


November 27th, 1988

On November 26th, 1988 at 3 P.M., a diving duck was seen by myself as the lone observer. It was located at the south settling pond of the Iowa Public Power Plant in Mills County Iowa. It was smaller than a mallard and between the sizes of male and female common goldeneye present on the pond. Overall color was dark brown, darker than the female mallards present. The belly was a slightly lighter brown. The bill was dark and I was unable to determine whether it was feathered. It was acutely angled and the upperline appeared straight. Crown was flattish. Eye color unknown. Two distinct whitish spots were visible on the face. One spot, located below and slightly in front of the eye was shaped like this;  . The second spot was located in the ear area and slightly larger than the first. This was the only contrasting color on the bird. The neck was short and stalky, mantle was rounded, and the short tail was flipped up. Wings, breast, and flanks unremarkable. A white speculum was not seen during preening and wing exercising.

The observation lasted about 15 minutes at a distance of approximately 75 meters. Viewing was through a 20x spotting scope. The weather was overcast with a strong NW wind.

The facts that it was a diving duck, the bill shape, the overall dark color, and the two whitish head spots indicated that it was a sea duck (*Melanitta*). The lack of a white speculum present when it should have been observable, and the shape of the forespot indicated it was an adult female surf scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*).

Submitted by,



Gerald W. Toll