

1999 - 25

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK
Anas rubripes

ACCEPT 6-1
Rocky Mountain

Location: Nee So Pah Reservoir; Kiowa County; near Lamar, Colorado

Date: February 7, 1999.

Setting:

Brandon Percival and I were birding at Nee So Pah Res. early in the afternoon. We were scoping a Tundra Swan about 150 yards away. There were many hundreds of assorted ducks swimming around in the area. The American Black Duck floated up and past the Tundra Swan. We spent about 15 minutes observing the bird at that distance. It was in direct comparison with many other ducks, including Mallards. The weather was calm and slightly overcast, but the light was quite good. I used my Kowa TSN-4 scope at 20-60X for the entire observation. We never saw the bird in flight, so the speculum was not well observed.

Description:

It was an adult. It was roughly the size and shape as the nearby Mallards. The bird was much darker than the female Mallards and other dabbling ducks and was nearly black or blackish overall, but basically it looked superficially like a very dark female Mallard. The brief views that we had of the speculum in the folded wing showed a dark bluish color without white borders. The body was a very dark charcoal-brown, with brownish mottling to the body feathers. The crown was darker brown than the rest of the head. The rest of the head (face, sides of neck and fore neck) were lighter -- a finely streaked, medium brown color. The paler head and neck contrasted with the nearly blackish body. It had a slightly darker eyeline that separated the lighter brown lower face from the light superciliary and dark crown. The back end of the bird, while floating, was darker than female Mallards there, being blackish and dark brown, as opposed to the lighter undertail and tail of the Mallards. The eye was dark. The bill was distinctive on this bird compared to Mallards -- it was plain, unmarked, yellowish-olive, with a faint orangish tone.

Similar Species:

Female Mallard and other female puddle ducks do not have the contrast between blackish body and tan head and neck. The combination of unmarked body feathers, plain greenish-yellow bill, and bluish-purple speculum without white edges is unique.

Experience with Species:

I have seen American Black Ducks in Illinois (1978-79), Wisconsin, and New York (1988). I have seen single male Am. Black Ducks in Pueblo in 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993. I saw a Black Duck in Holly, Colorado in 1992.

This report is prepared memory.

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Photo by Duane Nelson
12/31/90