

WINTER LOONSeen 16 November 1991, 12:30 p.m.Fish Springs NWR, Utah - Avocet Pond, by road

1. Bill - Large classical wedge-shaped - straight on top and tapered in 2 segments underneath - some black on top (only) of top culmen - about 1/2 of way from head to tip. Otherwise, bill light gray (yellowish?). Appeared translucent, with sun behind it. Bill too large for Red-throated or Pacific Loon, so it was presumed to be a Common or Yellow-billed Loon.
2. Neck - does not have the white indentation said to be typical of Common Loon. There was an irregular separation between light color on front of neck and darker color behind. Color -slightly tannish - not black and white type of gray.
3. Back - wide transverse barring that is quite noticeable from any angle (appeared scalloped).
4. Head and Face - head steeply dipping in front - almost vertical appearing - slightly humped in back giving bird a flat-headed appearance. Holds head high - bill pointing slightly up. Dark spot on right side of face behind eye about where shown in Kaufmann's "Advanced Birding," for Yellow-billed Loon. No spot on left side - mottled.
5. Eye - appears small, surrounded by light coloration, definitely no eye ring.
6. Behavior - not too shy - approached truck closely, after I parked. Moves through water with head and neck horizontal just below water, as if scanning in water below.
7. Observation Distance - As close as 50 to 100 ft. with 10x binoculars.

Probable identification: Yellow-billed Loon.

8-1991

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S. Parker Gay, Jr.
675 South 400 East
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111

November 18, 1990

Mrs. Ella Sorensen
3868 Marsha Drive
West Valley City, UT 84120

Dear Ella:

I wish to submit my observations to the Utah Bird Records Committee on the probable Yellow-billed Loon, that I saw November 16, 1991, at the Fish Springs NWR, Avocet Pond.

After sighting and studying the loon shortly after 12:00 noon, I went to the refuge headquarters and talked to Jay Banta about the sighting. He and I went back to the Avocet Pond, found the loon about 100 yards east of where I had seen it and he photographed it at a distance of about 175 ft. with a 300 mm lens, more or less into the sun, and probably not a good shot. He said he would return the next morning and try to get a better photograph.

After I returned to Salt Lake City, I called you at about 8:00 p.m. the same day and you suggested I also call Craig Kneedy, which I did. Craig said he planned to go take a look at the loon the following morning.

It would be nice to add a new bird to the Utah State bird list!

Best regards,



S. Parker Gay, Jr.

SPG/ph