

VERIFICATION OF UNUSUAL SIGHT RECORD FOR UTAH

Common Name: Surf Scoter Scientific Name: *Melanitta perspicillata*
 Date: Nov. 20, 1985 Time: 3:35 p.m. Length of time observed: 40 min.
 Number: 1 Age: Sex:
 Location: Grafton sewage plant, west of Rockville, Wash. Co., Utah.
 37° 10' N, 113° 3' W.
 Latilong: 19 Elevation (if known): 3690 ft.
 Distance to bird: 15 to 30 yards Light conditions: Scattered clouds,
 with light from behind me.
 Optical equipment: 6 X 18 binoculars, 20-60 X spotting scope.
 Weather: Scattered clouds, cold, with storms to northward.
 Description: (Write a detailed description of the bird's appearance, including
 size, shape, plumage pattern, color, and any unique features.)

A dark, compactly-built duck with a large head and a massive bill which sloped forward from the head and gave the appearance that the duck had no forehead. The body rode low on the surface of the water, with the tail at water level. The back was dark brown, almost black, with the sides slightly lighter brown. Under some lighting angles the bird looked black. The side of the head showed a vertical white mark between the bill and the eye. A second white mark, more circular in outline, showed on the cheek, behind and below the level of the eye. A large whitish patch showed on the back of the head and the nape of the neck. The bill appeared to be entirely dark.

Voice or call notes and method of delivery: Not heard.

Behavior: Always swam calmly around, never hurried; occasionally dived. Sometimes approached inquisitively.

Habitat: 12-acre sewage-collector pond, with surrounding dikes faced with boulders. Depth 3 to 4 feet, with a heavy growth of algae.

What similar species might it have been and how were these eliminated: White-winged and Black Scoters both lack the white patch on the back of the head and nape of neck that this bird showed.

What experience have you had with this and similar species: I have often seen scoters along the coast of California.

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

National Geographic field guide was checked after I returned home to try to determine the bird's sex. The Golden Guide was also consulted. Identification to species was made before using these guides.

Significance of record in this area or the state:

Second record of the species in the Zion area.

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

Description from notes taken at time of sighting X notes made later _____ from memory _____

Observer: Jerome L. Gifford

Signature: *Jerome L. Gifford*

Box 85

Address: Springdale, Utah 84767

Other observers who independently identified this bird:

Jewel A. Gifford, Springdale, Utah

Kirk Topham, Springdale, Utah

Date prepared: Nov. 21, 1985

Return this form to: Ella Sorensen
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