

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD UNUSUAL RECORD

ACCEPTED

Rec'd 2/8/03

Species: Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicaria*)**Date:** 23 September 2001**Number seen:** one**Sex:** ?**Plumage:** Alternate, molting to Definitive Basic**Locality:** Jackson Reservoir**Elevation:** ~4438'**Nearest town:** Weldona**County:** Morgan**Time observed:** ~10:00 - 11:00 MDT**Duration of observation:** off and on for ~15-20 minutes

Description: While scanning through the very large number of shorebirds and gulls present on the surface and mudflats of Jackson Reservoir, I noticed a phalarope that looked quite a bit like another of the many Red-necked Phals that were present. However, this bird looked somewhat different, so I studied it carefully and got Brian Gibbons to look at it, too. We studied it for some time before convincing ourselves that it was, indeed, a Red Phalarope. My main problem with it was that it was in a transitional plumage, nothing like I had seen before (having seen mostly Basic-plumaged individuals of the species).

The bird was obviously a phalarope, as it was a smallish shorebird variably swimming in shallow water foraging like a phalarope (spinning and picking from the surface) and walking in very shallow water, also while picking from the surface. However, it was noticeably larger than the Red-necked Phalaropes that were occasionally near it with a more substantial bill. The crown was blackish with that color meeting the top of the bill and spreading through the eyes. The part through the eyes was separated from the crown by a pale superciliary that started immediately above the eyes and connected with the pale of the auriculars and sides of the nape and neck.

The underparts were pale, whitish on the lower sides, flanks, belly, and vent, but with an obvious suffusion of pinkish-orange on the chest and upper sides. The back was dark with some vague paler fringes on some back feathers and scapulars. The wings were dark with the primary tips on the folded wing reaching the tail tip and with the primary projection being about equivalent to the length of the visible tail (this was different than exhibited by the Red-necked Phalaropes). The legs and eyes were dark. The bill was thick, for a phalarope, and about as long as the bills on the Red-necked Phalaropes nearby, but actually, proportionately shorter than those of the Red-necked Phalaropes. The very base of both mandible and maxilla were somewhat yellowish, with this color more extensive on the mandible than on the maxilla. The nearby Red-necked Phalaropes all had entirely-black bills.

Similar species eliminated: The only really similar species is Red-necked Phalarope, which I eliminated by bill shape, color, and size; head pattern; underparts coloration; and upperparts pattern. Wilson's Phalarope was easily ruled out by foraging style on land (the bird did not show the frenetic style of Wilson's) and by various features of 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 >250 Red Phalaropes, but most of those were in Basic plumage or in Juvenal, molting to Basic; a very few were in Alternate and none were in this combination of plumages. I have seen >1000 Red-necked Phalaropes in a variety of plumages, including some in a similar type of plumage transitional between Alternate and Basic. In fact, there were a few Red-necked Phalaropes present at this location on this date in that transition. I have seen bazillions of Wilson's Phalaropes.

Light conditions: sun variably behind me and to my left

Optical equipment used: Leica 32x

Distance, and how estimated: the closest approach of the bird was at ~60m

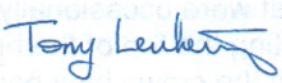
Other observers who saw the bird with you: Brian Gibbons

Other observers who saw the bird independently: others saw the bird on 24 Sept, but I know not who

If photographed, type of equipment and film: 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

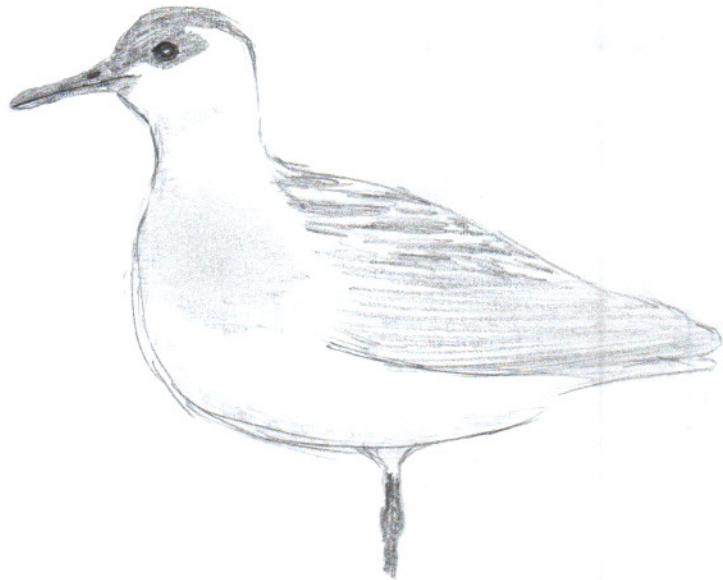
Reporting observer: Tony Leukering **Signature:** 

Address: Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, 14500 Lark Bunting Lane, Brighton, CO 80603

Date report was written: Initiated on 2 October 2001 and completed on 8 February 2003, from notes I wrote about two hours after the sighting.

2001-85

R - 10 Oct 2001



Diffuse buffy wash
across breast. Lower breast
& belly clean white
Dark cap - Not fully separated
from eye patch

B. L. B. 2001

Jackson Res., Morgan Co.

23 September 2001