

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Greater Scaup 2. Number: 4 - 2 pr.
3. Location Cone Marsh - S. E. area
4. Date: 4-6-80 5. Time Bird seen: ^{8:30} 7:20 AM to ^{8:45 AM} 7:25 AM
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):
Black, gray & white diving duck. Head appeared greenish compared to Lesser scaup seen nearby. Nail on end of bill large, very noticeable. When flushed the wing stripe was seen to extend almost all the way to the end of the wing. During the second period of obs. the "crested" head was noted on one male.
7. Description of voice, if heard: silent
8. Description of behavior: birds were in shallow water & were feed by stretching heads under water, not diving or tipping.
9. Habitat - general: pond-marsh
specific: shallow pond edge
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
Lesser Scaup - those nearby had smaller bill nails. They were not closely associating with the Greater.
11. Distance (how measured)? 50 yards at the closest 12. Optical equipment: 8x40, 10x35 binos, 20x zoom scope, no light angle
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): O.C. - no light angle
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: Have observed this species on about six occasions previously in the last 5 years.
15. Other observers: Clark Scott
16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: none to our knowledge
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
none used
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 20 min.

Address: _____

Signature _____

Date: _____ City, State: _____

From Peter C. Petersen 4/24/80 px
(over)

Paterson

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

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.

City, State: _____

Paterson
(over)