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Accepted

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

RED PHALAROPE
Phalaropus fulicaria

Location: Lake Holbrook; Rocky Ford area; Otero County, Colorado

Date: October 11, 1992

Setting:

I stood near the east shore of Holbrook Reservoir about 12:10 p.m. on a warm sunny fall day. I had my scope on a winter-plumaged Dunlin that walked at the shore's edge nearly at my feet. I looked up and saw a whitish bird floating in the corner of the lake about 75 yards away. Its small size, sandpiper-like bill and spinning motion identified it as a phalarope even before I trained my binoculars on it. As soon as I put binoculars on it I knew that it was a winter-plumaged Red Phalarope. I turned my Kowa scope on it at 20-60X and watched the bird until 12:20 p.m. It gradually swam off, not actively spinning and feeding but clearly picking at small insects on the glassy surface of the lake. I quit watching it when it was at least 250 yards off and drifting towards the center of the lake.

Description: (From my field notes)

The bird was thick-necked, erect and plump. Even grey above, white below. Black cap from mid-crown back, blending into blackish nape. White forehead. Blackish down-curving stripe behind, and including, the eye. Back unstreaked, even medium-grey and connected to the blackish nape and rear of neck. Underparts white. There was a faint buffy grey wash at the sides of the neck and breast.

Bill all dark, short, thick, straight and untapered. Bill was less than the length of the head. The bill size and shape was the most distinctive feature of the bird.

Although I did not see the bird fly, I saw it spread its wings and flutter a few feet when it was near the shore. It landed back down on the water. I briefly saw that the wing had a distinct white wing stripe but I was unable to see the rump or any other features of the spread wing.

Similar Species:

Was a phalarope for reasons indicated above. Winter-plumaged Wilson's Phalarope has grey forehead and crown, lacks black face patch, is darker grey-brown above and has long, slender bill much longer than head. Red-necked Phalarope in winter plumage has distinctive white and dark stripes on dark grey back and has small, slender needle-like bill and is much smaller phalarope.

Experience with Species:

I have seen all phalaropes in both breeding and winter plumage. I have seen Red Phalarope in winter plumage as recently as July (!) 1992 in Arizona and many times in fall and winter on the west coast.

This report is prepared from notes made during observation.

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