

Middlewestern Prairie Region
(Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio)

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Black Scoter 2. Number: one
3. Location Big Spirit Lake, Dickinson County, Iowa
4. Date: November 14, 1985 5. Time Bird seen: 3:20 to 3:31 PM
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):
- An all-black duck with a black bill and prominent, bright, orange knob at base of bill. A little smaller than the Canvasbacks with which it was seen, or approximately the size of a Lesser Scaup. There were no white or even light colored areas anywhere on the bird's body--it appeared entirely black other than the orange knobbed bill. Did not get to see feet or undersides as it was swimming the entire while I observed it. (unfortunately it was out of camera range)
7. Description of voice, if heard: (none)
8. Description of behavior: Was swimming with a small raft of Canvasbacks (60), but it appeared to swim around more rapidly than the Cans.
9. Habitat - general: Seen on open water of Big Spirit Lake.
specific:
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
White-winged scoter--no white evident on wings or head
Surf Scoter--no white evident on head (immatures of either of these species might appear similar to Black Scoter, except for presence of orange knob)
Coot--smaller, has a whitish bill
11. Distance (how measured)? approximately 1,500 ft.
12. Optical equipment: 20x B&L spotting scope
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): good sunlight from SW; I observed bird from SE.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: Have observed surf scoters on pacific coast; have handled 2 hunter-killed
15. Other observers: (none) White-winged scoters; vast experience with coots in Iowa Lakes Region.
16. Did the others agree with your identification? (not app.)
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: none as of this writing; although I directed another competent birder to sight later in afternoon.
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: Consulted Peterson & Robbins et.al. field guides within minutes of sighting and tentative ID as a Black Scoter. Field guides were used to confirm the ID. On return to office I further confirmed ID by checking with the Audubon Encyclopedia of N.A. Birds (Terres).
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? Field notes completed at time of sighting. This report completed 18 hours later.

Address: Box 65, Larchwood, Iowa 51241

Signature Douglas C. Harr

Date: Nov. 15, 1985 City, State: Larchwood, Iowa 51241