

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

SPECIES: Red-throated Loon (Basic Plumage)

LOCATION: Red Rock Reservoir (Marion County) Off Whitebreast Point.

DATE & TIME: 3 November, 1999 (About 2 PM for 30 minutes).

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

OTHERS: With me was Tom Kent.

DESCRIPTION: First appearance was a small and quite light colored loon. Although no direct comparison with Common Loon could be made, this bird appeared smaller with a smaller bill. The upperparts were generally dark and the foreneck, breast, and side of the face were white. The gray on the neck was limited to the hindneck, and the gray and white were distinctly separated. No chin strap could be seen. There was light flecking on the dark back. The head was evenly rounded and the neck seemed rather thin. The light colored bill was straight, but it was held at an upward angle from the horizontal.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Pacific Loon is generally darker, shows less white on the side of the neck and face, and usually exhibits a chin strap. Winter adult Pacific does not show light flecking on the back. Common Loon is larger with a larger bill, and shows an angular head outline. The dark-white line on the side of the neck is irregular and indistinct, compared to the Red-throated. Both other loons hold their bills horizontally.

OPTICS & VIEWING CONDITIONS: Viewing was toward the northwest at 300 yards on a sunny day with a KOWA TSN4 20-60X Zoom.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen a number of basic plumaged birds of this species in Iowa, and have seen alternate plumaged birds in Alaska.

REFERENCES & FIELD NOTES: Field notes were prepared the evening after the sighting and NGS guide was viewed during the viewing.