

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

SPECIES: Black Scoter (Female)

LOCATION: Pleasant Creek Lake State Park, Linn County.

DATE & TIME: 24 October, 1992 (10:29-43 AM).

OBSERVER: Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll, NE, Iowa City, Iowa, 52240.

OTHER OBSERVERS: The bird was discovered by Pete Wickham and John Daniel, and was also seen later by Tom Kent and Randy Pinkston.

BACKGROUND: After receiving a call from Pete Wickham of a female black scoter at this location, I arrived 45 minutes later to find the bird in the middle of the lake in the company of a single male Ruddy Duck.

GENERAL APPEARANCE: The duck like bird was generally all dark except for a distinct white area on the side of face and neck. The Ruddy Duck beside it appeared to be much smaller, maybe two-thirds to three-fourths the size.

DESCRIPTION: The only area on the bird which was not dark gray was a well-defined white area which started below the eye on the side of the face and included all the side and front of the neck. The bill was dark gray and relatively small, much smaller when compared to the relative size of the Ruddy Duck. The tail appeared stiff, but did not stick up in the air like that of the Ruddy Duck.

SIMILAR SPECIES: The only other waterfowl with a white pattern on the side of face and neck is a Ruddy Duck, and a male of that species was always within a few feet during the observation. Differences between the two were general size, relative bill size, tail in the air, white pattern that didn't extend nearly as far down the neck, and generally lighter coloration of the ruddy.

VIEWING CONDITIONS and OPTICS: The day was sunny and viewing was with a KOWA TSN-4 telescope looking west at about 250 yards.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen this bird five times previously in Iowa, and a number of times on the west coast.

FIELD NOTES and GUIDES: Field notes were made immediately, and no field guides were consulted at the time. This form was typed two days later, on 26 October.