

PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE
210 Welcome Ave. Norwood, PA 19074

8 February 2001

John Fedak
2173 Truittsburg Rd.
Fairmount City, PA 16224

Dear John,

Thank you for submitting documentation on the Yellow-billed Loon at Keystone Reservoir on 10 October 1997. After careful review, the committee regrets that it cannot accept this record. A majority of members felt that most of the evidence supported the identification, but not beyond all doubt. Among the troubling factors stated was an impression that the details combined some characters of an adult and others of a first-year bird. For such an extreme rarity in eastern North America, the committee believes acceptance should be conservatively based upon a bird that appears perfectly typical in all respects.

The committee emphasizes that non-acceptance does not mean that the bird was not the species reported, but rather that the committee believes the documentation submitted does not support the identification conclusively.

We hope that this will not discourage you from submitting documentation on any rarities you may find in the future.

Finally, the committee apologizes for the unacceptably long delay before all members were able to vote on the record. Circumstances beyond our control caused the problem, and we believe that we are back on a timely track.

Sincerely,

For the Committee:
Paul Hess, Chairman

P.S. Beginning this year observers will receive postcards acknowledging that the committee has received their documentation. In addition, whereas observers formerly were notified only when reports were not accepted (in disappointing or irritating letters like this one), they will now receive cards announcing that their records *have* been accepted.

Record #200-01-1999

004-01-1997

SENECA ROCKS AUDUBON SOCIETY BIRD SIGHTING DOCUMENTATION GUIDE

This form is intended as a convenience in reporting observations of rare or unusual birds. It may be used flexibly and need not be used at all except as a guide. Attach additional sheets as necessary. PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE. The following checklist can be used to remind yourself of items that you want to include in this report. Not all of these points will be seen, nor are they all necessary to correctly identify a species, but not including something you saw lessens the value of your documentation. PLEASE REPORT WHAT WAS SEEN, NOT WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN SEEN.

SIZE, SHAPE, AND PLUMAGE DESCRIPTION:

- ☒ Give size compared to a common bird
- ☒ Shape (warbler, thrush, hawk, etc.) *Drawing*
- ☒ Head: colors and pattern
- ☒ Eye: color, ring, stripe, lore, brow
- ☒ Bill: length, color
- ☒ Legs: color, length, toes (number, type)
- ☒ Upperparts: nape (neck), back, rump
- ☒ Tail: colors, shape, pattern, length *unknown*
- ☒ Underparts: throat, breast, belly, flanks, vent
- ☒ Wings: colors, wingbars, length, wing linings, shape
- ☒ Parts of bird that couldn't be seen *Did not see belly or clearly the tail*

BEHAVIOR:

- ☒ Posture *See drawing*
- ☐ Feeding method
- ☐ Flight pattern
- ☐ Vocalization
- ☒ Preening or sleeping *NO*
- ☒ Other species present *Common loons, Pile-Bled Grebes, Bonaparte's Gulls, Cuddy ducks*
- ☒ Interactions with other birds *NONE*
- ☐ Nesting (building, brooding, etc.)

NUMBER, SEX, AGE:

- ☐ Number of birds
- ☐ Sex by plumage or behavior
- ☐ Age by plumage or behavior

LOCATION:

- ☒ Place name (town, park, SGL, etc.)
- ☒ County and State
- ☒ Habitat (field, woods, water, plants, etc.)

CONDITIONS:

- ☒ Time of day
 - ☒ Temperature *About 45°*
 - ☒ Sky/cloud cover *getting cloudy toward dark, but cleared up later in evening*
 - ☒ Precipitation/snow cover *0*
 - ☒ Water (depth, waves, % ice) *Depth is not known*
 - ☒ Wind (speed, direction)
 - ☒ Moon phase *coming up as NEW*
 - ☒ Sun (location in relation to you and bird) *TO THE LEFT*
 - ☒ Length of sighting *~ 25 minutes*
 - ☒ Distance to bird *75 yds*
 - ☒ Optics (binos, scope, power of each)
 - ☒ Experience with this species, years birding
 - ☒ How were similar species eliminated? *see below*
 - ☒ Field guide used (during and after sighting)
 - ☒ Was description written from notes made during observation, notes made after observation, or memory? *Was field guide used prior to writing field notes? No, but was used after*
 - ☒ Other observers (are they reporting?) *NONE*
 - ☒ Sketch or photograph (sketches, no matter how basic, are extremely useful) *made BEFORE Field Guide but during discussion with Debra Hoffman*
- I am not loony, I am sure of the characteristics I observed*

SPECIES Yellow-billed LoonDATE SIGHTED 10/29/97

SIZE, SHAPE, AND PLUMAGE DESCRIPTION:

The bird drifted/swam slowly to from the right to a distance of about 75 yds and kept slowly moving until all I could see was a silhouette of the bird (even though it was only about 150 yds out and relatively close for a scope - it was gusser/uncertain). The 1st thing I noticed was the way the bill was held - it was like a red-throated I immediately rejected that because of bird size and bill size. Then I notice how light the bill was, and that it was yellowish. The bill was coming from the right at an angle at 1st toward me. The bill was light on top at the tip. In fact, it was only dark near $\frac{1}{2}$ of the way from the head. As it got closer, it turned so I could see it from the side. I then noticed the back and how barred/striped it was. I followed that by looking at the head/neck and noticed how light it was. After more observation, I could clearly see an ear patch - like a Bonaparte's Gull. The eye was dark and smaller, like comparing a common loon to a deer mouse eye. This loon to a vole. The face was light and the crown darker, but the dark did not extend down to the eye or to the back of the neck. The neck looked darker and the whole bird looked bulkier to the common loons (2-3) that were present at about 200 yds. The bird looked lighter, a whole than those birds. I compared them many times during the observation. These features helped me separate this bird from common loon, as well as the direct comparison I saw was flat on to and angled up on the lower mandible and the color started at yellow at

The base and became pure yellow to the tip. The bill was differently shaped, when compared to a common loon. I was very careful with my observations, I did not have my back with me, I wrote my observations down and did this sketch while Devane Hummer was playing record. Advocate. I finished shortly after our talk that evening I put everything together on this form. I hope it is enough.



BEHAVIOR: The bird came in swimming slowly (almost drifting) from right to left. It didn't dive the entire time I observed it. The bill was constantly held upward and it would occasionally stretch one of its bluish/black feet into its back to stretch it. It occasionally would turn its head side to side - This is how I made sure the top of the bill was light to the tip and only dark at the $\frac{1}{3}$ near the head. The bird made no sounds.

NUMBER, SEX, AND AGE: 1 Unknown sex. I would assume Adult due to the very easily seen banding, but I am not sure.

LOCATION: Keystone Reservoir, Rt 210 main boat launch, Armstrong county, Pa. Bird was about 75 yds away at closest point in main lake body.

CONDITIONS, TIME, WEATHER, OPTICS, EXPERIENCE: Setting sun, but light was good at first, 5:05 to about 5:30pm. Breezy, but no wind, few waves or ripples. I was using my Kowa TSN 2 and Leica 8x42 optics. I have never seen a Yellow-billed loon before. This bird was different from any common loon I have ever seen. I have seen commons with some slight barring, but not like stripes. I have seen light-necked commons, but not this light. I have never seen an ear patch on a common, no "yellow" on the bill. Gray-white bill. That looked light, but never yellow. I have plenty of experience with common loons. This bird was not one.

NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER, DATE OF WRITE-UP: 10/29/97 EVENING

John G. FEOK
221 WASHINGTON ST.
NEW BETHLEHEM
PA 16242
(814) 275-4086

004-01-1997

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round One

Species: Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*)

Date of Sighting: 10 October 1997 to 10 October 1997

Location: KEYSTONE RESERVOIR

County: ARMSTRONG

Observer(s): John Fedak

Date of Submission: 1997

Submitted by: John fedak

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
D. Couchman								X
T. Floyd								X
P. Hess					X			
R. Ickes				X				
J. McWilliams				X				
B. Reid					X			
P. Rodewald			X					
TOTALS			1	2	2			2
DECISION				X				

Comments: 1 - 4 - 2

Signature (Secretary):

Date:

9/18/00