

22 June 1994

Pam Allen  
1601 Pleasant St.  
West Des Moines, IA 50265-2331

Dear Pam,

I am responding to your request for information on your Greater Scaup report from 26 September 1993 in Dickinson County.

For unusual records, the Field Reports Editors make a decision as to whether to accept them or not, or, on occasion, whether to send them to the Records Committee. In the case of the Greater Scaup, we made a decision not to accept the record on a very close and agonizing call. The factors taken into consideration were the following.

1. The date was considered very unusual (although possible). Previous early dates for Iowa are 8, 13, and 29 Oct; for Missouri, 18 Oct; for Illinois, 4, 12, 13 Oct; for southern Minnesota, 26 Sep, 8, 9, 10 Oct; for northern Minnesota, 17, 20 Sep, 8, 15, 18 Oct; and for Wisconsin, late Oct. Very unusual dates require stronger evidence, because the citing of the record has more impact.

2. The species is difficult to identify, and, therefore, requires thorough documentation, especially when out of season. You gave two field marks, both of which are hard to see and open to some variation of interpretation. A full documentation would have been in order here. The wing stripe extending almost to the tip of the primaries, if seen well, is strong evidence, but on occasion I have been fooled.

3. Although you list three other observers as seeing the bird, the two who sent in field reports did not mention the bird. We were unsure as to whether: (1) they did not see it; (2) they did not identify it; (3) they did not agree with you; or (4) they left before the birds flew. If (4) were the case, we are surprised that such experienced birders would not recognized the rarity of the record and stay to see the bird fly.

You will not believe how much we agonized over this record, but in the end we decided that we should treat it as we might treat any similar record from another observer.

This is an important record, and we might reconsider or send it to the Records Committee if you provide further information and so request.

Best regards,

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