

1998-22

ACCEPTED 6-1

DOCUMENTATION FORM *rec'd 8-9-98 ✓*

Species: American Black Duck

Number: 1 female

Location: Woods L., Weld Co., CO

Habitat: large lake

Date: 30, 31 January 1998

Time: 3:40-4:16 p.m. (30 January)

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 612 ½ West Magnolia St. Fort Collins, CO 80521

Others who saw bird(s): Rachel Kolokoff (31 January)

Description of bird(s): I was scanning the large mallard flock when I spotted a darker female duck. The bird was very similar to nearby female Mallards except that the body and wings were very dark (almost black from a distance). The head was noticeably paler than the body and there was a darker eyeline. Bill color was olive-green. Leg color was not seen well, but appeared dull orange. The bird raised its wings several times, allowing me to see the speculum briefly. I noted that the speculum was deep iridescent purple and that there was no white on the upperwing. The remainder of the bird including the underparts, mantle, rectrices, and the rest of the upperwings, was very dark (not quite black). The bill color indicated that the bird was a female. As with many waterfowl, it is possible that this bird was not of a wild origin. However, I saw no reason to make that assumption. The bird was with a very large (>3,000) Mallard flock, there were no metal bands on the legs, the bird did not appear to be pinioned or marked in any other way, etc. I also studied the bird carefully to make sure it was not a hybrid of some sort. All of the features were consistent with American Black Duck, and none of the "usual" signs of hybridism like white in the speculum or rectrices, shades of green on the head, or brighter yellow bill color were noted.

Similar species and how eliminated: I considered the possibility of a Mottled Duck and an unusually dark female Mallard. The darker plumage and purple speculum ruled out mottled Duck. A dark female Mallard was eliminated on the basis of bill color, darker plumage, speculum color, and all-dark rectrices.

Previous experience with species: I have considerable experience with American Black Ducks from the Atlantic Coast (Massachusetts, North Carolina) and in the Midwest (Iowa). I have also banded thousands of Mallards (mostly in southeastern Alberta) and have handled several Mallard x American Black Duck hybrids.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were good with partly cloudy skies. Estimated viewing distance was 100-200m. I used 10x42 binoculars and a 20-60x spotting scope.

References consulted: none

How long before field notes written? none written

How long before this form completed? written 30 January 1998