

Species: Pacific Loon

Date: 5/11/13

Location: Memorial Lake SP – Lebanon County 40.419671,-76.597027

Discovered by: Jonathan Heller

Other observers: Jarrod Derr, David McNaughton, Chris Borz, Tim Becker and others.
– Jarrod Derr was taking pictures and should have photographic documentation

Time: discovered around 12:00 noon and reportedly present at least through the end of the day.

Conditions: Acceptable viewing conditions. Mostly cloudy with periodic rain, but no fog meant we could still get good views.

Equipment: Swarovski scope

Details:

The Pacific Loon came in with a new group of Common Loons. It immediately stood out to me as something different due to the smaller size of the bird and the much more diminutive bill. The bill was dark and straight and the back was quite dark (with a few small white flecks). These traits ruled out the Red-throated Loon. The paler buffy/gray head and hindneck and the sharp contrast on the neck was immediately suggestive of Pacific Loon. These traits, but particularly the smaller size of the bird and much smaller bill in direct comparison with Common Loon ruled out a 1st summer Common Loon. A closer view and examination of the head shape showed a rounded head shape rather than the blockier appearance of the Common Loons. The commons also appeared to have a flattened top of the head. A closer examination of the loon also showed a faint 'chinstrap.' – also supportive of Pacific Loon. There was no white patch on the flanks, so the unlikely appearance of Arctic Loon was ruled out as well. I am 100% confident of the ID as Pacific Loon. I would not consider myself an expert on the different plumages, but after referring to Sibley, it seems to me that the bird was probably a 1st summer based on the stated timing of the plumage transition.

Photographs: Jarrod Derr and Chris Bortz should have photos for documentation. Please let me know if these are not submitted as I would like to follow up and make sure that they are included for this record.

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