

Red Phalarope
26 Oct 1991
Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA
*M. Proescholdt
IBL 62:15, 70. Proescholdt 1992

Record Number: 91-29
Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATION

Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, IA 50148

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 62:15

Records Committee: IBL 62:70

Proescholdt, M. 1992. Two more Red Phalaropes at Saylorville Reservoir. IBL 62:87-88.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, Good description. This appears to be the same bird (or one very like it) as 91-28.

A-D, We have the description of one of eight observers with notes made 10 hours after observation and completed seven days later. There is nothing in the description that indicates any evidence of retained juvenile feathers. However, the date and location would make anything other than juvenile molted to basic unlikely. The observer could easily have missed seeing a few retained juvenile feathers. I am disturbed that the observer is unsure that the plumage was different from Schantz's photo, which clearly shows part juvenile and part basic plumage. My vote is based on the bill and white lines on upper parts. The bill should show some pale at the base and not be all black. This could be the same bird as seen previously, but it would have nearly completed its molt to basic plumage (as expected).

A-D, Good description and details of a Red Phalarope are given.

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

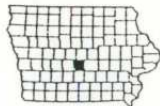
- Dinsmore, J. J., T. H. Kent, D. Koenig, P. C. Petersen, and D. M. Roosa. 1984. Iowa Birds. Iowa State University Press, Ames. 356 p.
Peterson, R. T. 1980. A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston. 384 p.

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.

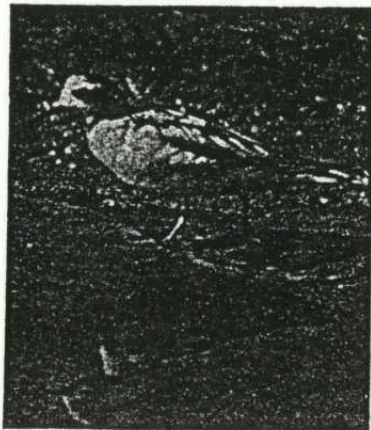


The following description is compiled from my notes and notes of other observers. The phalarope had a rather thick, short, black bill which was different from the longer and more needle-like bills of both the Wilson's and Red-necked phalaropes. This bird had a light grayish back that was generally unmarked 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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Red Phalarope, Saylorville Reservoir,
28 Sep 1991. Photo by Tim Schantz



Red Phalarope, Saylorville Reservoir,
28 Sep 1991. Photo by Tim Schantz

tail. It had a very noticeable light-grayish back. Its relatively short bill was very thick, stout, and black. It had a very black crown and a strong black bar through and behind the eye. In flight, it had a very distinctive wingstripe. This bird appeared to be almost into its basic plumage. The bird was running along the shore, later flew around, landed in the water off shore by a fishing boat, stayed there for a while, and then was gone. Based on its plumage differences, it was probably a different bird from the two reported earlier in the fall.

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TRICOLORED HERON IN POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY

JANET G. GREER

On 4 May 1991, Marge and Dutch Graf, Mary Jo Harlow, and I were participating in the Audubon Society of Omaha spring count. Upon our arrival at the Iowa Power and Light settling basins at 11:30 a.m., I noticed a medium-sized heron in the water near the rushes bordering the shore. It shortly flew away from the car, and I noted a stark white chin, slate-blue primaries and secondaries, and a rusty wash to the mantle and wing coverts. These characteristics convinced me that this bird was a Tricolored Heron.



The heron landed on the far shore of the settling basin and turned to face us. The entire belly and the upper part of the legs were stark white. The white extended up the flanks to the bend of the folded wings. As noted above, the chin was white in contrast to the dark of the entire face and crown. The long thin neck was mottled with rusty and white feathers. In addition, there were long rusty feathers on the breast. At the closest observation (75 feet), the distal one-fourth of both the upper and lower

mandibles appeared to be a different color than the base of the bill. The straight bill appeared long in proportion to the size of the bird. The legs, feet, and bill were a dark slate color. The bird appeared smaller than a Great Blue Heron, also present, although the two species were never side by side. At this time, the heron flew out of our range of vision.

We drove around the basins and relocated the heron standing on the fly-ash flat where we observed its behavior for almost an hour. The bird struggled to pick up a straight stick more than six feet long and carried it around over a large area of the fly ash. Several times the stick was dropped and picked up again. On several occasions, the heron approached a dead bush and shook it vigorously with its bill. After this, the bird would gently pick at the bush, thrusting its head at it. Often the heron stopped to scratch itself about the shoulders and neck with its foot. The bird was always active but it never approached the shore or resumed fishing while we watched.

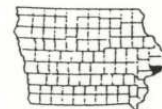
We left the settling ponds to inform other birders about this bird but it was not relocated that afternoon nor on subsequent days. This is the second record of Tricolored Heron for Iowa and the first from the Missouri River Valley. The first was at Cone Marsh on 29 April 1989 (Kent, T. H., *Iowa Bird Life* 61:1-4, 1991).

341 Steven Circle, Council Bluffs, IA 51503

SECOND-YEAR GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

THOMAS H. KENT

On 14 January 1991, Jim Fuller found a dark-mantled gull on the Mississippi River in Bettendorf/Moline waters and reported it on the Birdline as a possible Lesser Black-backed Gull. On 15 January, Dick Tetrault and I found a dark-mantled gull there. Compared to Herring Gulls in the same field of view it was 30% larger, much darker backed, longer and thicker billed, longer legged making the bird stand taller, thicker legged (twice as thick as Herrings), and longer winged in flight. It had a long-necked, slender-headed, long-billed appearance. The bill was straight and mostly black with poorly demarcated light areas in the proximal one-third. The head and neck were white with dark eye, slight streak through the eye, and touch of gray on the posterior crown. The under parts were unstreaked white. The legs were a slightly darker pink than those of Herring Gulls. On the standing bird, the wings and back appeared rather uniform black-brown with indistinct feather edging. The primaries and tail band were black. The tertials and posterior scapulars were light gray, producing marks on the standing bird. In flight, the base of the tail was white and a terminal black band, which was indistinct proximally and thicker centrally, occupied about one-fourth of the tail. The outer primaries and their coverts were black, and I did not see any mirrors. The inner primaries, secondaries, coverts, and back were dark brown with thin feather edging. The trailing edge of the wing was pale. The underwing appeared medium neutral gray.



On 17 January, Jim Fuller saw the bird at closer range and recorded basically the same features. Other observers on the 15th and 16th recorded a gull with similar features but smaller in size. These observers came to different conclusions on the bird's identity; Western and Lesser Black-backed gull. On 7 and 8 February, Steve

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What species? Red Phalarope How many? 1Location? Sandpiper Beach - Saylorville Reservoir - (POLKO.)Type of habitat? Sandy beach at water's edgeWhen? date(s): Oct. 26, 1991 time: 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. ^{very} approximatelyWho? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Ia. 50148others with you: Carol Strommeyer, Beth Proescholdt, Rita Geransen,
Russ Widner, Armstrongs, Maridel Jackson, Jane Clarkothers before or after you: none that I'm aware of

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 voice and behavior.

Eugene spotted this bird from the parking lot initially. The rest of us got closer and scoped it. It was a whitish-colored shorebird with white neck, breast, and undersides. It was blackish along wing edges. It had two thin black lines on its back that went the length of the back (from nape toward tail). It had a light grayish back that was very noticeable. Its relatively short bill was very thick and stout and was black. It had a very black crown and a strong black bar through the eye and behind the eye. It had a very distinctive wingstripe seen in flight. The bird was running along the shore, later flew around, landed in the water off shore by a boat, stayed for a while, and then was gone. I thought it had different plumage from the Red Phalarope here one month ago, but after looking at Tim Schantz's slides from then, I'm not sure. It

Similar species and how eliminated: could be the same bird or a different one.

A Red-Necked Phalarope would have distinctive zig-zag lines on its back and a longer, thinner bill which our bird did not show.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? not eventually.

If yes, explain: Some of us thought it may have been a Red-Necked Phalarope at first, but after good close looks at the back and those 2 thin black lines on the gray back we were sure it was a Red

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: PhalaropeCloudy and overcast, 70 yards to 30 yards estimated,8X30 Binocs, 22X scope, Kowa scopes

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

References and persons consulted before writing description: Great looks at Red Phalarope one month before and have seen numerous Red-Necked in fall.How long before field notes made? 10:00 p.m. that evening this form completed? Nov. 2, 1991