

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

1-94-1

ACCEPTED

RED-THROATED LOON

Gavia stellata

Location: Lake Henry; Ordway; Crowley County, Colorado

Date: October 30, 1994

Setting:

Bob Dickson, Brandon Percival and I found this bird after we observed the Brown Pelican that we had found earlier. We watched it for about a half hour, until about noon. We observed it swimming on the lake, fairly near the rocky dam. It was originally as close as 100 yards but later it moved off towards the center of the lake. Bob watched it with his Questar and I looked at it with my Kowa scope (20-60X). Sometimes I stole "Questar" glimpses too. The light was fairly overcast but it was calm and conditions were quite good. The Red-throated Loon mainly swam on the surface but occasionally dove under the water to feed.

Description:

The bird was a large, low waterfowl. It was well less than two feet long, perhaps 20" long or so. For a loon it was noticeably small and slender (compared to Common Loon also present). The bird was a juvenile. From a distance it was a small, round-headed loon with a evenly sloping forehead that sloped gradually into the top of the bill, without forming much of an angle. The back and upper-parts were an even grey, only slightly darker than the grey head and neck. Even at closest range through the Questar it had virtually no pattern to the back. The crown and neck were light grey and the forehead was a little darker grey than the crown. The chin, throat and lower face were white, which graded gently into the grey of the upper face and lower neck. There was no dark border to the grey foreneck (like the nearby Pacific Loon had). There was a dark grey collar across the foreneck and it had a whitish breast. There was a small white mark in front of the eye and the eye was surrounded by an obscure sort of white eye-ring. The bill was quite delicate and thin, with a nearly re-curved culmen above and an angled gonys below. The bird constantly held its bill tipped up at about a 10 degree angle.

Similar Species:

The Pacific Loon is most similar because of its similarly small size and slender bill. However it has a straight, horizontally-held bill; a lack of white invading the grey face around the eye; and a distinct blackish border between the dark rear-neck and light fore-neck. The Common Loon is darker, much larger and with a larger, blockier head and steep forehead. There is an uneven border at the sides of the neck. The bill is heavier, with a curved culmen, and the bill is held horizontally. The Yellow-billed Loon is much bigger, with a large, pale, up-turned bill. It has a darker, not lighter, area behind the eye and shows rows of spots on the back.

Experience with Species:

I have seen many Common and Pacific Loons in Colorado and on the West coast. I have seen Red-throated Loons twice before in Colorado (1991; 1992) and in March 1992 in the Seattle, Washington area. I have seen Yellow-billed Loons twice in Colorado.

This report was prepared from notes made after observation.

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\* N. Shrike 1 imm tot

\* Rough-l. Hawk tot

\* Red-thr Loon - 1 juv

Small; round-headed  
Loon. Straight, <sup>slightly</sup> forehead



Back & upper part,  
even grey, only slightly  
darker than head & neck.  
Crown neck bl. grey;  
forehead a little

darker. White chin throat  
& lower face; grading  
into grey. No dark bands  
to grey jaw-neck. White  
mark in front of eye.  
Dark grey collar across  
foreneck; whitish  
breast.

Bill thin & small.

almost re-curved culmen  
angled gonys.

Bill held tipped up.