

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION  
OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

Species: White-winged Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*) Number: I

Location: Nashua, Chickasaw County Iowa

Date: October 24, 1978 Time: 11:50 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.

Description: In size the duck was comparable to a Mallard. The head in profile was rounded in the back with a sloping forehead and bill. Frontal views of the head showed fat or puffy looking cheeks somewhat like a Common Goldeneye. Body shape seemed flattened. Body color was a very dark brown, nearly black, lacking any strong iridescent highlights, throughout. Speculum was white. A patch of white beginning below eye enlarging and extending to behind the eye. Eye color was a very pale yellow. Bill was mostly orange with a bluish-black area at the base and some yellow on the beak also. The exact pattern of the bill is hard to describe. Color of the feet was orange to red-orange.

Behavior: The isolated duck stayed near the center of the lake actively swimming slowly about. The duck was never observed diving, and only once stretched it's wings showing the large white speculum. Head and neck rested directly on the body most of the time, giving the scoter a short-necked look. Once or twice the bird yawned revealing a pink lining.

Habitat: A shallow muddy man-made lake of about 100 acres in size. No aquatic vegetation occurs in the lake except on the upper reaches where good amounts of marsh and associated plants (cattail, arrowhead, etc.) grow. The main part of the lake is roughly circular in shape.

Similar species: No other scoter has a white speculum, the combination of characteristics separates this species from all other vaguely similar ducks.

Distance: 550 to 600 feet. Optical equipment: Bushnell 20 to 45 power scope.

Light: Excellent sun position at time of sighting. Duck was north of me with the sun in the south. Sky was clear at the time of sighting.

Previous experience: I have no previous experience with any scoter species. But, I am familiar with all regularly ~~ducks~~ <sup>ducks</sup> occurring ~~species~~ of Iowa.

Other observers: No other person viewed the bird.

Books consulted: At the time of sighting only one book was consulted, that being Birds of North America by C. S. Robbins. Later (when this report was written up) I used two other books, Field Guide to the Birds by R. T. Peterson and Handbook of North American Birds by R. P. Palmer.

This documentation was written two hours after the observation using notes taken at the time of sighting.

Date: October 24, 1978

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