

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

CFO-ORC FILE # 2001-33

NEW STATE RECORD UNUSUAL RECORD X

rec'd 1/26/02

Species: Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*)

Date: 25 April 2001

Number seen: one

Sex: ?

Plumage: Alternate

Locality: marsh on north side of JJ Rd, west of 18 Rd.

Elevation: ~3870'

Nearest town: Ft. Lyon

County: Bent

Time observed: early evening

Duration of observation: ~45 seconds

Description: While stopped on JJ Road looking at shorebirds in the marsh where the 2000 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was, I noted a lanky heron pick up out of the marsh to the north and fly south toward the reservoir across the road in front of me. As it was about that time, I suspect that it was heading to a roost out on the reservoir. Also, as it was obviously a Tricolored, I looked around quickly to see if there were any birders about to show the bird to (slim chance, I realize, but...), but there were none. So, I went back to watching the bird fly across above and in front of me and off to the south.

The bird was a thin, lanky darkish heron with a white belly. Since I only really saw the bird from underneath, I cannot describe the upperparts. But, the brief look I had of them as the bird came out of the marsh was that they were dark. The head and neck were dark blue and the bill appeared dark. There appeared to be at least one aigrette, as I saw a thin patch of white on the head. I did not note the color of the underside of the neck. However, the chest was the same color as the head and neck, but the belly was bright white and sharply contrasting with the dark chest. From underneath, the wing linings were gleaming white, in stark contrast to the dark remiges. The vent and undertail coverts were also bright white. The tail was very short and dark and the long legs trailed well beyond the tail tip.

Similar species eliminated by description: In flight, there are really no ID contenders with Tricolored Heron. This species' white wing linings, contrasting with dark remiges, are very different from the dark gray-blue wing linings of Great Blue Heron and the very dark blue wing linings of Reddish Egret. Presumably, the odd subadult Little Blue Heron would show dark flight feathers contrasting with white wing linings in its molt from Juvenal to First Basic, but I have never seen such an instance. In fact, when that species still retains white feathers among mostly dark feathering, the remiges are the ones usually retained from Juvenal, thus are white.

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

What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species? I have seen >500 each of both Tricolored and Little Blue herons and >200 Reddish Egrets. I have seen uncountable bazillions of Great Blue Herons.

Light conditions: The sun was lowering to my south and west, thus was behind me

Optical equipment used: Swarovski 8.5x42

Distance, and how estimated: estimated at ~85m at closest approach

Other observers who saw the bird with you: none

Other observers who saw the bird independently: Rachel Hopper, Marshall Iliff, and Ric Olson (on subsequent days)

If photographed, type of equipment and film: I did not photograph

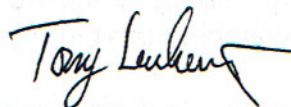
List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

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: 26 January 2002 from notes written immediately after the sighting

rec'd 5/4/01

Colorado Field Ornithologists Sight Record Form

(Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.)

2001-#33

Each table cell will automatically enlarge as you type!

CFO-RC FILE X:

RESULTS:

Species:(Common Name) **Tricolored Heron**(Scientific Name) **Egretta tricolor**Date(s) of occurrence: **4/28 & 4/29**Number of birds seen: **One**

Sex:

Plumage: **Adult**

Exact location: **The low spot in the road through John Martin Reservoir, about 2 miles east of the junction of Roads 16 and JJ. The bird was on the north side of the road, seen in marshy area behind the field.**

County: **Bent**Nearest town: **Ft. Lyon**

Elevation:

Length of observation: **5 minutes**Time(s) of observation: **Approx. 4p.m. on the 28th and about 10 a.m. on the 29th**Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you: **None**Other Observers who independently saw the bird(s): (that I know of) **Stan Oswald, Tony Leukering, Mark Janos**Light Conditions (quality; direction relative to bird(s); position: **Sunny & clear**Optical equipment used: **Swarovski Scope with 20-60 zoom**Distance from bird(s) (estimated unless otherwise noted): **?**Was bird(s) photographed? **No**

If so, have you submitted photos?

Who took the photographs?

Describe the general and specific habitat in which the bird(s) occurred: **Marsh**Describe the bird's behavior (flying, feeding, habits, behaviors used in identifying the Species or in supporting the identification): **The bird flew up, perched on a snag, and flew around the back marsh area before landing in the weeds.**

Describe the bird in detail. This is the most important part of this report. Include the overall size and shape and how you placed the bird in the general group that you did. Give complete details of plumage, including head, throat, undersides, nape, back, wings and tail. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird(s). Describe other important details, such as color and shape of bill, legs, eye, (etc.) that were important in making the identification. (Fill out this portion even if photographs are submitted; you may attach additional sheets, drawings, field sketches or copy field notes): **Dark blue upperparts with dark breast and white belly. Pale underwing coverts seen well in flight. Long neck, long bill.**

Describe bird's call or song:

Discuss similar species and how you eliminated them: **No other heron has the distinct plumage of dark breast and white belly.**What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species? **I have seen numerous Tricolored Herons both in and out of the U.S.**List books, guides, recordings or other sources consulted and how this influenced your identification (during and after observation): **National Geographic and Sibley.**This report is from notes made during ☐ or after ☐ observation or later ☒ from memoryDate of written report: **5/1/01**Reporting observer: **Rachel Kolokoff**Signature: **Rachel Kolokoff**Reporting Observer's Address: **1721 Cottonwood Pt. Dr.**City: **Ft. Collins**State: **CO**Zip: **80524**

Send report to:
Colorado Birds Record Committee
Tony Leukering
P.O. Box 157
Arvada, CO 80001

rec'd 5/28

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Tricolored Heron at John Martin Reservoir, Colorado, 2 May 2001

On 2 May 2001 I visited John Martin Reservoir with Tony Leukering and Joe Fontaine. We arrived at RD 18 on the north side of the reservoir at about 6:50 p.m., hoping to see the Tricolored Heron (that Tony had found a week earlier) going to roost among the willows in the center of the lake to the southwest. Tony had parked his rental Toyota 4-runner with the passenger side facing the reservoir to block the wind, and Joe and I were sitting on the passenger side of the car. I scanned the lake alternately with binoculars and with Tony's Leica Televid scope. On our arrival, Snowy Egrets had already congregated at a roost that Joe and I had noticed back on 30 April, and at least 5 were visible.

At about 7:10 p.m. I picked up a small heron flying east over the willows in the center of the reservoir. I immediately called it out to the others as I continued to watch it flying low over the willows. Distance was at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile and I was using Zeiss 10x40 binoculars, so the view was distant. I watched the bird work its way low over the willows for about 8 seconds before it turned and flew towards me, showing off the white underparts. After another 4 seconds it banked and dropped into the willows. During that time I was unable to accurately describe where the bird was to Tony or Joe, but Joe watched the spot with a scope and saw the bird perch in view briefly a couple minutes after I had seen it settle down. I did not see it again after it dropped into the willows. Interestingly, there were no other species obviously roosting in the area where I saw it drop down (the egrets were about $\frac{1}{4}$ mi to the west). Hundreds of Glossy Ibis and up to 30 cormorants were also seen dropping into the willows to roost though.

It clearly was a small heron, close in size to a Snowy Egret, though none were nearby for direct comparison. The flap was slow and languid like all herons, but not as slow as on Great Blue Heron. The heron was clearly flying with its neck fully tucked in the distinctive "S" curve shape typical of herons. The long legs trailed behind the bird. At that distance very little detail of color or pattern was apparent, but it appeared to be a totally dark heron with white underparts. The belly was clearly gleaming white and contrasted with the dark back and dark neck.

Great Blue Heron was easily eliminated by its small size and quick wingbeat. Great Blue also appears mostly dark bellied at a distance, and does not show the sharp contrast of dark neck and gleaming white underparts that were seen on this bird. Dark morph Reddish Egret and adult Little Blue Heron were easily eliminated by the pale belly.

Although the distance was great, I am very familiar with Tricolored Heron and see hundreds each year (along with all other heron species) at home on the East Coast. Identification of Tricolored Heron is easy by size and overall color almost as far away as it can be seen and I had no difficulty making the identification even given the extreme distance.

Feel free to contact me if there are any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Marshall Iliff
901 Crystal Spring Farm Rd.
Annapolis, MD 21403
miliff@aol.com
(410) 269-1589

