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CFO-ORC FILE # 2001-~~25~~

2000-32

## COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

2001 12/29/01

NEW STATE RECORD \_\_\_\_\_ UNUSUAL RECORD X**Species:** Black Scoter (*Melanitta nigra*)**Date:** 27 December 2001 **Number seen:** one **Sex:** female? **Plumage:** Alternate**Locality:** John Martin Res.**Elevation:** about 3850'**Nearest town:** Hasty**County:** Bent**Time observed:** ~0830-0845 MST**Duration of observation:** off and on for about 1 minute during that time

**Description:** While sorting through an absolutely incredible number of waterfowl on the reservoir with Mark Janos on the inaugural John Martin Res. CBC, Mark suddenly yelled out, "Black Scoter!" He told me that it was a female and showed me where it was. As soon as I got my scope to the place, it, of course, dove and all I saw was black wingtips of its open wings and a blackish tail and butt. It eventually resurfaced very near where it had gone under and I immediately agreed with the ID. I looked at it one more time a bit later and then went back to sorting waterfowl. Not much later, Mark found a female-plumaged Surf Scoter and, though I didn't see the Black again, I could compare in my mind's eye the different head patterns and bill structures of the two birds.

The bird was a medium-sized diving duck (about the size of nearby Common Goldeneyes) that was dark brownish-black with a paler grayish-white face. This pale patch was sharply defined and set off by the much darker crown and back half of the neck (though the latter was a bit paler than the former). The paler color of the face extended onto the throat where it ended abruptly. All other visible plumage of the bird was a dark, blackish. The tail was blackish and held nearly parallel to the water's surface. I did not see the legs. The head was round, unlike the long, slanted heads of the other two species of scoter. Additionally, the bill was shallow, not the deep-based bill of the other two scoters.

**Similar species eliminated:** Both other scoter species are eliminated by size, bill size, and head shape and pattern (face all the same general color - no whiter spots anywhere). Ruddy Duck female eliminated by lack of dark eyeline; all Ruddy Ducks eliminated by size, head shape, coloration, and tail posture. Other female diving ducks by head pattern and lack of back/side color contrast. Male Gadwall eliminated by plumage pattern. Female Gadwall eliminated by diving behavior and lack of strong brown in the plumage.

**Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):** No vocalizations heard.

**What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species?** I have seen 10s of 1000s each of all three scoter species. I have also seen large numbers of all confusable species.

**Light conditions:** sun behind me in mostly clear skies

**Optical equipment used:** Leica 32x

**Distance, and how estimated:** estimated closest approach of about 400 meters

**Other observers who saw the bird with you:** Mark Janos

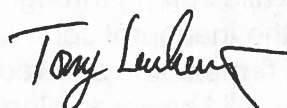
**Other observers who saw the bird independently:** none

**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:** Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, 14500 Lark Bunting Lane, Brighton, CO 80601

**Date report was written:** 29 December 2001 (in early evening) from brief notes written on the evening of the 27<sup>th</sup> and from memory