

1998-19

ACCEPTED 7-0

Luke Cole & Nancy Shelby
561 Hill Street
San Francisco, CA 94114

rec'd 5-5-98

April 30, 1998

Colorado Field Ornithologists Records Committee
c/o Mark Janos
10 Sedum Court
Pueblo, CO 81001

Re: Trumpeter Swan at Dodd Reservoir, Niwot, March 10, 1998

Dear CFORC:

Here is my report of Trumpeter Swan, *Cygnus buccinator*, based on a sighting at Dodd Reservoir, Niwot, Boulder County, on March 10, 1998. Although I understand from Mark Janos that no one has submitted a report on this bird as of yet, it is important to note that I did not discover the bird and actually went to see it after hearing about it on the rare bird tape; who actually first found it, I don't know, nor do I know how long the bird was there before and after I saw it. I have also submitted two photographs of the Trumpeter Swan and a Tundra Swan, *C. columbianus*, with which it was associating at the reservoir, which will probably be more useful in confirming the identification than this brief written submission.

Introduction/Viewing Conditions

When I arrived at the Dodd Reservoir, I did not initially see the two swans because they were along the shore closest to me and obscured by dry, tall reeds. I then spotted the birds and proceeded to observe and photograph them together as they fed near the shore and then swam out to the middle of the reservoir.

The weather was clear but somewhat overcast. I had excellent looks at both swans as close as 50 feet initially as they fed near the bank of the reservoir, and then up to about 75 yards away as they slowly swam from the shore to the middle of the reservoir. I was using 10x40 binoculars and a 250 mm camera lens for observation. I spent about 20 minutes observing the birds. I have a fair amount of experience with Tundra Swans, seeing hundreds of them each year here in California, and some experience with Trumpeters, having seen them on perhaps a dozen occasions over the past 10 years in various locations in Idaho, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming.

Observed Field Marks

The Trumpeter was a large, solidly built, white swan. It had a thick neck. Its bill was entirely black and the culmen was straight. The bill and associated black bare parts came back to the eye in a delta shape, with the point towards the eye. I did not notice the feet or legs as the swan was on the water the entire time I observed it.

Identification

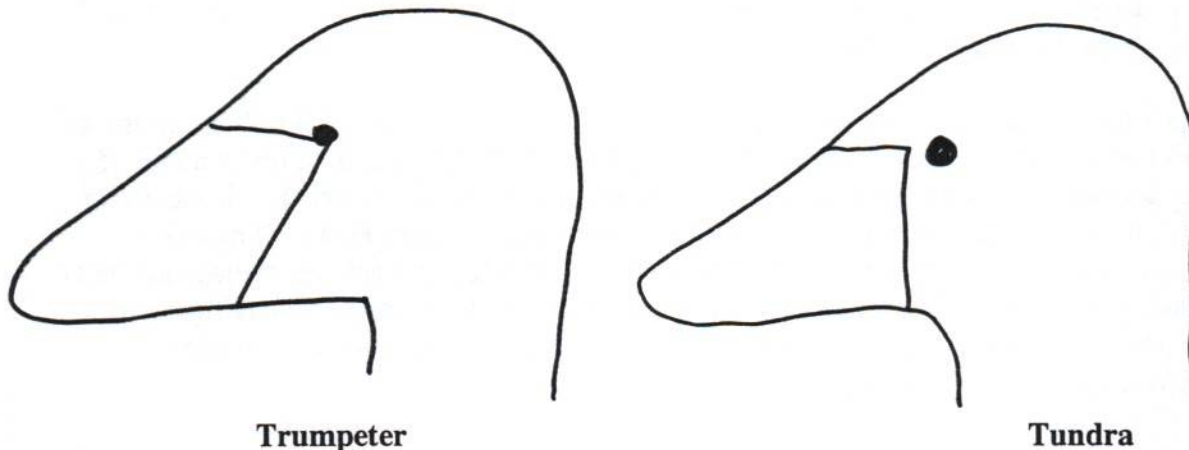
Having a Tundra Swan right next to the Trumpeter the entire time was an easy way to confirm the identification. Here are the field marks I used:

Size. The Trumpeter appeared visibly larger than the Tundra. While I am a poor judge of relative size, I would estimate that it was between 15 and 20 percent larger. It had a thicker base to the neck and a much bulkier "jizz" than the Tundra. The photographs show this difference.

Bill shape. The culmen on the Trumpeter was straight from forehead to tip. The culmen on the Tundra Swan, by contrast, was slightly but visibly concave. The photographs show this and the difference in bare parts color (below) if studied closely. Because of the bill shape and the bare parts shape, the Trumpeter appeared "long-nosed" compared to the Tundra.

Bare parts shape and color. The bare parts in the Trumpeter came back to a point at the eye, and were completely black throughout. In the Tundra, there was a yellow spot in front of the eye. The facial pattern was also different, with the Trumpeter's bill/bare parts going into the face diagonally and the Tundra's bill ending squarely against the face (this somewhat confusing description is easier to draw -- see Fig. A).

FIGURE A
Bill Shape In Dodd Reservoir Swans



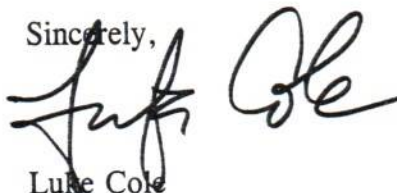
Neck shape and size. While perhaps the most subjective of the four field marks I used, the neck shape was clearly different in the two swans, being thicker in the Trumpeter. This distinction is also visible in the photographs. The Trumpeter also "sat back" on its neck, or ~~held~~ its neck back more over the body; this is slightly visible in the photo of the two swans facing each other.

Discussion

There is little doubt in my mind as to the identification of this swan; rarely does one have such good, close looks with a swan of another race with which to compare and contrast the Trumpeter. Perhaps the only question which might be troubling to the CFORC is, is this a "wild" swan or one that is part of a captive breeding program released or reintroduced to the wild? I am aware that a number of Trumpeter Swans have been reintroduced in southwest Wyoming in recent years; I have seen them at Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge there. Whether there are similar reintroduction programs on the east side of the Rockies, I do not know. I am also unclear on whether the swans are released as fledglings, or whether adult swans were reintroduced as well. I did not notice the legs of the Trumpeter so I could not see if the bird was banded.

If I can furnish further details or answer any of the committee's questions, I look forward to that opportunity. Since I do not receive the *CFO Journal*, I would appreciate some notification of the action taken on this record submission (or best, a copy of that issue of the *Journal*). Thanks for your time and hard work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Luke Cole", written in a cursive style.

Luke Cole

Luke Cole & Nancy Shelby
561 Hill Street
San Francisco, CA 94114

3/98 ✓
requested reprint
PHOTOS x2

Brandon Percival
835 Harmony Drive
West Pueblo, CO 81007

Re: Tundra Swan and Trumpeter Swan at Dodd Reservoir, Niwot,
March 10, 1998


Dear Mr. Percival:

As I promised, here are two photographs I took of the Tundra Swan and Trumpeter Swan at Dodd Reservoir, Niwot, Boulder County. I saw these two beauties there in the afternoon of March 10, 1998. I think the photos illustrate nicely the different "jizz" of the birds. I hope that you can use them for Field Notes. I am sorry that the quality is not better; I enlarged them myself at my local photo store on what is really a glorified xerox machine. Quality is once more sacrificed for expediency.

At your suggestion, I am mailing a copy of these photos to Mark Janos of the Colorado Rare Birds Committee.

Sincerely,


Luke Cole


Center on Race, Poverty & Environment
631 HOWARD STREET, SUITE 330
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105



Photograph by Luke W. Cole
Dodd Reservoir, Niwot
Boulder County, CO
March 10, 1998

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X2



Photograph by Luke W. Cole
Dodd Reservoir, Niwot
Boulder County, CO

March 10, 1998

1998-19 x 2