

0022-01-1990

FIRST SIGHTING OF PACIFIC/ARCTIC LOON FOR PENNSYLVANIA

by Rick Wiltraut

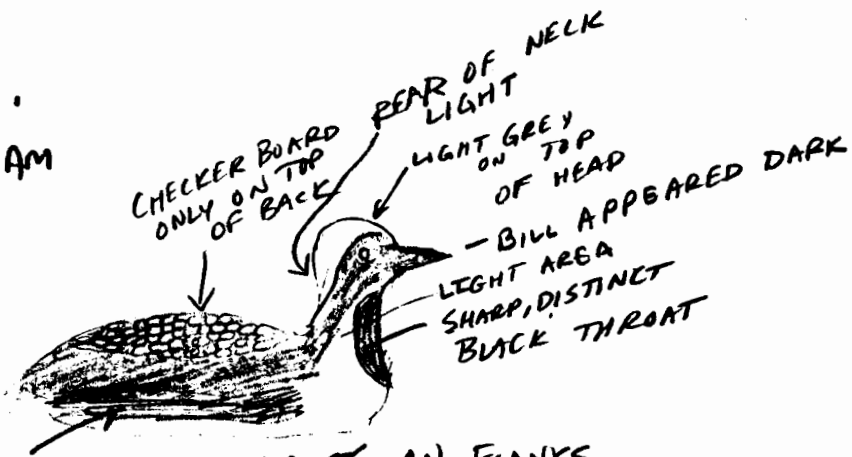
On May 13, 1990, Steve Boyce was birding during a drizzle at Penn Forest Reservoir, Carbon County when he spotted three loons resting on the water near the dam. Two of the loons he identified as Commons, but the third was noticeably smaller and had a light gray colored nape and crown. The throat was dark and the back had a distinct black and white checkerboard pattern like that of a breeding plumaged Common Loon. Since Boyce had no previous experience with the Red-throated Loon in breeding plumage, he made the "reasonable" assumption that the bird was a Red-throated Loon and that the throat appeared dark because of the light conditions. However, when he returned home in the afternoon and checked his field guide, he was astonished to discover that the bird he saw was actually a breeding-plumaged "Arctic" Loon! Although he tried to reach me and other birders in the area, no one else saw the bird. Steve sent me a sketch of what he saw.

Although the sighting must be considered hypothetical, I'm convinced that there was indeed a Pacific/Arctic Loon in Pennsylvania. I've known Steve for many years and his abilities as an excellent birder. He is a meticulous note taker, both mentally and on paper, and he's always trying to improve this skill by studying critical field marks on butterflies and moths.

The date of this sighting is consistent with other Pacific/Arctic Loon sightings in the East during the spring migration. At Whitefish Point Bird Observatory in Michigan where notable flights of Common Loons sometimes exceed 1000/day, Pacific/Arctic Loons have been reported at least five times, all in May. There are also a number of May sightings from Duluth,

Minnesota. In addition, there are about six records for New Jersey, including two fall sightings near the Pennsylvania border (Round Valley Reservoir, Nov. 17+, 1978 and Merrill Creek Reservoir, Nov. 15-20, 1988 - both sightings Greg Hanisek et al.). Pacific Loons breed from Alaska east across northern Canada to Hudson Bay, wintering along the Pacific Coast.

13 MAY 90
~07:30 A.M.
PENN FOREST RSVR.
FROM S. SHORE BY DAM
AREA



NO CHECKERBOARD SPOTS ON FLANKS

- SMALLER THAN COMMON LOON WHICH CHASED THIS BIRD - PACIFIC LOON THEN TOOK FLIGHT
- OBSERVED ~ 200 YDS AWAY 10 X 25 BINOCLS
- RAINY (DRIZZLE) NO FOG ON LAKE
COULD SEE ACROSS IMPOUNDMENT
- HEAD STRUCK ME AS IMMEDIATELY DIFFERENT THAN COMMON LOON, THOUGHT IT WAS A RED-THROATED UNTIL I COULD CONSULT A FIELD GUIDE

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

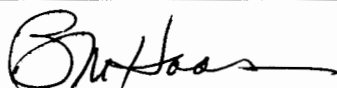
Voting Tabulation - Round # / of

Species: **Pacific Loon**Date of Sighting: **May 13, 1990**Observer(s): **Steve Boyce**Date of Submission: **1990 CARBON**Submitted by: **Rick Wiltraut**

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V		
					A	B	C
E. Kwater				X			
B. Haas				X			
F. Haas				X			
R. Leberman						X	
G. McWilliams				X			
S. Santner				X			
P. Schwalbe				X			
TOTALS				6		1	
DECISION				X			

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

8-15-91