

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species White-winged Scoter 2. Number: 1

3. Location Iowa part of DeSoto Bend National Wildlife Refuge

4. Date: March 14, 1987 SAT 5. Time Bird seen: 2:00 PM to: 2:15 PM

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):

7. Description of voice, if heard: Not heard

8. Description of behavior: swimming - "taxied" along water prior to take off

9. Habitat - general: water
specific: along shore until alerted, then swam further out and finally flew off

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:

11. Distance (how measured)? 75-100 ft. - just offshore 12. Optical equipment: 20X

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): more overcast Bushnell Scope on tripod

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:

15. Other observers: Craig Harms of Ames

16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: NONE

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?

Andrew S. Fr DVM Address: 153-C University Village
Signature

Date: 5-20-87 City, State: Ames, Iowa 50010

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6. We observed A mostly brown, slightly mottled duck About the size of the ^{common} Goldeneye ~~of~~ that we had observed earlier. This bird was alone up along the bank and swam out into open water as we walked along the shore in some woods.

Description:

- drab brown with slight mottling all over
- bill had noticeable extension of cere up toward eye - bill was dull brown and irregularly humped dorsally
- eye was dark
- AN EVIDENT whitish patch that blended into surrounding brown was evident between cere and eye. This patch was not distinctly white but more creamy colored and not very well-demarcated. It blended well with adjacent brown.

- No other noteworthy marks were noted until the bird flew, at which time prominent white wing patches (secondaries) along the inner, trailing portion of the wing were seen. In taking off, this bird characteristically "taxied" across the water before actually taking off. It traveled at least 30 feet before leaving the water.

- Overall shape was of a much more long, pointed duck than many of the other common species. It also appeared stouter and chunkier.

See ~~sketch~~
photocopy of field notes.

10. By general shape, bill characteristic, and color this bird was identified as a scoter. The white/creamish spot between the cere and eye and lack of pale cheeks and throat ruled out the Black scoter; the bill was also too extended up the forward part of head for a Black scoter. I did not feel comfortable differentiating Surf from White-winged based on the morphology of the head. No white wing patch was evident while this bird was on the water. In my experience (see # 14), the white patches on the heads of female and immature scoters are very unreliable and highly variable. Fortunately the two key characteristics were plainly visible when the bird flew; paddling along the water for a short distance (confirmed scoter), and prominent white secondaries (confirmed white-winged scoter).

13. The earlier description on this day (Barrow's Goldeneye), was in sunlight however at about 1:00 PM it became overcast. Light on this bird therefore was diffusely scattered by the clouds and no shadows or contrast was present. The sun was still fairly high in the sky although obscured by clouds.

14. As stated in The Barrow's Goldeneye account, I lived in Michigan for several years and birdwatched extensively. I have seen hundreds to thousands of scoters of all three species along the Great Lakes, particularly off the eastern shore of Michigan in Lake Huron. Scoters arrive here in late fall and many will overwinter (depending on degree of ice lock) and molt. Late February birds in this area, particularly evident along St. Clair River since it remains ice free, are a combination of many plumages. Males are readily identifiable by their black/white pattern but females and immature first-years are variable. Although generally a dull, mottled brown, the white pattern on the heads of white-winged scoters varies. I traditionally would like to see the white wing patch on these female and immature birds to separate white-wing from surf. The black scoters are morphologically distinct enough to not be a problem.

18. Consultation with Petersen's "Eastern Birds" verified my observations but my previous experience was extensive enough to assure me of my identification. Illustrations and descriptions used in this account were taken from field notes (see attached photocopy).

19. Field notes were made on day of sighting. This complete documentation completed May 20, 1987.

Andrew S. From

White-winged
Scaup

March 14 Sat

2:00 PM

Desoto Bend
NWR

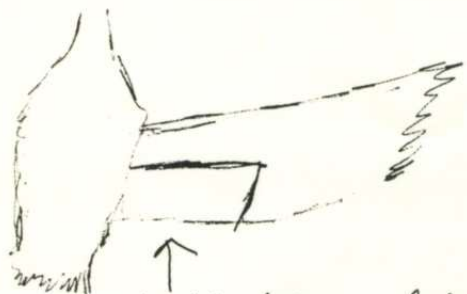
Bill extended
up to wood
eye

pale, diffuse
white between
bill and
eye



Dark brown,
mottled
Body

Head had
cere that extended
further up to
eye than most
ducks. Between bill
and eye was a slight
wash of white that
blended into brown on head.



in flight, white
wing patch

Was not sure of identity until flew and
saw characteristic white secondaries.