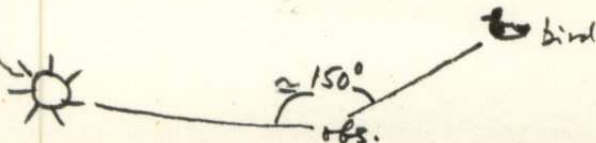


BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

- OK
- Species Greater Scaup, ♂ 2. Number: 1
  - Location Coralville Reservoir, Johnson Co., Iowa, just NE of McHaffey Bridge (rd F28)
  - Date: 3/20/1976 5. Time Bird seen: 3:50 to 4:00
  - 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): black chest; round head with greenish gloss; white flank; finely banded gray back; yellow eye, blue bill with black nail; hind end back; white wing stripe in flight clearly extends well beyond speculum onto primaries (almost to the) wingtip. Lesser Scaup next to it less chunky than Gr. Scaup; the latter has a relatively slender, heavier neck; proportions of Gr. Scaup more those of Redhead (also nearby).
  - Description of voice, if heard: none
  - Description of behavior: made repeated shallow dives; harassed ♀ Lesser Scaups when they came too close
  - Habitat - general: swimming in water of reservoir  
specific: near the shore in shallow water, then flew off into deeper central water
  - Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:  
Lesser Scaup - several pairs nearby; ♂ in same scope field as Gr. Scaup: differences evident — L. Scaup showed purplish, not green, head gloss, slightly peaked head, daintier proportions, finer bill.
  - Distance (how measured)? est. 200 ft; bird ≈ 50 ft. below obs. 12. Optical equipment: 7x35 Leitz binoculars, 20x Bushnell zoom scope (window-mounted)
  - Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): bright sunshine, sun SW, bird NNW from observer (ideal lighting) see diagram
  - Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: Lesser Scaup abundant migrant in Iowa; studied flock of Gr. Scaup 3/75 in Chesapeake Bay
  - Other observers: —
  - Did the others agree with your identification? —
  - Other observers who independently identified this bird: —
  - Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:  
Only after writing the description. Birding 7: 232, 1975. Peterson, Robbins, Roberts' Birds of Minnesota! All confirm identification
  - How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 1 hour

Signature W. H. Salmi Address: R#6  
Date: 3/20/1976 City, State: Iowa City, Iowa 52240



(over)

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, there really is no need to describe your observations in writing. But, if you have seen something unusual and want to share this experience with others, a written description is essential. It is true your immediate friends who know and respect your ability probably will accept your report without question, but what about those who do not know you, particularly the bird students 100 years from now who cannot know you? Also, what about the habitual skeptics? And most importantly, what about the compilers of regional bird lists who probably will insist that records be scientifically sound? All these critics will investigate your observation not because they assume you are wrong, but merely because they ordinarily expect verification. Whether the individual demanding verification realizes it or not, in doing so, he is employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

If your observation involves a common 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, verification is not obtained easily and special documentation is necessary. The best documentation is a collected specimen, and many bird students insist this is the only acceptable evidence. However, others recognize the importance and reliability of sight records accumulated by the experienced field observer, and maintain that even extraordinary sight records are acceptable if accompanied by an adequate verifying description.

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.

It should also be pointed out that with the great photographic equipment now available, species identification from photographs are possible. Such species documentation are highly desirable and should be sent to the state editors or to large museums.

Recd  
Ives City, Iowa 22240

W. H. ...  
3/20/1971