

Trumpeter Swan
26 Feb 1989
Charles City, Floyd Co., IA
*Jan Walter
IBL 59:48 (photo), 61:84

Record Number: 89-02
Classification: A-E

DOCUMENTATION

Jan L. Walter

PHOTOGRAPH

Jan L. Walter and Jim B. Walter, 25 Feb 1989, 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-P

A-E. Interesting that these "wild" birds were tame enough to approach the observers and try to feed from their hand.

A-E. Nice description of birds from Minnesota flock. Reason for A-E vote noted above.

A-E. Excellent photo of Trumpeter Swan. No problem with I.D., but I do not yet consider this species established in Iowa.

A-E. Excellent details and photo.

A-E. Very good description. There is no doubt that these birds were studied and are probably a part of a reintroduction program due to the fact that they are wearing number tags. The question becomes are they wild enough or have they been on their own long enough to become a part of the Iowa avifauna. Evidently these birds are extremely tame and show very little or no wariness to people. I conclude that these particular birds be considered recently released and not established well enough to be accepted as wild and independent.

A-E. Photo clinches ID. See comments on 89-01. These birds (89-02) stated to be from MN "one pair per lake" (which lake?).
SENT TO: Jan L. Walter, 934 13th S.E., Mason City, IA 50401
[5/31/89].

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

side JJD). Finally, 1 at Casey-Barrow Landing n. of Burlington on 20 Jan was reported as a

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 unrepresented 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 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 num-

bers, 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 (Mary 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

Portawattamie 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 Say-

lorville 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 re-

ports.

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. until 5 Feb (SD).

Returning migrants included 4 at Lock & Dam 14 on 24 Feb (DCP) and 6 at IPL Ponds (BLW)

American Wigeon: In the same category as Shoveler as a rare bird in midwinter, wigeon lin-

gered as late as 1 Feb at Red Rock Res. (MP) 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 re-

main this year, leaving well before the river iced over. Small numbers were found through

February on the Mississippi R. in 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).

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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).

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 Say-

lorville 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-doc-

umented. 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 im-

mature Trumpeter in the Pinceton-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 Gebording fide MJH), and rather amazingly a different pair in the same place

report shows neither bird has a neck collar. Two birds were at Easter L. in Des Moines on 9

Feb, 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 (MP). A single wing-

tagged bird was on Cedar L. on 25 Dec (Bart Ballard fide SD). The immature near Pinceton-

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.

Photo by Don Moeller.

10 Jan 1989.

Trumpeter Swan (right), LeClaire.

Two Tundra Swans (left) and

City, 26 Feb 1989. Photo by Jan

and Jim Walter.

Trumpeter Swans (above), Charles

Iowa Bird Life, Spring 1989

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89-02

DOCUMENTATION FORM

For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

89-02

What species? Trumpeter Swan How many? 2 AdultsLocation? Cedar River at end of Maple St., Charles City, Ia.Type of Habitat? Narrow stretch of open water along bank of frozen riverWhen? date(s): 26 Feb., 1989 time: 5:10 PM to 5:40 PMWho? your name and address: Jan. L. Walter, 934-13th S.E., Mason City, Ia. 50401Others with you: Jim B. Walter " " "Others before or after you: James L. Hansen, Clear Lake, Ia.

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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Very large, long necked, all white bird, with black feet, legs, eyes, and bill. With narrow red "grinning patch". Also slight tinge of rusty stain on head and neck. Forehead slanted down to straight bill. Black facial skin ended in broad point at eye and slightly curved down into a definite V on forehead. Neck was held straight, much of the time kinked back at the base. Voice - several single "Honks". When we arrived at the river edge, the birds were downstream. They slowly swam upstream and when they reached us, they moved in close to the shore. I held my arm out and one swam up and nibbled at my finger 5 times. They remained there for about 20 minutes, then slowly swam about 50 feet farther upstream when another group of people arrived. They had wing tags, #22 and #74 indicating they had been released into the wild by the Minnesota DNR, one pair per lake.

Similar species; how eliminated: Mute Swan by all black bill without knob at base; neck held straight not in S curve
Tundra Swan by forehead slanting down to straight bill, black facial skin ending in broad point at eye, not sharp point in front of eye, and dipping down into a V on forehead, not extending straight across

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? No
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.

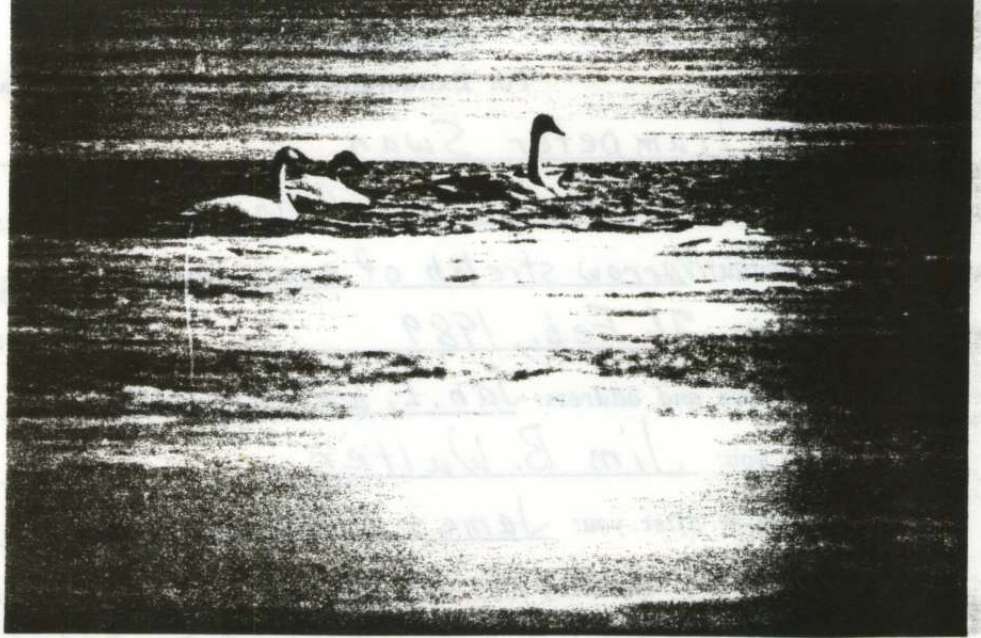
Lighting - late afternoon sun, good light
Distance - as close as 26 inches, measured my arm
Optical equipment - None needed

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have studied Mute Swan at Portland, Ia sewage lagoon and N.W. States cement plant pond. Have studied Tundra Swans on sheet water well within binocular and spotting scope range. Only previous experience with this species was studying books and TV-VER tape.
References and persons consulted before writing description:

None

How long before field notes made? At the time this form completed? 1 day

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).



Trumpeter Swan (1844)

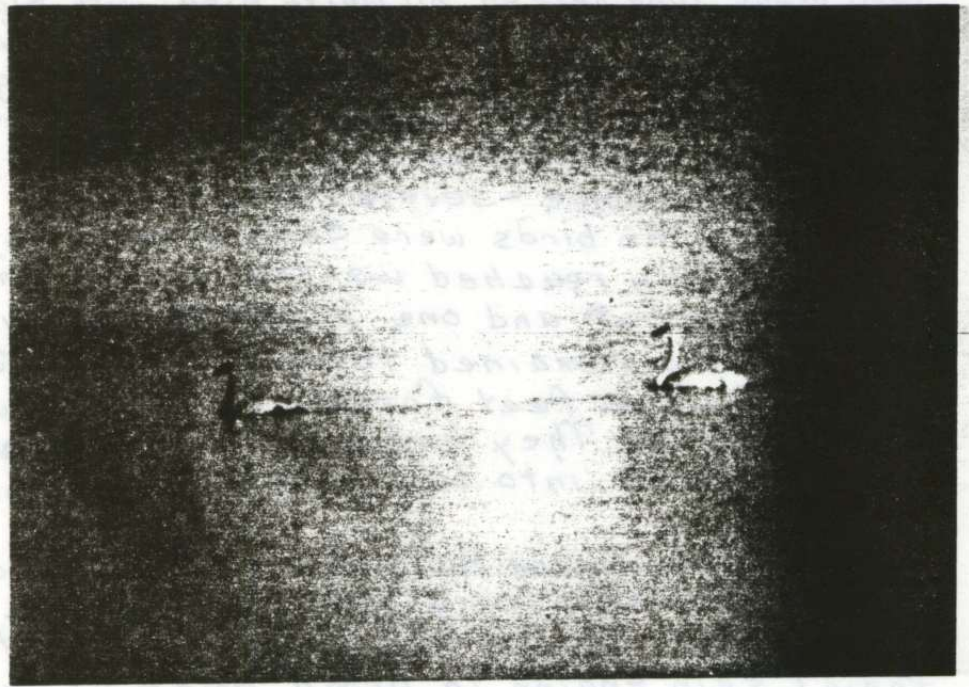
+ Tundra Swans

2-10-89

Le Claire

Photo by Don Moeller

89-01



Trumpeter Swan

2-26-89

Chicoes Cr.

Photo by Jarl.
+ Jim B. Walter

89-02

