

Red Phalarope
27 Aug 1989
IPL Ponds, Pottawattamie Co., IA
Silcock
IBL 60:11, 14, 61:86

Record Number: 89-33
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Ross Silcock

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 60:11, 14

Records Committee: IBL 61:86

VOTE: 4 A-D, 2 N-A, 1 abstain

NA: Highly unreadable document does not rule out Red-necked Phalarope.

NA: Quite possibly this identification is correct but the only mention of this accidental species that came from any of the other 6 birders present in their season field report was a comment that there was disagreement about this bird and that it was probably a Sanderling. Most of the description does sound like a basic plumaged Red Phalarope but I could not conclusively seem to rule out the possibility of a Sanderling. Much of the basic description of size, shape, coloration, etc. can possibly fit both species. This, combined with the apparent reluctance of other observers to make the same conclusion, provides a reasonable doubt. Apparently no field notes were taken and the description was not written until after discussion with others, reference to field guides, and about a day of consideration.

A-D: About all we have to go on is bill shape. Size compared to Pectoral, but evidently none present for direct comparison. Comparison to Yellowlegs size not really germane. Wilson's eliminated by field marks, so possibility of Red-necked is the question. With some reluctance, I'll vote in favor due to description of bill's consistent thickness to tip, unlike tapering, pointed bill of Red-necked. Ross, we need to get you a typewriter.

A-D: All field marks seem to support a winter plumage Red Phalarope.

A-D: Very good description of Red Phalarope.

A-D: Good descriptions of the bird indicate a Red Phalarope.

REVOTE: 3 A-D, 4 NA

NA: Too many other possibilities

NA: This identification possibly correct but also still possibly incorrect. Besides my first N-A vote, there was another N-A vote and one of the A-D votes was accompanied by comments that expressed some reluctance. If the record is not clear cut to convince the committee, probably should not be accepted.

NA: Change to NA. Peterjohn points out, and other references support the fact that all Phalaropes are surface feeders and would not submerge head while feeding. This would appear to also rule out Sanderling.

NA: I originally thought I could not vote N-A on this documentation because of the dark eye mark and black posterior crown. However, the fact that this bird was not substantiated by

other observers present, the white nape (Red Phalarope would have a dark gray nape), and the feeding pattern (not characteristic of a phalarope) leave to much doubt as to whether this bird was a Sanderling or Red Phalarope. Therefore, I am changing my vote to N-A.

A-D: Red-necked phalarope is ruled out by description of bill. Sanderling does not have a dark eye mark, a black cap at rear of crown, or black center and tip of tail. All these marks are good for Red Phalarope. Maybe there was some doubt from others. Others on this committee did not know about the seasonal field reports comment. Should this information have been kept from the rest of the committee? As I reread the documentation and researched the given field marks as they related to the materials I looked through I am still drawn to the conclusion that what was described by Silcock was beyond reasonable doubt a Red Phalarope.

A-D: I feel that the "dark eye mark, extending a little to rear of eye, and a cap (black) at rear of crown" with a white nape puts this into the Phalarope category and eliminates Sanderling from consideration although Sanderling could fit other field marks. The white wing stripe while the bird was in flight certainly eliminates the Wilson's Phalarope. And the emphasis on the thick bill - "no longer than head, and rather thick, tip little if any thinner than base. Bill similar to Pectoral Sandpiper but straighter and a little heavier" - would eliminate Red-necked Phalarope and make this a Red Phalarope. It is regrettable that the other good birders present did not document this and also that field notes weren't made sooner.

A-D: First N-A must not agree with my reasoning with respect to Red-necked Phalarope. At least he/she agrees the bird was a phalarope and not a Sanderling. Second N-A I believe is fairly accurate - most doubt has been expressed about possibility of Sanderling. However other observers present agreed that bird did not feed (act) like a Sanderling, and had a distinct black cap at rear of crown. This was a puzzling sighting - probably most likely a Red Phalarope, but a slight chance it was not. I do not think Peterjohn raises enough doubt to persuade me that the bird was a Sanderling. I think he is premature in eliminating Red Phalarope on one point of my description "scalloped back and wings". While this description is not 100% correct (back is plain) it alone should not eliminate Red Phalarope.

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

89-33

What species? Red Phalarope How many? 1

Location? IPL Ponds, Polk Co., IA

Type of Habitat? _____

When? date(s): AUG 27, 1989 time: 12¹⁵ to 1³⁰ AM/PM

Who? your name and address: ROSS SILCOCK

Others with you: LOREN + BABS, PADERFORD, TANIA BRAY, BJ, PAUL + ROGER ROSE

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.

I WENT TO IPL AFTER A CALL BY LOREN PADERFORD REGARDING A POSSIBLE JUV. LAUGHING GULL. HOWEVER IT HAD DEPARTED WHEN I ARRIVED. LOREN, BABS, TANIA + I CHECKED OVER THE SHOREBIRDS + LOREN REMARKED ON A TALE ONE WHICH WE PASSED OFF AS A SANDWING, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS FEEDING METICULOUSLY AND APPEARED TO HAVE SOME MARKINGS NOT CHARACTERISTIC OF A SANDWING (WE WERE STILL LOOKING FOR A LAUGHING GULL!). A LITTLE LATER BJ ROSE + SONS ARRIVED + SAID THEY HAD SEEN A BIRD THEY TENTATIVELY ~~SAID~~ IDENTIFIED AS A RED PHALAROPE THE DAY BEFORE, BUT WEREN'T SURE DUE TO DISTANCE. WE REEXAMINED THE BIRD AND I NOTED THE FOLLOWING: A SHIBBLED ABOUT PECTORAL SPP. SRE BUT A LITTLE MORE ELONGATED + LESS PLUMP. OVERALL WHITE, WITH SCALLOPED BACK + WING FEATHERING DUE TO CREAMY FEATHERINGS WITH WHITE EDGINGS. LEGS + BILL BLACK, WITH LATTER NO LONGER THAN HEAD, AND RATHER THICK. TIP LITTLE IF ANY THINNER THAN BASE. BILL SIMILAR TO PECTORAL SPP BUT STRAIGHTER + A LITTLE HEAVIER. ALSO A

Similar species; how eliminated: DARK EYE MARK, EXTENDING A LITTLE TO REAR OF EYE, AND A CAP (BLACK) AT REAR OF CROWN. NOSE WHITE. REMAINDER OF BIRD WHITE, EXCEPT TIP OF TAIL + ~~BASE~~ CENTER OF TAIL ~~AND~~ DARK GRAY TO BLACK. ALSO NOTICEABLE WAS DARK COLORATION AT BEND OF WING, WHEN BIRD FEEDING. LATTER WAS DELIBERATE, RATHER LIKE DOWITCHER, HEAD OPEN UNDER WATER. WHEN FLUSHED, WIDE WHITE WING STRIPE WAS SEEN, MINGLED WITH WHITE EDGES TO TAIL, WITH DARK ~~AND~~ TIP + CENTER. NO CALL

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? NO
If yes, explain: SOME QUESTION AS TO ID, BUT GENERAL AGREEMENT ABOUT THE FIELD MARKS INDICATING RED PHALAROPE (PTO)

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. EXCELLENT - OVERCAST, OCCASIONAL LIGHT DRIZZLE. NO WIND. BIRD ABOUT 50-75 YDS AWAY.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: HAVE SEEN ONE RED PHALAROPE AT CLOSE RANGE IN NORTH CAROLINA.

References and persons consulted before writing description: LOOKED AT NGS GUIDE + SEABIRDS WHILE WATCHING BIRD - DISCUSSED WITH OTHER OBSERVERS. MULLED OVER BEFORE WRITING THIS DOCUMENTATION.

How long before field notes made? NONE this form completed? NEXT EVENING (MONDAY)

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

THESE FIELD MARKS STRONGLY INDICATE RED PHALAROPE.
 PROBLEMS, TO MY MIND, AS FOLLOWS:

(1) DATE - THIS EARLY SHOULD BE AD ♀, FIRST TO LEAVE
 BLDG AREAS. IF AD ♀, MIGHT BE EXPECTED TO HAVE SOME
 REDDISH FEATHERING, BUT NONE SEEN. POSSIBLY A NON-BREEDER,
 HOWEVER, AND POSSIBLY THEREFORE, A MALE - LESS LIKELY
 TO RETAIN RED FEATHERING.

(2) DIFFICULTY OF ELIMINATING RED-NECKED PHALAROPE - I BELIEVE
 THIS IS ACHIEVED DUE TO THE FOLLOWING

(a) RED HAS MUCH THICKER BILL	} SIZE COMPARISON WITH LESSER YELLOWLEGS AT IFL INDICATED THIS BIRD WAS NOT A SMALL PHALAROPE. BILL WAS VERY HEAVY - AS HEAVY OR MORE SO AS A PECTORAL'S BILL.
(b) RED IS SIGNIFICANTLY LARGER	

(c) VERY PROMINENT WHITE WING STRIPE - LIKE SANDPELLING,
 RED-NECKED HAS A STRIPE, BUT NOT AS OBVIOUS.

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