

Species: Yellow-billed Loon Gravia adamsii A
 (Vernacular Name) (Scientific Name-use binomial)

Date(s): 18 December 1982 Time Bird Seen: 11:30-2:30 to _____
 Locality: Chattfield State Park Reservoir
 Nearest Town: Denver County: Douglas/ Jefferson Co

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

NAME	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE
Jack Reddall	4450 S. Alton Way St. Englewood, CO 80111	
Robert Andrews	1390 S. Ivy Way	756-5553
Charles Chase	Denver Museum of Nat Hist., City Park, Denver	8575-3911

Optical Equipment: Bushnell Spaxmaster II Scope, 20x wide angle lense
 If photographed, type of equipment used: _____
 Light Conditions: from behind observer usually
 Distance from bird (how measured): closest: 50 meters; farthest 300 meters (guesstimate)

Number of Birds Seen: 1 Sex: ? Plumage: Basic

Describe the bird's overall behavior and demeanor:

Swimming in presence of a common loon within 50m. of shore at times; often much further from shore. Diving was not frequent (1 dive per 10 minutes). Movement from 1 spot to another was mostly accomplished underwater. Ritual-like movements with bill and head preceded dives. It involved a sweeping of the bill 4 or 5 times across the water, followed by a shaking of the head with bill out of water. The head and chin were placed flat on the water. The entire head submerged simultaneously followed by the body.

Describe in great detail the bird's size, overall shape, plumage and color-pattern.

Include details on shape of bill, wings and tail. Give particular emphasis to the marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance in field guide descriptions is not enough. Describe what you actually saw in the field:

Details, when used in comparison, are relative to a common loon seen with the Yellow-billed Loon.
Size: 10-15% larger than common loon (C.L.) in length of body, length of neck, head and bill. In particular, the body was much more massive, the neck was thicker, head was larger (= longer), the bill was longer (10% longer).

Shape differences were evident in the bill: In C.L. the superior + inferior borders were both slightly curved; in the Yellow-billed Loon (YbL) the superior border appeared straight while the inferior border was curved as in C.L. In the head: because of the ^{superior} angle of the head relative to the horizontal, the posterior crown appeared slightly more rounded in YbL. In the neck: wider in the YbL from throat to body, but particularly evident towards the body - very thick necked.

Plumage. The overall effect was the much paler gray ^{dorsal} plumage of the YbL. The plumage color of C.L. was a darker dusky gray. This was particularly evident on the back, wings, dorsal neck and crown. Additional differences were in color pattern (discussed below). Otherwise, the YbL and the C.L. were both in full Basic plumage; the differences seen were not an effect of different stages of molt, to the best of my knowledge. Ventrally, both YbL + C.L. were off-white.

Color Pattern Bill: even pale gray throughout in YbL. (Yellowish ~~culmen~~ to distal 1/3 culmen seen by Andrews not seen by me); blackish throughout in C.L. Crown: paler coloration of YbL was restricted to the crown, it did not extend down onto the face except in the Auricular area. Here a pale grayish or brownish spot, somewhat distinct from the crown, was the only facial coloration. The eye of the C.L. was within the dark area whereas in the YbL the eye was clearly not surrounded by the pale gray dorsal coloration. Neck: In YbL the dorsal coloration was restricted to (OVER) narrow (perhaps 3/4" to 1" wide) line extending from the crown to the back. In C.L. this dorsal stripe reached around to the sides of the neck. The delineation of the dark dorsal coloration to the pale ventral coloration on the C.L. was

adual - much less distinct than on an Arctic Loon. In the YbL + his dark/pale delineation was even less distinct.
Back Spotting: present on both YbL and CL but they were larger, in more uniform rows, and hence more distinct in YbL.

Describe the bird's song or call, if heard, including method of delivery, i.e., from perch, in flight, etc: No vocalizations heard

Describe the habitat in which you observed this bird: In large reservoir in open water. Often the bird was close to shore in presumably relatively shallow water.

How were similarly appearing species eliminated?

From C.L.: YbL was 10-15% larger. Bill shape had an upturned effect due probably to the straight upper mandible line (=culmen). Bill color was paler than C.L. and bill size was about 10% larger. Neck was thicker, especially near body. Dorsal coloration was very much paler, and more restricted to dorsal head + neck. On C.L. it extended down onto face and sides of neck. Head was held at a 15-20° upward angle, whereas head of CL was held at the horizontal. Back spotting was larger and more evident despite the reduced contrast with the pale back coloration.

From Arctic Loon: YbL was much larger, paler, and upturned bill effect was unlike Arctic Loon. The delineation between dark dorsal area and pale ventral area was not sharp and the darker area was more restricted dorsally than on Arctic Loon.

From Red-throated Loon: YbL was much larger in size of bill, head, neck, and body. Back spots were relatively and absolutely larger.

From all other Loons: the auricular spot is generally (never??) found on any but YbL in Basic plumage.

Prior experience with this and similarly appearing species:

YbL seen once previously on Denver CBC, 1981, Chatfield Reservoir. Thorough study made at the time. Subsequently I have examined 5 study skins of YbL, several of C.L., Red-throated Loon, and Arctic Loon, all in winter (=Basic) plumage.

Books, illustrations and advice consulted and how did these influence this documentation?

Roberson, Rare Birds of the West Coast

Godfrey, Birds of Canada

Jones, Birds of Sea + Coast; Penguin Books, Ltd., London.

Palmer, Handbook of North American Birds

This report was written from notes made during _____ after ☒ observation; from memory ☒

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