

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

1988 *pe*

What species? White-winged Scoter How many? 1 and 2

Location? Miss. River (pool 19) near Montrose in Lee Co., IOWA

Type of Habitat? River

When? date(s): April ~~18~~²⁶ through (off and on) May 31 time: various to _____

Who? your name and address: Robert Cecil, 327 S. 6th, Keokuk, Iowa 52632

Others with you: John Cecil on Ap. 30, Tom Kent on May 6

Others before or after you: Chuck Fuller, others??

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Chuck Fuller of Burlington called me to report two White-winged Scoters at Pool 19 near Montrose on Ap. 26. I checked, and found, among several other lingering divers, two essentially black or blackish ducks with wedge-shaped heads. One bird showed a white, small, tear-dropped white mark about eye, a conspicuous dark bill with yellow on the end, and usually inconspicuous white patch in wing (when sitting). The head was generally wedge-shaped, but not so elongated as Canvasback. Otherwise, the bird was somewhat stocky and chunky, and overall blackish. While I had no doubt it was a W.W. Scoter, I waited until it flapped its wings a few times (usually after a dive) and observe the white speculum amid otherwise black wings. The second bird was a paler blackish, had no observable head markings, but also displayed the white speculum. I assumed this was either an a first year male or female. In size, the birds were slightly shorter than accompanying Canvasbacks, and about the same size or slightly larger than accompanying Scaup Sp. (APRIL)

On the 30th with John Cecil, the birds flushed, and we both had excellent vies of them in flight, noting white speculums.

On the 6th of May, Kent and I observed birds sitting, noting general features described a above, including white speculum on black wings.

(cont.)

Similar species; how eliminated:

Without lengthy elaboration, I felt white speculum eliminated other Scoters. Larger size, dark (or yellow and dark) bill eliminated Am Coot.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? Nope

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.

Various conditions and distances, but usually 200+ yards. Optics: 20x Nikon Scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen all three Scoters in Iowa, although have never had the opportunity to study White-winged in such detail before.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

None before writing description, but did refer to field guide during initial identification.

How long before field notes made? at time this form completed? May 31.

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

White-winged Scoter description (cont.)

I last noted the birds on May 13 (I thought), and after a few more days of looking, assumed they had gone. (I drive past this location daily). On May 31, I stopped at the location to count the lingering divers, which I had seen daily as I drove past in the car, for this Spring report. I was astonished to see a White-winged Scoter among the group. The bird was not well marked, with no white about head, and no conspicuous coloration on the bill. Otherwise, the bird fit the general description of an imm., including overall dark color, wedge-shaped head, and stockiness. I waited for the bird to dive, which it did, and then noted the conspicuous white speculum when it flapped its wings. I felt confident this was the immature bird noted earlier in the month. I was aware that this was a record late date by 2+ weeks, and that this bird may stay into the summer, for a first summer record for Iowa.

DETAILS OF IDENTIFICATION

White Winged Scoter

Final Observation : June 5, 1988

Location: Mississippi River 5 miles north of keokuk, Lee County, Iowa

Two White-winged Scoters had been present since April 26, with one departing sometime in mid May. The features noted on the late bird included the heavy, all black, duck-shaped body, significantly larger than a Coot--closer in size to Canvasback, of which there were several to compare. The head and bill were essentially wedge-shaped. While the earlier bird (the one that departed) had conspicuous yellow on the bill, the lingering bird did not. Similarly, the white teardrop around the eye was not well developed, although it was noticeable under close observation. I am guessing this was an immature bird.

As with each time I observed these birds, I waited until they reared up and flapped their wings, which they did frequently. I also did this on the 5th, and was able to clearly observe the white speculum in the wing.

No other obvious field marks were noted, and no sounds were heard.

NOTE: I took very sketchy notes on the 5th because while the bird had moved perhaps 5 miles downstream, I fully expected to see it again. I never did. The bird I saw on this date was obviously (to me) the same I had been seeing on previous days, and the above details represent a compendium of observations. Also, I submitted a documentation of this and the other bird with my spring field reports

Bob Cecil