

Red Phalarope

30 Sep 1988

Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA

*S. Dinsmore *****

to 3 Oct; IBL 59:13, 77, Dinsmore/Engebretsen 1989

Record Number: 88-21

Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Steve Dinsmore, 30 Sep-2 Oct

Bery Engebretsen, 30 Sep

Mark Proescholdt, 1 Oct

Beth Proescholdt, 1 Oct

Andrew S. Fix, 2 Oct

Jim Sinclair, 2 Oct

Jim Dinsmore, 3 Oct

Thomas H. Kent, 3 Oct

Ann Johnson, 3 Oct

Mike Thomas, 3 Oct

PHOTOGRAPHS

Steve Dinsmore, 1 Oct, P-0268 (IBL 59:19)

Andrew S. Fix, 2 Oct, P-0260 (IBL 59:19)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 59:13, 19

Records Committee: IBL 59:77

Photographs: IBL 59:19 (P-0260, P-0268)

Dinsmore, S. D., and B. Engebretsen. 1989. Red Phalarope at Saylorville Reservoir. IBL 59:19.

VOTE: 3-A-P, 3-A-D, 1-abstain

A-D. The bill looks too thick in the picture provided.

However, I can think of no other possibilities.

A-P. The bill shape and pattern of upperparts in flight were convincing to me.

A-P. Excellent group of documentations describing this species and eliminating other species. Good photo for additional proof.

A-D. This was a well kept secret from some of us.

A-D or A-P. Well-documented record.

SENT TO: Steve Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010; Bery Engebretsen, 6492 James Francis, Johnston, IA 50131; Beth and Mark Prescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, IA; Andrew S. Fix, 153-C University Villiage, Ames, IA 50010; Jim Sinclair, 810 North B St., Indianola, IA; Jim Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010; Ann Johnson, 532 120th Ave., Norwlk, IA 50211; Mike Thomas, 2517 47th St., Des Moines, IA 50310.

(Hamburg); *Alan G. Grenon (Omaha, NE); Alan W. Hancock (Clear Lake); James L. Hansen (Clear Lake); Douglas C. Harr (Larchwood); Mary Jo Hartogh (Elma); *Tom Hartwig (Garner); Ann Johnson (Norwalk); *Dixie Kanago (Spencer); Matthew C. Kenne (Algona); Thomas H. Kent (Iowa City); Sharon Laub (Rippey); Paul Martsching (Ames); Robert K. Myers (Perry); Babs Padelford (Bellevue, NE); Marietta Petersen (Walnut); Peter C. Petersen (Davenport); Diane C. Porter (Fairfield); Beth Proescholdt (Liscomb); Mark Proescholdt (Liscomb); W. Ross Silcock (Tabor); Jim Sinclair (Indianola); Ed Thelen (Spirit Lake); Mike Thomas (Des Moines); *Gerald W. Toll; John Van Dyk (Sioux Center); Jan L. Walter (Mason City); *David Youngblut (Indianola); and Hank Zaletel (Colo).

OTHER OBSERVERS

Bart Ballard; Ann Barker (Davenport); Beth Brown (Osceola); John Cecil (Des Moines); Francis L. Moore (Waterloo); Loren Padelford (Bellevue, NE); Mary Lou Petersen (Davenport); and James P. Sandroock (Iowa City).

COMMENT

A total of 1,111 records was extracted from the reports of 48 observers and entered into a computer database for sorting and analysis. Ninety-three documentations for 37 different species were also received.

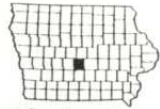
Most reports were very well done and were received on time, which made the job of compilation much easier. Also encouraging was that a greater number of the unusual, hard-to-identify, or early/late records were accompanied by some level of detail. This helps to show the observer was aware of the unusual species or dates and took the time to be certain of the identification. You can see the number of initials in the species summaries that are followed by "details." Unfortunately, a number of records had to go unmentioned when they were not accompanied by details.

It is interesting to consider how much the general trends mentioned at the beginning of this seasonal report were real and how much is related to observer activity. For example, many of the early warbler records were of 1 or 2 birds seen by a few observers at several locations. Their careful and diligent reporting is very important but it does not necessarily mean that entire warbler populations migrated early this year.

Also notice how many of the reports came from a few locations. Saylorville Res., for example, was the location of over 21% of all the records I extracted for entry into the database and Union SI N.W.R. represented another 12%. Again, these numbers represent a lot of birding hours spent by a number of observers at these two popular spots.

RED PHALAROPE AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE AND BERY ENGBRETSSEN

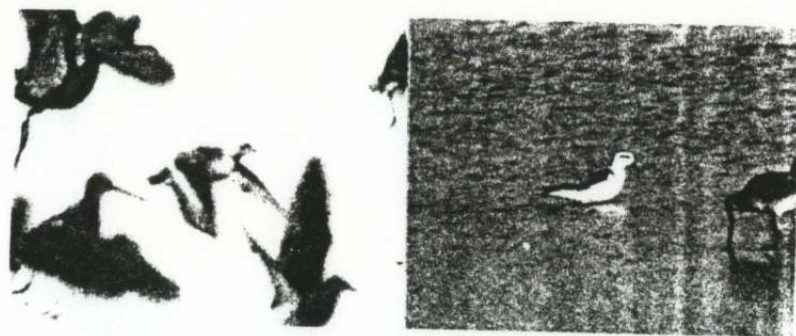


At 4:15 p.m. on 30 September 1988, we were near the north end of Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County studying a mixed flock of over one hundred shorebirds, mostly Pectoral Sandpipers and Long-billed Dowitchers. At a distance, one bird resembled a Sanderling because of the size, very white appearance, and bill shape, but the bird was too far away to make a positive identification. At 4:46 p.m., after approaching the bird, we identified it as a Red Phalarope. We studied the bird until 5:05 p.m. and noted the following as we studied the bird. It was roughly the size of a Pectoral Sandpiper and had a striking black-and-white appearance. The bird's color, general shape, and habit of swimming identified it as a phalarope. The underparts were entirely white, except for some light buff on the throat. When resting, the bird's wings were entirely dark and were darker than the rest of the bird. In flight, a light stripe extended the length of the wing. The mantle was light gray and was dappled with small, blotchy light brown areas. The back of the neck was darker than the mantle, and this dark color extended to the crown. The forehead was white. The rest of the head was also white except for a dark spot which included the eye. The bill was rather short, about the length of the bill of a Pectoral Sandpiper. The bill was dark, had a tubular look, and was tapered slightly towards the tip.

We believe this was a juvenile bird molting into first-winter plumage and photos of the bird clearly show the mottled upperparts and buffy neck characteristic of a juvenile Red Phalarope. This bird was observed by at least a dozen people through 3 October, but was not seen on later dates. This represents the first accepted record of this species in Iowa.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010

6942 James Francis Pl., Johnston, IA 50131



Red Phalarope, Saylorville Reservoir, 1, 2 October 1988. Photos by S. J. Dinsmore and A. F. Fix.

88-21

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species?Red Phalarope

How Many?1 juv. molting into basic plumage

Location?north end of Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.

Habitat?swimming and wading in shallow water adjacent to large mudflat

Date?30 Sep-2 Oct 1988

Time?4:46-5:05 p.m. on 30 Sep and 2:12-4:05 p.m. on 1 Oct

Observers Name and address:Steve Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50010

Others who saw bird:Bery Engebretsen, Mark and Beth Proescholdt, m.ob.

Description of bird:I first noticed the bird around 4:15 p.m. at a distance of about 3/4 mile while we were on the south shore of the reservoir. I commented to Bery that the bird sure looked like a phalarope and he agreed with me. Realizing that Red Phalarope was a possibility at this time of year, we decided to approach for a closer look.

At 4:46 p.m., we relocated the bird at a distance of about 600 yards. While watching the bird, we both commented on two features of the bird; the stout bill and the pale gray, unstreaked upperparts. The bird was roughly the size of nearby Pectoral Sandpipers, though it may have been slightly smaller. The bird spent most of its time wading and swimming in shallow water, although the bird did briefly walk around on the mud.

We then approached to within about 400 yards. While watching the bird, I took the following notes. Bird roughly the size of a Pectoral Sandpiper. Overall, the bird was very pale, almost resembling a basic-plumaged Sanderling. The underparts, including vent, belly, breast, and throat were white. The wings looked black, and were darker than the rest of the bird. The mantle was a pale gray color, noticeably lighter than the wings. There were no dark or light streaks on the back. The nape was the same color as the mantle. The head pattern was as follows; mostly white with a darker area posterior to and including the eye (dark area approx. 1 cm long) and a darker cap. Dark cap was noticeably darker than nape and mantle. Bill was short (less than the length of the head), straight, fairly thick, and dark colored. Bill seemed about as thick as the bill of a nearby Stilt Sandpiper. To me, the bird seemed much more lethargic than a Red-necked Phalarope. Red-necks are usually very active, swimming in circles and bobbing their heads continuously. This bird, however, really didn't swim that much, but instead spent most of its time wading slowly in shallow water. I also thought this bird looked like it didn't have much of a neck, giving it a "hunchbacked" appearance. On the other hand, I think Red-necked Phalaropes have a very upright appearance and have a fairly obvious neck. We did not see the bird in flight. At approximately 5:15 p.m., we noticed that the phalarope and the other shorebirds had disappeared, and we were unable to relocate them.

On 1 Oct, Mark and Beth Proescholdt and I relocated the bird at the same location where it had been the day before. We watched the bird from 2:12-4:05 p.m. at close range. I was able to approach within 30 feet and photograph the bird. While watching the bird, I

made the following notes. Mantle was mostly light gray with some small patchy brown areas throughout, suggesting that the bird was molting. The throat, upon close examination, was somewhat buffy, not white. The bill was dark and was nearly identical in shape to the bill of a nearby Sanderling, although the phalarope's bill was a bit shorter. The legs, at very close range, appeared to have a yellowish tint. The bird made several short flights and we were able to clearly see the white wing stripe.

Andy Fix and I observed the bird on the evening of 2 Oct, and it was seen early the next morning by Jim Dinsmore. The bird was not seen after 3 Oct.

Similar species and how eliminated: The posture, behavior, and black and white color pattern rule out all shorebirds except phalaropes. The size, "hunchbacked" appearance, bill shape, head pattern, and unstreaked, gray upperparts eliminates Red-necked and Wilson's phalaropes.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were very good. The sky was overcast, but the air was very clear and there were no heat shimmers. Estimated viewing distance was 400-500 yards at the closest on 30 Sep, but was less than 30 feet on later dates. I used a Bushnell 20-45x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: I have seen hundreds of Red Phalaropes off the east coast and in Massachusetts. I have also seen numerous Wilson's and Red-necked phalaropes in Iowa, including many Red-necked Phalaropes this fall.

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

How long before field notes were made? made on spot

How long before this form was completed? written 3 hours later

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Red Phalarope 2. Number: One
3. Location Saylorville
4. Date: 9/30/88 5. Time Bird seen: (first, at 4:15) 4:47 PM to 5:05 P.M.
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): obviously a Phalarope by movement, swimming and posture. Uniform gray above, white below. Bill shorter and thicker than other two species of Phalarope. Neck seemed short. Eye patch seemed small to me. Dark stripe up nape of neck on to head. Wings darker than gray of back. Basically, a gray above and white below with short, thick bill.
7. Description of voice, if heard: —
8. Description of behavior: on shore and swimming; erratic movements of phalarope but did not SPIN
9. Habitat - general: North shore of Saylorville across from Jester Park
specific: mud flats left by low lake level
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
Bill was shorter and thicker than other two phalaropes
Back was uniform gray, unlike Red-necked
11. Distance (how measured)? $\frac{1}{4}$ mile (estimate)
12. Optical equipment: 45x (Steve's excellent scope)
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): overcast, but good light and no mist, fog or heat distortion
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: Red-neck & Wilson's in Iowa and other states. Red only once in California
15. Other observers: Steve Dinsmore
16. Did the others agree with your identification? Yes
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: — many OB, later
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
National Geographic
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 3 hours
- Bery Engler Address: 6492 James Francis
Signature
- Date: 9/30/88 City, State: Johnston IA 50131

Field notes attached

44 → 5-05
45x - 30x

Uniform gray back - no obvious stripes. Dark dorsal neck stripe. Dark cap.



(Bird gone before sketch completed)
(had only pen available - fore head & fore neck were white)

Uniform white neck, breast.

Bill did not appear thin at all.

Short neck,

I could not see ^{neck} eye spot at this distance

$\frac{1}{4}$ mile

→ Especially compared to Skell's nearby, about same body size.

First seen swimming in characteristic phd. fashion

The overall appearance was two-tone; gray above, white below

What species? Red Phalarope How many? 1Location? Saylorville Reservoir - across from Jester ParkType of habitat? extensive mudflat areaWhen? date(s): Oct. 1, 1988 time: 1:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. - (very approximately)
(2:10 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. - close looks)Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Iowaothers with you: Steve Dinsmore, Beth Proescholdtothers before or after you: Jim Dinsmore, Andy Fixx, others

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.

Steve located the Phalarope from the north end of Jester Park about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile away or so across the river. Then we boated closer and walked closer. The Phalarope had a short, black bill that was substantial and thick and definitely not needlelike by any means. It had a light grayish back. When Steve and I were very close to it later, the grayish back was almost in 2 big grayish plates on the back. It was darker on the edge of the wings with some light blackish markings on the flanks. It was a pudgy-looking bird that was very light white. It had a strong, distinctive wingstripe in flight. It had a very white forehead and a very large black line through its eye and toward the back of its head. It had a blackish crown from the top of the head and then on back to the back of the head. It had a dark black line on the back of its neck to the crown and this was much darker in color than the grayish, un-marked back. It had a slight buffy, rosy throat area when seen up close. The top of the legs appeared light and not dark with the rest in water at this observation. At least 3 different times I saw it bobbing up and down and pressing its breast into the water repeatedly. It was swimming at times. It was very active and running and moving around a lot.

Similar species and how eliminated:

A Red-Necked Phalarope is darker with a strongly striped back, a blacker crown, and a more needlelike bill.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? NO

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:
Cloudy most of the time. Partly sunny at the end when we were closest.Distances estimated: 200 yards away at island, 70 yards away at boat, 10-15 yards away at closest on foot.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

My first Red Phalarope. Have seen a number of winter-plumage Red-Necked Phalaropes.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

R.T. Peterson guide, Nat'l Geog. guide, Shorebirds, Robbins' guide.

How long before field notes made? 10:15 p.m. this form completed? Oct. 8, 1988-that evening

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

What species? Red Phalarope How many? 1Location? Saylorville Reservoir, Des MoinesType of habitat? shallow north end, on a long sandbarWhen? date(s): October 1, 1988 time: 1:30 to 5:00 approximatelyWho? your name and address: Beth Proescholdt, 2110 - 4115 close observation, Liscoomb, Iowaothers with you: Steve Dinsmore, Mark Proescholdtothers before or after you: Andy Fixx

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.

When we first saw the bird from shore at least $\frac{1}{2}$ mile away, it stood out from the other shore birds for its whiteness. Then as we worked by boat to an island 200-300 yards from it we were able to determine it was a Red Phalarope, not Red-necked.

About the size of a Sanderling near it, the bird had a light solid-gray back with a slightly mottled look ^{from feather edgings} but with no stripes on its back (as a Red-necked). The mantle, scapulars + coverts had a clean, gray look. It had a white "forehead", with a dark stripe up the back of its neck + nape + onto only $\frac{1}{2}$ of the crown (instead of far forward as in Red-neck).

The bill was thick for a Phalarope, reminding me of a Western Sandpiper's without the droop - much heavier a bill than the other 2 phalarope.

The bird was very white on breast, belly + sides, except for a pinkish wash on upper breast + throat, + a black crescent through eye seen with a 45x scope at 50 yards.

We didn't see it spinning, but it did a lot of swishing + swaying + bouncing in the water at times.

When it flew twice, I saw its white wing stripes.

Similar species and how eliminated: Red-necked Phalarope. This bird had a solid gray back with no stripes, and a white forehead, and a thick bill, unlike a Red-necked.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? no

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

cloudy, but good light - $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile from shore - 200-300 yards by boat, a last, 50 yards - 8x40 Nikon binocs, 22x Bushnell scope + 45x scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Never a Red Phalarope, but a few sightings of Red-necked.

References and persons consulted before writing description: studied all guides + discussed with Mark + Steve.

How long before field notes made? at once this form completed? Oct 4, 1988

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

Documentation for Red Phalarope

Andrew S. Fix

153-C University Village

Ames, IA 50010

515-296-7557

Date: Oct 2, 1988

Time: 4-5 pm.

Location: mud flat north end of Saylorville Lake, east side, south of #17 bridge

Conditions: clear, calm

Situation: Steve Dinsmore and I went to relocate a Red Phalarope he had identified earlier, and we hoped to photograph it. We walked along a mud flat along the east side of the north end of Saylorville and noticed a large, whitish shorebird with the following morphologic features:

- dark, ^{pale} gray back
- white belly, breast
- dark stripe at crown
- distinct white wing stripe in flight
- dark auricular patch with white line above
- dark, short, stout bill
- subtle spots on back

This bird stayed in the water most of the time and was in with a mixed group of shorebirds. It was about Pectoral Sandpiper sized and had a somewhat taller, more erect stance.

We identified it as a Red Phalarope based on the above unique features and differentiated it from a Wilson's Phalarope based on the thick, shorter bill and chunky appearance. The back also lacked the streaking of a

winter Red-necked Phalarope, and it did not have the jointed Bill this Red-necked Phalarope has. It was much too large for a Snowy Plover or piping Plover and had a much larger bill.

I photographed the bird at close range (up to 30 ft.) with a Minolta X-570 camera, Tokina 400mm telephoto lens, and Kodachrome 64 speed film. Enclosed is a slide & substantiate the ~~the~~ documentation. All the features are clearly evident in this photo.

If there is anything else I can provide, please contact me.

Andy Fox

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species Red PhalaropeLocation Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co.Habitat mud flatDate(s) 10/2/88 Time 11:30 to noonName and Address Jim Sinclair, 810 North R St., IndianolaOther observers David Youngblat

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 behavior and voice.

Same size as the Pectoral Sandpipers it was with upright posture of a phalarope and frantic feeding behavior typical of phalaropes.

Breast, throat and flanks white; heavy black line through and extending past eye; back gray

with few dark highlights; bill relatively short and sturdy

Similar species and how eliminated: Red-necked Phalarope - size and shape of bill and lack of gray on flanks

Sanderling - Posture, feeding behavior, head and back color and pattern

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? no

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: lighting conditions fair to good, bird first seen at 200 yds subsequently as close as 75 yds with Discoverer scope at 30x

Previous experience with species and similar ones: have observed Wilson and Red-necked before, no previous experience with Red Phalarope

References and persons consulted before writing description: National Geographic Field Guide and Harrison's Seabirds

How long before field notes made? _____ . How long before this form

completed? 6 hours

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species? Red Phalarope

How Many? one

Location? north end of Saylorville Reservoir

Habitat? freshwater lake; bird was feeding in shallow area along the edge of a sandbar with a number of other shorebirds

Date? 3 October 1988

Time? watched bird from 8 to 8:15 a.m.

Observers Name and address: Jim Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Drive, Ames

Others who saw bird: Steve Dinsmore, Andy Fix, Bery Engebretsen

Description of bird: medium sized shorebird, about the size of a Pectoral Sandpiper-compared when the two were next to each other Basically gray above and white below; was seen with two Sanderlings and back color was similar to theirs but head markings were different. Top of head dark colored with that color extending completely down the back of the neck and onto the back

Dark slash of color extending through the eye and to just back of the eye

Rest of face and neck was light colored except for a faint trace of buffy color across the front of the neck

Bill was heavy and fairly long but not as long and thin as that of Wilson's Phalarope. Back was gray with some darker markings on it but didn't have the conspicuous scalloping pattern of Red-necked Phalarope

Similar species and how eliminated:

Wilson's Phalarope-neck not long and thin enough, bill too short, head markings were wrong

Red-necked Phalarope-bird was a bit too big, bill heavier and neck markings were wrong, markings on back were different

Viewing conditions and equipment:

20-45 power scope, about 100 yards away
clear sky and fair light

Previous experience with species:

none

References consulted:

Harrison-Seabird book

How long before field notes were made?

2 1/2 hours

How long before this form was completed?

2 1/2 hours

DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Red Phalarope, 3 Oct 1988, Saylorville Res., Polk Co., IA

Observer: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52240

Other observers: Steve Dinsmore and others

Time: 11:00 to 11:15, 11:45 to 11:50, 12:45 to 1:05

Habitat: Upper end of large reservoir with mud flats.

Description: After 3.5 hours of looking I finally found two phalaropes about 1 mile east of Highway 17 bridge on the north side. They were on a mud bar with dowitchers, Stilt Sandpipers, and pectorals. Later one was seen with the same flock of shorebirds about 1/4 mile east of the bridge on the south side. Initial notes made at 12:10 before looking at any books were as follows: "Bird number one was the size of nearby pectorals. It had a short straight black bill, shorter than head, uniform thickness, and as thick as base of pectoral's bill. Black over crown and through eye. All white underparts. Primaries black, coverts gray with considerable white, scapulars darker. Back and tail gray. In flight, prominent white wing stripe. Wings, back, and tail appeared all medium gray. White sides to base of tail, but center and tip all gray. Walking and picking at food with slight side to side movement; swam once. Not twisting. No streaks in back when flying, slight smudge at shoulder. Bird number two: same size and posture. Much plainer with only hint of dark cap and some dark through eye. Billed seemed longer, thinner, and more pointed. I saw both in flight and they looked the same. I did not see this bird again after the flock flushed (presumably by a Merlin that I saw twice in the area)."

The initial views were against or partially against the light (partly cloudy). After writing notes and looking at the National Geographic Guide, I studied the first bird at 40 to 50 yards with the light but under cloudy sky. It was with the same mixed flock of shorebirds but with more pectorals. It sometimes chased pectorals. It fed along the mud flat, swam, and flew several times while I had the scope on it. I made the following additional notes at 1:30: "Better view at 40-50 yards. White on forehead; black starts over eye and goes over head and narrows at nape. Bill 2/3 of head length. Bill consistently shorter than pectorals' bills, tapers slightly, but rounded at tip. Picking side to side and swimming. When standing, lower edge of wing and primaries dark, rest gray with indistinct dark V in scapulars. Not as white in coverts as it seemed before with back lighting. Legs dark gray. Seen well in flight with scope and 10x binoculars several times. No marking on back. Wings and mantle uniform gray. Tail as before.

I conclude that the first bird was a Red Phalarope in basic plumage (I saw no feather edging to suggest a juvenile). I'm not sure what the second bird was. The bill suggested Red-necked; perhaps I failed to judge the size correctly and missed markings on wing and back.

Song: not heard

Behavior: as above

Conditions: Probably about 100 yards at first and second sightings; 40-50 at last sighting as judged by comparable distance along shore. Lighting as described above. Used 20x scope and 10x binoculars.

Similar species: Bill shape, relative size compared to pectorals, lack of wing bars when standing and back markings in flight appear to be best marks for favoring Red over Red-necked Phalarope in basic plumage. Now, looking at the drawings in *Shorebirds* by Hayman, Marchant, and Prater, I think I can appreciate the more bulky body and wider wings as compared to Red-necked. Also the flight was relative slow.

Agreement: Not discussed with any one else, but reported at Red Phalarope.
 Previous experience: I have seen both species in this plumage on California
 pelagics and have seen Red-necked Phalaropes in all plumages on shore.
 I have seen Red Phalarope in breeding plumage in Alaska.
 References/time used: National Geographic Guide after first set of notes.
 Time of notes/typed: Notes made when I got back to car. Typed 5 hours after
 last sighting.

... of Highway 1 bridge on the north side. One was on a hill
 with downy. Still downy. and downy. later one was seen
 the same flock of shorebirds about 1/2 mile east of the bridge on the
 south side. Initial notes made at 1:15 p.m. (about 1/2 mile east of
 as follows: Bird number one was the size of a shorebird. It had a
 short straight black bill. Shorter than head. Uniform thickness. The
 thick at base of decedent a bill. Black over crown and throat and
 white underparts. Primaries black. Coverts gray with consistent white
 scapulars darker. Back and tail gray. In flight, downy with white
 scapulars, wings, back, and tail appeared all brown gray. White sides of
 base of tail. Out center and tip all gray. Walking and picking at food
 with slight side to side movements. Sway once. Not excited. No display.
 back when flying. Shorter than head. With throat and some dark
 and posture. Much darker with only hint of dark cap and some dark
 eye. Bill seemed longer. Thinner. and more pointed. I saw both birds
 and they looked the same. I did not see this bird again after the first
 sighting. Presumably by a flight that I saw twice in the area.
 The initial views were distant or partially obscured by light. I
 after writing notes and looking at the National Geographic Guide.
 studied the first bird at 40 to 50 yards with the light out under
 sky. It was with the same mixed flock of shorebirds out with notes.
 decedent. It sometimes chased decedent. It was about the 1/2 mile
 away. and flew several times while I had the scope on it. I saw the
 following additional notes at 1:15: Better view at 40-50 yards. Head
 forehead black stripe over eye and goes over head and narrow
 bill. Tip of head longer. Bill consistently shorter than decedent. Head
 longer slightly. but rounded at tip. Flicking side to side and
 when standing. Lower edge of wing and primaries dark. Tail with
 distinct dark V in scapulars. Not as white as decedent as it
 decedent with back standing. Last dark gray. Seen only in flight with
 and in binoculars several times. No markings on back. Wings and
 uniform gray. Tail as decedent.
 I conclude that the first bird was a Red Phalarope in basic plumage. I
 feature being to suggest a juvenile. I am not sure what the second bird
 was. The bill suggested Red-necked Phalarope. I failed to make the bill
 correctly and missed markings on wing and back.
 could not hear
 generally as above
 locations probably about 1/2 mile east of first and second sightings.
 last sighting as judged by comparable distance along shore. Location
 described above. Last 1/2 mile and in binoculars.
 either species. Bill shape. relative size compared to decedent. Lack of
 wings bare when standing and dark barring in flight appear to be
 better for favoring Red over Red-necked Phalarope in basic plumage.
 looking at the markings. In particular, the markings on the
 think I can appreciate the more bulky body and higher wing as compared to
 Red-necked. Also the flight was relative slow.

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species: Red Phalarope

Location: 1/4 mile east of Hwy 17 bridge over Des Moines River/Saylorville Lake; Polk County, IA

Habitat: mud flat at edge of river/lake

Date(s): 10/3/88

Time: 1:50 pm to 2:00 pm

Name and Address: Ann Johnson, 532 120th Ave., Norwalk, Iowa 50211

Other observers: Mike Thomas, Larry Morris

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 behavior and voice. Predominately white bird feeding with pectoral sandpipers and dowitchers. Slightly smaller than dowitchers, approximately the size of pectorals but with a slightly different body shape. Fed more actively and slightly apart from other shorebirds. "Gray back with light feather edging. Broad black stripe through eye toward back of head. Broad black stripe running from back to mid-top of head. Pale rusty wash under chin down on to neck. Thick black bill." Seen in flight x2, circling and returning. "White wing stripe in flight" and easy to discern in group because of almost white color.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Wilson's Phalarope - Eliminated by bill size and shape and size of black area on head.

Red-necked Phalarope - Eliminated because of lack of striping on back, thicker bill, and location of rusty wash on chin and neck area.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

Overcast but suitable lighting. Observed at 30' to 50' (similar distance paced) through scope at 30x - 45x. Excellent looks from various angles.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Life bird. Numerous observations of Wilson's over the course of the years.

References and persons consulted before writing description:

National Geographic Field Guide; Peterson's Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern North America

How long before field notes made? 4 hours
completed? 2 days

How long before this form

What species? Red Phalarope How many? 1Location? Highway 17 + Des Moines River - North edge of Saylorville Lake-Type of Habitat? Mudflats on south side of DM River c. 1/2-3/4 mile below Highway 17 bridgeWhen? date(s): 3 Oct. '88 time: c. 2 pm to c. 2:20 pmWho? your name and address: Nike Thomas, 2517 49th St., Des Moines, IA 50310Others with you: Ann JohnsonOthers 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.

The bird was feeding with a flock of pectoral sandpipers on the mud flats. It was c. 8 inches in length - the same size as the pectoral sandpipers. It had a "white face with a elongated black eye patch, a gray-blue cap on the back of the head and neck" blending into a "blue gray back without stripes." The "wings were blue-gray on top and white underneath." The "breast and undersides were white." The throat and the underside of the neck were "white with a rusty or tawny wash" on them. The bill was "mostly dark, short ("no longer than the head length"), and "thick throughout." The bill appeared thicker and no longer than the bills of the pectoral sandpipers. In flight, a "white stripe" was clearly visible "on the wings."

Similar species; how eliminated:

Wilson's Phalarope: bill too thick & short, presence of wing stripe, eye patch vs. eye stripe

Red-necked Phalarope: bill too thick & short, absence of stripes on back,

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.
partly cloudy - c. 50%, sun on shore at c. 75ft. + flying with flock of pectoral sandpipers.
used 8x40 binoculars & 60mm scope @ 25x

Previous experience with species and similar ones: none. life bird.

References and persons consulted before writing description: National Geographic Field Guide used at time of viewing to check field marks as life bird.

How long before field notes made? 10 min. this form completed? 1 1/2 months.

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