

SPECIES: RED-THROATED LOON
(Vernacular Name)

Gavia stellata

1997-3

(Scientific Name) accepted

DATE(S): November 6, 1994 TIME OF OBSERVATION: 0935 TO 1000 MS

EXACT LOCATION: North Sterling Reservoir

NEAREST TOWN: Sterling

COUNTY: Logan

OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY IDENTIFIED THIS BIRD:

None that I am aware of

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT: 9.5 x 44 Celestron Binoculars; 15X-60X B/L Telescope

WEATHER CONDITIONS: Partly cloudy; Wind, variable 5-10 MPH; 45°F

BIRD/SUN ORIENTATION: Sun directly upon bird coming from behind observer

DISTANCE FROM BIRD AND HOW MEASURED: 150'-300'. Estimated

NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN: one SEX: Unknown PLUMAGE: Basic

BEHAVIOR AND DEMEANOR: Initially found swimming about 200' away from the top of the dam. Head was held tipped slightly upward as it swam along with much of its body slightly submerged giving a "snake-like" profile. It occasionally dived, staying under water for protracted periods of time. When reappearing on the surface it would raise up occasionally to flap its wings. The bird did not fly during period of observation.

HEAD & NECK (forehead, crown, auricular & malar regions, median line, etc.):

Rounded, smooth crown not "squared" as in G. immer and G. adamsii. Crown grayish-brown.

EYES & LORES (supercilium, eye-ring, eye-stripe, color, etc.): Face white with conspicuous dark eye.

LOWER & UPPER MANDIBLES (color & shape): Bill sharply pointed and thin with upper mandible mostly straight, lower mandible strongly upturned at the gray.

LEGS & FEET: Not observed.

UPPERPARTS (nape, back, rump, uppertail coverts, etc.): Pale grayish-brown nape and back with white spotting on back.

UNDERPARTS (chin, throat, belly, sides, flanks, crissum, etc.): Chin, throat and belly white and unmarked. Sides and flanks gray.

RETRICES (inner, middle & outer tail feathers; color, pattern, shape, etc.):

Tail short and dark. Not readily observed.

WINGS (color, length, shape, bars, coverts, etc.): Long, pointed wings, grayish brown on upper side with darker primaries. Underwings with dark primaries and secondaries and pale linings.

VOCALIZATION (call/song, method of delivery, i.e., from perch, in flight):

None heard.

HABITAT: Man-made fresh water reservoir on the eastern high plains

ELIMINATION OF SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES: Basic Plumage Adults

COMMON LOON (Gavia immer): Much larger with larger heavier bill. "Squarer" head profile. Rounded culmen. Holds head level. "Whitethroat" at mid-point on neck.

PACIFIC LOON (Gavia pacifica): Roughly the same size as G. stellata, but bill is thicker and straight. Holds head level. Blackish crown extends below eye. Foreneck is white sharply margined with black. Upperparts are generally darker. Early fall migrants still retain soft gray rump. Is not as "shaky" appearing when swimming.

YELLOW-BILLED LOON (Gavia adamsii): Considerably larger with massive bill.

PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND SIMILARLY APPEARING SPECIES: Basic Plumage Adults

RED-THROATED LOON: Have observed at least 15 winter-plumaged birds in Colorado during past 30 years as well as "hundreds" off Long Island, N.Y. and Cape Cod, Mass. clear back to the 1950's. Also seen off California & Washington.

COMMON LOON: Seen in all plumages throughout North America over the past 55+ years.

PACIFIC LOON: Usually see 5 or more every fall in Colorado since the early 1970's. Also seen "hundreds" in winter from California to Washington.

YELLOW-BILLED LOON: Seen perhaps 6 individuals (immature and/or winter plumaged adults) in Colorado and three individuals in California.

BOOKS, ILLUSTRATIONS AND ADVICE CONSULTED THAT INFLUENCED THIS REPORT:

None required.

THIS REPORT WRITTEN FROM NOTES MADE DURING AFTER X OBSERVATION; X FROM MEMORY

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SIGNATURE: Jack Reddall

DATE: 11/30/94