

BIRD SIGHTINGS DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*) **How many?** 1 basic adult in early pre-alternate molt

Location: Iowa, Story co., Ames, Hallett's Quarry

Habitat: Lake in old quarry at edge of urban residential area.

Date: 8 May 1999 **Time:** approx. 5:30-5:45pm.

Observer: Michael D. Overton, 1316 S Duff #93, Ames, IA, 50010

Other Observers: Dixie Overton, Michael Freiberg.

Observers Before and After: Before: Kevin Healy, Hank Zaletel After:?

Description:

Size: Larger than a Mallard. No direct comparison available as the bird was alone.

Shape: Heavy body, thick neck, relatively large head. Waterfowl shaped but stouter than a duck.

Bill: Dark grayish black, straight, almost parallel-sided, upper and lower mandibles tapered evenly over the distal 20% to a sharp point. Held horizontally (parallel to the water surface).

Eyes: Not noted.

Head: Dark gray and white. Crown evenly rounded. Forehead darker than crown. Crown evenly gray with nape. Gray of crown extended in an almost straight line from the top of the upper mandible, just below the eye, to the back of the auricular where it joined the dark nape and side of neck. Auricular white.

Throat: Chin and throat white with a dark gray "chinstrap" on the upper throat. The white throat and neck extend back about 1/2 way on the sides of the neck and meet the dark gray nape in a distinct, almost straight, vertical line.

Back: Dark blackish gray. Darker than the nape.

Rump: Not observed.

Breast/Belly: Breast white to waterline. Flanks dark to waterline. Belly not observed.

Wings: Dorsal surface of folded wings uniform and concolorous with back. No other details noted. Ventral surface and extended wing not observed.

Tail: Not noted.

Legs/Feet: Not observed.

Vocalizations: None.

Behavior: Swimming and diving (foraging) in open water approx. 50 yards from the nearest shoreline.

Similar species and how eliminated: Red-throated Loon by parallel sided bill, horizontal bill and head position, no white areas above or in front of the eye, distinct straight demarcation between light and dark areas on head and sides of neck, lack of white spots on back.

Arctic Loon by presence of "chinstrap", lack of white flank patches, realistic attitude.

Common Loon by smaller size, smaller parallel sided bill, rounded crown, no white areas in front of or above eye, nape lighter than back, white auricular area, distinct straight demarcation between light and dark areas on head and sides of neck.

Yellow-billed Loon by smaller size, smaller parallel sided bill, rounded crown, no white areas in front of or above eye, white auricular area without a dark spot, distinct straight demarcation between light and dark areas on head and sides of neck.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification: No.

Viewing conditions: Cloud cover not noted, approx. 150 yards (estimate), Leupold 12-40x60@40.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Numerous sightings of Red-throated Loon, Pacific Loon, and Common Loon. Yellow-billed Loon: 4 in Alaska, 1 in Washington, 1 in Oregon, 3 in California, 1 in Oklahoma. Arctic Loon: 1 in Alaska.

References consulted before writing description: None.

How long before field notes made? Immediately after observation. this form completed? 5 days.