throated Loon has a smaller bill that it usually keeps tipped up from the horizontal. It shows much more white than dark on the neck, lacks a chin strap, and normally shows light flecking on the back.

OPTICS & VIEWING CONDITIONS: The bird was viewed toward the north at about 250-300 yards on a sunny day using KOWA TSN4 telescope with Zoom 20-60 mm.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen as many as eight birds of this species in winter plumage, and have also seen them in the Pacific Northwest in alternate plumage.

REFERENCES & FIELD NOTES: Field notes were not made until returning home in the evening, and NGS guide was checked during time of viewing.