

(ACCEPT 6-1)

## DOCUMENTATION - RARE BIRD SIGHTING

**Species:** Vernacular name: Trumpeter Swan  
**Scientific name:** Cygnus buccinator

**Date(s):** 1/7/95    **Time(s) of observation:** From 10:50 to 11:30 am  
**Number of birds seen:** 3    **Sex:** ?    **Plumage:** Adult  
**Locality (exact location, nearest town, county, state):** Valmont Reservoir, Boulder, Boulder County, CO

**Optical equipment used:** Bushnell 10x40 binocs, Bushnell 20-45x scope

**If photographed, equipment used (enclose copy of photo if possible):** Not photographed

**Weather conditions (sky, wind, temperature):** Sky clear; Wind west, 5-10 mph; temperature cool (40's F)

**Light conditions, bird/sun orientation:** Excellent light; bright sunlight directly on birds with sun behind observer.

**Distance from bird, and how measured:** Estimated to be less than 100 yards at closest.

**Description of the bird's overall behavior:** Birds were seen swimming in a group on the reservoir during entire period of observation.

**Description of habitat in which bird(s) observed:** Man-made reservoir that is part of a power plant complex.

**Description of the bird(s) seen with emphasis particularly on the field marks used to identify the bird, but including a complete description of the bird.** These were huge all-white, long-necked waterfowl with rust-colored stains on the head and neck. Relatively close observation and excellent light conditions made it possible to observe the heads and bills of the swans in considerable detail. When seen in profile, heads appeared "peaked" (reminiscent of Canvasback) rather than smoothly rounded, with the highest point toward the back of the head and with a long sloping profile to the tip of the bill. The bills appeared large and long in proportion to the head. Forehead and upper edge of culmen formed a relatively straight sloping line to the tip of the bill; on none of the 3 swans did the upper edge of the culmen appear concave or "dished" when seen in profile. The bills and facial skin of all three birds were black with no trace of a yellow loreal spot in front of the eye. The only color on the bills was a conspicuous red line between the upper and lower mandibles of all 3 birds. The black facial skin tapered to a relatively broad point at the eye (the eyes of all 3 birds appeared to be continuous with the facial skin, not separate from it).

All 3 birds swam with their lower necks crooked well back over the front of the body; upper necks were held vertically. Size was not used in ID. All 3 swans were the same size indicating that all 3 were the same species; all were huge (much larger than nearby Canada Geese), but without direct comparison with Tundra Swans, size is of little use in ID. The portion of the legs visible on the

swimming birds appeared blackish.

While each of the characteristics described above is somewhat subjective and can apparently be seen on Tundra Swans (see Birding, Oct. '94), the combination of all characteristics on all 3 birds I think overwhelmingly supports Trumpeter Swan ID.

I did not see the swans flying or on land so I don't know if they were banded.

**Description of bird's calls or sounds if heard, including method of delivery (i.e., from perch, in flight, etc.):** None heard.

**List of similar species and how they were eliminated:**

Only similar species are the other swans.

Tundra (Whistling) Swan: This is the only significant ID problem. Eliminated by combination of the following characteristics: head shape and proportions, bill shape and size, bill color (complete lack of yellow loreal spot on bills of all 3; conspicuous red line between mandibles), pattern of facial skin in relation to the eye.

Mute Swan: Eliminated by bill shape and color, and by overall "jizz".

**Prior experience with this and similar species:**

Trumpeter Swan: Have seen a few adult Trumpeter Swans in WY and CO (2).

Tundra Swan: Have seen hundreds of Tundra Swans in CO, NC, VA.

Mute Swan: Have seen dozens of "countable" Mute Swans in CT, NY, VA. Have seen several "domestic" Mute Swans in Colorado, most notably in Mt. Olivet cemetery.

**References consulted during and after observation:**

NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America (during/after observation)

Identifying Trumpeter and Tundra Swans. M. Patten & M. Heindel, Birding, Oct. 1994 (after observation)

Waterfowl, an Identification Guide. S. Madge & H. Burn. 1988 (after observation)

**Other observers who independently identified this bird (list name and address):**

Bill Fink 1225 Columbia Dr., Longmont, CO 80503

**This report written from notes made during ☒ after ☒ observation; from memory ☐.**

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**Signature:**

*Dick Schottler*

**Date:** 1/24/95