COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD _____ UNUSUAL RECORD X *recd 9-2-97 ✓*

Species: Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*)

Date: 8 June 1997   **Number seen:** one   **Sex:** female   **Plumage:** Alternate

Locality: Antero Reservoir   **Elevation:** about 8940'

Nearest town: Antero Junction   **County:** Park

Time observed: about 09:00 AM MDT   **Duration of observation:** 5 minutes

Description: Sue Bonfield and I were doing a Big Day when we stopped at Antero Reservoir to add DCCO and AWPE for the day. While scanning through the birds (we were standing on the eastish end of the dam) on what little water was there (the dam was being worked on, so the water had been pulled out of the reservoir), I found a group of three birds swimming about 200 meters from shore. I immediately identified two of them as Eared Grebes and noted that the third bird was somewhat smaller. I looked at it more directly when what to my wondering eyes did appear but a bright red Red Phalarope! I had Sue look at it for a short time, then I studied the bird and wrote a few field notes.

The bird was red underneath with a black crown, white, almost silvery, face, yellow bill, red hindneck, and dark back. The bird was swimming with the two grebes, apparently to snatch small critters that the grebes were either disturbing or somehow making available to the phalarope. The phalarope swam with very jerky motions and was very bouyant, as its tail and red undertail coverts were visible above the water's surface. The bird would occasionally spin in circles, as phalaropes are wont to do, and jab at the water's surface with its bill. The bird stayed with the grebes the entire time we watched it. I did not see the bird do anything else, so did not view the bird's legs or the body from the underside. There were quite a few Wilson's Phalaropes on the shore and on the surface, but none within 100 meters or more. Despite this, by panning the scope quickly from Red Phalarope to Wilson's Phalarope, it was easy to see that the two species were at least roughly similar in size, particularly when comparing both species to nearby Eared Grebes.

Similar species eliminated by description: There really aren't any species that are reasonably similar to an alternate-plumaged, female Red Phalarope in plumage color and pattern and behavior. All other red shorebirds are not often seen swimming in relatively deep water. Besides, all other red shorebirds lack this bird's combination of white face, black crown, and yellow bill. Male Cinnamon Teal are noticeably larger than Eared Grebes. In fact, bright red body plumage is not a common aspect of waterbird coloration.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration): The bird was not heard.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species? I have seen fewer than 20 Red Phalaropes (including only two that were red, or mostly so), but have seen bazillions of Cinnamon Teal, Wilson's Phalaropes, and Red Knots. I have seen a handful of Curlew Sandpipers (all at least partially red), but no Red-necked Stints. And, I don't believe it matters as this bird's plumage is distinctive.

Light conditions: sun was behind us and to our left

Optical equipment used: Kowa 30x wide angle

Distance, and how estimated: estimated at 200 meters

Other observers who saw the bird with you: Sue Bonfield

Other observers who saw the bird independently: none of which I am aware

If photographed, type of equipment and film: I did not photograph the bird

List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

a) at time of observation: none   **b) after observation:** none

This report was written from notes taken immediately after viewing the bird and without reference to any sources of information.

Reporting observer: Tony Leukering   **Signature:** Tony Leukering

Address: Colorado Bird Observatory, 13401 Piccadilly Road, Brighton, CO 80601

Date report was written: 30 August 1997