

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2016-04-10 20:27:57
Observer's Name	Carl Engstrom
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Observer's Address	Country: United States
Names of additional observers	Kurt Engstrom
Species (Common Name)	Pacific Loon
Species (Scientific Name)	Gavia pacifica
Number of individuals	1
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	Non-breeding plumaged adult
Observation Date and Time	04-09-2016 1:20 PM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Yes
Link to eBird checklist	http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S28841608
County	Centre
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Howard
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	Bald Eagle SP
Habitat	Lake, open water
Distance to bird	600 yards
Viewing conditions	Overcast with light snow at times

Description	<p>When we first saw the bird, it was in close company with a breeding plumaged Common Loon and two non breeding plumaged Red-throated Loons (has all four of these birds in one scope view). The second I saw this bird my mind jumped directly to Pacific Loon of which I have seen close to a hundred on the West Coast in non breeding plumage. I was immediately struck by the birds grayish cast to the back of the head/neck and down onto the back and wings of the bird and especially the clean cut definition between the gray on the neck with the bright white on the throat down to the birds breast. When compared to the nearby COLO and RTLO, the bird seemed to intermediate in size although not by very much. The head was rounded at the back, but showed a slight bulge on the forehead which was not great for PALO, but additional research showed that sometimes loons will puff out their head feathers at rest and can show this feature (I did not notice this bulge and the head seemed much rounder when the bird was in an alert posture after surfacing from some of its dives later on). The bill compared to the COLO was markedly less heavy and bulky looking, but not dainty as in the RTLO, and was held out from its head even with the water. The body of the bird was a dark gray, darker than the gray on the neck, but lighter than the black back of the nearby COLO, the distance however made it difficult to pick up on any real pattern on the back other than a few flecks of white. The real clincher of a field mark for us was just how defined the separation of the gray and white was down the neck. After its dives, the bird held its head up fully extended in a very alert position which gave off great views of its neck (all this was apparent with the bird had its head tucked at rest, but this posture really showed it off well). The separation line was vertical up and down the neck and had no marks to break up this line as would be shown in a non breeding plumaged COLO. Finally there was no white around the eye as would typically be shown in a non breeding plumaged COLO either.</p>
Behavior (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)	<p>When first observed, the bird was only floating around on the surface of the lake and slowly swimming around in a very relaxed posture. However as the weather began to clear up, we observed it begin to make a series of dives underwater for extended periods of time. After a few of these dives (at least 4-5), the bird suddenly picked up off the water and took off flying up the lake, quickly gaining altitude, and out of sight our sight.</p>
Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)	<p>See description</p>
Discussion – anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:	<p>The bird was seen while a large front with snow was moving through the area. There were over 50 COLO on the lake during the storm which indicates a large loon movement on this day.</p>
Are you positive of your identification ? (Why or why not)	<p>Yes</p>
During	<p>Peterson Field Guide to Birds; National Geographic Birds of North America; Audobon Birds App</p>
After	<p>Many additional sources</p>
Supporting evidence (check all that apply)	<p>Photograph</p>



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[IMG_0642.JPG](#)



[IMG_0644.JPG](#)