

BLACK DUCK

(Anas rubripes)

A Black Duck was seen at 6:00 P.M., September 6, 1992, in a field 200 yards south of the intersection of Weld County roads #50 and #43. This is a few miles east of La Salle, Colorado, on the west edge of Lower Latham Reservoir. The field is really a pasture, often holding considerable water from irrigation run-off.

At the time of my sighting, there were about 25 Mallards, 4 Green-winged Teal, and approximately 40 shorebirds feeding, largely Lesser Yellowlegs, a few Solitary Sandpipers. The Black Duck was immediately distinguishable by the very dark "chocolate" coloration of the body. This is dark to the point of almost being black. The coloration was quite uniform, with barely noticeable feather edgings. I took great pains to look at the speculum, waiting for the bird to stretch it's wings. It had a very narrow, fine white line on the trailing edge of the speculum, but no white showing above, or on the leading edge of the speculum. The speculum itself was a dark purple. The face and neck showed much contrast, being quite pale brown. There was a dark stripe, however, running from the bill, through the eye, and back toward the nape. The crown was nearly as dark as the body. The bill on this bird was greenish in color, legs bright orange. When flapping wings, the pure white of the underwing coverts stood out in great contrast to the extreme dark color of the body.

I have seen a number of Mallard-Black hybrids at Lower Latham Reservoir, so I was very careful to scrutinize this bird for signs of hybridization. I could see no evidence at all of this possibility. The bird was about 30 yards distance from me, and I used 30x scope for analysis.

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