

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

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NEW STATE RECORD _____ UNUSUAL RECORD X**Species:** Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*)**Date:** 10 September 2002 **Number seen:** one **Sex:** male? **Plumage:** Def. Basic**Locality:** Barr Lake**Elevation:** ~5000'**Nearest town:** Brighton**County:** Adams**Time observed:** late morning (~10:30 - ~11:30) and early afternoon (~12:45 - ~13:15)**Duration of observation:** about five minutes

Description: I was perusing the shorebirds in the southeastern part of Barr Lake, when among the many Red-necked Phalaropes (RNPH), I noted a phalarope that seemed paler and bigger, but that was not a Wilson's Phalarope (WIPH). I studied it carefully, as it was almost entirely in Basic and showed it to a contingent of the Tuesday Birders (led by Ann Bonnell) that was on a field trip. I studied the bird on at least four occasions with the Tuesday Birders and then, again, when a number of Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory staff came out to look at it in the early afternoon.

The bird was a bit bigger than the neighboring RNPH, but smaller than the nearby WIPH. It usually was among the RNPH, but I also often noted it foraging by itself on or very near the shore. The forehead was white and the crown was dark, nearly black, fading to gray at the rear. The hindneck, back, and rump were pale gray, with some traces of darker Alternate plumage remaining. The face was white with an obvious, black eye patch, that extended from just in front of the eye through the auriculars. The bill was black with a bit of pale coloration at the base of the mandible and was noticeably thicker than the RNPH bills. The eyes were dark, or at least did not stand out amidst the black eye patch. The tertials were pale gray and extended nearly to the tip of the longest primary - at least, I could not really detect any primaries beyond the tertials. The underparts were nearly entirely white, but with scattered Alternate feathers on the neck and upper breast sides.

When the bird was in flight (seen once), I noted that the wings, both above and below, were paler than those of the RNPH, thus the black distal end of the upperwing contrasted strongly with the interior of the wing, unlike on the RNPH. There was a fairly wide white wingstripe that often looked more extensive than that of the RNPH, but not always. Also, the pale underwings were different than the darker underwings of the RNPH. The central upper tail coverts were gray, contrasting with white lateral upper tail coverts - very similar to that of the RNPH. The tail was gray.

Similar species eliminated: WIPH is easily ruled out by head pattern, bill length and thickness, gray rump, and by smaller size in nearly direct comparison. RNPH is more difficult to eliminate, but the combination of bill thickness and color pattern, tertial color, and wing pattern do the trick. Interestingly, there was a single RNPH present at the time that was more similar to the REPH than all the others, as it was in a similar stage of molt (most other RNPH present retained much more Alternate plumage than did this bird) and I, and others, kept finding that bird when looking for the REPH on both the 10th and the 11th. I could not find the real REPH on the 11th.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration): I did not hear the bird vocalize.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species? I have seen 100s of both "pelagic" phalaropes and 1000s and 1000s of WIPH. I have also seen 1000s and 1000s of Sanderlings, which can bear an uncanny resemblance in some plumages to REPH. However, that species does not usually forage by spinning in water as did the bird under discussion.

Light conditions: sun in front of me and to my left, but behind mostly overcast skies

Optical equipment used: Leica 20x-60x

Distance, and how estimated: estimated closest distance at about 45 meters

Other observers who saw the bird with you: Ann Bonnell, Doug Faulkner, Alison Banks, David Hanni, and many others

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.

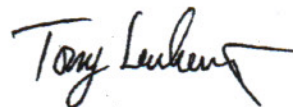
List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

a) at time of observation: none

b) after observation: none

Reporting observer: Tony Leukering

Signature:



Address: Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, 14500 Lark Bunting Lane, Brighton, CO 80603

Date report was written: Written on 16 September 2002 and 21 August 2003 from notes written about six hours after last sighting