

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS
SIGHT RECORD FORMRESULTS : accepted 7-0
rec'd 1-98 ✓

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE. ATTACH PHOTOGRAPHS AND ADDITIONAL PAGES IF NECESSARY.

SPECIES: Yellow-billed Loon Gavia adamsii
(Common Name) (Scientific Name)DATE(S) OF OCCURRENCE: Oct. 13, 1997 (earliest inland lower 48 record since 1981); Oct. 14, 1997NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN: 1 SEX: ? PLUMAGE: Juvenile - this bird is 3 1/2 - 4 months oldEXACT LOCATION: Chatfield Reservoir, in a small bay east of the Sandspit east of the south marina (Oct. 13); near Plum Creek delta, swimming toward dam (Oct. 14)
COUNTY: Douglas NEAREST TOWN: Littleton (Arapahoe Co.) ELEVATION: 2545'LENGTH OF OBSERVATION: About 30 minutes total, when bird was on surface, not diving TIME(S) OF OBSERVATION: 10:30 am - 12:15 pm Oct. 11:00 am - 11:45 am Oct.

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO SAW THE BIRD(S) WITH YOU:

Joey Kellner 8612 W. Hinsdale Pl. Littleton, CO 80120 (Oct. 13 + 14)
Robert Spencer 4430 Gladiola St. Golden, CO 80403 (Oct. 14)OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY SAW THE BIRD(S):
?

LIGHT CONDITIONS (QUALITY; DIRECTION RELATIVE TO BIRD(S); POSITION):

Bright, strong front lightingOPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED: Kowa TSN-4 scope; Zeiss 10x40B (20x-60x)DISTANCE FROM BIRD (ESTIMATED UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED): Range between 50 + 500 ft.WAS BIRD PHOTOGRAPHED? No IF SO, HAVE YOU SUBMITTED PHOTOS? _____

WHO TOOK THE PHOTOGRAPHS? _____

DESCRIBE THE GENERAL AND SPECIFIC HABITAT IN WHICH THE BIRD(S) OCCURRED:

A shallow bay of a large, manmade, fresh-water reservoir

DESCRIBE THE BIRD'S BEHAVIOR (FLYING; FEEDING; HABITS; BEHAVIORS USED IN IDENTIFYING THE SPECIES OR IN SUPPORTING THE IDENTIFICATION):

Bird was actively feeding, with lengthy dive times and distances. I saw it bring a slender fish about 6" long to the surface, but the bird lost it. It rested several times, occasionally preening, thus affording excellent views in ideal light.

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 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 OF FIELD NOTES): Most serious birders would have recognized this bird to be a large loon. The ID problem is Common or Yellow-billed. Face and neck are very pale, with a vague, diffuse, almost indescribable pattern of shades of light brown. The darker "ear spots" shown in several field guides are present, but are more elliptical than circular, and gradational into lighter surrounding areas rather than sharply bounded. The back of the neck is darker than the foreneck, but still paler than the bird's back. At the base of the hindneck is a darker, teardrop-shaped patch pointing upward. The sides of the base of the neck are also darker, with a hint of rusty-red tone. The feathers on the back have clean, bright, sharp buffy borders around darker brown centers. This feature points to juvenile plumage. These buffy edgings align to form distinct, straight light bands across the back. Bill color is overall pale straw, with only the inner part of the culmen darker. The outer part of the culmen is totally pale, easily seen under the ideal viewing conditions I enjoyed. Bill shape is that of a juvenile Yellow-billed Loon; the culmen curves slightly downward at the tip. Kaufman (1990, p. 27, fig. 12) shows this feature. The bird swam consistently with its bill tilted upward (above horizontal). The forecrown is steeply peaked, more so than shown in the field guide. The hindcrown is also squared or peaked slightly, giving the bird a distinctive "block-headed" look. The bird is overall shades of brown (warm tones), with no hint of gray (cool tones). In my experience, the brownish tones alone strongly suggest juvenile or basic Yellow-billed Loon. The bird looks very much like the drawing of a juvenile yellow-billed Loon (white-billed Diver) shown in Jonsson (1993, p. 37).

DISCUSS SIMILAR SPECIES AND HOW YOU ELIMINATED THEM: - Elimination of Common Loon is implied in my description of the subject bird. That is, basic and juvenile Common Loons have different bill structure and bill color pattern, different head posture, different head and neck pattern, different color (i.e., gray to gray-brown rather than brown).

WHAT IS YOUR PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES?
Yellow-billed Loon: winter plumage, Hamilton Reservoir, CO 1-8-91
winter plumage, Chatfield Reservoir, CO 12-3-91
breeding plumage, numerous sightings in Alaska, 1993-97
Common Loon: countless individuals in various plumages in 8 states, 1989-97

LIST BOOKS, GUIDES, RECORDINGS OR OTHER SOURCES CONSULTED AND HOW THIS INFLUENCED YOUR IDENTIFICATION (DURING AND AFTER OBSERVATION):
During: Kaufman (1990) Advanced Birding; National Geographic Society Field Guide (1987)
Peterson (1990) Western Birds. After: Harrison (1985) Seabirds; Zimmer (1985) The Western Birdwatcher; Jonsson (1993) Birds of Europe (excellent drawings + descriptions).

THIS REPORT WAS MADE FROM NOTES MADE DURING _____ OR AFTER _____
OBSERVATION, OR LATER FROM MEMORY X.

DATE OF WRITTEN REPORT: October 13, 1997 4:00 pm. (addition Oct. 14, 1997)

REPORTING OBSERVER: J B Hayes SIGNATURE: J B Hayes
ADDRESS: Mark Janos 1517 W. Briarwood Ave,
10 Sedum Ct. Littleton, CO 80120
Pueblo, CO 81001

✓ rec'd 12-12-97COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS
SIGHT RECORD FORM

RESULTS : _____

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE. ATTACH PHOTOGRAPHS AND ADDITIONAL PAGES IF NECESSARY.

SPECIES : YELLOW-BILLED LOON GAVIA ADAMSII
(COMMON NAME) (SCIENTIFIC NAME)DATE(S) OF OCCURRENCE : DECEMBER 6 1997NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN : 1 SEX : UNKNOWN PLUMAGE : IMMATUREEXACT LOCATION : CHATFIELD RESERVOIRCOUNTY : JEFFERSON NEAREST TOWN : DENVER ELEVATION : 5300'LENGTH OF OBSERVATION : 45 mins TIMES(S) OF OBSERVATION : 11:00 - 11:45 am

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY SAW THE BIRD(S) :

DAVID LEATHERMAN, JOE MAMMOSER, OTHERS.

LIGHT CONDITIONS [QUALITY; DIRECTION RELATIVE TO BIRD(S); POSITION] :

HIGH CLOUDS AND SUN. SUN 90° TO LINE OF SIGHT OF LOONOPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED : TELESCOPE 20x-60xDISTANCE FROM BIRD (ESTIMATED UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED) : 200 YDS

WAS THE BIRD PHOTOGRAPHED : _____ IF SO, HAVE YOU SUBMITTED PHOTOS? _____

WHO TOOK THE PHOTOGRAPHS? _____

DESCRIBE THE GENERAL AND SPECIFIC HABITAT IN WHICH THE BIRD(S) OCCURRED :

CHATFIELD IS A LARGE, DEEP BODY OF WATER UNDER THE FOOTHILLS

DESCRIBE THE BIRD'S BEHAVIOR (FLYING; FEEDING; HABITS; BEHAVIORS USED IN IDENTIFYING THE SPECIES OR IN SUPPORTING THE IDENTIFICATION) :

SPENT MOST OF THE TIME PREENING AND SITTING ON THE SURFACE.SPENT SOME TIME MAKING SHORT DIVES.

DESCRIBE THE BIRD IN DETAIL. THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THIS REPORT. INCLUDE 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 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 OF FIELD NOTES):

THE BIRD WAS CONSIDERABLY BULKIER THAN A PACIFIC LOON, THAT AT ONE TIME WAS IN THE SAME TELESCOPE VIEW. THE BILL WAS LIGHT YELLOW AND APPEARED TO TILT UP AT THE END, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT WAS HELD UP AT A SLIGHT ANGLE. THE TOP OF THE HEAD WAS DARK. THE FRONT AND SIDES OF THE NECK WERE LIGHT, GRADUALLY TURNING TO DARK ON THE BACK OF THE NECK. THE UPPERPARTS WERE DARK, BUT THERE WERE DISTINCT LIGHTER STRIPES ACROSS THE BACK. THE UNDERPARTS SHOWN DURING PREENING WERE WHITE. THERE WAS A DISTINCT DARK PATCH BEHIND THE EYE. THERE WAS A BUMP ON THE FOREHEAD, WHICH GAVE THE HEAD A BUMPY, RATHER THAN A SMOOTH, PROFILE.

DISCUSS SIMILAR SPECIES AND HOW YOU ELIMINATED THEM:

COMMON LOON - BILL COLOR, PATTERN ON SIDE OF NECK, BACK PATTERN.

PACIFIC LOON - SIZE, BILL COLOR, NECK PATTERN

RED-THROATED LOON - SIZE, BILL COLOR, NECK AND BACK PATTERNS.

WHAT IS YOUR PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES?

HAVE SEEN YELLOW-BILLED LOON A FEW TIMES PREVIOUSLY, NOTLY IMMATURES. MANY SIGHTINGS OF THE OTHER LOONS, ESPECIALLY COMMON LOON.

LIST BOOKS, GUIDES, RECORDINGS, OR OTHER SOURCES CONSULTED AND HOW THIS INFLUENCED YOUR IDENTIFICATION (DURING AND AFTER OBSERVATION):

USED NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC GUIDE WHEN I RETURNED TO THE CAR.

THIS REPORT WAS MADE FROM NOTES MADE DURING _____ OR AFTER _____ OBSERVATION, OR LATER FROM MEMORY X.

DATE OF WRITTEN REPORT: DECEMBER 7, 1997

REPORTING OBSERVER: PETER R. GENT SIGNATURE: Peter R. Gent

(303) 494-1750. 55 S 35th ST, BOULDER, CO 80303.

SEND REPORT TO: MARK JANOS, 10 SEDUM COURT, PUEBLO, CO 81001

SPECIES:

Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*)

DATE:

October 13, 1997

TIME(S) OF OBSERVATION:

11:20-12:20pm MDT

LOCATION:

Chatfield Reservoir State Recreation Area, Douglas County. The bird was seen swimming and diving in the "cove" east of the marina sandspit on the south side of the reservoir.

HABITAT:

Medium sized, man-made reservoir at the base of the foothills

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY IDENTIFIED THIS BIRD:

J.B. Hayes, 1517 West Briarwood Avenue, Littleton, Colorado 80120

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT I USED:

Zeiss 10x40 Binoculars

Bausch & Lomb Elite 77mm spotting scope (20-60x zoom eyepiece)

WEATHER CONDITIONS:

SKY: Clear

WIND: North at 10-20mph

TEMP: 52F

BIRD/SUN ORIENTATION:

Bird was north of the observer (sun was behind observer and shining upon the bird)

DISTANCE FROM BIRD AND HOW MEASURED:

50-150 feet (estimated)

NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN:

1 (one)

SEX:

Unknown

PLUMAGE:

Juvenile/Immature

BACKGROUND:

The first major cold front of the season (complete with snow) came through early in the morning on October 12th. This front was preceded by high winds (60-90mph along the foothills) from the west for 24-30 hours.

BEHAVIOR AND DEMEANOR:

The loon was floating and swimming low on the surface of the reservoir and was seen frequently diving underwater. The first things I noticed were the massive size of this bird and the long yellow bill. The loon would "look" under the water while floating on top as if looking for something underwater just before diving. The bird would stay under for periods of time ranging from 15 seconds up to 1-1/2 minutes. The bird made several counter-clockwise "loops" around the small "cove" just east of the marina sandspit and seemed to favor the area near the small portable "pier" jutting out from the east side of the sandspit. J.B. Hayes said that he had seen the bird come up from a dive with a fish in his bill.

HEAD & NECK:

Head "squared off", not rounded, with two "peaks" (one near front of the head, one near the rear of the head). Head and bill consistently held above horizontal. Crown and sides of head **light tan**; side and back of neck **light tan** with a darker brown line which ran from the back of the crown down the center of the back of the neck almost to the back. The color of the sides of the head were an evenly distributed, **light tan** with no discernible markings on the right side of this bird's head. The left side of this loon's head had an ill-defined "darker brown" area behind the eye. The front of the neck and throat was washed with a light buff-tan color throughout (lighter than the sides of the neck). There were faint indentations on the sides of the neck where the buff of the front of the neck tried to invade the tan of the side of the neck. The cheeks and throat were white.

EYES & LORES:

Eyes were brown with a slight reddish tint. Lores white. The eye was below the light tan crown and within the white of the face.

LOWER & UPPER MANDIBLES:

Mandibles yellow except for medium grayish color on the basal half of the top of the culmen. The **outer half of the culmen was completely yellow**. This was observed many times as the bird swam close by and as the bird "looked" into the water facing us. The culmen appeared very slightly convex (slightly curved) the entire distance to the tip. The lower mandible was yellow except for a slight

amount of medium grayish color along the bottom near the face. The gonyeal angle was present, but very slight. The bill had the appearance of being only slightly longer than a Common Loons bill.

LEGS & FEET:

Not seen during my observation.

UPPERPARTS:

Back medium light brown with the coverts having broad, crisp, buff color tips. These buff colored edges lined up on the back of this bird to form neat "rows" across the birds back. This "banded" appearance was obvious at quite a distance. When the wind calmed some I could actually make out individual feather tips on the back!

UNDERPARTS:

White breast and belly; seen as the bird "surged" prior to a dive; sides not seen well because the bird swam low in the water obscuring the sides.

RETRICES:

Not particularly noticed.

WINGS:

Light brown.

UPPERWINGS:

Primaries medium brown, solid with no noticeable change in color or markings.

UNDERWINGS:

Not seen during my observation.

VOCALIZATION:

No vocalizations were heard.

ELIMINATION OF SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES:

Birds being eliminated are in basic plumage.

Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*) - Small loon with a rather thin looking dark bill, not long, thick and yellow as this loon. Red-throateds have backs that are very dark and sometimes very noticeably spotted not medium light brown and "banded".

Pacific/Arctic Loon (*Gavia pacifica/arctica*) - Medium sized loon with a dark, straight bill; sides of neck clearly contrast with back of neck with no "indentations" instead a clear "line of demarcation" exists between the white of the front of the neck and the dark brown of the back of the neck. Pacific Loons usually have more of a rounded head and generally does not show a noticeable "block-headed" look. Back is much darker (not light brown) than a Yellow-billeds' and not boldly "banded" as this bird was.

Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) - Dark brown and gray tones on head, neck and back not tan and pale brown as this bird showed. Bill shorter, usually grayish except in young birds which can show an almost straw yellow bill. Gonyeal angle not noticeably present in Commons. Outer half of culmen has ridge of dusky gray to black not completely yellow like this bird. This yellow color on the outer half of the bill is distinctive of Yellow-billed Loons with close looks. Eyes are usually on the edge of (or surrounded by) the dark of the crown whereas Yellow-billeds' have eyes that are clearly in the pale white of the face

PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES:

Yellow-billed Loon - Have seen several in Colorado all in basic plumage.

Red-throated Loon - Have seen several in Colorado all in basic plumage except for one individual that stayed April and May 1993 at Chatfield and allowed me to watch this bird change from basic to nearly full alternate plumage!

Pacific/Arctic Loon - Have seen 30+ in Colorado mostly in basic plumage but have seen one in near alternate plumage in the spring.

Common Loon - Have seen perhaps 200+ in Colorado in plumages ranging from basic, to full breeding and even one young bird seen at Chatfield this year (September 13, 1997).

BOOKS, ILLUSTRATIONS AND ADVICE CONSULTED THAT INFLUENCED THIS REPORT:

This report was prepared from notes made immediately after my observations.

COMMENTS:

I realize that a Yellow-billed Loon in October is virtually unheard of! I found it hard to believe myself. The plumage seems to indicate a juvenile bird still changing to basic plumage since:

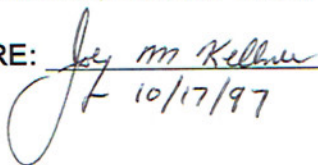
- 1) The birds' bill is still somewhat small and the gony angle slight (not absurdly long and sharply angled like an adults)
- 2) The neat crisp feather tips on the back coverts
- 3) The buffy wash on the front and sides of the neck
- 4) Lack of a clearly noticeable dark "spot" on the head, behind the eyes

NAME:

Joey M. Kellner
8612 West Hinsdale Place
Littleton, Colorado 80128

SIGNATURE:

DATE:


10/17/97