

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

What species? Tundra Swan How many? 7 (5 ad, 2 imm.)
Location? Pool 19 of Mississippi R., near Montrose, Lee Co., IA
Type of Habitat? resting on ice on river
When? date(s): 31 Dec 1988 time: 10:15 am, to 11:30 a.m.
Who? your name and address: Steve Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010
Others with you: Bart Ballard, Fairfax IA
Others before or after you: _____

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

At 10:15 a.m., we noticed 7 swans on the ice with Great Canada Geese. The swans were about 50% larger than the geese. Five of the swans were all white and were presumed adults, but two of the swans had browner heads and necks and were thought to be immatures.

Our identification as Tundra Swans is based on neck posture and bill shape. A couple of the swans were seen swimming and feeding in a small patch of open water. When they were swimming, their necks were held straight up from the body. The neck was not bent back over the body, nor was it held curved back like a Mute Swan. Although the viewing distance was great, I think I saw the bills pretty well on a couple of the birds. The bills appeared to have "dished" upper mandibles, and appeared more slender than the bill of a Trumpeter Swan.

Note that on 26 Dec 1988, I saw two Trumpeter Swans on the Des Moines CBC. Both of the birds were from the Minnesota flock.

Similar species; how eliminated:

Neck posture and bill shape eliminates Trumpeter and Mute swan.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? NO
If yes, explain: _____

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.

Viewing conditions weren't the best, although the light was excellent. Estimated viewing distance was about 3/4 mile. I used a Bushnell 20-45x Spotting scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

I have seen many Tundra Swans and a few Trumpeter Swans in Iowa. I am also very familiar with Mute Swans from Massachusetts.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

How long before field notes made? none made this form completed? 1 day

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).