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COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

BLACK SCOTER
Melanitta nigra

Location: Lake Meredith; near Ordway; Crowley County, Colorado

Date: December 3, 1995

Brandon Percival and I were birding at Lake Meredith late on the morning of the 3rd. I spotted the Black Scoter with my scope (Kowa TSN-4 20-60X) well out from shore. I observed the bird for about 15 minutes as it swam with other diving ducks, including a female White-winged Scoter. Distance was ranged from 100-400 yards. The light was direct sun but the angle was lousy, with the light coming partly from the front. The bird did not dive but swam deliberately further and further from shore, sometimes turning to give us different angles.

Description:

The bird was a female. It was a medium-sized, low-slung sooty-brown duck. It was smaller, smaller-billed and with a steeper forehead and different head shape (rounder) than the White-winged Scoter. It was about the size of a Ring-necked Duck. The bird was very plain overall -- the color being a uniform, sooty brownish-black. The lower part of the face, sides of the head and the upper neck showed a very pale, nearly white, patch. The bill was dark gray. No color was visible in the folded wing and the bird flapped while on the water a couple of times. When it did this it showed a plain, dark, blackish upperwing with no white.

Similar Species:

No other diving duck sports the all-blackish color of the Black Scoter female combined with the distinctive white cheek and neck patch. White-winged Scoter was side-by-side and showed a white wing patch, white spots on the face and had a larger, lower-profile forehead and bill. The Surf Scoter is larger and has two white facial spots and lacks the white on lower face and neck.

Experience with Species:

I have seen two previous Black Scoters and several other scoters in Colorado.

This report is prepared from notes made after observation.

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