

CFO-ORC-FILE# 1998-3

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS SIGHT RECORD FORM

Results: 13th

✓ rec'd 1/99

Species:

Yellow-billed Loon

Gavia adamsii

Dates: 12/26/98

Number of birds seen: one

Sex: ?

Plumage: alternate

Locality: Pueblo Reservoir

Elevation: 5000 feet

Nearest town: Pueblo

County: Pueblo

Time observed: 2:00 pm to 2:45 pm

Duration of observation: 45 minutes

Other observers with you: George Armbrust, Karleen Schofield, Bob Spencer, Norm Erthal, Joe Roller

Other observers who saw the bird independently: none

Light conditions: partly cloudy, the sun was directly to our right

Optical equipment: Svarovski ST80 scope, usually zoomed to about 58 power

Distance from bird: not sure, maybe 200 or 300 yards? The image in the scope was pretty clear and detailed.

Describe the bird's behavior: it was just floating for most of the time.

Sometimes it would preen or wave a foot at us. As we were leaving it dove one time.

Describe the bird (what you actually saw):

When I first scoped I got an immediate impression of Yellow-billed Loon because of the upturned bill. I soon detected an ear spot that was only visible from certain angles, a rather pale face and neck, a small eye, and also a strongly barred back. At this point I got out my copy of Advanced Birding, by Kenn Kaufman and reviewed the field marks suggested by Kaufman. Of the field marks that I noticed before looking in Kaufman, only the upturned bill and the ear spot were familiar to me.

size: similar to nearby Common Loons, but they were never close enough to get a direct comparison

wings, back: Before looking at Advanced Birding, I noticed that the back was more strongly patterned than I am used to in Common Loon. The barring consisted of wavy dark and light bars horizontally across the back. The dark bars were a little wider than the light bars. Two Common Loons swimming nearby did not show nearly as much of a barred look on the back.

Head and neck: The head and neck were very pale compared to the nearby Common Loons. There was a small dark circular ear spot that was usually plainly visible. Sometimes the spot would momentarily disappear when the bird turned its neck a certain way. There was a faint dark line that extended back in a line from the bill to under the eye. The side of the face was pale with the eye in the pale part. The eye seemed small and was dark. The eye on the nearby Common Loons did not seem as small. The neck of the bird was thicker than on the Common Loons. The top of the head was a uniform medium gray.

underparts: some white showed above the waterline, perhaps about an inch.

Bill: The bill appeared to be upturned. The gonydeal angle on the lower mandible was very distinct. I had a little difficulty discerning whether the

culmen was straight or not, but it at least appeared to be straighter than on the Common Loons. The color was pale. Other observers with me thought it was somewhat yellow, but I never saw any hint of yellow. Unfortunately I forgot to compare the color to the bills of the Common Loons nearby. The culmen was dark on its upper ridge at the base and the darkness narrowed to a point about halfway or a third of the way to the tip. It was a little difficult to see the top of the culmen clearly but occasionally I could see pale on the ridge of the tip half of the culmen. I checked the Common Loons and I could easily see the dark line extending along the top ridge of the culmen all of the way to the tip of the bill so I am certain that it was not just the light and that the tip half of the top edge of the culmen on the Yellow-billed Loon was pale.

Legs and feet: gray

Describe the bird's song and call if heard: it was silent

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird: a large reservoir

How did you eliminate similarly appearing species:

The ear spot is not present on Common Loon. The back was more strongly barred than Common Loon. The bill was upturned and the culmen straighter than Common Loon. The dark ridge on the culmen stopped in the middle rather than extending to the tip as on Common Loon. The face and neck were paler than Common Loon.

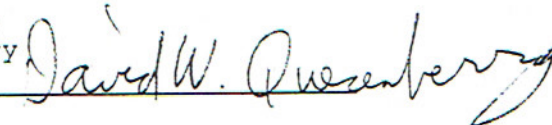
What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species: Lots of Common Loons in winter in Central California and Colorado. Three previous Yellow-billed Loons.

List books if they helped in your identification: Birds of North America (NGS), Advanced Birding by Kenn Kaufman.

This report was written from notes taken during x, or after observation or from memory. I used a microcassette recorder to record my observations while I was observing the bird. I transcribed the tape to written notes and wrote this from the written notes on 12/27/98.

Reporting observer:

David W. Quesenberry

Signature: 

Address:

6254 S. Elmira Cir
Englewood, CO 80111

Mail to: Mark Janos, 10 Sedum Court, Pueblo, CO 81001.

1998-3

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

YELLOW-BILLED LOON

Gavia adamsiiLocation: Pueblo Reservoir, Pueblo; Pueblo County, ColoradoDate: December 27, 1998 (through March 18, 1999)Setting:

This bird was originally found by David Quesenberry on December 26. I observed it on the 27th. It was a clear, sunny, cold day. I found the Yellow-billed Loon near the sail board parking area. I came over a ridge and observed the bird within 25 feet of the shore and set up my scope. At closest range the bird was probably 40 yards away. At farthest range, after it drifted off, it was at least 500 yards away. The bird was only rarely diving so I got wonderful long views of it. I watched it for over an hour in all. At some moments it was near a Common and a Pacific Loon.

Description:

This bird was large – about 24-30 inches long. Directly compared to the Common Loon it was about 6" longer and was proportionately longer- and thicker-necked. It held its head and bill just barely above horizontal – up-tilted. This was unlike the other two loons which held their bills horizontal to the water surface. It was a lighter-backed and lighter-headed bird than the Common Loon. It was sandy gray-brown on the back. It had a large, chunky head: peaked at the fore-crown in a large bulge and peaked at the hind-crown as well. This gave the head a distinctive blocky, double-peaked shape. The neck was proportionately long and thick. It had a much larger, stouter, up-turned bill. The bill had a barely curved, nearly straight culmen (compared to Common Loon) and a noticeably tipped-up lower mandible (strongly angled gonys). The bill color was pale yellow with a dusky, darker basal upper ridge on the upper mandible. The bird was remarkably small-eyed – with the small dark eye in the middle of its pale whitish face. The crown and nape were pale gray (paler than on Common Loon). There was a small dark auricular patch. The foreparts and fore-neck were white. The back was medium brownish-gray with distinct, broad, white margins to the scapulars, that, at long distance, created widely spaced whitish rows – giving the bird a scalloped appearance above. The sides were light gray.

Similar Species:

The Common Loon is darker, smaller and with a smaller head and shorter, thinner neck. The bill is gray, not yellow, and is smaller, more dagger-like with a curved culmen, and is held horizontally, not up. The Red-throated Loon is much smaller, with small, darker thin bill. It has a lighter, not darker, area behind the eye and shows indistinct light specks on the back. The Pacific Loon is smaller, has a straight, horizontally-held bill, a darker crown, and a distinct blackish border between the dark rear- and light fore-neck. This bird was distinctively different, as described above, in direct comparison with Common Loons.

Experience with Species:

I have seen many Common and Pacific Loons in Colorado and on the West coast. I have seen Red-throated Loons in Colorado in 1992 and 1994 and in March 1992 in the Seattle, Washington area. I have seen Yellow-billed Loon four times before in Colorado (also at Pueblo Reservoir).

This report was prepared from notes made after observation and from memory.

Mark Janos
10 Sedum Ct.
Pueblo, CO 81001



COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD _____ UNUSUAL RECORD X

CFO-ORC FILE # _____

1998-3

Species: Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*)

Red 3/99 impl

Date: 3, 9, and 31 January 1999

Number seen: one

Sex: ?

Plumage: Juvenile

Locality: North Marina, Pueblo Reservoir

Elevation: about 5000'

Nearest town: Pueblo

County: Pueblo

Time observed: 3rd - 17:05 - 17:15 MST; 9th - 09:00 - 09:20 MST; 13th - 08:45 - 09:05 MST

Duration of observation: off and on during that time period for a total of about 10 minutes each day

Description: Twice during January 1999, I visited the North Marina with friends to observe the Great Black-backed Gull and the Yellow-billed Loon (YBLO) and once, specifically, to see the YBLO.

The bird was a large loon, similar in size and structure to Common Loon (COLO). However, unlike COLO, the bird's head was very much paler and with a much paler bill than typical of COLO. At close range, I could tell that the distal half of the culmen was pale and contrasted with the dark proximal half and with the rest of the bill, which appeared pale yellow to dirty white in various lighting conditions. The maxilla was nearly straight, but the mandible angled sharply upward at the gonys.

The dark eyes were surrounded mostly by the creamy color of most of the face, though the medium brown of the crown came down the face and abutted the top side of the eyes. There was a faint irregularly-shaped, isolated brown spot on the ear coverts, but it was not particularly obvious. The sides of the neck were pale brown and the foreneck was white. The nape and back of the neck were roughly the same coloration as and contiguous with the crown. There was no white indentation into the brown sides of the neck, nor were there any indentations of dark into the white foreneck (as on COLO). The back was dark with wide, pale scalloping created by pale fringes to the back feathers. The primaries and tail were dark. I did not see the underparts below the upper breast. The bird held its head at a slight angle above parallel to the water, thus accentuating the bill shape.

Similar species eliminated: COLO is the only real confusion species and there were COLOs (2-4) available for direct comparison. The bird in question was as large as the largest of the COLOs and fairly similarly proportioned. However, COLO can be eliminated on the strength of the bill shape, color, and pattern, on overall head and neck coloration and pattern, and on posture.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration): No vocalizations heard.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species? I have seen 3 YBLOs and 10s of 1000s of COLOs.

Light conditions: sun to my right and/or behind me (once, it had just set)

Optical equipment used: Kowa 30x and Zeiss 7x42

Distance, and how estimated: estimated closest distance at 15 meters

Other observers who saw the bird with you: Brandon Percival (on the 3rd), Sue Bonfield and Peter Gaede (on the 9th), and Doug Faulkner (on the 31st)

Other observers who saw the bird independently: many others

If photographed, type of equipment and film: Canon rig with 420 mm lens setup and Ektachrome Lumiere 100 film, pushed to 200 ISO

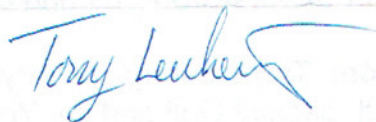
List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

a) at time of observation: none

b) after observation: none

Reporting observer: Tony Leukering

Signature:



Address: Colorado Bird Observatory, 13401 Piccadilly Road, Brighton, CO 80601

Date report was written: 28 February 1999 from notes (written on the evening of the 9th) and from reviewing my photographs of the bird

Yellow-billed Loon
(Gavia adamsii)

Red 1/6/00 upl



All of these shots were taken from the boat launch ~~and~~ dock
at the N side marina at Lake Pueblo S.P., on January 3, 1999.