

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Printed: 11/20/00

Red Phalarope

Record Number: 95-45

22 Oct 1995

Classification: A-D

Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA

*S. Dinsmore, *T. Kent, *J. Fuller

also 24-26 Oct; IBL 66:21, 96; Dinsmore 1996

DOCUMENTATIONS

Stephen J. Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014 [*3/24/96]

Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City 52246

Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City 52240

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 66:21

Records Committee: IBL 66:96

Dinsmore, S. J. 1996. Red Phalaropes at Saylorville Reservoir.

IBL 66:113-114.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, basic.

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Killdeer and Lesser Yellowlegs. Shape and posture was most similar to Lesser Yellowlegs. The thin, straight, black bill was about as long as the head. The lower face was pale gray compared to the darker cap and nape. In addition to the smudged black across the breast, there was some fine barring around the throat. The lower breast, belly, and undertail coverts were white. The upper parts were dark due to black feathers, some of which had white or buff fringes at their tips. There were scattered gray feathers in the scapulars. Upon flushing the bird, I observed and photographed a V- or U-shaped white patch on the upper tail that pointed to the tip and had a black center proximally. The wings were plain except for a thin white wing bar. Jim Fuller and Chris Edwards noted that some of the back feathers were ruffled, and they saw chevrons on the sides extending to the legs.

I judged the bird as a female based on size and plumage and the plumage as mostly alternate based on the distribution of black and feather wear. The underparts would have more black in fresh spring plumage. This bird was seen by many birders and remained until at least 26 August. This is the third and earliest fall record of Ruff in Iowa. The others were juveniles east of Tabor in Fremont County from 8 to 12 September 1982 (Silcock 1983) and at Hendrickson Marsh in Story County on 1 and 2 September 1984 (Martsching 1986).

LITERATURE CITED

- Martsching, P. 1986. Ruff in Story County. *Iowa Bird Life* 86:64.
 Silcock, W. R. 1983. A Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*) in southwest Iowa. *Iowa Bird Life* 53:87-90.

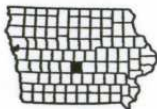
211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246

RED PHALAROPES AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 19 September 1995 I arrived at Jester Park to look over the extensive mudflats at the north end of Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County. At 2:10 p.m., I noticed a phalarope swimming along the edge of the mudflat near several Killdeer. The bird was nearly as large as the Killdeer, although it was shorter legged. I watched the bird until 2:23 p.m. and noted the following. In general, it was a pale, stocky, plump, short-legged shorebird. The black bill was short, thick, blunt-tipped, and roughly equal to the length of the head. The head was white, except that the crown and back of the neck were black and there was a black spot around each eye. The underparts were entirely white. There was some very faint buffy color on the sides of the neck and shoulder. The mantle and scapulars were light gray with several small black patches. In flight, a clear white stripe extended across the bases of the flight feathers. The tail was dark, and the legs were black. Based on the mantle pattern and buffy color on the neck, I concluded the bird was in first-basic plumage.

On 22 October 1995, I was once again scanning the mudflats at the upper end of the lake when I saw another Red Phalarope. I watched the bird from 9:35-10:15 a.m. Initially, the bird associated with three Sanderlings. The head, neck, underparts, and vent were white except for a black cap and a black spot around each eye that extended posteriorly a short distance, and pale gray color extending up the back of the neck.



The mantle was entirely pale gray. The folded primaries appeared dark gray to black. The bill was black, about the length of the head, and had a stout, tubular appearance. The bird made several short flights, during which I noted the pale wing stripe contrasting with the dark upperwings and the dark tail. At a distance, the bird appeared so pale that it might easily have been overlooked as a Sanderling. Based on the mantle pattern and lack of any buffy wash on the neck and underparts, I concluded the bird was an adult in basic plumage. However, it is possible the bird was a juvenile that had already completed the molt to basic plumage. This bird remained in this area through 26 October and was seen by several others.

These are the seventh and eighth records of Red Phalarope in Iowa. There are four previous records from Saylorville Reservoir: 30 September-3 October 1988 (Dinsmore and Engebretsen 1989), 4 August 1991 (Dinsmore 1992), 25-30 September 1991 (Proescholdt 1992), and 26 October 1991 (Proescholdt 1992). The other two records are from 8-9 November 1992 at Rathbun Reservoir (Kent 1993) and 25, 29 November 1994 at Spirit Lake (Gordon Brown, pers. comm., Schoenewe 1996).

LITERATURE CITED

- Dinsmore, S. J. 1992. A second Red Phalarope at Saylorville Reservoir. *Iowa Bird Life* 62:86-87.
 Dinsmore, S. J., and B. Engebretsen. 1989. Red Phalarope at Saylorville Reservoir. *Iowa Bird Life* 59:19.
 Kent, T. H. 1993. Red Phalarope at Rathbun Reservoir. *Iowa Bird Life* 63:82.
 Proescholdt, M. 1992. Two more Red Phalaropes at Saylorville Reservoir. *Iowa Bird Life* 62:87-88.
 Schoenewe, L. A. 1996. Red Phalarope at Spirit Lake. *Iowa Bird Life* 66:111-112.

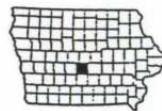
4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014

RED KNOTS AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

On 1 September 1995 I observed a Red Knot with a group of about 100 shorebirds on a distant mudflat at the north end of Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County. I watched the bird at a distance of 300-400 m from 8:55-9:10 a.m. The bird was larger, stockier, and shorter-legged than several Lesser Yellowlegs and Stilt Sandpipers with which it was feeding. The bill was straight, thick, and about the same length as the head. The legs appeared dark at a distance. The underparts were white and appeared unmarked. The mantle and head were gray, similar to the color of a basic-plumaged Sanderling. When feeding, the wings appeared darker than the upperparts. The bird made two short flights. In flight, the bird appeared nearly uniform pale gray except for darker primaries and a pale rump. Since the underparts appeared very white and unstreaked, I concluded that the bird was probably an adult in basic plumage.

On 29 September 1995 I was birding the same area when I noticed a larger shorebird with a small flock of Sanderlings. I watched the bird from 7:45-8:20 a.m. and identified it as a juvenile Red Knot. This bird was about half again as large as a



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DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Red Phalarope

Number: 1 basic

Location: Saylorville Res., Polk Co.

Habitat: large mudflat at north end of reservoir

Date: 22,24,25,26 October 1995

Time: 9:35-10:15 a.m. on the 22nd

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

Others who saw bird: m.ob.

Description of bird(s): When I began scanning the extensive mudflats off Jester Park, I immediately noticed a small group of shorebirds that included four very pale birds. Three of the birds were together and I soon recognized them as Sanderlings. The other bird was by itself, walking through the shallow water in a distinct manner. The head, neck, underparts, and vent were white except for a black cap and a black spot around each eye that extended posteriorly a short distance, and pale gray color extending up the back of the neck. The mantle was entirely pale gray. The folded primaries appeared dark gray to black. The bill was black, about the length of the head, and had a stout, tubular appearance. The bird made several short flights, during which I noted the pale wing stripe contrasting with the dark upperwings and the dark tail. At a distance, the bird appeared so pale that it might easily have been overlooked as a Sanderling. Based on the mantle pattern and lack of any buffy wash on the neck and underparts, I concluded the bird was an adult in basic plumage. However, it is possible the bird was a juvenile that had already completed the molt to basic plumage.

Similar species and how eliminated: There are very few shorebirds that are this pale. Compared directly to a Sanderling, this bird had a longer neck, a dark cap, a black spot around the eye, and darker upperwings which were particularly visible in flight. Red-necked Phalarope (which would be even more unusual at this date) was eliminated by bill size and shape and unstreaked mantle.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were fair with mostly cloudy skies and a stiff wind. Estimated viewing distance was mostly 300-400m. I used a 20-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: Extensive experience with this species from pelagic work in the Atlantic Ocean, plus several sightings in Iowa. Also very familiar with the similar Red-necked Phalarope.

References consulted: none

How long before field notes made: brief notes made during observation

How long before this form completed: written 24 October 1995

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DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Species: Red Phalarope; **Number:** 1 basic

Location: Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co., IA

Date: 25 October 1995; **Time:** 2:30 to 2:45 p.m.

Name and address: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246.

Others before/with/after: with Jim Fuller

Habitat and circumstances: Exposed mud flats in middle of broad part of reservoir off Jester Park camp site #4.

Description of bird: I noticed the bird as I was scoping because of its white color and twisting movement in shallow water. It appeared to be about three-fourths the size of a nearby Killdeer, but was much slimmer and had shorter legs. The underparts, head, and neck were mostly white, except for a black line through the eye and black on the posterior head extending as a narrow line down the neck. The upper parts were medium to light gray and without streaks. In flight, there were prominent white wing stripes and no streaks on the wings or back. I didn't note the tail color. The bill was black, straight, and shorter than the length of the head. Jim thought the bill was tubular, but all that I could say is that I could see it at a great distance. I did not see the leg color. The bird flew twice and landed in shallow water, where it displayed typical phalarope twisting and picking at the surface of the water.

Voice: not heard

Similar species: A Sanderling with an injured leg was present on another spit. It was much whiter on the upper parts and did not go into the water. Red-necked Phalarope would have streaks on the back and a thin pointed bill.

Wilson's Phalarope is larger, longer-billed, plainer on the head, lacks a white wing stripe, and has a white rump.

The date would be late for the other phalaropes.

Any one have reservations?: no.

Light: sun behind us; **Distance:** 500 yards (guess); **Optics:** 20x and 20-60 zoom scopes.

Previous experience: Have seen two others in fall in Iowa and many on pelagic trips.

References before/after viewing: we looked at National Geographic Guide while viewing.

Time of notes: while viewing; **Final typing:** 2 days

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DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

SPECIES: RED PHALAROPE (Basic-plumage)

LOCATION: Mudflats in upper end of Saylorville Reservoir seen from the Campground 4 area of Jester County Park (Polk County).

DATE & TIME: 25 October, 1995 (2:30-2:45 PM)

OBSERVER: Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll NE, Iowa City, IA, 52240

OTHERS: I was with Tom Kent, and seen later by Pam and Reid Allen

DESCRIPTION: Tom Kent located a very light bird. It seemed to be swimming or wading breastdeep and picking off bugs on the surface of the water. Its general size appeared to be about three-quarters that of Killdeer that were in the proximity on occasion. The body was also noticeably thinner than that of Killdeer. It was gray on the upperparts, but had very white underparts. The back and folded wing were an unmarked medium gray. The head was white, except for a dark area to the rear of the eye. There was also a black area on the back of the head which continued in a relatively narrow black stripe down the back of the neck. The forehead and top of head were white. The bill was dark, relatively thick, and its length appeared to be a little less than the width of the head. The legs were dark. The bird flew a considerable distance on one occasion much closer to us, and it was noted that there was a white wingstripe.

BEHAVIOR: Most of the time, the bird was wading breastdeep or swimming in the water, picking at bugs on the surface. It did twirl around in the water, although not in complete circles. It did walk out onto the mudflat a couple of times.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Red-necked Phalarope and Wilson's Phalarope both have long and thin bills, unlike the relatively thick and short bill of this bird. Red-necked has some back patterning, unlike the plain back of this bird, and Wilson's has dark on top of the head and forehead, which this bird lacked.

OPTICS & CONDITIONS: It was mid-afternoon on a sunny day, and I was looking toward the northeast with the sun at my back. The lighting was excellent. I was viewing with a KOWA TSN-4 telescope (20-60 X zoom lens). The distances ranged from 300-500 yards.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen three previous Red Phalaropes in this plumage in Iowa, and I have seen numerous alternate plumaged birds in Alaska.

REFERENCES & FIELD NOTES: Field notes made in car after sighting, and this form was typed on 28 October. National Geographic Field Guide was viewed at time of sighting.