BIRDS: DUCUMENTATION OF UNUSUAL RECORD

HOODED MERGANSER (1)

Location: Willow Slough, Anderson Twp., Mills Co., Iowa.

Date: June 4, 1978 Late evening.

Description: Very dark, rather small duck. Head unpatterned. Bill thin, yellow.

Behavior: Duck spends much time peering underwater like a loon looking for food. Dives.

Habitat: Lake, out near the middle, where there are tops of drowned weeds sticking out of the water.

Similar species: Only mergansers have thin bills (of the ducks, that is). Only Hooded mergansers have yellow bills or unpatterned heads. Shape and bill color eliminate the grebes. Size eliminates the loons. I really can't think of anything else it could be.

Distance: It was maybe a third of the way across the lake. 80 yds? (A rough guess)

Optical equipment: 20/40x telescope.

Light: It was late and the sun low, but it did shine on this duck, though nearer parts of the lake were shadowed by the dike. Sky clear, bright. The duck was east of me while the sun was west.

Previous experience with this species: I've never before identified the female Hooded Merganser without the male. I've seen enough of the other mergansers, grebes, diving ducks, etc. to eliminate them confidently,

No other observers who could identify this duck.

No books.

The parts under description and behavior were quoted from my notes taken while I could still see theduck.

Barbara L. Wilson
Rt. 1, Box 41
Hastings, Ia. 51540
~~June~~ July 14, 1978