

White-winged Scoter, Melanitta fusca

November 19, 1989 16:00 - 17:00

References

Pleasant Creek Lake north of Palo, Linn Co., Iowa

Description: A lone, large, large-billed duck spotted with Zeiss 10X40 binocular 200+ meters distant near dam. Dark brown to black dorsally except for white patches behind the large bill and around eye. Bill long and deep at the base. My immediate impression was White-winged Scoter. I could see a sliver of white posteriorly (area of folded secondaries/tertiaries) on one wing at rest. A drive around to the dam brought me to within 100 meters where I could better study the facial pattern: Obscure whitish patch at base of bill (feathered in appearance though I cannot be sure of this) and brighter white patch of similar size slightly behind and below eye. Bill itself was somewhat pale, a grayish or dull pinkish. Closer inspection revealed definite white patches in the secondaries of both wings at rest and as bird flapped wings on water. At the time bird raised to flap I noted white venter with warm brown tones in breast and sides. This bird was studied off-and-on for about one hour, always alone except on one occasion within 10 meters of a female Hooded Merganser. The scoter was much larger.

I never saw it dive

Conditions: Late afternoon sunny skies, slightly choppy water.

Similar Species: White wing patches and typical facial pattern of young White-winged rule out other scoters. Large size, large bill, dual facial patches eliminate female Bufflehead. White wing patches and large bill eliminate female Harlequin Duck.

Previous Experience with Species: Several adults of both sexes studied at various points along the California coast in March, 1979.

Note: I judged this bird to be a young of the year vs. adult female based on white venter and prominent facial patches. Sex unknown.

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(over)

References

Dinsmore, J.J., Kent, T.H., Koenig, D., Petersen, P.C., Roos, D.M. 1984. Iowa Birds. The Iowa State University Press.

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Kortright, F.H. 1967. The Ducks, Geese, & Swans of North America. The Stackpole Co. and Wildlife Management Institute.

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Oberholser, H.C. 1974. The Bird Life of Texas, vol. 1. University of Texas Press.

Conditions: Late afternoon sunny skies, slightly choppy water. Similar Species: White wing patches and typical facial pattern of young White-winged Teal out other teal. Large size, large bill, dual facial patches eliminate female. White wing patches and large bill eliminate female Merganser Duck.

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