

STATE OF COLORADO

Richard D. Lamm, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

Jack R. Grieb, Director

6060 Broadway

Denver, Colorado 80216 (825-1192)

Accepted JK 12/9/75
File No. 8-75-160



December 4, 1975

Mr. John W. Reddall
4450 South Alton
Englewood, CO 80110

Dear Jack:

As you know, the only record of the Trumpeter Swan in Colorado is a bird found dead near Ft. Collins in 1915. This specimen is in the Denver Museum, but I do not think it has even been examined recently. Consequently, it could be considered a questionable record. In view of this, I would like to report an observation that definitely confirms this species in Colorado.

At about 2 pm on December 1, I visited Mrs. Gallagher on Bowles Lake in south Denver, on the Jefferson County-Arapahoe County line. Two Mute Swans reside there and they were being accompanied by an immature wild swan.

Having had first-hand experience with both Whistling Swans and Trumpeter Swans, I identified the wild swan as a Trumpeter. I observed the bird from about 30 yards with 10X binoculars. The main identifying feature was the predominantly black bill with a slight reddish-pink saddle on the dorsal surface - immature Whistling Swans have a much more reddish-pink bill.

Fortunately, I was able to confirm my identification. The swan had a yellow band on the right leg, an aluminum band on the left leg, and a coded yellow neck collar. The collar was about six inches tall and possessed the code - 18TA. The figures were large and there is no doubt about their accuracy. I double-checked them several times with the binoculars, although I could read them without binocs. Upon checking, I found that this band was issued to Dr. W. D. Stephens in Edmonton, Alberta - he is with the Canadian Wildlife Service. I contacted his office and obtained the following information: The bird was banded on September 9, 1975, in the Grand Prairie area, about 280 miles northwest of Edmonton. The bird was a flightless locally produced male and was accompanied by two other Trumpeter Swans - there are no Whistling Swans in this area. In fact, Dr. Stephens indicated that the swan was absolutely a Trumpeter - they work with them intensively. Interestingly, banding recoveries indicate that the Grand Prairie Trumpeter Swan population winters along the Snake River in Idaho. So, the Bowles Lake bird appeared to be off-course!

Mr. John W. Reddall

-2-

December 4, 1975

On December 2, 1975, I again visited Bowles Lake at about 2 pm. The Swan was not present and he could not be found on any of the nearby, mostly frozen, lakes. Mr. King, who lives next to Mrs. Gallagher, said that he saw the bird fly in to Bowles Lake on December 1 - just before I arrived. So, the swan was definitely alone.

On my December 2 visit I also identified a Blue Goose on Bowles Lake and photographed the bird. Apparently records of this species are extremely rare for the Denver area.

I hope that your committee will give due consideration to the above swan observation. Unfortunately, I did not obtain photographs, but frankly a photograph is not nearly as valuable as the band observation - this is conclusive.

Bird observers in the area should keep a close watch for the Trumpeter Swan, since he may still be in the area. I have a hunch that Trumpeter Swan immatures are sometimes confused with Whistling Swan immatures in this area. One word of caution - people should not run out to Mrs. Gallagher's house. She is adamantly opposed to public access to her land. Furthermore, she is considering donating her land to some agency at this time. If people flooded out to her place, her consideration would undoubtedly vanish. Anyway, the swan could be anywhere by now.

Sincerely,

Walt

Walter D. Graul

WDGsbc

cc: Hugh Kingery

Rare swan seen in area

Associated Press

A Colorado Division of Wildlife specialist reports spotting a rare trumpeter swan at a Denver area lake earlier this month.

Walt Graul, a nongame bird specialist, said he was doing field work Dec. 1 when he noticed that two mute swans at the unspecified lake had a companion.

He said he was able to confirm the sighting through an identification band and neck collar on the bird.

Canadian Wildlife Service authorities confirmed the bird was a trumpeter that had been banded in the Grand Prairie area of northern Alberta.

It was the first sighting of a trumpeter swan in Colorado since 1915 when a dead trumpeter was found near Fort Collins, Graul said.

Species: TRUMPETER SWAN

Olor buccinator

(Vernacular Name)

(Scientific Name-use binomial)

Date(s): Dec 1, 1975

Time Bird Seen: 2 pm to 3 pm

Locality: Bowles Lake

Nearest Town: Littleton

County: Arapaho - Jefferson Line

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

NAME

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE

none

Optical Equipment: 10X BINOCs

If photographed, type of equipment used: _____

Light Conditions: excellent

Distance from bird (how measured): 30-35 yards - passed off

Number of Birds Seen: 1

Sex: as male

verified later

Plumage: immature

Describe the bird's overall behavior and demeanor:

Swimming in open water in company of two Mute Swans. Seemed quite calm - ignored me.

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:

Overall dusky white appearance. Bill was black with a slight reddish-pink saddle on the dorsal surface. Species was confirmed from a number on a yellow neck collar (IETA). Also had a yellow band on the right leg and an aluminum band on the left leg. Banded 280 miles north of Edmonton, Alberta on Sept. 9, 1975 = Grand Prairie Region. This info obtained from Dr. Stephens of Canadian Wildlife Service. The Trumpeters that nest in the Grand Prairie Region usually winter along the Snake River in Idaho.

* The bird was not on Bowles Lake or nearby lakes on Dec. 2, 1975

(OVER)

Describe the bird's song or call, if heard, including method of delivery, i.e., from perch, in flight, etc:

none

Describe the habitat in which you observed this bird:

Open water along lake shore - most of lake was frozen

How were similarly appearing species eliminated?

I have had experience with both Trumpeter's and Whistling Swans in the field (worked with the latter species in the Canadian Arctic in 1966, Trumpeters at Delta Waterfowl Research Station in 1968. Trumpeters have the dark bill (immatures) while Whistling Swans have a reddish-pink bill overall (immatures).

Prior experience with this and similarly appearing species:

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

Documented on basis of neck collar number.

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

PRINT NAME: Walter Gaul SIGNATURE: Walter Gaul DATE: Dec 8, 1975
Street Address: 1682 Truda Dr. Town and State: Northglenn, Co. ZIP: 80233

Return to: JACK REDDALL - 4450 South Alton Street, Englewood, Colorado 80110

Species: TRUMPETER SWAN

Order: bucinator

(Vernacular Name)

(Scientific Name-use binomial)

Date(s): Dec. 1 or 2, 1975 Time Bird Seen: 3 P-M. to 3:30 P-M.

Locality: West side of Main Reservoir.

Nearest Town: Lakewood

County: Jefferson

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

NAME

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE

Optical Equipment: _____

If photographed, type of equipment used: Kodak Instamatic X30

Light Conditions: Cloudy

Distance from bird (how measured): Estimated 75 feet.

Number of Birds Seen: 1 Sex: _____ Plumage: Brownish grey

Describe the bird's overall behavior and demeanor: Alert and somewhat shy. Walked very slowly, large feet about the size of a man's hand. When the bird flew away, the wingspread looked as if it might be as much as 8 feet.

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:

The bill was similar to that of a goose, the head and bill was dark, the neck was very long, the body was considerably larger than that of a lesser goose and the color was a brownish grey. The neck had a yellowish band about 2½ to 3" in length. There was also a yellowish leg band.

Describe the bird's song or call, if heard, including method of delivery, i.e., from perch, in flight, etc:

No sound heard.

Describe the habitat in which you observed this bird:

First on the grassy shore of the reservoir, then swimming to the edge of the ice, then on the ice where the enclosed picture was taken.

How were similarly appearing species eliminated?

The other birds that were there come every day for their handout of cracked corn.

Prior experience with this and similarly appearing species:

Never have seen this species before.

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

After reading Mr. Walt Graul's article in the December 7th copy of the Denver Post, I called Mr. Graul at the Division of Wildlife to confirm the identity of the bird.

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

PRINT NAME: Henry G. Pelon SIGNATURE: Henry G. Pelon DATE: Dec. 18, 1975
Street Address: 1322 So. Owens Street Town and State: Denver, Colorado ZIP: 80226

Return to: JACK REDDALL - 4450 South Alton Street, Englewood, Colorado 80110