

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

CFO-ORC FILE # 2001-77

NEW STATE RECORD \_\_\_\_\_ UNUSUAL RECORD X

*Rec'd 2/9/03*

**Species:** Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*)

**Date:** 10 July 2001 **Number seen:** one **Sex:** ? **Plumage:** Basic I white morph

**Locality:** Neenoshe Res. (north side) **Elevation:** ~3930'

**Nearest town:** Eads **County:** Kiowa

**Time observed:** ~13:30 and ~19:30 **Duration of observation:** off and on for ~6 minutes

**Description:** Nancy Gobris and I chased after the Reddish Egret that Duane Nelson had originally found in Bent County in spring 2001 and which had been refound at Neenoshe in early July. From the south side of the reservoir, I located the bird on the north side and watched it in my scope for a couple minutes and showed the bird to Nancy. It mostly stood fairly still, but near the end of my observation, the bird started foraging on the north shore, utilizing the fairly frenetic methods typical of the species. Later that evening, Duane Nelson took us in to the north side of the reservoir to help him move a Least Tern nest and we got to see the bird at a much closer distance, but for a shorter period of time (only a minute or so) before it flew off out of sight to the west side of the reservoir.

The bird was a largish heron whose plumage was entirely whitish. It was somewhat smaller than a Great Egret in the vicinity, quite obviously smaller than a nearby Great Blue Heron, and somewhat larger than a Snowy Egret also in the vicinity. The bill was fairly long, straight, and hefty and appeared all dark. (A picture obtained by Chris Wood shows that it was two-toned, but I could not determine that at the distance at which I saw the bird for most of my viewing time of it). I could not discern eye color; the legs were all dark with no yellow on the backs of the legs or on the toes.

The most obvious feature that was critical in correctly identifying the bird (due to the distance at which I first saw it) was its foraging behavior, which involved much dashing along the shore and spreading its wings, with frequent changes of course. This contrasted strongly with the relatively sedate foraging style of the nearby Snowy Egrets (though, of course, they have a relatively active foraging style) and the very staid foraging style of the neighboring Great Egret.

Similar species eliminated: None of the other white herons has quite the foraging style of this bird. Additionally, the lack of yellow on the legs eliminates Snowy Egret, the dark bill rules out both Great and Cattle egrets, and the lack of any dark feathers should rule out a subadult Little Blue Heron (there should be no fully-Juvenal-plumaged Little Blue Herons at this date). Great White Heron is also easily eliminated, as that taxon is larger than Great Blue Heron.

**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 100s of Reddish Egrets and 100s to 1000s of all regularly-occurring North American confusion species. I have seen one or two Little Egrets.

**Light conditions:** sun behind on first sighting and to my left and somewhat in front on second sighting

**Optical equipment used:** Swarovski 8.5x42

**Distance, and how estimated:** during my first sighting, the bird was ~950m away; during second sighting, ~125m away

**Other observers who saw the bird with you:** Nancy Gobris, Duane Nelson

**Other observers who saw the bird independently:** Duane Nelson, Dave Leatherman, Chris Wood, and many others

**If photographed, type of equipment and film:** 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 80603

**Date report was written:** Written on 20 July 2001 and 9 February 2003 from field notes that I wrote at the time of the sighting



2001-77



2nd year, white morph  
Reddish Egret  
Kiowa County, CO

christopher l wood  
zeledonia@att.net