

8-1990

UTAH ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Verification of Unusual Sight Record

Common Name: Black Scoter

Scientific Name: *Melanitta nigra*

Date: Oct. 19, 1990 Time: 10:30 Am

Length of time observed: 1 hr 45 min

Number: 1 Age: Adult

Sex: MALE

Location: SUGARHOUSE Park Pond, Salt Lake Co., Utah

Lat/long: 5

Elevation: 4300 ft.

Distance to bird: 20 meters +

Light conditions: excellent

Optical equipment: 10x50 binos, Celestron Scope

Weather: Cool / Clear

Description: (Write a detailed description of the bird's appearance, including size, shape, plumage pattern, color, and any unique features.)

Totally black duck except for bulbous orange cere. Swam low in water with tail held at water level. Much smaller than the tame mallards in the pond and still slightly smaller than the wild mallards on the pond. I ~~never~~ look at this pond, but the small black water bird made think coot or gallinule (I needed a gallinule for my big year) when I raised my binoculars I nearly became incontinent! During the observation period both feet were observed without brands (indicating <sup>no</sup> previous captivity). Wings were not clipped or pinioned. Belly was observed during a raised flap from the water and it appeared lighter than rest of body. Bird was present for at least 10 days after initial observation.

Voice or call notes:

None heard

Behavior:

Swam, preened, and dived - seemed oblivious to the other ducks (Hame & wild mallards) but shied away from observers (didn't fly away though)

Habitat:

pond approx 1 acre in size and 3-4 ft deep.

Describe what specific features you saw or heard that caused you to reach your conclusion:

totally black coloration with bulbous orange cere - checking around to see if anyone kept them as aviculture birds for possibility of escapee - no one keeps them in area.

What similar species might it have been and how were these eliminated:

Coot & gallinule - bills shaped differently and colored differently  
white is present under tails of both  
smaller than this bird

Black duck - not as deeply true black  
head & neck lighter  
bill yellow

What experience have you had with this and similar species:

Have seen Black Scoters in California  
Very familiar with Coots & Moorhens.

Books, illustrations, and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:

The ID wasn't influenced by the National Geographic or Audubon Master Guide  
the problem was the provenance - escapee or true vagrant?

Significance of record in this area or the state:

1<sup>st</sup> male Black Scoter for state?

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

Photo taken

Observer: CRAIG L. KNEEDY  
314 S. 4500 W.

Signature:



Address: West Point, Utah 84015

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

Terry Saddler

Date prepared:

11.06.90

12/29/90 from notes taken in field

Return this form to: Utah Ornithological Society  
C/O Ella Sorensen  
3868 Marsha Drive  
West Valley City, Utah 84120