

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD SIGHTING

mid 12/10/02

Species: Arctic Loon *Gavia arctica*

2002-105

(A)

Date(s): Nov. 17-19, 2002 Time seen: 11/17: 9 - 9:30 am; 11/18: 12:00 to 1:30 pm; 11/19: 9 am-11:30 am

Locality: Walker Pit, Franktown, Douglas County CO

Latilong: 39104

Optical equipment: 10x binoculars, 30-60x scope. No camera but sketch from field attached.

Number of birds seen: one adult Sex: Unk Plumage: Changing from alternate to basic

Distance from bird: 50-250 yards

Light conditions: Excellent each day: standing on south side of pit, sun over our backs. Loon came rather close and afforded excellent views.

Weather at time of observation: Clear and sunny

Prior weather & number of days since change: A minor snow flurry on 11/15; otherwise clear

Describe habitat: Modest-sized gravel pit filled with water next to channel of Cherry Creek. Grassy sides, with cottonwoods lining the Cherry Creek channel 100-200 feet away.

Describe behavior: Feeding, preening, resting. Moved easily (underwater) from one part of pit to another.

Field marks observed:

General: Loon, smaller than Common.**Head:** This bird has a very well defined neck pattern, but not a well-defined face pattern. Head Brownish above eye, slightly darker on forehead. The cap ends cleanly at eye level, perhaps with a small white space behind and above the eye. But it has a dusky cheek that lacks contrast with the chin—sort of blends into it.

In profile, it has an angular or block-shape to the head—not rounded. It has a peak at the top front of the head.

Back of head and neck pearly gray contrasting strongly with white throat and front of neck. Along line of separation about 6 alternating white and dark (brown? Black?) vertical stripes; more on one side than the other. These appear to be remnants from alternate plumage.

Two pale dusky lines extend from dark, back part of neck to front of throat, below the chin, except they don't join at the front of the neck. We saw this mark all three days. Below these lines, the throat has pale scalloping. At the base of the neck, a few curved stripes (similar to those on the upper neck) separate chest from wings.

Bill: Holds bill at a slight angle above horizontal. Bill looks as if it has a dark tip, but all of upper mandible dark, contrasting with pale lower mandible that is darker at tip.**Back:** Darker than neck, almost black with white spotting. Does not exhibit "scalloped" feathers on back.**Sides:** Shows extensive white feathering along water line, on one side. On the other side it shows a large white patch towards the rear. Depending on the attitude of the bird, the white sides or white spots become less or more visible. When viewed from the rear, you can see white spots on both sides.**Belly:** Belly white. When it preens and shows its underparts, it has no dark band across the vent.

Bird's call or song: Silent

Similar species: Distinguished from Pacific Loon in these regards

Bill: This bird's bill seemed bigger and less delicate than that of a Pacific. It's close to the same length as the head.

This bird points its bill upward at an angle, not straight out.

Shape: This one has a blocked, or peaked head.**Flanks:** This bird has extensive white flanks, visible most of the time, and even from a rear view.**Vent strap:** This bird appears entirely white across the vent without even a hint of a strap.**Chin strap:** This bird does have two marks across the throat, thinner perhaps than the chin strap of a Pacific. Along with the mottled feathers below the throat, these bands may be relics of alternate plumage.**Nape:** The back of the neck of this bird is a pearly gray, all the way from the crown to the back, but contrasting with the dark back. We did not detect any color difference from crown to nape to lower neck.

Prior experience: None with this species.

Description from: Notes taken in field and memory.

Urling C. Kingery Hugh E. Kingery
PO Box 584, Franktown CO 80116

Other observers who saw bird at Walker Pit

2002-105

11/17	3	Urling & Hugh, Karen Metz
11/18	3 more	(Hugh) Glenn Walbek, April & friend
11/19-20	155 142	See sign-up sheets attached

Not everyone signed in. At least 15 people watched the bird fly away, on Wednesday afternoon.
Others during the first two days failed to sign in.

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

CFO-ORC FILE # 2002-105

(A)

NEW STATE RECORD _____ UNUSUAL RECORD X

rec'd 12/26/03

Species: Arctic Loon (*Gavia adamsii*)

Date: 19 November 2002

Number seen: one

Sex: unknown

Plumage: adult alternate molting into basic

Locality: Walker Lake

Elevation: about 5900 feet

Nearest town: Franktown

County: Douglas

Time observed: late morning

Duration of observation: a total of about 30 minutes

Description: photos accompany this report.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration): I heard none.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species? This is my first experience with this species. I have seen 100s, perhaps >1000, of Pacific Loons while living/birding in Colorado, Washington, Alaska, and California.

Light conditions: Clear with the sun behind me.

Optical equipment used: Kowa scope 20x60 zoom

Distance, and how estimated: estimated closest distance at 80 meters

Other observers who saw the bird with you: Chris Wood, Jim Schmoker, Brandon Percival, Duane Nelson, Dick Schottler, Stan Oswald, Jason Beason, and many others.

Other observers who saw the bird independently: >100 people

If photographed, type of equipment and film: Nikon Coolpix 4500 through the scope.

Reporting observer: Doug Faulkner

Signature:

Doug Faulkner

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

Date report was written: This report was written on 3 December 2002 from memory.

(A)

2002-105

CBRC FILE #:

RESULTS:

Species: Artic Loon (Common Name) *Gavia actica* (Scientific Name)

Date(s) of occurrence: Nov 19, 20 and 21, 2002

Number of birds seen: one Sex: Plumage: molting from alternate to basic

Exact location: 'Walker Lake, ½ mile n of Hwy 86 on Walker Rd (19th and 20th) near Franktown, Cherry Creek Res. (21st)

County: Douglas (19th and 20th), Arapahoe (21st) Nearest town: Franktown and

Aurora Elevation: 5500 to 6000 feet

Length of observation: total of about 11/2 hours

Time(s) of observation: 15:00 to 15:45; 10:35 to 11:15 and 15:45 to 16:10

Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: MOB

Other observers who independently saw the bird(s): MOB

Light conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s) and observers position: Partly cloudy to sunny, wind at various directions and speeds. Sun was mainly from behind the observer.

Optical equipment used: Kowa TSN4 20x60

Distance to bird(s) (estimated, unless otherwise noted): 75 yards to ¼ mile

Was (were) bird(s) photographed? yes If so, are you submitting photos? Yes

Who took the photograph(s)? Ric Olson

Describe the general and specific habitats in which the bird(s) occurred: Pond or Res.

Describe the bird's (birds') behaviors, particularly behaviors that were used in supporting the identification, e.g., flying, feeding, habits: The bird was observed diving, preening, swimming and at one eating a sunfish.

DESCRIPTION -- This is the most important part of this report. Include in these details the overall size and shape of the bird, how you placed the bird in the general group that you did, and give as many plumage details as possible, even including those that you feel might not have relevance to the specific identification. Features to include are the color(s) and/or patterns of the head, eyes, bill, back, folded wings, open wings, tail, chin, throat, breast, sides, flanks, belly, vent, and legs. Also, please include, where possible, shape of the whole bird, of the wings - folded or open, of the bill, and of the tail. Please fill out this portion even if photos are accompanying your report. We welcome attachments of additional sheets of description, drawings, field sketches, or copies of field notes. This first reported awful white sided Pacific Loon was seen by me at Walker Lake on the 19th. The bird was actively swimming and diving throughout most of the lake. My first impression was that this loon carried its head a lot like a Red-throated Loon. The bill was large. Bluish on the basal 2/3s and dark on the tip. The eye was red. The crown, nape and neck were a cold stone gray that varied with the ambient light. The throat breast were white with some remaining alternate plumage dark and white vertical striping on both sides of the neck. The back and wings were brownish-black with assorted white spots both large and small. The tail appeared darker than the back. Most of the time the bird showed large white flank patches behind the wings. At times the head appeared flat

topped. The bird was observed preening a few times and the belly and vent area were unmarked white. The legs appeared a darkish gray color.

Describe the bird's (birds') call(s) and/or song(s), if noted: None Heard

SIMILAR SPECIES - This is another critical part of your report. Please discuss how you eliminated similar species from consideration: Pacific Loon has a smaller more petite looking bill, less white on the flanks, more often than not a dark vent stripe. Pacific Loons tend to carry their heads at a different, more horizontal, angle.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species?

None

List books, guides, recordings, or other sources consulted and how this influenced your identification (during and after observation): Mainly used the 1997 Birding article and field separation of ArLo and PaLo .Birch and Lee, April, 1997.

This report was made from (check one) ☒ notes made during observation ☐ notes made after observation ☐ later from memory.

Date and time of written report: Nov. 28, 2002

Reporting observer: Ric Olson Signature:

Reporting observer's address: 9450 N. Heather Dr. Castle Rock, 80108