

VERIFICATION OF UNUSUAL SIGHT RECORD FOR UTAH

Common Name: ROSS' GOOSE Scientific Name: *Chen rossii*
 Date: 10/29/88 Time: 10-11 AM Length of time observed: ABOUT 1 HOUR
 (COMPARING w/ SNOW GEESE)
 Number: 3 Age: 2 ADULT Sex: UNK
 1 IMMATURE
 Location: FISH SPRINGS NWR
 Latilong: 9 Elevation (if known): 4300'
 Distance to bird: 150-200 YARDS Light conditions: VERY GOOD
 Optical equipment: 15-60 X B+L SPOTTING SCOPE
 Weather: CLEAR

Description: (Write a detailed description of the bird's appearance, including size, shape, plumage pattern, color, and any unique features.) ^{Looking for NECK BANDS}
 BIRDS WERE IN A FLOCK OF 64 SNOW GEESE. AFTER COUNTING, I LOOKED FOR POSSIBLE ROSS' IN THE FLOCK. ONE BIRD WAS INITIALLY SEEN AS SMALLER THAN THE GOOSE DIRECTLY NEXT TO IT, AS THE BIRDS WERE MILLING ABOUT. FURTHER OBSERVANCE REVEALED A SHORTER, TRIANGULAR BILL ON THIS BIRD. COMPARISONS WITH MANY OF THE OTHER GEESE SHOWED THIS AS A DISTINCTIVE FEATURE AND NOT JUST AN ANGLE 'MIRAGE'. THE BIRD'S HEAD WAS ALSO NOTED AS BEING MORE ROUNDED AND NOT SLOPING LIKE THE SNOW GOOSE. THE SMALLER SIZE & 'GRIN PATCH' WERE THE ONLY IDENTIFICATION KEYS BETWEEN THE 2 SPECIES THAT I KNEW ABOUT, THE LATTER COULD NOT BE DISTINGUISHED AT THE VIEWING DISTANCE. I NOTED THE BILL & HEAD DIFFERENCES ON A PORTABLE TAPE PLAYER & THE FIELD GUIDE LATER CONFIRMED THESE CHARACTERISTICS, AS BELONGING TO ROSS' GEESE. TWO OTHER BIRDS WERE SUBSEQUENTLY OBSERVED NEARBY WITH THE SAME CHARACTERISTICS, EXCEPT ONE SEEMED TO HAVE A LITTLE GRAY ON IT, PRIMARILY AROUND THE HEAD. ^(IMMATURE) THESE 3 TENDED TO STAY IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO EACH OTHER. CONSTANT COMPARISONS WITH THE SNOW GEESE CONFIRMED DIFFERENCES & THEY BECAME EASILY IDENTIFIABLE ANYWHERE IN THE FLOCK BY HEAD & BILL SHAPES. THE SMALLER ^{BODY} SIZE WAS APPARENT IN MANY INSTANCES, BUT THE DEGREE OF SIZE DIFFERENCES ^{& NECK LENGTH} WAS SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT DUE TO OBSERVATION DISTANCE, AND THE FACT THAT ^{ALL} THE BIRDS WERE SEEMINGLY IN MOTION WITH POSTURES VARYING IN ALL. SOME WERE RESTING, SOME FEEDING, BATHING SOME HAD NECKS OUTSTRETCHED, SOME TUCKED, ETC. AT ONE POINT, A ROSS' WENT PAST AN IMMATURE SNOW & ITS HEAD SEEMED TO BE THE ONLY PART OF IT THAT WAS ABOVE THE PLANE OF THE SNOW'S BACK. THE ROSS' DID NOT SEEM TO HAVE ITS NECK OUTSTRETCHED IT LOOKED TO BE FLOATING BY RESTFULLY.

Voice or call notes and method of delivery:

NONE HEARD

Behavior:

FEEDING + RESTING WITH SNOW GEESE
RESTLESS MOVEMENT DUE TO MY PRESENCE

Habitat: Wmf

ON IBIS UNIT OF FSNWR - OPEN WATER

What similar species might it have been and how were these eliminated: SNOW GOOSE —
SEEN IN DIRECT PROXIMITY TO SNOW GEESE

SIZE WAS SMALLER, BILL WAS SHORTER + TRIANGULAR, HEAD MORE
ROUNDED THAN OTHER SNOW GEESE. ONE HAD A LITTLE GRAY ON IT,
PARTICULARLY ~~ON~~ ON THE HEAD (IMMATURE). THE GRAY WAS NOT NEAR AS OBVIOUS
OR AS EXTENSIVE AS THAT ON THE IMMATURE SNOW GEESE.

What experience have you had with this and similar species: NONE w/ ROSS' BUT
HAVE SEEN COUNTLESS SNOW GEESE, PRIMARILY ON EAST COAST +
WASHINGTON STATE AREA

Books, illustrations, and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC FIELD GUIDE VERIFIED THE TAPED DESCRIPTION I MADE,
AS I DID NOT HAVE FIELD GUIDE w/ ME AT THE TIME.

Significance of record in this area or the state: CONSIDERED RARE IN STATE
ACCORDING TO 1983 STATE LATILONG RECORDS; BUT KNOWN TO BE INCREASING.

Additional material: (attach drawing, photograph, tape recording if available)

Description from notes taken at time of sighting ^{From TAPE} notes made later from memory

Observer: JOSEPH ENGLER

Signature: Joseph D. Engler

Address: FISH SPRINGS NWR

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

NONE

Date prepared: 10/31/88

Return this form to: Ella Sorensen
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