

Species: Black Scoter

Melanitta nigra

(Vernacular Name)

(Scientific Name-use binomial)

Date(s): November 15, 22, 1975

Time Bird Seen: _____ to _____

Locality: Cherry Creek Reservoir

Nearest Town: Denver

County: Arapahoe

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

NAME

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE

Mildred Snyder

Optical Equipment: 15-60 X Zoom telescope (B&L)

If photographed, type of equipment used:

Light Conditions: Sunny, with sun shining on the bird

Distance from bird (how measured): Minimum distance of 300 ft.

Number of Birds Seen: 1 Sex: Male Plumage: subadult

Describe the bird's overall behavior and demeanor:

The bird was observed swimming and diving during the length of both observations, fairly close to shore. Was observed flying on one occasion. On November 15 it was seen in company with American Wigeon, American Coots and Redhead. On November 22 it was alone.

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

A moderate-sized duck, about the same size as the Redhead. Entire body uniformly slate-gray in color, with no head or face pattern whatsoever. Some blackish feathers, mostly on back. Bill black, with no bulge. No patches or marks on the wing when seen in flight, belly appeared about same color as the rest of the bird when seen in flight.

A very nondescript bird, with no markings or pattern at all. No growth on the bill. Pattern of lobing at base of the bill illustrated on reverse side.

Describe the bird's song or call, if heard, including method of delivery, i.e., from perch, in flight, etc:

None.

Describe the habitat in which you observed this bird:

Large recreation reservoir.

How were similarly appearing species eliminated?

Redhead(female): brown, not gray, has some pale color in face, light bill, wing stripe.

Harlequin Duck(female); three white patches in face.

Bufflehead(female); smaller, white patch on face, white wing patch.

Ruddy Duck: smaller, humpbacked, large white patch on face.

White-winged Scoter:(any plumage)has white wing ~~strip~~ patch. Also has white patches on head or face. Different pattern of lobing on bill.

Surf Scoter: has white patches on face or head. Different pattern of lobing on bill.

Following are illustrations showing pattern of feathering and lobing on bills of scoters (based on specimens in DMNH, illustrations in Kortright's The Ducks, Geese and Swans of North America, and field observations of the Black Scoter subadult male).



Black



White-winged



Surf

Prior experience with this and similarly appearing species:

Much experience with Redhead, Bufflehead, Ruddy Duck. None with Harlequin. Have seen all three scoters, in Colorado and California, in female and adult males plumages.

Books, illustrations and advice consulted and how did these influence this documentation?
Standard field guides and Kortright consulted, confirmed identification.

This report was written from notes made during X after observation; from memory

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SIGNATURE: Robert Andrews DATE: Nov 29, 1975

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