

1997-4

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Documentation Form

Species- Red-throated Loon

Number- 1 adult?

Location- John Martin Reservoir, Bent Co., CO

Habitat- large lake

Date- 10 May 1997

Time- 12:18-12:30 p.m. MDT

\* Observer- Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

Other observers- Richard L. Bunn

rec'd 11-16-97  
~~PHOTOS~~

Description- We arrived at John Martin and I soon spotted a smaller loon with a small flock of Western Grebes and a single Common Loon. The bird was actively diving but remained above water long enough for several good looks. I estimated the bird was about one third smaller than the Common Loon. It had a slightly longer body and shorter neck than a Western Grebe. The long neck was very slender. The head appeared very small and was no larger than the diameter of the neck. The bill was slender and pointed, and the lower mandible was angled upward. The bird also held it's head tilted slightly upward. Because of the sun, the body plumage was difficult to see. However, I did note that the nape and back of the neck were light gray and the foreneck appeared dark. The mantle also appeared dark and lacked any lighter spotting. Even without the details of plumage, I would have no hesitation identifying this bird based solely on shape. Based on these views, I would conclude the bird was certainly an adult, and probably in alternate plumage (or near the end of the molt to alternate plumage) because of the color of the nape and dark (red?) foreneck.

Similar species and how eliminated- The bird was clearly a small loon. The bird was compared directly to Western Grebes and had a longer body and shorter neck. Bill and body shape were wrong for a cormorant. Compared to a Common Loon nearby, this bird was much smaller and had a "snakier" appearance-slimmer neck, very small head, very slender, upturned bill. The overall shape and bill shape were also wrong for Pacific or Yellow-billed Loon.

Previous experience with this and similar species- I have seen thousands of Red-throated Loons in North Carolina, where I have seen similar numbers of Common Loons. I have also seen hundreds of Pacific Loons, mostly in California but also in the Midwest.

Viewing conditions and equipment- Viewing conditions were very good, except that we were looking almost directly into the sun. Estimated viewing distance was 300m. I used a 20-60x spotting scope.

References used- none

How long before field notes were written? none written

How long before this form was completed? written 11 May 1997