

DOCUMENTATION FORM  
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

What species? Surf Scoter How many? 2 <sup>♀ or</sup> Im.

Location? Hageman Farm Pond, 2 1/2 miles west of Burr Oak, Winneshiek Co., Iowa  
north side of County Rd. A18

Type of Habitat? large farm pond

When? date(s): Sept. 23-29, 1991 time: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Who? your name and address: Dennis Carter, P.O. Box 531, Decorah, IA 52101

Others with you: \_\_\_\_\_

Others before or after you: Arnold and Dolores Rohm, Mary Jo Hartogh, Dr. Tex Sordahl,

Lee Zieke, and other members of Upper Iowa Audubon Society  
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.

On 9/23/91, I visited a large farm pond west of Burr Oak and immediately discovered two dark, medium-sized waterfowl which I immediately recognized as scoters. I thought they might be white-winged scoters, but when the birds flapped their wings I saw there were no white <sup>wing</sup> patches of any kind. Both birds had two white patches on ~~the~~ <sup>each</sup> sides of their heads, more distinct in one individual. The rear spot appeared somewhat larger than the forward mark. Both birds appeared dark brown with light bellies which could be seen when they preened. They had sloping profiles and light gray bills. They dove repeatedly and spent more time beneath the surface than on it. They were fast swimmers (underwater) and moved from one side of the pond to the other in a few minutes. Other waterbirds that were initially seen nearby were 2 redheads and a coot.

Arnold and Dolores Rohm returned with me on 9/23 and also observed ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> scoters. (see reverse side).

Similar species; how eliminated:

White-winged Scoter was eliminated because both individuals showed no white on either the upper or lower surfaces of the wings, when they flapped them.

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

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

varied from poor to excellent lighting  
distances varied from 250 to 400 yards  
optical equipment 8X40 binoculars and 60X scope

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

I have seen this species several times on the Atlantic Coast, e.g. at Cape May, NJ.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

A Field Guide to the Birds - Peterson Birds of North America - National Geographic  
Advanced Birding - Kaufman

How long before field notes made? on site this form completed? Sept. 30, 1991 & Oct. 1,

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

I observed the surf scoters again on 9/24, 25, 27, 28, & 29. During later leisurely observations, some under excellent lighting conditions, I made the following notes -

Both individuals appeared to have darker (black) caps which <sup>extended down the back of the neck.</sup> They were about 1/2 times the size of a pied-billed grebe that swam nearby. One bird's feet & legs appeared to be pale orange while the other bird appeared to have gray feet. Bills were a uniform gray color. A small space separated the white spots on the sides of the head. The underparts were white, visible only when they preened.

During the seven days that the scoters were on the pond, I observed them for a total of about 2 hours. I notified other birders in the area of the presence of these birds, and they were seen by Mary Jo Hartogh and Tex Sordahl who agreed with my identification. They were also seen by other local birders.

The surf scoters seemed to be part of a push of migrants from the north. Other birds seen at the Hageman Farm Pond included <sup>Red-necked</sup> ~~Northern~~ Phalarope (9/24), ~~Water~~ <sup>American</sup> Pipit (20 on 9/23 and later), and Rusty Blackbird (9/27 and later).

When I visited the Hageman Farm Pond on 10/1, the surf scoters were gone. I plan on checking this productive locality more frequently in the future.

Dennis Carter