

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD ☐UNUSUAL RECORD ☒

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

Species: YELLOW-BILLED LOON | GAVIA ADAMSII
(Vernacular Name) (Scientific Name)Date(s): 20th NOVEMBER 1988Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: UNKNOWN Plumage: WINTERLocality: HAMILTON RESERVOIR, RAWHIDE POWER PLANT Elevation: 5000'?Nearest town: WELLINGTON County: LARIMERTime(s) observed: 9:30 am → 11 amDuration of observation (e.g. 1 sec., 5 min., etc.): ONE HOUR

Other observers who saw the bird with you (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):

JACK REDDALL, WADE LEITNER, WILLIAM HOWE

Other observers who saw the bird independently (give names, addresses, telephone numbers)

Light conditions (position of bird to light and shade, direction and strength of light):

PARTIAL HIGH OVERCAST, PARTLY SUNNY. BIRD OBSERVED WITH SUN BEHIND ME.Optical equipment used (e.g. power, types): BINOCULARS 10X, TELESCOPE 20X-60XDistance, and how measured: CLOSEST 50 YDS, ESTIMATED

If photographed, type of equipment and film: _____

Who else photographed the bird? _____

Describe the bird's behavior (e.g. flying, feeding, or habits used in identifying):

EITHER SITTING ON WATER, OCCASIONALLY PREENING OR DIVING FOR LENGTHY PERIODS.

Describe in detail the bird's relative size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern. Include details of bill, wing and tail shape. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions and illustrations is not enough. Describe only what you actually observe in the field:

I FIRST SAW THIS BIRD FROM THE OVERLOOK AND EVEN AT A GREAT DISTANCE THE RELATIVELY LIGHT HEAD AND NECK COMPARED TO COMMON LOONS WAS VERY OBVIOUS.

AT CLOSE RANGE, THE SIDES OF THE NECK WERE VERY LIGHT, WITH THE DARK ON

Description (continued):

THE BACK OF THE NECK BEING QUITE THIN. THE AREAS ON THE HEAD BEHIND THE EYES WERE ALSO QUITE LIGHT, EXCEPT FOR POST AURICULAR SPOTS. THESE WERE OBVIOUS, BUT NOT ALL THAT DARK; THE OTHER YELLOW-BILLED LOONS I'VE SEEN HAD DARKER SPOTS. THE BILL WAS ALL LIGHT - STRAW COLORED YELLOW, WAS LARGE AND THE LOWER MANDIBLE WAS UPTURNED AT THE END. THIS GAVE A SLIGHTLY UPTURNED LOOK TO THE BIRD'S HEAD. THE BIRD WAS ABOUT THE SIZE OF A COMMON LOON. THE BACK WAS DARK BROWN WITH LIGHTER BROWN PATTERNING. - I COULD NOT SEE DIFFERENCES WITH COMMON LOONS HERE.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery, (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):

Describe the general and specific habitat in which you observed the bird:

SITTING OR DIVING ON HAMILTON RESERVOIR

How did you eliminate similarly appearing species?

COMMON LOON BY BILL COLOR AND SHAPE, PALE SIDES OF NECK, POST AURICULAR SPOTS
PACIFIC LOON BY SIZE, BILL COLOR, NECK PATTERN ETC
RED-THROATED LOON BY SIZE, BILL COLOR, NECK PATTERN ETC

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

HAVE SEEN YELLOW-BILLED LOON TWICE BEFORE, BOTH TIMES IN WINTER.
VERY FAMILIAR WITH OTHER LOONS FROM COLORADO AND BOTH COASTS IN WINTER.

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

a) at time of observation: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC FIELD GUIDE

b) after observation:

This report was written from reports made during X, after observation _____ from memory _____
Date and time report was written: 6pm 20th NOVEMBER 1988

Reporting observer: PETER R. GENT Signature: Pete R. Gent

Address: 55 S 35th St, BOULDER, CO 80303.

All reports will be maintained permanently at the address below:
Return to: CURATOR, DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS
DENVER MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
CITY PARK
DENVER, CO 80205

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD ☐UNUSUAL RECORD ☒

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

Species: YELLOW-BILLED LOON Gavia adamsii
(Vernacular Name) (Scientific Name)Date(s): NOVEMBER 5, 1988Number of birds seen: One Sex: ? Plumage: WinterLocality: Hamilton Reservoir Elevation: 4500' (?)Nearest town: Wellington (about 20 m n of Fort Collins) County: LarimerTime(s) observed: from about 9:30 to 11:20 AMDuration of observation (e.g. 1 sec., 5 min., etc.): Two periods of about 1/2 hr. each

Other observers who saw the bird with you (give names, addresses, telephone numbers):

David Farmer, 1011 1/2 4th Ave, Longmont 80501 (678-5326)

Joe Mammoser, 2919 Worthington Ave., Ft. Collins 80526 (223-2187)

Other observers who saw the bird independently (give names, addresses, telephone numbers)

William Howe (FC), Paul Opler (FC), David Martin and Dick Schottler (Denver), Bill Prather (Longmont), Joe Himmel (Greeley), Others?

Light conditions (position of bird to light and shade, direction and strength of light):

Very good - light was from the south, bird was viewed from the east and southeast, mostly sunny

Optical equipment used (e.g. power, types): Nikon 7x50 binoculars and Joe

Mammoser's spotting scope with 40x fixed eyepiece (Spacemaster)

Distance, and how measured: I would estimate 20-50 yardsIf photographed, type of equipment and film: Several photos taken with Tokina100-300 mm telephoto on PKL-200 film (slides)Who else photographed the bird? Joe Mammoser on 100 ASA print film and KR 64slide film

Describe the bird's behavior (e.g. flying, feeding, or habits used in identifying):

Bird was quietly diving for fish along the rocks below the dam road.

It did not interact with other waterfowl present. It was relatively

tame and did not seem particularly bothered by people, particularly

if we stayed in the car. The water where it was swimming was apparently

shallow. One fish the bird caught is thought to have been a green

sunfish (4-5" long). After swallowing it, the loon did not dive for 20

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

Include details of bill, wing and tail shape. Give particular emphasis to marks you used

to identify the bird. Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions and il-

lustrations is not enough. Describe only what you actually observe in the field:

My first impression was that it was a pale loon, about the same size as a common loon. It's bill was light yellow with a slight greenish tinge. Bill was large, slightly uptilted, culmen straight, lower mandible distinctly upward-angled over the distal 1/3. Head was paler in general than back. Front of neck white, sides of neck pale gray, back of neck slightly darker gray. Top of head same as back of neck. Back was medium gray overall, with the individual feathers being two-toned gray with broad white margins. This gave the bird a very "scaly"

Description (continued):

backed appearance, not unlike the feeling you get with a Baird's sandpiper. Upon close inspection, the bird seemed wider than a typical common loon. (See photos enclosed for further details). One other character noted was a faint ear spot or smudge behind the eye. This was not readily apparent at close range, but oddly seemed more prominent when the bird moved a little further out off the rocks. (I would say this mark was considerably less prominent than the ear-spot shown in the National Geographic plate of this species in basic or winter plumage). The eye of the bird appeared dark reddish-brown, and stood out prominently on the side of the head.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery, (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration):

Did not give any vocalizations.

Describe the general and specific habitat in which you observed the bird:

Hamilton Reservoir is a large, relatively new body of fresh water that serves as a water source for the Rawhide Power Plant. As such the water is artificially warmed and aerated. Many fish species have been introduced. How did you eliminate similarly appearing species?

The only species with which this bird could have been readily confused is the common loon (Gavia immer). The large pale bill, slightly up-tilted did not resemble the gray or dark gray-blue bill held horizontal that I normally associate with the winter common loon. The fact its head was paler than the body, plus the ear spot and scaly back all tipped the scale in favor of yellow-billed loon. What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species?

None with yellow-billed loon, considerable with common loon (particularly in winter plumage). I have seen 3 Arctic loons (Pruitt Reservoir 1987) and several red-throated loons in the Pacific off California.

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

a) at time of observation: National Geographic Field Guide, Master Guide (volume I), Audubon Waterbird Guide by Pough
All of the above

b) after observation: These confirmed what was observed.

All of the above plus Point Reyes Bird Observatory Notes, Summer '83 by Stallcup (Loon ID)

This report was written from reports made during x, after observation x from memory x
Date and time report was written: November 6, 1988 2 PM

Reporting observer: Dave Leatherman Signature: David A. Leatherman

Address: 2048 Whiterock Court, Fort Collins, CO 80526

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This bird was also observed on November 6 and 11, 1988. There are a few additional behavioral and descriptive notes that may help to supplement my original report.

BEHAVIOR: This bird was observed "interacting" with a common loon. The bird was found on 11/11 feeding alone in shallow water along the dam. A rain shower accompanied by cold, strong winds came up. The yellow-billed loon and at least two common loons which were also feeding separately further north along the dam all flew separately off to the west, both species gaining an altitude of at least 100 feet. I initially thought they were perhaps leaving Hamilton Reservoir. Later while searching the reservoir from the Observation Area on the south side of the reservoir, the yellow-billed loon and one common loon were seen swimming and diving together in the middle of the reservoir, roughly on line from the observation point to the large smokestack. The depth of the water at this point is not known. (It would be interesting to obtain a topographical or depth map of the reservoir, if one exists, and see if any correlation could be made between water depth or temperature and where certain groups of ducks seem to frequent, scoters, for example.)

Also, the yellow-billed seemed to have two styles of diving: one, was very calm and hardly disturbed the surface of the water as it just dipped its head and slid under; two, a more energetic dive somewhat like a typical diving duck where it seemed to forcefully throw itself into the water making a bigger splash and some noise audible from 50-75 yards. With either type of dive, the bird would compress air from its feathers and "thin out" just before going under. It would stay under for an estimated 45-60 seconds.

APPEARANCE: As described previously, the earspot seemed to come and go. At first I thought this was a feature more easily seen on one side of the head than the other. But as the photos show, this mark is non-existent under some light conditions and angles of viewing, and fairly distinct in others. This may have been due to wind blowing the feathers a certain way exposing dark feather bases.

Another feature which appears to be helpful with this species is the smokey gray color of the upper bill at its base. This color is only slightly lighter in tone than the gray on the crown. This medium gray of the crown blends down the forehead onto the bill and ends at the nostril. The remainder of the bill is a dull yellow-green (like talc).

Also attached, please find two pencil sketches made mostly at Rawhide on 11/11/88 attempting to show the contrast in shading and pattern in the yellow-billed loon and one well-studied common loon.

detail of (mantle)
back feathers



Overall impression is light
head, darkest body @ "scaly"
back. Bill is talc green and
held slightly up. Base of upper
bill gray, rest is light.



YELLOW-BILLED LOON
Hamilton Reservoir 11-11-88

D. Leatherman

Overall impression is head
darker than back. Bill
is blueish-gray, straight.
Back shows some pattern
but not readily apparent.
Lower back & side of neck
almost black.



COMMON LOON
Hamilton Reservoir
11-11-88

D. Leatherman



1-88-25

1-88-25
YELLOW-BILLED LOON
Gavia adamsii
Larimer Co,
11-20-88
Dave Leatherman

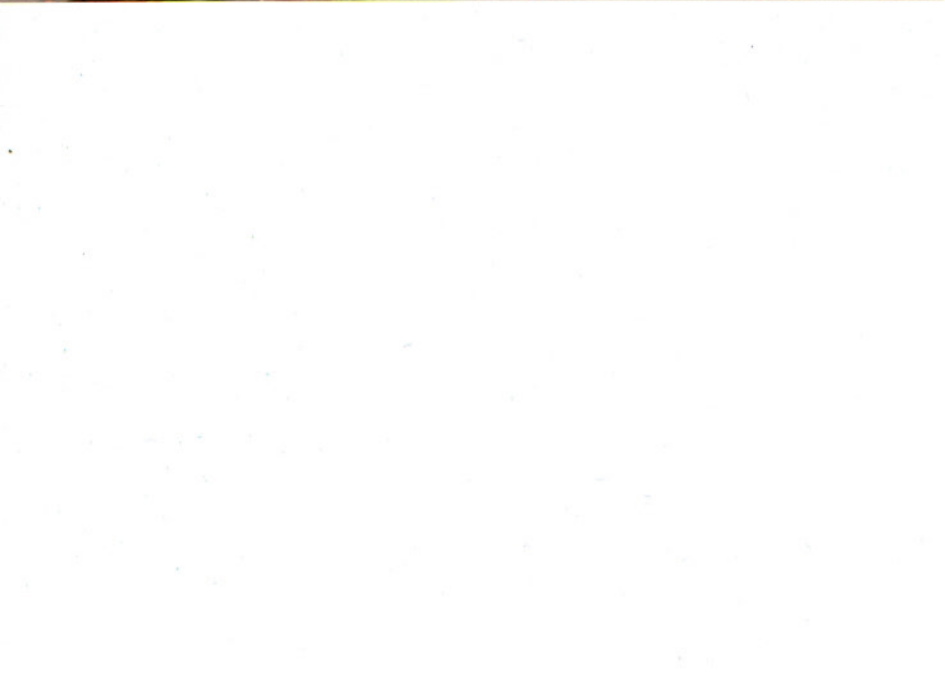
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1-88-25
YELLOW-BILLED LOON
Gavia adamsii
Larimer Co.
11-20-88
Dave Leatherman

D. Leatherman

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1-88-25

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1-88-25
YELLOW-BILLED LOON
Gavia adamsii
Larimer Co.
11-20-88
Dave Leatherman

Note: ear patch

1-5