

Black Scoter

11 Nov 1983

Colfax, Jasper Co., IA

\*T. Kent, \*T. Staudt, \*C. Bendorf

IBL 53:98; 54:38

Record Number: 83-30

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Thomas H. Kent

Thomas J. Staudt

Carl Bendorf

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 53:98

Records Committee: iBL 54:38

VOTE: 5-II, 2-abstain

II, well described bird.

83-30  
II

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Black Scoter (1 female or imm. male), 11 Nov 1983

Colfax sand pits, Jasper Co., Iowa.

Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City IA 52240

Other observers: Pete Petersen, Carl Bendorf, Tom Staudt

Time: 9:30 - 10:10

Habitat: Sand/gravel pits along Interstate 80 north of Colfax.  
River bottom land area.

"Black Scoter--size of scaup it was with, 2/3 size of male White-winged Scoter it was with. All dark black/brown except for light gray patch covering lower face below eye. Bill relative small and forehead not straight like White-winged. The White-winged Scoter was all dark (black) except for white wing patch and mark at eye." The size contrast and lack of white wing patch were seen well as the two scoters flew by together. Carl saw a light belly on the Black Scoter. On the water the Black Scoter had a small pointed tail that angled up at 45 degrees.

Song: not heard

Behavior: swimming and flying

Conditions (distance, light, optical equipment)

30 yards in flight, 60 yards in water; sunny, various angles; 8x binoculars, 20x scope, 60x questar

Similar species: Ruddy Duck not as brown/black, face patch less distinct, and head and bill shape different.

Female Surf and White-winged scoters have divided and less extense face patch and straighter forehead; White-winged has white wing patch.

Agreement: all agreed

Previous experience: Have seen one female in Iowa; also on West Coast and Alaska.

References/time used: Looked at field guides while viewing.

Time of notes/typed: notes 15 min; typed 3 1/2 hours.

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF  
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

83-30

1. Species Black Scoter 2. Number 1
3. Location Van Duzendorp (sp) sand & gravel pit Colfax Ia.
4. Date: November 11 1983 5. Time Bird Seen: 9:30 am to 9:40 am
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):
- on water: dark gray to black bill, rounded head, head, nape, and all upper body parts black. stubby black tail. Face below eye, including chin, throat and extending to aricular and down the sides of throat off white to light gray. Facial markings was continuous, no markings within.
- in flight: upper wings all black underwing black lining with lighter secondaries & primaries.
- smaller is size than white-winged scoter.
7. Description of voice, if heard:
8. Description of behavior:
9. Habitat - general: open area, in C shaped pond in active sand & gravel pit.  
specific:
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:  
Other scoters would have dark chin and throat. white-winged has white secondary wing patch. surf scoter would have light smudges on face but otherwise all black. Ruddy Duck has a white face patch but darker throat. Female Ruddy has a line through face patch.
11. Distance (how measured)?
12. Optical equipment:  
7x binoculars  
26x scope  
Black scoter is larger than Ruddy
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):  
overcast to partly sunny
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:  
none with this species. Two previous sightings of white-winged scoter one of surf scoter.
15. Other observers: Carl Bendorf, Tom Kent, Pete Petersen
16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:  
National Geographic's new Birds of North America Field guide and the new Masters Field Guide series from the National Audubon Society
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?  
notes taken ~~immediately~~ right after observation, description written about 3 hours later
- Signature: Thomas J. Standt Address: 931 N Summit
- Date: November 11 1983 City, State: Iowa City, IA.



facial markings  
excuse the proportions.

The white here is not an indication of the contrast from face to body but an approximation of the area on the face that was lighter

What species? BLACK SCOTER How many? 1Location? VAN DUSSELDORP SAND PITS - COEFAX EXIT OF I-80.Type of habitat? HORSESHOE SHAPED POUNDS AROUND SAND PITS.When? date(s): 11 NOVEMBER 1983 time: 9:30AM to 9:45AM.Who? your name and address: CARL BENDORF 825 774 NE Iowa Cityothers with you: TOM KANT, Tom Standt, Pete Peterson.others before or after you: OTHERS LOOKED, BUT COULD NOT FIND

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, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

We spotted two duck-like birds on water. As they flew up we noticed one was much larger, all black, with large white wing patches. This was a white-winged scoter. Bird alongside was completely black but was 25% smaller.

After birds landed, in Tom Kant's Questar scope we observed smaller bird was all black except for a well demarcated lighter grayish-brown area on lower cheek and down side of neck. Head and fore head were distinctly rounded in shape compared to more typical ~~angular~~ angular and lower profile of white-winged scoter. Bill was relatively normal duck shaped.

When birds finished, noted a lighter cast to belly of Black Scoter. This is consistent with a female or immature Black Scoter.

Similar species and how eliminated: Other female scoters eliminated by well defined lighter cheek and neck patch. → i.e. sub.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No.

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:  
Estimated 40-150 yds. w/ 7X35 Binocs and 30X QUESTAR.Previous experience with species and similar ones: Looked exactly like female Black Scoter seen in Chicago last year.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

How long before field notes made? 30 minutes. this form completed? 19 days.

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240