

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD IN IOWA

SPECIES: Surf Scoter (one, immature)

DATE: 27 November 1985

LOCATION: DeSoto NWR oxbow lake. Bird in Iowa at all times.

VIEWING CONDITIONS: Excellent; sunny but no heat distortion. Some fog over water (temperature about 6 deg. F). Bird well seen, however, with sun behind us.

OBSERVERS: W. Ross Silcock and Babs Padelford.

DESCRIPTION and CONCLUSIONS: Written evening of Nov 27.

A large (about Mallard-size) black-appearing duck. Most noticeable features were the large bill, appearing somewhat bulbous in the area of the proximal culmen, and two large paler spots on each side of the head. The two spots were not totally distinct, as the area around them was paler than the rest of the dark feathering on the head. The bill shape alone was diagnostic, compared to White-winged Scoters seen within the week in the same area. The bird dived several times while we observed it, and no white speculum could be seen in the wings. This last point is not alone enough to identify the bird as a Surf Scoter in our opinion, as the white can be hidden even if several dives are observed. However, taken together with the large bill, the bird can be conclusively identified as a Surf Scoter.