

Tufted Duck
28 Aug 1980
Sweet Marsh, Bremer Co., IA
*F. Moore, *R. Myers
P-0174, IBL 52:41

Record Number: 80-22
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATIONS

Robert K. Myers, 30 Jun
Francis L. Moore, 28 Aug

PHOTOGRAPHS

Francis L. Moore, 28 Aug, P-0174

REFERENCES

Records Committee: 52:41

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

Tom Kent to Records Committee, 13 Sep 1993

VOTE: 2-V, 5-VI

VI, I am not convinced. To me it looks like an odd plumaged Lesser Scaup, perhaps oiled on breast. Head shape appears wrong. Date and tail wear suggests non-breeding straggler that summered in Iowa, enhancing chance of worn, off-color plumage.

VI, Head shape looks like ring-neck. Not experienced with molting ring-necks. Tufted very unlikely, esp. in summer.

V, Very difficult to identify. Has many features of female tufted, but not unlike female scaups. All Tufted Duck records of which I have seen were during late fall-early spring. Photos should be sent to experts for their opinion. Date of sighting is during molting period and could be male scaup in eclipse.

V, Aberrant l. scaup: head shape typical of this sp.--lacks ... head of tufted duck. Plumage suggests eclipse male or male with female elements in plumage.

VI, Nice photos. Not diagnostic. Tufted Duck female should have no white by bill.

VI, Pictures show that the bird is a male ring-necked duck, probably molting.

VI, Comparison with plates in Cramp (Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East, and N. Africa) and Belliose (Ducks, Geese and Swans of N. America) suggest to me that the bird shown in the photograph is an eclipse male Lesser Scaup, probably a bird which did not breed, and entered eclipse plumage early, allowing it to be in transition between eclipse and breeding plumage at the time of the picture (August 28). Reasons: (1) Adult male Tufted Duck eclipse plumage shows rather obvious vertical barring on sides without definite vertical contrast between dark breast and lighter belly. Head shape of Tufted Duck also is flat, rather like Greater Scaup. Head shape also eliminates female Tufted Duck. (2) Actions and date of observation suggest an eclipse male duck, most likely an unmated and therefore non-breeding bird. (3) Plates in Belliose of eclipse male Lesser Scaup in early nuptial molt in September is very similar to photographed bird, especially if molt to nuptial plumage from eclipse is well under way. Strong vertical contrast between breast and belly suggest molt has progressed significantly, although belly and back coloration appears to have

changed rather more slowly. Particularly significant is the smudgy white coloration at the base of the bill, clearly shown in Belliose plate. Belliose describes eclipse plumage of Lesser Scaup as "back brown, head brown-black, and belly mottled with brown". (4) Note the eclipse male Greater Scaup in Cramp--this bird strongly resembles the photographed bird in plumage characteristics.

REVOTE (1993): 4 A-P Ring-necked Duck, 3 A-P Lesser Scaup

NA [for Tufted, Ring-necked, and Lesser Scaup], Based on head shape and bill, this bird is absolutely, unquestionably a Lesser Scaup. Head shape is inconsistent for Ring-necked, and Tufted's is rounded. The bill is unmarked. Unless the Ring-neck molts its bill along with its feathers, it cannot be that species. Unfortunately, I don't have any good information on eclipse plumage of Ring-neck, but my hunch is that the ringed bill remains throughout molts. I think Myers is right that this bird is probably a hybrid. Kauffman (Adv. Birding) mentions that ducks hybridize more often than other bird families, and that he has personally seen a Ring-neck x scaup hybrid.

A-P [Lesser Scaup], Eclipsing male Lesser Scaup 1) all blue bill 2) flat back of head.

80-22

13 September 1993

To: IOU Records Committee
From: Tom Kent
Re: Request for reconsideration of record

Record: 80-22 Tufted Duck

Reason for request: Photos show Ring-necked Duck.

Comment: I didn't know for sure what this bird was at the time, although I did call it a Ring-necked Duck. I have had several opportunities to watch Ring-necks go through molt at Swan Lake. In fact there are two pair there this summer into September, and the males look like the bird in the photograph. The mark on the neck seems to disappear during molt. Note the head shape and bill, which are typical of Ring-necked.



Ring-necked Duck P-0174
Sweet M., Bremer Co., IA
28 Aug 1980 Francis Moore

80-22

Ring-necked Duck P-0174
Sweet M., Bremer Co., IA
28 Aug 1980 Francis Moore

80-22

MYERS

1. Species Tufted duck ♀ (?) 2. Number 1
 3. Location Sweet Marsh (Tom Stone Jr. + I first found bird)
 4. Date: June 30 5. Time Bird Seen: 7:45 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.
 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):

1. Med. size duck
2. Dark above + rusty below - darker on breast
3. bluish bill
4. yellow eye
5. dark feet
6. some white spots visible on wings
7. narrow white just behind bill

Please refer to Francis Moore's photographs

7. Description of voice, if heard: —
 8. Description of behavior: Sitting on mound of vegetation
 9. Habitat - general: marshy area near cattails
 specific:
 10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:
May be a ring-neck female or scaup but doesn't look right - probably a hybrid
 11. Distance (how measured)? probably about 50'
 12. Optical equipment: B. & L. 7X35's
 13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):
light was excellent - I have observed bird different times in different light and it didn't "shed new light"
 14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
no experience with Tufted - much with ring-necks + scaup
 15. Other observers: Francis Moore
Tom Stone + Tom Stone Jr.
 16. Did the others agree with your identification? } We only think and we are
 17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: } leaving it up to experts
 18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description
The Audubon Society Field Guide (Eastern) by Bull + Forrester has a picture on plate 155 that looks familiar but not exact
 19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? first notes were written immediately
 Signature: Robert K. Myers Address: 1236 Sylvia Ave
 Date: Nov. 3, 1980 City, State: Waterloo, Iowa 50701

MOORE

See photographs that accompany this documentation.
80-22

1. Species Tufted Duck
2. Number 1
3. Location N. side of Sweet Marsh near boat ramp at dam; west side of road.
4. Date: August 28, 1980
5. Time Bird Seen: 10:15 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.
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): Shape that of an *Aythya* species with size of ~~this species~~ ^{appearing} smaller than *Amarilla*. Plumage is that of definitive Basic Plumage of ♀, though somewhat out of usual (according to Palmer; below) on the breast which is usually not as dark as this duck. The "white" area at side of bill is quite indistinct in this individual whereas "usually" on Lesser Scaup a broader area is white although not necessarily so. Eye is quite yellow without eye-ring as in Ring-necked Duck. This individual showed very little if any white on belly. Somewhat perplexing is the shape of the head which has a bit of a pointed portion at crown. This could be a rudimentary "tuff" in the case of *A. fuligula* or the basic head shape of *A. affinis*. Head is all very dark brown with no auricular patch evident. Dark brown of head continues down onto breast and sides with a clear dividing line at approach to belly which is a dull, light buffy color. Back is uniform dark brown to dark gray. Ventral area becoming increasingly darker brown as approaches tail. Tail a dirty brown color which was quite worn. Rump was a uniform dark brown.
7. Description of voice, if heard: None heard [Bill a dull blue gray.]
8. Description of behavior: Unafraid at approach; upon waving my arms for awhile the duck slowly moved off of perch and swam off a little way. Quite tame. Cramp states that
9. Habitat - general: Shallow marsh very tolerant of human presence and often becomes tame and usually swims away rather than flies away from intruders
specific: Near boat ramp with abundance of water plants, especially Common Arrowhead, Smartweed species.
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain: Ring-neck Duck has eye-ring and distinct facial pattern in ♀. ♀ Lesser and Greater Scaup in most cases have much wider white area at side of bill and is a lot more distinct than the above-mentioned bird.
11. Distance (how measured)? 30' to 40' (eye)
12. Optical equipment: 7x35 mm Bausch & Lomb roof prism binoculars
Nikkormat FTN w/400 mm lens
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): Clear to partly cloudy, Sun shining full on bird, sun behind me while photographs taken.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: No previous experience with this species.
15. Other observers: Bob Myers, Russell Hays, Tom Stone, Tom Stone, Jr.
16. Did the others agree with your identification? Yes especially when compared to photograph of ♀ Tufted Duck on Page 125 of the Audubon Society Field Guide to N.A. Birds Eastern by Bull.
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: Tom Stone, Tom Stone, Jr., Bob Myers.
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description Audubon Society Field Guide to N.A. Birds, Eastern, Bull; Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, Vol. I, Cramp, et al.; Handbook of North American Birds, Vol. III, Palmer. Helpful in wording of description. See photographs that accompany this documentation.
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? approx. 4 hours.

Signature: James L. Moore Address: 264 Western Ave.

Date: August 28, 1980 City, State: Waterloo, IA 50701

11 March 1981

80-22

Francis Moore
Bob Myers
Waterloo

Dear Francis and Bob,

The Records Committee has reviewed your reports and photos of a possible Tufted Duck; 2 thought it was not possible to say whether it was a Tufted Duck or not and 5 thought it was not a Tufted Duck.

Comments were made as follows:

"I am not convinced. To me it looks like an odd plumaged Lesser Scaup, perhaps oiled on breast. Head shape appears wrong. Date and tail wear suggests not breeding straggler that summered in Iowa, enhancing chance of worn, off-color plumage."

"Head shape looks like ring-neck--not experienced with moulting ring-necks. Tufted very unlikely, especially in summer."

"Very difficult to identify. Has many features of female tufted, but not unlike female scaups. All Tufted Duck records of which I have seen were during late fall-early spring. Photos should be sent to experts for their opinion. Date of sighting during moulting period and could be male scaup in eclipse."

"Aberrant L. Scaup: head shape typical of this species--lacks round head of Tufted Duck. Plumage suggests eclipse male or male with female elements in plumage."

"Nice photos, not diagnostic. Tufted Duck male should have no white by bill."

"Pictures show that the bird is a male Ring-necked Duck--probably moulting."

"Comparison with plates in Cramp (Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and N. Africa) and Bellrose (Ducks, Geese and Swans of N. America) suggest to me that the bird shown in the photograph is an eclipse male Lesser Scaup, probably a bird which did not breed, and entered eclipse plumage early, allowing it to be in transition between eclipse and breeding plumage at the time of the picture (August 28).

Reasons:

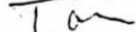
- (1) Adult male Tufted Duck eclipse plumage shows rather obvious vertical barring on sides without definite vertical contrast between dark breast and lighter belly. Head shape of Tufted Duck also is flat, rather like Greater Scaup.
- (2) Actions and date of observation suggest an eclipse male duck, most likely an unmated and therefore non-breeding bird.
- (3) Plates in Bellrose of eclipse male Lesser Scaup in early prenuptial molt in September is very similar to photographed bird, especially if molt to nuptial plumage from eclipse is well under way.

Strong vertical contrast between breast and belly suggest molt has progressed significantly, although belly and neck coloration appears to have changed rather more slowly. Particularly significant is the smudgy white coloration at the base of the bill, clearly shown in Bellrose plate. Bellrose describes eclipse plumage of Lesser Scaup as 'back brown, head brown-black, and belly mottled with brown'.
(4) Note the eclipse male Lesser Scaup in Cramp-- this bird strongly resembles the photographed bird in plumage characteristics."

Thank you for sharing this most challenging identification problem with us. It might be worth sending to one of the birding magazines that has quizzes in each issue such as Birding or Continental Bird Life.

The committee would also like to commend you for the excellent photographs.

Sincerely,


Tom Kent
Secretary, Records Committee