

Red Phalarope

4 Aug 1991

Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA

\*S. Dinsmore

IBL 62:15,70; 65:83, Dinsmore 1992

Record Number: 91-27

Classification: A-P

#### DOCUMENTATION

Stephen J. Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010

#### PHOTOGRAPHS

Stephen J. Dinsmore, 2 prints, P-0308 [not circulated for first review].

#### LETTER

Stephen J. Dinsmore to Records Committee [Aug 1994]

#### REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 62:15

Records Committee: IBL 62:70; 65:83

Dinsmore, S. J. 1992. A second Red Phalarope at Saylorville Reservoir. IBL 62:86-87.

#### VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Very complete details.

A-D, The photos are overexposed so that I cannot judge the bill or upper parts without reference to the written documentation. I agree that this bird must be an adult in basic plumage based on the description, photos, and date. I also agree that the bill shape, lack of white streaks, and bicolored bill are distinctive features.

A-D, Concur that this is a adult close to complete molt to basic plumage.

A-D, Good descriptions and details given for a Red Phalarope.

REVOTE at meeting of 11 Apr 1992 after viewing photos: 1 A-P, 6 A-D

REVOTE (by mail 1994): 6 A-P

A-P, The original prints were poor and not reproducible. Having the slides and getting better quality prints makes the difference. Dinsmore points out the essential points for identification. I had trouble telling that the bill was "tubular." My measurements indicate that the bill is slightly shorter than the head. Red-necked has a bill slightly longer than the head. The lack of back/scapular stripes is also better shown in the new prints.

A-P, A better photo ("new evidence") allows upgrade to A-P.

in the Marsh Wren, and it did not have the white outer tail feathers characteristic of Bewick's Wren.

Upon further observation, I looked for characteristics of the Rock Wren described by Peterson (1980). Having already noticed the buffy tail corners, I next noticed the presence of a finely streaked breast and the rusty rump, all characteristics of the Rock Wren. Furthermore, there are quite a few rocky outcrops along the small tributaries and rivers in the surrounding area; and there is a limestone quarry about 4 miles north of Red Oak which could provide adequate habitat for these birds.

According to Peterson (1980) (the only reference I had at the time I had possession of the bird), this species is accidental east of the Mississippi River; thus I assumed that this species was common in Iowa. That is where I made a very big mistake. Believing that I had stressed the bird enough (I had had it in my possession for about 10 minutes), I released it on the ground outside my garage without taking a picture (my second mistake). Fifteen minutes later, upon arriving at work, I checked the status of the Rock Wren in Iowa (Dinsmore et al. 1984). It was at this point I realized the rare occurrence of this bird in Iowa. I then went back to my house and, of course, could not find the bird anywhere. Through a couple of phone calls, one to Ross Silcock in Sidney and the other to a former teacher Dr. David Easterla at Northwest Missouri State University, I learned that there have only been a couple of documented sightings of this species in Iowa; however, this species was sighted and documented by Easterla in the Maryville, Missouri area, 60 miles south of Red Oak, in fall 1990.

#### LITERATURE CITED

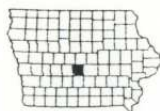
- Dinsmore, J. J., T. H. Kent, D. Koenig, P. C. Petersen, and D. M. Roosa. 1984. Iowa Birds. Iowa State University Press, Ames. 356 p.  
Peterson, R. T. 1980. A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston. 384 p.

2000 *Sunnyslope, Red Oak, IA 51566*

### A SECOND RED PHALAROPE AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

At 10:38 a.m. on 4 August 1991, while birding the Saylorville Reservoir dam in Polk County, I saw a Red Phalarope in basic plumage. Throughout the observation, the bird swam a few feet off the rocky dam face, gradually working to the east. The stocky body, thin neck, small head, and swimming behavior easily identified the bird as a phalarope. Though there were no other birds for direct comparison, I estimated that the bird was about the size of a Pectoral Sandpiper. The bill was roughly equal to the length of the head and was bicolored; dark near the tip, gradually fading to a small, pale area at the base of the bill. There was a dark spot around each eye that extended forward to the base of the bill. The forehead, cap, and nape were also dark. The broad white supercilium was also seen. The throat, sides of the neck, breast, and flanks were white and marked with irregular buffy patches. The undertail coverts were also white. The mantle was mostly pale gray except for several small, scattered black spots. The wings were darker than the



mantle with the primaries appearing black. The tail also looked black on the swimming bird. I was not able to observe the bird in flight. Separation from Red-necked Phalarope was based largely on bill shape and the unstreaked mantle. I concluded, on the basis of the pale gray mantle and bicolored bill, that the bird was an adult Red Phalarope that had nearly completed the molt to basic plumage.

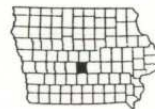
I last observed the bird at 11:14 a.m. just before other birders arrived. The bird was not relocated, despite a thorough search of the reservoir that afternoon. This is the second acceptable record of Red Phalarope in Iowa. The first was of a juvenile bird at Saylorville Reservoir on 30 September-3 October 1988 (Dinsmore, S. J., and B. Engebretsen. *Iowa Bird Life* 59:19. 1989).

2600 *Glen Burnie, Raleigh, NC 27607*

### TWO MORE RED PHALAROPES AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

MARK PROESCHOLDT

On 25 September 1991, I went to the Sandpiper Beach area of Saylorville Reservoir to see what birds might be there. After scoping over the gulls, terns, and shorebirds on this sunny, windy day, I noticed a very whitish shorebird floating in a corner of a small bay at the east end of the beach. As I slowly moved to get closer to this bird, I could tell it was a phalarope since it had a dark bar through and behind its eye.



The following description is compiled from my notes and notes of other observers. The phalarope had a rather thick, short, black bill which was different from the longer and more needle-like bills of both the Wilson's and Red-necked phalaropes. This bird had a light grayish back that was generally unmarked and had black showing at the wing edges along the flanks. It had a dark cap on its crown and a white forehead. The breast, belly, flanks, and undersides were very white. The sides of the neck were white with a rusty wash under its chin on its throat area. Its legs were fleshy pink in color. In flight, a very distinct wing stripe, a bold white V around a gray rump, and a black-gray terminal band on its tail were observed. It had the appearance of being short-necked and short-legged and appeared about the same size as a Pectoral Sandpiper. On close observation the back, wings, and tail were a contrasting gray and black pattern with white feather edgings on the gray feathers. This bird appeared to be in mid molt going to basic plumage. It was observed occasionally spinning and probing in the water at the pool's edge and walking along the shore. It was very tame and allowed very close approach. One observer speculated that it had never seen humans before and was therefore unafraid of people approaching it. The bird was present through 30 September, and many other birders were able to see it.

This is the third sighting of a Red Phalarope in Iowa. All have been at Saylorville Reservoir and all in fall migration. The first Red Phalarope sighting in Iowa was seen from 30 September to 3 October 1988 at the north end of the Saylorville Reservoir (Dinsmore, S. J., and B. Engebretsen, *Iowa Bird Life* 59:19, 1989). Iowa's second sighting of a Red Phalarope was seen by Steve Dinsmore on 4 August 1991, at the west overlook on the Saylorville Dam.

On 26 October 1991, another Red Phalarope was seen by a group of observers at Sandpiper Beach, Saylorville Reservoir. This was a very light-colored bird with a white neck, breast, and undersides. It was blackish along the wing edges at the flanks. It had two thin black lines that went the length of the back from the nape toward the

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To: Members of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

From: Stephen J. Dinsmore  
4024 Arkansas Dr.  
Ames, IA 50014

I respectfully request that the Records Committee reevaluate the following four records in light of some clarifications of the original information. The records are:

1. (California Gull 7 Dec 1986 Saylorville Res., Polk Co.)
2. (Little Gull 27 Oct, 1 Nov 1988 Saylorville Res., Polk Co.)
3. (Little Gull 8 Oct 1989 Saylorville Res., Polk Co.)
4. (Red Phalarope 4 Aug 1991 Saylorville Res., Polk Co.)

#### Literature Cited

- Dinsmore, S. J. 1992. A second Red Phalarope at Saylorville Reservoir. *Iowa Bird Life* 62: 86-87.
- Dinsmore, S. J., P. Allen, and R. Allen. 1990. Little Gull at Saylorville Reservoir. *Iowa Bird Life* 60: 77.
- Grant, P. J. 1986. *Gulls: A guide to identification*. Buteo Books, Vermilion, South Dakota. 352 pages.
- Kent, T. H. 1989. Report of the Records Committee for 1988. *Iowa Bird Life* 59: 75-77.
- Kent, T. H., and R. K. Myers. 1987. Report of the Records Committee for 1986. *Iowa Bird Life* 57: 77-78.
- National Geographic Society. 1987. *Field guide to the birds of North America*. 2nd ed. National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C.

## Record #4

A Red Phalarope in nearly basic plumage seen and photographed on 4 August 1991 at Saylorville Reservoir (Dinsmore 1992). The record was accepted as a sight record. I request that the committee review the two photos and upgrade the record to A-P status.

It is obvious that the bird in the photos is a phalarope. Clearly, the bill is too short for Wilson's Phalarope, leaving only Red and Red-necked phalaropes for consideration. In the photos, red color on the neck, breast, and flanks is visible. The short, tubular bill is dark with a small amount of yellow at the base. Also apparent in the photos is the largely pale gray mantle, lacking the white stripes of a basic-plumaged Red-necked Phalarope. I also note (and this was not described in my original documentation) the distinct white face contrasting with the darker crown and reddish neck, a mark that is distinctive of Red Phalarope and is visible in both photos. The large amount of pale gray color in the mantle and remnants of red color on the neck, breast, and flanks indicate that the bird was molting into basic plumage.



Red Phalarope P-0308  
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA  
4 Aug 1991 Stephen J. Dinsmor

91-27

< 1016 19-02 ZHENN-06RU 307

Red Phalarope P-0308  
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA  
4 Aug 1991 Stephen J. Dinsmor

91-27

> 021 19-02 ZHENN-06RU 307

91-27



6-16

DOCUMENTATIONFORM

Species: Red Phalarope

Number: 1

Location: Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co., IA-above dam

Habitat: swimming on lake near rocky dam face

Date: 4 Aug 1991

Time: 10:38-10:52 a.m. and 10:59-11:14 a.m.

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50010

Others who saw bird: none

Description of bird(s): At 10:38 a.m. I pulled into the west pull-off on the dam of Saylorville Reservoir. An object floating in the water just a few feet of the dam face immediately caught my eye. At first, I thought it was probably a styrofoam cup or some other type of garbage, but a look through my binoculars quickly revealed that it was a bird. The thought of a gull quickly entered my mind because of the fact that the bird was floating on the water, but I soon realized that the bird was too small for a gull and was instead a phalarope. I studied the bird for several minutes and took several photos at close range. Two photos are enclosed.

In general appearance, the bird was easily identifiable as a phalarope. The stocky body, thin neck, small head, and habit of swimming on the water were all consistent with a phalarope. The bill had a distinctly tubular appearance, much like the bill of a Sanderling. The bill was roughly equal to the length of the head and was bicolored; dark near the tip, and gradually fading to a small, pale area around the base of the bill. The head was patterned as follows; dark spot around the eye extending forward to the base of the bill, a broad white supercilium, and a dark forehead, cap, and nape. The throat, sides of the neck, breast, and flanks were white and marked with irregular, dull buffy splotches. The undertail coverts were white. The pale gray, unstreaked mantle contrasted sharply with the darker nape. There were several irregularly-shaped black spots on the mantle (these black spots covered perhaps 20% of the mantle). The wings were darker than the mantle, and the primaries appeared black. The tail also appeared black. The bird was not seen in flight. Based on the plumage, I concluded that the bird was an adult which had nearly completed the molt to basic plumage.

Throughout my observation, the bird swam a few feet off the face of the dam, sometimes swimming among the rocks along the shore. I notified other birders immediately after I found the bird. However, the bird suddenly disappeared at 11:14 a.m., fifteen minutes before other birders arrived. The bird was not relocated.

Similar species and how eliminated: The general body shape and swimming behavior identified the bird as a phalarope. The unstreaked, gray mantle, thicker, bicolored bill, and buffy wash on the underparts eliminates Red-necked and Wilson's phalaropes.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were very good. Estimated viewing distance was 50 yards initially and later less than 40 feet. I used a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope and Bausch & Lomb 7x35 binoculars.

Previous experience with species: I have seen one other Red Phalarope in Iowa (Sep-Oct 1988) as well as thousands in the Atlantic Ocean off the east coast of North America.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

How long before field notes made: written during initial sighting

How long before this form completed: 2 days