

Middlewestern Prairie Region  
(Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio)

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species SURF scoter 2. Number: 15
3. Location Slough at SE edge of Iowa City IA
4. Date: 5/9 - 5/17 5. Time Bird seen: total obs to ~ 1 hr
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):  
large duck with heavy head, neck, bill. larger than lesser scaup near it. Body, head, neck black, wings blackish but more 'faded' in color. Bill swallows at base, making a very shallow angle  $\bar{\tau}$  head (see sketch) distal part of bill red-orange, proximal part had a round white swelling on each side, with a dark smudge covering most of center. Narrow vertical whitish stripe on nape (Crown patch missing).
7. Description of voice, if heard:  
not observed to call
8. Description of behavior: swimming in open water and among reeds, diving.
9. Habitat - general: slough with fairly deep water at center. Supported  
specific: several other spp of diving duck during may (ring-neck, d. scaup, redhead)
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:  
black (not dk brown) body and diving habit, bill color, <sup>and shape</sup> rule out black duck. bill coloration and shape rule out ~~the~~ Common and white-winged scoters (also absence of eye patch for w-w but bad head plumage makes this a less good argument)
11. Distance (how measured)? 20-70 yds (estimated) 12. Optical equipment: 10x50 binocs, 25x60 scope
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):  
bright to moderate sunlight on bird, sun behind observer
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: 6 yrs birding of coastal Mass, 2 yrs coastal Wash. - have seen all 3 scoters, C. eider, other sea
15. Other observers: locks many times, K. eider several times. Nicholas Halmi, F.W. and Thomas Kent, Carol Newton, many others.
16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: ?
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: none. description above copied from one made immediately after 1st sighting.

19. <sup>Mile</sup> How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 5'

Michael C Newton

Signature

Address: 128 Grove St #

Date: 20 May 1975

City, State: Iowa City IA 52240

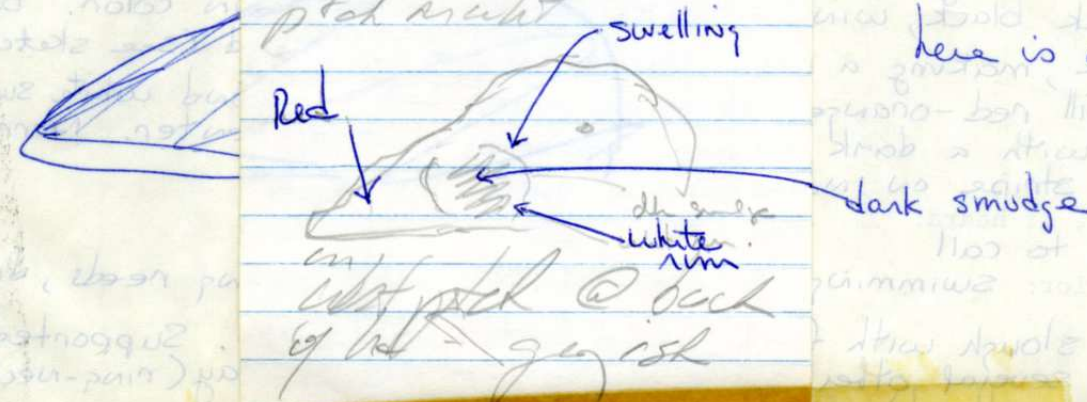
→ (over)



1/2

1/2 duck, head bl.  
black patch  
white patch

smaller bill  
red, white  
at sides, dark  
patch



here is original sketch

white patch @ back  
of head - greyish

The slough on which the scoter was found was one of the local 'hot spots' this spring. In addition, it produced numerous late records of ducks and many shorebirds, including avocet and Hudsonian godwit, also tentorial y-h blackbirds.

158 Grove St #2  
Irvine CA 92714

Michael Chamberlain  
20 Mar 1972

(over) ←