

1997-16

ACCEPTED 6-1

## SIGHT RECORD FORM

## NEW STATE RECORD

Species: Tufted Duck - Aythya fuligulaDate: 21 March 1997Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: male Plumage BreedingLocality: Cottonwood Marsh, Walden Wildlife Habitat Elevation: 5200 ft.Nearest town: Boulder County: BoulderTimes observed: 0915-0930; 1000-1030; 1430-1500

I was alone and the first to observe and identify the bird at 0915; no other birders were present.

I returned home, contacted the Rare Bird Alert with the observation, and we made several phone calls before returning to observe the bird at 1000.

Duration of observation: approx. 1 hour cumulative

## Other observers present when I was there:

1000-1030: Suzi Plooster (took photos)

1430-1500: Karleen Schofield, 33 Yates St., Denver CO 80219, 936-8661

Robert Spencer, 4430 Gladiola St., Golden CO 80403, 279-4682

Warren Finch, 455 Dover St., Lakewood CO 80226, 233-3372

Peter Gent, 55 S. 35th St., Boulder CO 80303, 494-1750

## Observers who saw the bird independently:

William Kaempfer, 724 Fourmile Canyon Dr., Boulder CO 80302, 939-8005

Alan and Deon Hay, 10572-C W. Florida Ave., Lakewood CO 80232, 986-9786

Glen and Jeane Hageman, ~~Cotton~~ 448 S. Leyden St., Denver CO 80224, 322-6589

Dick Schottler, 25 S. Indiana Pl., #1A, Golden CO 80401, 278-8035

numerous others

## Light conditions for first sighting:

Ideal; sunlight, no clouds, sun behind me, bird N-NW of me

## Optical equipment:

Kowa TSN-4 scope, 30X wide angle eyepiece; Leica 10x42BA binoculars

## Distance to bird:

75-150 yards (variable; estimated) - bird was approximately midway between south and north shores of Cottonwood Marsh

## Photography:

Nikon FG, Sigma 400 mm f5.6 lens, Tokina 1.4x teleconverter

Kodak Elite II - 200 ASA slide film (not yet developed)

## Behavior:

The bird was first observed (0900-0915) actively feeding with a small group of scaup, diving and resurfacing repeatedly. Later (1000-1030) it moved about more slowly on the surface, preening occasionally. In the afternoon (1430-1500) observation period, much of the time it spent resting with bill tucked under wing. Periodically it would stretch, move about, and then go back to resting position.

## Description of bird:

Size: approximately the same as the Lesser Scaup with which it associated.

Plumage: Head and breast black to purplish-black, depending on light angle

Back - black; Sides - uniformly bright white; Tail and undertail coverts - black

**Conspicuous plume of dark feathers on back of head**

Bill: broad, blueish to blue-gray with pronounced black tip, demarcated by clearly visible white band

Legs and feet: (visible when preening back of head and neck): medium to dark gray.

## Song and call: not applicable

## Habitat in which bird was observed:

Cottonwood Marsh (in the Walden Wildlife Habitat northeast of the city of Boulder, Boulder County) is the largest of several ponds reclaimed from a former gravel mining area south of Boulder Creek. It is heavily birded year-round; "the premier wetlands area in Boulder County." Variety of waterfowl, gulls, shorebirds, and/or marsh-dwelling birds present year-round.

**Elimination of similarly-appearing species:**

Only Lesser and Greater Scaup and Ring-necked Duck are remotely similar. The Tufted Duck was swimming and diving with Lesser and/or Greater Scaup and Ring-necked Duck. The Tufted Duck's back is black, whereas the scaup species have a white to light gray back. The Ring-necked Duck differs in head shape (knobbier than Tufted Duck), and has a grayer side with a clearly demarcated vertical white band at the leading edge. **The plumage of the Tufted Duck is unique to this species, and was clearly visible.**

**Prior experience with this species:**

I had close-up looks (from within 10 ft) at a Tufted Duck in 1992, when a leg-banded bird, obviously escaped from a captive breeding population, was observed at Waneka Lake in Lafayette CO. We took slides of this previously observed bird from close up. Once seen, there is no other waterfowl species with which a Tufted Duck could be confused by a competent observer.

**Could this bird could be an escapee from a captive breeding population?**

This possibility cannot be categorically eliminated. The bird observed in 1992 was leg-banded with a bright red band. It was not at all shy around humans, and would readily come to hand-held feed. It did not associate or move with similar duck species such as Scaup or Ring-necked Duck. It did not migrate, and stayed around the Waneka Lake area in Lafayette through several seasons. The present bird is apparently migrating with a group of scaup. We saw both legs and feet as the bird preened on the water surface, and there was no sign of any leg bands. The population of Lesser Scaup at Cottonwood Marsh had been very low for much of the winter, and only recently have appreciable numbers been observed here. It is not known how long the Tufted Duck has been here, but it would have certainly been identified earlier if it had been present before the recent increase in Scaup numbers on area ponds and lakes.

The ABA publication "Winging It" (see the December 96 and January, February, and March 97 issues) has noted a much more widespread presence of Tufted Ducks this winter in the lower 48 states (including such nearby inland states as Kansas and Arizona) than in past years. This widespread distribution would be difficult to explain on the basis of escapees from captive breeding populations.

**Books and references consulted:**

Field guides and other references were consulted only to confirm certain minor points in the identification of this bird. With our past experience with the escaped bird observed earlier, the bird in question here was identified on sight without hesitation or reservation. The books consulted were the National Geographic Society "Field Guide to the Birds of North America," First Edition, and Volume 1 of the Audubon Master Guide to Birding.

This report is written at 2100 hours on March 21, 1997, the day of the first observation of the bird in question.

**REPORTING OBSERVER:** Myron N. Plooster



**Address:**

7420 Spring Drive  
Boulder CO 80303  
(303) 494-6708  
email mplooste@du.edu

## COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD ☒UNUSUAL RECORD ☐

rec'd 3-30-97 pc✓

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

Species: TUFTED DUCK | AYTHYA FULIGULA  
(Vernacular Name) (Scientific Name)Date(s): MARCH 21ST AND 22ND 1997Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: MALE Plumage: BREEDINGLocality: WALDEN POND Elevation: 5300'Nearest town: BOULDER County: BOULDERTime(s) observed: 2:15 - 3:15 pm (21st) 8:45 - 10:30 am (22nd)Duration of observation (e.g. 1 sec., 5 min., etc.): MORE THAN 1 HOUR

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

MYRON POOSTER PLUS MANY OTHERS

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

MARK JAMES, BLANE NELSON

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

SUNNY BOTH DAYSOptical equipment used (e.g. power, types): 10x40 BINOCULARS 20-40x TELESCOPEDistance, and how measured: 100 YARDS (ESTIMATED)

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):

ACTIVELY FEEDING BY DIVING FREQUENTLY, RESTING WITH HEAD ON BACK, PREENING.

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:

THE BIRD WAS COMPARABLE IN SIZE TO LESSER SCAUP AND RING-NECKED DUCK.THE LONG TUFT OF AN ADULT DRAKE WAS VERY OBVIOUS BOTH WHENTHE BIRD HAD ITS HEAD UP AND WHEN THE WIND RIPPED IT WHEN THE

Description (continued):

BIRD WAS SLEEPING. THE HEAD WAS DARK WITH A BRIGHT YELLOW EYE. THE SIDES WERE IMMACULATE WHITE AND THE WHOLE OF THE BACK WAS DARK. THE HEAD WAS ROUND AND THE POSTURE WAS VERY UPRIGHT. THE BILL WAS DARKISH WITH A NARROW WHITISH BAND JUST BEFORE THE BLACK TIP. THE WINGS HAD A CONSPICUOUS WHITE BAND ON THE TRAILING EDGE WHEN THE BIRD FLAPPED. WHEN PREENING, THE FEET WERE SEEN TO BE DARK, AND NO BANDS COULD BE DISCERNED ON EITHER LEG. Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery, (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):

NONE GIVEN

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

WALDEN POND IS APPROX 150 YDS X 200 YDS IN SIZE.

How did you eliminate similarly appearing species?

BOTH SCALP - LONG TURT, BLACK NOT GRAY UPPER BACK, ROUND HEAD.

RING-NECKED DUCK - LONG TURT, WHITE NOT GRAY SIDES, NO LARGE WHITE BAND ON BILL.

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

TURTLED DUCK - VERY COMMON IN ENGLAND AND SEEN VERY MANY TIMES.

SCALP, RING-NECKED DUCK - SEEN VERY MANY TIMES 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: NONE

This report was written from reports made during \_\_\_\_\_, after observation ☒ from memory \_\_\_\_\_  
Date and time report was written: MARCH 23rd 1997 6pm

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

Address: 55 S 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 X

UNUSUAL RECORD \_\_\_\_\_

*rec'd 4-1-97 pc ✓***Species:** Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)**Date:** 22 March 1997**Number seen:** one**Sex:** male**Plumage:** Def. Alternate**Locality:** Walden Pond**Elevation:** ca. 5100'**Nearest town:** Boulder**County:** Boulder**Time observed:** about 9:50 MST**Duration of observation:** about 20 minutes

**Description:** An obvious male, scaup-like *Aythya*, the bird was just slightly smaller than immediately nearby male Ring-necked Ducks and male Greater Scaup. The size difference was unnoticeable with anything less than careful scrutiny and yardstick species very nearby and in similar postures. Its head was dark with a variably-noticeable green sheen, particularly immediately after surfacing from a dive. Its eyes were yellow. The bill was bluish-gray with the entire tip black and with a vaguely-defined band of whitish subterminal to the black and completely separating the black tip from the blue-gray of the rest of the bill. Enough of the tip of the bill was black as to make discernment of the nail impossible. The nearby Greater Scaup had a distinct patch of black at the bill tip with only the very barest of whitish patches ~~anterior~~ adjacent to each side of the black tip; these patches did not meet across the top of the bill as in the Tufted Duck. Hanging down from the rear of the head was a tuft of feathers that reached virtually to the back. Upon surfacing from a dive, this patch was laid against the back of the head and was not visible at distance.

Bills



Tufted Duck



Greater Scaup

The back, folded wings, and tail were entirely black as in the nearby male Ring-necked Ducks. The breast was black and the sides and belly were stark white; there were no vermiculations on the sides as in male scaup and no white and gray pattern as in male Ring-necks. The undertail coverts and lower belly were black, as these regions are in most male *Aythya* divers and in many male *Anas* dabblers. I did not see the legs of the bird nor the open wings.

Similar species eliminated: Back color, head tuft, bill pattern, and side/flank color/pattern eliminate both species of scaup. Head tuft, bill pattern, and side/flank color/pattern eliminate Ring-necked Duck. A hybrid combination involving Tufted Duck and either a scaup, sp. or Ring-necked Duck is eliminated by back coloration (for the scaup combo) and by complete head tuft and side/flank color/pattern (for any combo).



**Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):** None heard

**What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species?** I have seen 10s of 1000s of both scaup species and 1000s of Ring-necked Ducks. I have also seen one male Tufted Duck (twice in two seasons of two different years at the same site in New York). I have some slight experience with a Tufted Duck x scaup hybrid in that I convinced the Michigan Records Committee to reanalyze a record of Tufted Duck that they had accepted after I saw a picture of what was undoubtedly the same bird taken nearby in Ohio, and which the Ohio Records Committee had not accepted as it had some obvious scaup characteristics.

**Light conditions:** sun behind me and to my right

**Optical equipment used:** Zeiss 7x42 and Kowa 30x

**Distance, and how estimated:** estimated at about 300 feet

**Other observers who saw the bird with you:** Peter Gent and others

**Other observers who saw the bird independently:** hordes!!

**If photographed, type of equipment and film:** I did not photograph.

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

**a) at time of observation:** none

**b) after observation:** none

**Reporting observer:** Tony Leukering

**Signature:**



**Address:** Colorado Bird Observatory, 13401 Piccadilly Road, Brighton, CO 80601

**Date report was written:** 25 March 1997 from notes written at the time of viewing

**Note:** The identification of this bird is not at all questionable; the provenance might be. The bird was found upon the arrival of a relatively large number of Greater Scaup, a species that is usually very scarce on the Front Range in Colorado in winter. The situation seems to suggest that the Tufted Duck was amongst this flock of Greater Scaup (and other *Aythya*s present?) wherever it was and migrated (north?) with the flock to Walden Pond.

1997-16

## COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

TUFTED DUCK  
Aythya fuligulaLocation: Cottonwood Lake ("marsh" at Walden Ponds; Boulder; Boulder County, ColoradoDate: March 22, 1997Background:

This bird was found by the Ploosters. I "chased" it, driving to Boulder and arriving about 2:00 p.m. on the 22nd. I immediately found the bird and observed it under excellent conditions for 1 hour and 15 minutes. The sky was slightly overcast but the sun periodically peeked through. The distance to the bird ranged 75-150 yards (est.). I used my scope (Kowa 20-60x) and binoculars. Many other birders were present. The bird associated with a fairly large mixed flock of diving ducks (scaup, Redhead, Canvasback, etc.) that afforded excellent comparisons.

Description:

This was an adult male in breeding plumage. It was 16" long; about the same size and general shape of a Greater Scaup (which was also present in small numbers for direct comparison). The head was deep purple when seen in good light, but usually looked black. The iris was golden yellow. The bill was bluish-gray with a black tip and an ill defined white band between the black nail and the bluish-gray base. The back, chest and rear parts were black. The sides and belly were a pure, unmarked white. The vent area was gray. The bird showed a very erect posture and a rounded head. There was a long, dangly, purplish-black tuft that hung from the back of the rounded crown and was quite obvious, even when wet. This tuft blew side-ways in the breeze and hung halfway down the neck. The spread wing had blackish coverts and extensively white secondaries and inner primaries as in the Greater Scaup. The underwing was whitish. The bird fed actively by diving. unam

Similar Species:

The combination of black back, white sides, and rounded purplish head indicate one of the diving ducks. The three-toned bill and long tuft rule out Ring-necked Duck, both scaups, Redhead and Canvasback.

Experience with Species:

I have seen one male and two female Tufted Ducks in Vancouver, B.C. and Seattle, Washington in late March, 1992. I also saw the female Tufted Duck (escapee) in Denver in Oct./Nov. 1992.

This report is prepared from notes made during observation.

Mark Janos  
10 Sedum Ct.  
Pueblo, CO 81001



✓ rec'd 8-18-97

## COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD

|X|

UNUSUAL RECORD

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

Species: TUFTED DUCK  
(Vernacular Name)Aythya fuligula (ANATIDAE)  
(Scientific Name)Date(s): 23 MARCH 1997Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: ♂ Plumage: ADULTLocality: WALDEN LAKES WILDLIFE MGMT AREA Elevation: \_\_\_\_\_Nearest town: BOULDER County: BOULDERTime(s) observed: 0800-1030 amDuration of observation (e.g. 1 sec., 5 min., etc.): BRIEF MOMENTS BETWEEN FEEDING DIVES

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

10+ people thru the morning, but didn't trade names.

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

TONY LEUKERING, 2/0 CBD 13401 PICCADILLY RD. BRIGHTON CO 80601 303-659-4348SHARON DOOLEY, 303-673-3181

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

FULL SUN ON CLEAR DAY. SUN TO MY BACK. BIRD ON WATER WITHOUT SHADOWS. EXCELLENT VIEWS SUSTAINED UP TO 30 SECONDS BETWEEN DIVES.Optical equipment used (e.g. power, types): SCOPE 15-60X and BINOCULARS 10XDistance, and how measured: FIRST AT ~10m then moved out to ~80m OCULAR ESTIMATESIf photographed, type of equipment and film: N/AWho else photographed the bird? N/A

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

SEE ATTACHED

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:

SEE ATTACHED



Description (continued):

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

BIRD WAS SILENT

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

OPEN WATER AT WALDEN LAKES

How did you eliminate similarly appearing species?

GREATER AND LESSER SCAUP AND RING-NECKED DUCK DO NOT HAVE TUFT ON BACK OF HEAD.

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

WINTERING TUFTED DUCK AT LAKE SHERWOOD, VENTURA COUNTY, CALIF.  
JAN 1973 (SEE P. 114 in GARRETT AND DUNN BIRDS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION). ADULT ♂ 19 DEC 1976

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

- a) at time of observation: None
- b) after observation: Checked MASTER GUIDE VOL I (Vickery p. 176) to learn about purple vs. green iridescence on head.

This report was written from reports made during X, after observation \_\_\_\_\_ from memory \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time report was written: description dictated into pocket recorder at time of observation on 23 MAR 97 0800-1030.

Reporting observer: LARRY L. NORRIS Signature: Larry L. Norris

Address: 1154 SOUTH VANCOUVER WAY  
LAKEWOOD CO 80228-3656

Return to:  
Bill Prather  
C.F.O. Official Records Committee  
13810 WCR 1  
Longmont, Colorado 80504

## TUFTED DUCK (*Aythya fuligula*) Adult Male

23 March 1997. Walden Lakes Wildlife Management Area, Boulder County, Colorado  
Time: 0800-1030. Weather: Cold, clear (20% high cumulus), stiff breeze from north.

### Description:

Head: Rounded with long, black tuft from back of crown down half-way on neck. Head dark black, but when iridescence shown on head it was dark green, not purple. Eye bright yellow.

Bill: Black tip not as wide as that of Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*), but smaller than that of Greater Scaup (*A. marila*) "nail". Both species were nearby for good comparisons. Black tip edged by thin white band, rest of bill blue-gray.

Breast, Back, Tail: All dark black. No white streaks on back.

Wings: Bird never flew, I did not see wing pattern.

Sides, Flanks: Immaculate white. Brighter than nearby one Greater Scaup and three Lesser Scaup (*A. affinis*) with which the Tufted Duck was spending its time on the lake.

Legs: Could not see. Could not determine if it was a banded individual.

### Behavior:

The bird dove frequently in conjunction with several Scaup. It never stayed on the surface for long, maybe 5-10 seconds at most, until about 10:00am when it seemed to rest for a half-minute or so before diving again. The bird was silent through the whole observation.

The way in which the bird stayed and dove in close association with the several scaup makes me think that it was a wild bird. The bird never acted agitated at the close proximity of the other three species of ducks, and did not seek to be solitary. The bird stayed well away from the lake shore and the watching humans. It did not exhibit any behavioral traits of being a tame bird.

Submitted 07 May 1997

Larry Norris  
303-980-6212  
email: larry\_norris@nps.gov