

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Species: Trumpeter Swan; *Number:* 1 ad., 1 imm.

Location: Runnells A.; Marion Co., IA

Date: 29 February 1992; *Time:* about 2:30 to 2:45 p.m.

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

Others before/with/after: Bob Cecil, Ann Johnson, and another man.

Habitat and circumstances: Refuge area at upper end of Red Rock Res.

Description of bird: We had been watching ducks at this spot for a while and suddenly two swans were in the middle of one of the bodies of water. The adult was all white with a black bill. There was no yellow spot on the bill. The black of the bill narrowed and touched the eye. The white of the forehead came down almost as a semicircle into the top of the bill--it was neither V-shaped nor straight across. The culmen appeared very slightly concave to me. I did not see any tendency to crook the neck at its base. The immature bird had a dark gray wash over the face and upper neck and a lighter wash on the lower neck, body, and wings. The unidentified man said that he had watched this bird get lighter over the last week. The bill appeared larger than that of the adult. It was black but may have still had some pink mottling. The culmen was longer than the adult's and straight.

Voice: Not heard.

Similar species: The appearance of the adult's bill eliminates Mute Swan. The lack of a yellow bill spot on the adult argues against Tundra Swan, but I understand that this is not an absolute criteria. The straightness of the culmen and shape of the feather extension along the forehead are difficult to judge, especially at a distance. Perhaps most convincing was the amount of darkness on the immature. Tundra Swans are said to be quite white on the back and wings by spring. The size of the bill on the immature was also quite impressive. The date is a bit early for Tundra Swan, but fine for Trumpeter.

Any one have reservations?: The unidentified man insisted that these were Tundra Swans and said that Tim Schantz had seen them. Ann and I thought that they were Trumpeters. I'm not sure what Bob thought.

Light: Sun behind us; *Distance:* 500+ yards (guess); *Optics:* 10x binoc, 20x scope; old Questar (about 50x).

Previous experience: I have seen a number of all three swan species in Iowa, but still have more to observe in reference to molting of immatures and head patterns of adults.

References before/after viewing: We glanced at the field guides while watching the birds.

Time of notes: none; *Final typing:* 20 hours.