

16-95-26

Accepted (7-0)

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

WHOOPING CRANE

Grus americana

Location: Around and near Thurston Reservoir; north of Lamar; Prowers County, Colorado

Date: March 12, 1995

Setting:

This bird was discovered by someone else. Brandon Percival, Bob Dickson and myself went out and found the bird early on the morning of March 12th. We first found it about 3 miles southwest of Thurston Reservoir, at the intersection of RR and 5 Roads. It was feeding in a corn field with about 25 Sandhill Cranes. It clearly stood out, being much larger and whiter. We observed it at several hundred yards distance with our scopes (including a Questar). After about 10 minutes it flew towards Thurston Res. and landed in a bare field right on the south edge of the lake. I got excellent views of it here in my scope at about 75 yards for ten minutes. It then flew to the north side of the lake where it spent the remainder of the morning with hundreds of Sandhill Cranes at the lake edge. Conditions and light were excellent.

Description:

It was an immature bird. It was much taller than the Sandhill Cranes. It looked to be nearly 5 feet tall where the Sandhills were about 4 feet tall. It was bigger in every way. It had a larger head, a bigger, thicker bill, a longer and thicker neck, a bulkier body and longer thicker legs. The heads of the Sandhill Cranes reached to just past the back of the Whooper. The plumage was basically white and in flight the bird had black wingtips. However the white plumage was relieved by a tan head, gradually becoming white on the neck. There were several large brownish-tan splotches on the wings and body plumage. The legs were long and gray. There were no bands on the legs.

Similar Species:

The Sandhill Crane is smaller and lacks the white and black plumage of this bird. American White Pelican and Snow and Ross' geese are smaller and are not long-legged.

Experience with Species:

I have seen Whooping Cranes in Texas and many thousands of Sandhill Cranes.

This report is prepared from notes made during and after observation.

Mark Janos
10 Sedium Ct.
Pueblo, CO 81001

Mark Janos

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD

|

UNUSUAL RECORD

IX

First record for
Prowers County

Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.

Species: Whooping Crane
(Vernacular Name)Grus americana
(Scientific Name)Date(s): March 12, 1995 and March 18, 1995Number of birds seen: one Sex: Unknown Plumage: immatureof Thurston Reservoir.Locality: Road RR and 5 Prowers Co. and then North side Elevation: _____Nearest town: May Valley County: ProwersTime(s) observed: off and on between 10:15 AM - 11:45 AM; 9:45 - 10:20 AM on 3/12Duration of observation (e.g. 1 sec., 5 min., etc.): 30 minutes at least on 3/12 and 15 minutes on 3/18

Other observers who saw the bird with you (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):

Mark Jandos, Dan Bridges, Toni Brevillier, Bob & Johnnie Dickson, Pearle Sandstrom-
Smith, Clif Smith on 3/12; Van Truan on 3/18.

Other observers who saw the bird independently (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):

3/10) Jennifer Slater (finder) 1610 South 8th St. Lamar, CO 81052 719-336-3505
Diane Nelson, Dick Schottler, Mauriaili, By Linda Wheelock on March 19, 1995
Peter Gent, Bob Spencer, David S. Johnson, David Silve
Light conditions (position of bird to light and shade, direction and strength of light):
excellentOptical equipment used (e.g. power, types): 10X40 Bausch & Lomb Binoculars & 20X60 Kowa TSN 4 ScopeDistance, and how measured: 300 yards both days.If photographed, type of equipment and film: not photographed.Who else photographed the bird? Van Truan; when the bird was in flight.

Describe the bird's behavior (e.g. flying, feeding, or habits used in identifying):

The bird was first observed feeding in a corn field with Sandhill Cranes. Then feeding along or near the north shore of Thurston Reservoir with 2000+ Sandhill Cranes.

Describe in detail the bird's relative size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern. Include details of bill, wing and tail shape. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions and illustrations is not enough. Describe only what you actually observed in the field: The size was about 10 inches taller than the Sandhill Cranes with it.

The overall shape was typical crane shaped. The plumage was an immature because of the orangish rusty color on the bird. The color pattern is as follows: The bill was light probably a yellowish color. The eye color could not be seen. The head and neck were rusty orange. The back and wings were all white with a little rusty orange on the back. The tail was white. The end of the tail and wing were black. The legs and feet were a grayish color with no bands of any kind. The

Description (continued): In flight the bird was quite distinctive. It had bold black wing tips. The size was distinctive in flight with the Sandhill Crane. The Whooping Crane was much larger. The bird had a long neck and long legs behind the tail. The shape of the bill was thick and pointed at the end. The shape of the wings and tail were typical crane shaped. I identified this bird because of many reasons, H 1 the large size compared directly with Sandhill Crane H 2 the color of the bird (white) not grayish like other cranes. H 3 The shape (crane shaped / long neck and long legs). H 4 I believe that Whooping Cranes would not be

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery, (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration): no sounds heard.

difficult identification for me because I have been birding since 1981 and have seen many similar species of crane family. Also I have observed thousands of Sandhill Cranes every year in Colorado.

Describe the general and specific habitat in which you observed the bird:

First observed in a corn field and then along the shore of a small reservoir in southeastern Colorado.

How did you eliminate similarly appearing species?

Sandhill Crane: This species is grayer and smaller with black wing tips.

Common Crane: This species is grayer and smaller.

American White Pelican: does not have long neck.

Egrets: Are not as large as cranes. Wood Stork: Are not as large as cranes.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species?

Whooping Crane: This is my first one.

Common Crane: have not seen this species.

Sandhill Crane: Have seen many including maybe 1/000+ here with the one immature Whooping Crane. American White Pelican: Seen many in CO/CA. Have seen all the others.

List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

a) at time of observation:

b) after observation:

National Geographic Society Birds of North America

This report was written from reports made during after observation from memory

Date and time report was written: 8:30 PM March 12, 1995

Reporting observer: Brandon K. Perovich Signature: Brandon K. Perovich

Address: 835 Harmony Drive Pueblo West, Colorado 81007-2604

719-547-3722

And herons except Great White Heron, Many Snowy, Great, & Little Blue Herons in CO/CA
Little Blue Heron (immature) seen one in CO and 3 in CA, Wood Stork: Seen about
20 at Salton Sea, CA July 7, 1988.

Return to:

Bill Prather

C.F.O. Official Records Committee

13810 WCR 1

Longmont, Colorado 80504

Comments by this reporter. This bird is from the Texas flock because the bird is an immature. Also the location the Southeastern part of Colorado. This bird has no bands.

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD UNUSUAL RECORD

Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.

Species: WHOOPING CRANE
(Vernacular Name) | GRUS AMERICANA
(Scientific Name)Date(s): MARCH 18, 1995 (SEEN DAILY SINCE MARCH 10th)Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: UNKNOWN Plumage: IMMATURELocality: THURSTON RESERVOIRElevation: 4500' (?)Nearest town: LAMARCounty: POWERTime(s) observed: 11:30 am to 12:30 pmDuration of observation (e.g. 1 sec., 5 min., etc.): 1 hourOther observers who saw the bird with you (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):
SUZI MYROW PLOOSTER, BOULDEROther observers who saw the bird independently (give names, addresses, telephone numbers)
JENNY SLATER (FINDER), LAMAR, Dwayne Nelsen, MARK JAMES, DICIC SUTROTTLE, DAVID EBYLight conditions (position of bird to light and shade, direction and strength of light):
BRIGHT SUNLIGHTOptical equipment used (e.g. power, types): TELESCOPES FIXED 30X, ZOOM 15-40XDistance, and how measured: 0.5 MILE (GUESS)

If photographed, type of equipment and film:

Who else photographed the bird?

Describe the bird's behavior (e.g. flying, feeding, or habits used in identifying):

WALKING AND FEEDING ON NORTH SHORE OF THURSTON RESERVOIR.

Describe in detail the bird's relative size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern. Include details of bill, wing and tail shape. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions and illustrations is not enough. Describe only what you actually observe in the field:

THIS WAS A VERY LARGE BIRD WITH VERY LONG LEGS AND NECK AND WAS OBVIOUSLY A CRANE. IT WAS CONSIDERABLY TALLER AND LONGER LEGGED THAN THE 2-3000 SANDHILL CRANES THAT IT WAS WITH. THE HEAD AND UPPER NECK WAS A

Description (continued):

UNIFORM LIGHT, RICH BROWN COLOR. THE BILL WAS LONG AND DARKISH YELLOW. THE LOWER NECK AND BREAST WAS MOSTLY OFF-WHITE COLOR BUT THERE WERE SEVERAL PATCHES OF THE LIGHT, RICH BROWN COLORED FEATHERS IN THE WINGS AND RUSTLE. THE LEGS WERE DARK AND I COULD NOT SEE ANY LEG BANDS, ALTHOUGH I WAS QUITE A LONG WAY AWAY. THE PLUMAGE LOOKED VERY LIKE THE ILLUSTRATION ON PAGE 59 OF NAT. GEOGRAPHIC GUIDE, SO I PRESUME THE BIRD WAS BORN IN 1994.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery, (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):

NOT HEARD

Describe the general and specific habitat in which you observed the bird:

LAKE SHORELINE, SPENT SOME TIME FARTHER OWSHORE IN GRASSY AREA.

How did you eliminate similarly appearing species?

SANDHILL CRANE - VERY DIFFERENT JUVENILE PLUMAGE, SIZE

Snow & Ross' Geese - HUGE SIZE DIFFERENCE, HEAD PATTERN ETC

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species?

HAVE SEEN WITTINGING CRANES AT ARANSAS & THE GRAY'S LAKE FLOCK IN COLORADO

List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

a) at time of observation: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC FIELD GUIDE

b) after observation:

This report was written from reports made during ✓, after observation from memory
Date and time report was written: 18 MARCH, 9pm, 1995

Reporting observer: PETER R. GENT Signature: Peter R. Gent

Address: 55 SOUTH 35TH ST, BOULDER, CO 80303

All reports will be maintained permanently at the address below:
Return to:

CURATOR, DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS
DENVER MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
CITY PARK
DENVER, CO 80205

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD UNUSUAL RECORD

Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.

Species: Whooping Crane Grus americana
(Vernacular Name) (Scientific Name)Date(s): 10, March through 26, March, 1995 (at least; still present)Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: UNK ^{at this time} Plumage: juvenileLatilong: 21 Distribution Code: _____ Habitat Code: L, CrLocality: Thurston Reservoir Elevation: approx 3800 ftNearest town: Lamar, Colorado County: ProwersTime(s) observed: various times over several daysDuration of observation (e.g. 1 sec., 5 min., etc.): several hours over several days

Other observers who saw the bird with you (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):

Laurie Raymond, 103 S. 5th, #205, Edmonds, WA (206) 771-707

Other observers who saw the bird independently (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):

Numerous Colorado birders (over several days)

Light conditions (position of bird to light and shade, direction and strength of light):

Various light conditions from dawn to dusk over several daysOptical equipment used (e.g. power, types): 8x40 binoculars, 15-45x scopeDistance and how measured: As close as 300 yards (estimated)If photographed, type of equipment and film: 35mm SLR with 300 mm lensWho else photographed the bird: UnknownDescribe the bird's behavior (e.g. flying, feeding, or habits used in identifying): Initially seen flying between reservoir and alfalfa fieldSeen at other times on reservoir shoreline and in other fields.Call very distinctive from accompanying lesser sandhill cranes.

Describe in detail the bird's relative size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern. Include details of bill, wing and tail shape. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions and illustrations is not enough. Describe only what you actually observed in the field:

Very large, white crane, with black wing tips. Easily 1-1½ ft taller than lesser sandhill cranes. Juvenile plumage indicated brown feathers on leading edge of wings.

Description (continued): Obviously a crane, as while in flight head/neck outstretched, and legs/feet trailing straight behind.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery, (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):

Called briefly in flight, obviously crane-like, but quite different in tonal quality from lesser sandhill cranes it was flying/calling with.

Describe the general and specific habitat in which you observed the bird:

General - SE Colorado plains reservoir surrounded by ag fields
Specific - Reservoir shoreline, alfalfa fields, and milo stubble field

How did you eliminate similarly appearing species?

Black wing tips eliminated egrets; crane shape + flight form eliminated snow geese; flight form + body shape eliminated pelicans

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species?

I have observed whooping cranes at Aransas NWR previously. Other species that are similar I observe routinely do my job.

List books, illustration, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

a) At time of observation: None

b) After observation: None

This report was written from reports made during _____, after observation ✓, from memory _____

Date and time report was written: 26 March, 1995, 2:30 p.m.

Reporting observer: Jennifer Slater Signature: Jennifer Slater
Division of Wildlife

Address: 1204 E. Olive, Lamar, Colorado 81052

All reports will be maintained permanently at the address below:

Return to: CURATOR, DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS
DENVER MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
CITY PARK
DENVER, CO 80205