

DOCUMENTATION FORM
Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species: Surf Scoter

Location: Jester Park, Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co., IA

Habitat: Open water

Date: 10 November 1990

Time: 9:50 am to 10:05 am

Name and Address: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Avenue, Norwalk, Iowa 50211

Other observers: Bery Engebretsen, Eugene and Eloise Armstrong, Pam and Reid Allen, other from Des Moines Audubon

Description of bird: This bird was identified as a duck by its size and shape. The comparative size of the small body/large head and bill led me to believe it was a sea duck, and the flat, angular slope of the head and bill and broad base to the bill identified it as a scoter. For the most part the bird was all dark brown with the exception of a good sized white spot/crescent behind the eye and a smaller white spot in front of the eye. Shading was not evident as the bird appeared to be essentially the same color otherwise. Occasionally the bird would raise its wings and they were uniformly dark. Based on the lack of a pale nape patch and size and definition of the facial patches, this bird was probably, but not conclusively, a juvenile.

Similar species and how eliminated: Most ducks were eliminated by the angle/slope of the head and bill and the size of the bill. Although there was a similarity of head profile to the Common Eider, the facial spots eliminated any eider. Black Scoter would have a more rounded head with a uniform lighter cheek area as opposed to the spots on this bird. White-winged Scoter should have shown more rounded angle from the top of the head to the bill, generally would have less distinct facial spots, and definitely would have had white wing patches when the bird raised its wings.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? No
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions (lighting, distance, optics): Observed at perhaps 200-300 yards through scope at 25x-45x. Skies were mostly overcast with light varying from time to time.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: All scoters have been observed periodically over the past several years.

References and persons consulted before writing description: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America was consulted during observation. Madge and Burn, Waterfowl, was consulted prior to completing documentation.

How long before field notes made? Some notes dictated at time of observation
How long before this form completed? Evening of 11/10/90