

DOCUMENTATION FORM
Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species: Black Scoter - breeding plumage male

Location: Jester Park area of Saylorville Lake, Polk County, IA

Habitat: Large impoundment with much open water

Date(s): 4/9/89

Time: 5:20 pm to 5:30 pm

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

Other observers: Andy Fix

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, under-tail, legs, feet). Also mention behavior and voice.

This was a medium sized, glossy black duck with a round head sitting rather low in the water. The tail seemed rather long in proportion to the body. The bill and body were all black except for what appeared to be a triangular fluorescent orange patch on the upper part of the bill. The tip of the upper mandible and the entire lower mandible were black. The orange patch did not appear knobby but I am unsure if this was simply my observation position. The scoter spooked as I drove closer and skitted across the top of the water before settling down again.

Similar species and how eliminated:

The coot was eliminated by bill color and general body shape. Other scoters were eliminated by the rounder head shape, lack of any white on the head or body, and by the distinctive bill color and pattern.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

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

Excellent light with sun at back. The bird was observed initially from about fifteen feet off shore which would make it approximately 40-50' from my vehicle. It moved another fifty feet away which made photography difficult. Optical equipment included 7x26 binoculars and scope at 30x-45x.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

First black scoter in breeding plumage.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Peterson's Field Guide to the Birds

How long before field notes made? 2 hours How long before this form completed? 2 hours