

Trumpeter Swan

9 Jan 1989

n. of LeClaire, Scott Co., IA

*P. Petersen, *Porter

also 25 Feb; IBL 59:48 (photo), 61:84

Record Number: 89-01

Classification: A-E

DOCUMENTATION

Peter C. Petersen, 9 Jan

Diane Porter, 25 Feb

PHOTOGRAPH

Don Mueller, 10 Jan, P-0272

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 59:48

Photograph: IBL 59:48 (P-0272)

Records Committee: IBL 61:84

VOTE: 6-A-E, 1-A-D

A-E. I don't accept the argument that birds that are possibly offspring of the Minnesota reintroductions are automatically and immediately countable just because this species was formerly native to Iowa. If I were lucky enough to see a young River Otter in Iowa this summer, I would not feel I had seen a naturally wild animal even if it acted wild. The A-E category is for birds considered not established in Iowa and possibly introduced. How do we know the Minnesota is now established without further human intervention?

A-E. Description convincing. I concur with the conclusion that this bird is from the Minnesota flock, even though no tags noted. I am not convinced Minnesota flock birds should be considered as established and "countable" in Iowa. I feel their future at the Hennepin re-introduction site is precarious in view of last year's high lead-poisoning mortality.

A-E. Although description of entire bird is minimal, description of bill adequately eliminates other swans. Swan not identifiable from photos provided. Bird most likely from MN and therefore not yet considered established in Iowa.

A-E. Good details, drawings and photos. Observations fit those described by Peterjohn (IBL 56:9) for immature swans at this time of year.

A-E. Photo and descriptions adequately show and describe Trumpeter Swan. Origin of this bird and status of birds from reintroduction programs have not been ascertained. Need for additional study and discussion on these individuals that are sighted in Iowa is very important and should take place at our next meeting.

A-E. Photo and descriptions as well as direct comparison with Tudras confirm ID. Problem is establishment of populations proving these birds as wild or not. MN birds are considered a reintroduction (Janssen), but breeding and migration in the wild has occurred since 1986; in SD the prairie population (NE, SD) winters at LaCreek and may never have been extirpated (Whitney et al.). Thus, LaCreek birds I consider wild; MN birds I'm not sure about. How long must a population breed? One generation? What about Blue-gray Tanager?

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union
Trumpeter Swan

Printed: 08/05/93
9 Jan 1989 RC No. 89-01 (cont)

SENT TO: Peter C. Petersen 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, IA
52803; Diane Porter, 908 E. Briggs, Fairfield, IA 52556 [5/31/89]

Common Loon: The last were 1 at Saylorville Res. on 7 Dec (SD) (3 were there on 4 Dec) and 2 at Burlington on 4 Dec (CF).

Pied-billed Grebe: The last were 1 at Saylorville Res. on 26 Dec (BE, SD) and 2 at Cedar L. in Cedar Rapids on 30 Dec (JF).

Horned Grebe: The last was at Saylorville Res. on 9 Dec (SD).

American White Pelican: 2 lingered this year: 1 "apparently healthy" at Burlington from 11 to 24 Dec (CF) and 1 near LaPorte City from late December to early February (Beth Brown fide SD). Presumably the early February cold snap caused the later to leave.

Double-crested Cormorant: A few individuals apparently wintered, including up to 3 in the Davenport area until at least 19 Feb (TEB, SD, PCP). Late birds were at Saylorville Res. until 15 Dec (SD).

Great Blue Heron: Much in evidence, at least in early winter, the last seen (live!) was at Saylorville Res. on 30 Dec (AJ), although a freshly dead bird was found there on 9 Jan (SD).

Tundra Swan: Swans in general were much in evidence this winter, with most reports well-documented. An immature Tundra remained below Red Rock dam from 3 Dec to 15 Jan ("AJ, "SD). Four swans reported as Tundras without details on the Mississippi R. 8 miles n. of Burlington (CF) may have been part of the group of 7 Tundras (5 adults and 2 immatures) seen 30 miles south near Montrose on 30 Dec ("SD). Up to 10 Tundras accompanied an immature Trumpeter in the Princeton-LeClaire vicinity from 2 to 24 Feb (PCP, "AJ).

Trumpeter Swan: At least 13 different Trumpeters appeared, many identified simply by various neck collars and wing tags as derived from the breeding population established artificially in Minnesota. In this category was a pair with collars numbered 54 and 57 at Charles City on 4-5 Feb (August Geberding fide MJH), and rather amazingly a different pair in the same place with wing tags numbered 22 and 74 on 26 Feb ("JLW). The photo submitted with the latter report shows neither bird has a neck collar. Two birds were at Easter L. in Des Moines on 9 Dec, both with wing tags, one numbered 39 (MT). A group of one adult with a neck collar and 4 immatures showed up on 1 Feb at Keomah S.P. in Mahaska County (MPr). A single wing-tagged bird was on Cedar L. on 25 Dec (Bart Ballard fide SD). The immature near Princeton-LeClaire was photographed ("PCP, "DCP). At some point it seems that these birds will be considered part of an established breeding population, and thus part of the Iowa avifauna as migrants and winter visitors.



Trumpeter Swans (above), Charles City, 26 Feb 1989. Photo by Jan and Jim Walter.



Two Tundra Swans (left) and Trumpeter Swan (right), LeClaire, 10 Jan 1989. Photo by Don Moeller.

Mute Swan: The only positively-identified Mute Swan was an adult at Mason City from 17 Dec through the period ("JLW).

Swan sp.: Other than the 4 birds n. of Burlington reported as Tundras and perhaps best considered here, other reports not clearly assignable to species included 1 at West Okoboji L. from 10 to 27 Dec, reported as a Tundra without details (ET). One flying over the Iowa State University campus on 14 Feb was described without details as "not a Mute Swan" (Larry Hood fide JJD). Finally, 1 at Casey-Barrow Landing n. of Burlington on 20 Jan was reported as a Mute without details (CF).

Greater White-fronted Goose: Unusual in winter and rather far east were 4 at Keokuk on 21 Jan (Brian Warren fide SD). Another was at DeSoto N.W.R. on 23 Dec (THK).

Snow Goose: In SW Iowa, this species usually lingers in varying numbers into January, but probably unprecedented were the 153,000 at DeSoto N.W.R. as late as 10 Jan (TEB). These birds departed with the early February cold snap (BLW), presumably as did the 2,500 at L. Manawa seen on 31 Jan (BPa). Small flocks appeared at various E Iowa locations, such as 29 at Red Rock Res. on 18 Dec (AJ) and 16 at Rathbun Res. 12 Jan (SD). Up to 55 were at Saylorville Res. as late as 29 Jan, but all departed during February (BE), apparently not as hardy (or as pampered?) as the group (up to 16) that wintered at a waterfowl breeder's pond in Polk County (SD).

Ross' Goose: As expected, patient observers were able to pick out up to 12 Ross' from the huge number of Snows at DeSoto N.W.R. through 6 Jan (MT, AJ, DD)[2nd latest]. There were 3 with about 900 Snows at Bays Branch on 28 Dec (SD).

Brant: One of this winter's highlights was a single Brant of the eastern race at DeSoto N.W.R. from 19 Dec to 3 Jan ("MR, "SD, "RKM, "JF, "THK, "TEB, "RIC, "WRS). This bird associated with the Snows.

Canada Goose: This species attempts to winter wherever conditions allow, often in large numbers, such as the 3,100 at Saylorville Res. on 12 Jan (SD) and 2,000 at Bays Branch on 28 Dec (SD). Cold weather causes movement of these birds, with numbers reduced to 1,050 by 4 Feb at Saylorville Res. (SD); however, 3,000 remained in Clay and Palo Alto counties on 12 Feb (Marty Eby fide SD).

Wood Duck: Small numbers wintered statewide, usually with Mallards: 5 at Rock Valley (JV), 1 in Polk County (SD), and 1 at Mason City (JLW).

Green-winged Teal: A few lasted until the February cold snap, including 12 at the IPL Ponds in Pottawattamie County on 31 Jan (BPa) and 8 at Saylorville Res. on 29 Jan (SD). The latest were 2 at Saylorville Res. on 4 Feb (SD).

American Black Duck: Good numbers remained through early February, including 46 at Saylorville Res. on 17 Jan, declining to a still-good-sized flock of 16 on 4 Feb (SD), and 2 at IPL Ponds on 28 Jan (BLW). The first returning birds were 4 at Red Rock Res. on 22 Feb (AJ).

Mallard: The effect of the early February cold snap was obvious on the flock at Saylorville Res., where the peak of 25,000 on 21 Jan (BE) declined rapidly to only 820 on 5 Feb (SD). Two different Mallard hybrids were reported: 3 Black Duck/Mallard at Saylorville Res. (SD) and a male-like Pintail with some green feathers on the head and a rump like a Mallard (SD).

Northern Pintail: Small numbers are usually found with Mallard flocks in winter. This year's high count was 11 at Saylorville Res. prior to 4 Feb when most with the Mallards (SD).

Northern Shoveler: Rare at best as a wintering bird in Iowa, one did winter at the breeder's pond in Polk County (SD), and unusually late and a notably high number were 18-22 birds at DeSoto N.W.R. from 2 to 10 Jan (SD, TEB). There were no other January or February reports.

Gadwall: Only 3 were reported to be wintering. 1 male with the Mallards at Rock Valley (JV) and 2 in the LeClaire area (PCP). The high count was of 22 at Red Rock Res. on 6 Jan (SD). Birds remained at Red Rock Res. to 21 Jan (AJ) and at Saylorville Res. until 5 Feb (SD). Returning migrants included 4 at Lock & Dam 14 on 24 Feb (DCP) and 6 at IPL Ponds (BLW) and 2 at Saylorville Res. (SD) on 25 Feb.

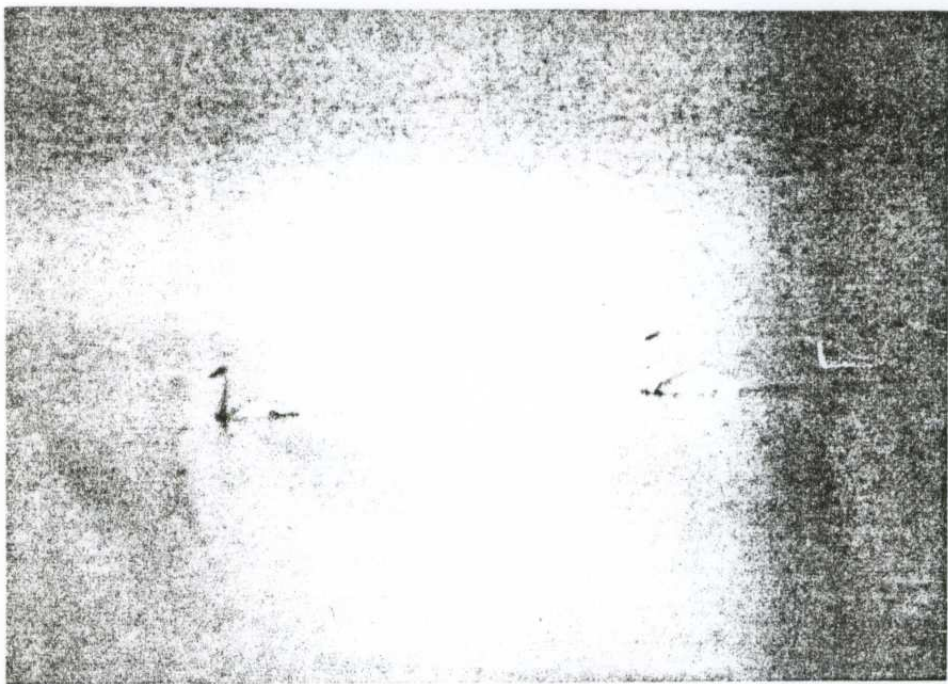
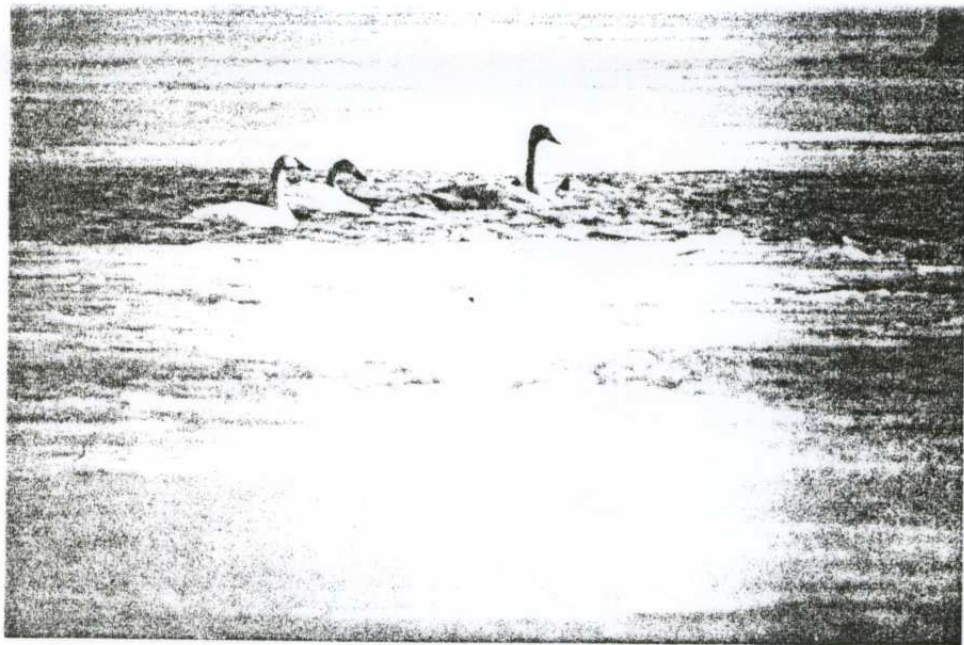
American Wigeon: In the same category as Shoveler as a rare bird in midwinter, wigeon lingered as late as 1 Feb at Red Rock Res. (MPr) and 15 Feb at Saylorville Res. (SD). Eight were at Saylorville Res. as late as 5 Feb (SD).

Canvasback: Bob Cecil reports that the large numbers at Keokuk the past two years did not remain this year, leaving well before the river iced over. Small numbers were found through February on the Mississippi R. in S Iowa, presumably wintering. The highest count was 9 at Davenport on 16 Feb (SD).

Redhead: Not a particularly hardy species, most Redheads left in December, the only January report was of 2 at DeSoto N.W.R. on 3 Jan (SD). One at Bettendorf on 12 Feb (PCP) may have wintered. Up to 6 early returnees were at Saylorville Res. 25 Feb (AJ, SD).

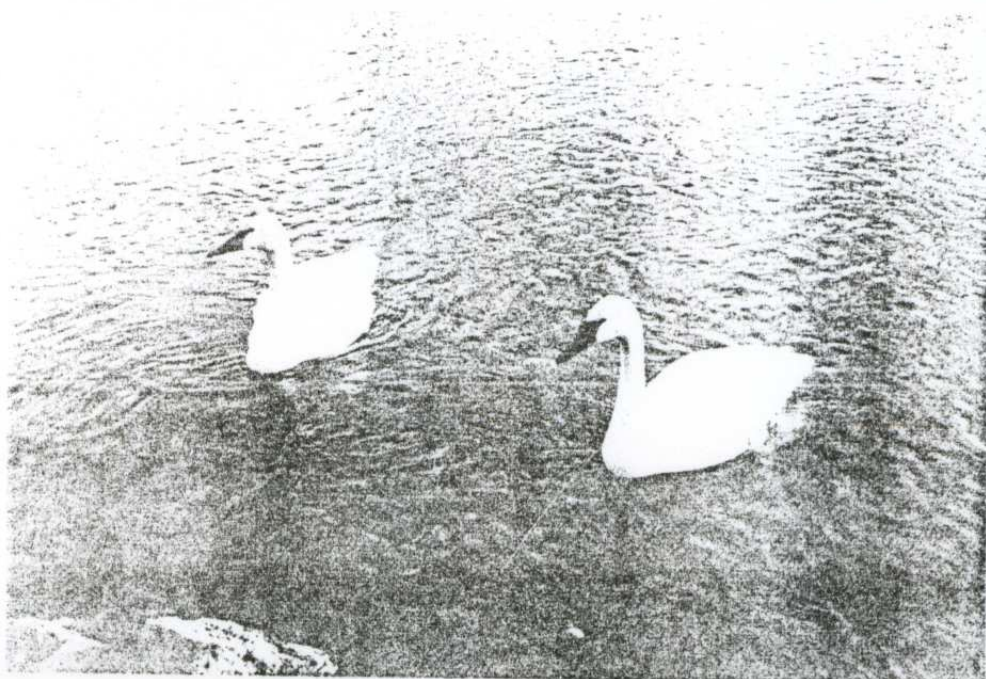
Trumpeter Swan (1849)
& Tundra Swans
2-10-89
Le Cluse
Photos by Ron Moeller

89-01



Trumpeter Swan
2-26-89
Chico, CA
Photo by Jack
& Jan. B. Lott

89-02



1. Species: Trumpeter Swan Number seen: 1
 (If known) Age: Immature Sex: ? Plumage: 1st winter
2. Location (including county): Channel of Miss. River/mi. N. LeClaire ^{to Pt Byron IL} ^{Scott + Rock IS}
3. Date(s): Jan. 9, 1989 - present thru 28 Feb. Time of day: 9:40 to 9:45 AM
10:00 to 10:03 AM
4. Observers -- Your name: Peter C. Petersen Phone: (319) 355-7051
 Address: 235 Mc Clellan Blvd. Davenport, IA zip 52803
 Others present: Mary Lou Petersen
 Others before or after you: Don Moeller, Ann Barker
5. Describe the habitat the bird(s) was found in and the surrounding habitat:
Open pool in main channel of Mississippi River.

6. Description: Describe in great detail (but only include what actually was seen in the field (the size, shape and color pattern of the bird(s)). Include a description of the bill, eye, legs, feet, tail, body and wings as well as other diagnostic characteristics.

Large swan - long neck, plumage light grey with a brownish tint. Bill black at tip, pink in middle, black at base extending to eye, seemed quite long for a swan. straight line in profile from tip of head to tip of bill

bill:



Considered wild as it is a wary, free flying bird of the year from established Minn. pop. as far as can be judged.

Species: Trumpeter Swan Date seen: Jan. 9, 1989 Observer: Peterson 89-01

7. Similar species (explain how eliminated): Tundra Swan - Bill very dark near base in this bird, would be light in Tundra, slope of top of head to bill tip wrong for Tundra, brownish tinge to plumage wrong for Tundra, also long bill.
8. Describe the bird's behavior: Feeding, swimming + resting in open water
9. Describe the song or call notes heard: not heard
10. Viewing conditions:
Optical equipment used (type, power): 40X Scope, also at 25X + 30X, 10X 40 Zeiss binocs
Closest distance to bird (how measured): 400 yards - est.
Lighting and weather: sun at 90° angle to bird
Was the bird photographed? yes By whom? Don Moeller Attached? yes
11. Summarize previous experience with this species and similar species:
Have seen Trumpeter Swans previously in Iowa, S.D. + western U.S. on 4-5 occasions, many Tundra Swans
12. Other observers who did not agree with the identification (explain): none
13. List books and illustrations consulted and advice received. How did these influence this description?
Checked Geographic + Mester guides after observation + after notes made.
14. How long after observing the bird(s) before field notes completed? 1 hr.
15. How long after observing the bird(s) before this form completed? 8 hrs.

Mail this completed form to: Avian Ecology Program, Natural Heritage Division
Dept. of Conservation, Springfield, IL 62701

If you have observed a common bird species during a season of abundance, verification is achieved simply by returning there again in season. If, however, the observation involves a rare species, or a common species out of season or at an unusual location, and you wish to share this experience with the scientific community, special documentation is necessary.

An acceptable documentation consists of one or more of the following: a collected, diagnostic specimen; a diagnostic photograph; a diagnostic recording of the bird's voice; or, an accurate and detailed written description of the observation. It must be emphasized that a request for documentation is not an affront, but an effort to perpetuate a record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for all to examine. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation irrespective of the observer.

DOCUMENTATION FOR SIGHTINGS OF IOWA BIRDS

Species: 10 Tundra Swans and 1 Trumpeter Swan

Location: Princeton, Iowa, Scott County

Habitat: Mississippi River, close to Iowa shore

Date: February 25, 1989

Name and address: Diane Porter, 908 East Briggs, Fairfield, IA 52556.

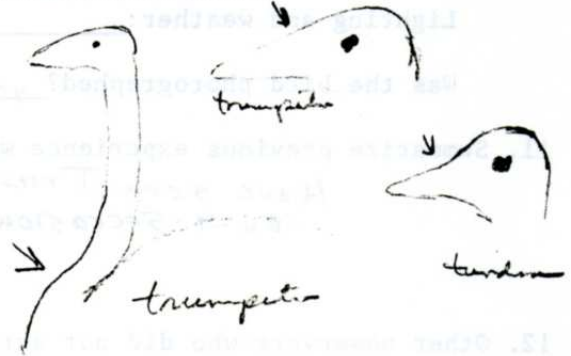
Other observers: Many observers saw it before and after I did: Ann Barker, Pete Petersen

Description:

Ten white swans and one medium grey swan: "very dusky — much darker than herring gulls." The grey one was "slightly but noticeably larger than the white ones." And "When tundra and trumpeters are next to each other, larger size of trumpeter is apparent."

"I do see that 'subtle kink' in the trumpeter's neck." All of the swans held the length of their necks straight up most of the time, not arched as mute swans do. All held their heads so that the lower mandibles were horizontal, not pointed down as mute swans do.

"The trumpeter's bill seems longer than the white ones' (the tundras'), and thicker at the base." The trumpeter's forehead and upper mandible were all pretty much a straight line, while the tundras' upper mandibles had more of a concavity about it. The tundras varied in this respect, but in all cases the line from the forehead to the tip of the bill was less straight than it was for the trumpeter. None held their wings arched over their backs. The grey one sometimes held its neck sort of laid back on its back at the base, while straight up for the middle and top part of the length. I saw white ones do this too, but not so much of the time as the grey one.



I tried to draw it, and my efforts are reproduced above.

"I can not see yellow spots on any of the bills. I can not tell any difference between the swans in the degree to which the eye seemed to be isolated from the dark skin at the base of the beak." I probably just wasn't close enough to see this. The white swans all had "black beaks." The grey one's beak was "dark but not black, and some dusky orange color in the middle part." None of the swans had a knob on the beak.

Species I considered:

Because of the difference in size, the grey one has to be a trumpeter or a mute swan. I say not a mute because of the posture, the way the neck is held, and the massive beak. I believe an immature mute swan would have been white by this late-winter date.

The smaller swans were tundras by default. The fact that several of these had been described as grey (lighter than the trumpeter) just a few weeks earlier, but that they had turned white by the time I saw them, corroborates the conclusion they these are tundras and the grey one is a trumpeter.

Reservations: I have not seen an immature mute swan, so I don't have tremendous conviction about what one would look like.

Viewing conditions: It was a bright sunny morning.

Duration: watched them for about an hour the day before (in Illinois) and about an hour this day. Distance: 200-300 yards. This is a blatant guess. Zeiss 10X25 binocs, and Questar 700 mm. lens.

Previous experience: I have seen adult mute swans up close many times. My experience with tundras and trumpeters has been mostly in books.

Notes made while viewing the birds. This report is written on 3/1/89, four days after the sighting.