

# WV BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE REPORT FORM

Please Type or Print Legibly

Species:  Number: (leave blank)   
Location:  Date:  Time:   
Bird Seen:  To:  Age/Sex:

Description: In lieu of physical material substantiating a record (e.g., specimen, diagnostic photograph, vocal recordings) a complete written description can serve as verification for the biological record. Please be as thorough as your field notes allow. Do not feel constrained by the space provided. Additional supporting descriptions/illustrations may be attached.

Note that photographs or recordings WILL NOT BE RETURNED but become part of the permanent record for the observation.

Structure: (Overall size and shape plus details on the head, feet, tail, etc.)

A relatively small loon, smaller and slimmer than Common Loon, with a much smaller bill. The bill was slim and straight, held on a horizontal level. Its head was smooth and rounded, and appeared rather bulbous along the back of the head and nape.

Plumage: (e.g. markings, coloration, molt)

The bird had a dark grayish-brown crown and nape that were slightly paler than the back. Its cap extended to the level of the eye. The throat and foreneck were white and formed a straight and sharply demarcated border with the hind neck. There was faint brownish chin strap. The back was dark grayish with a scalloped pattern of white speckling. Finally, the flanks were dark to the waterline and lacked any white.

Description of any vocalizations, if heard:

N/A

Description of behavior:

The bird spent most of its time swimming on the water of the lake, but it occasionally dove, presumably hunting for fish.

Habitat: (General and Specific)

Alpine Lake is a high-elevation man-made lake that is mostly surrounded by trees, with some areas of open lawn.

Circumstances of observation: (Include details of distance to bird, optics employed, lighting in relation to observer and the bird)

The day was sunny and clear. When I first noticed the bird, it was about 75 to 100 yards away. I was on the narrow north end of the lake, facing south. The sun was behind the bird, causing some glare. However, I was still able to get good enough looks through my Zeiss Terra Ed 10x42 binoculars and Kowa TSN-661 spotting scope to make a positive identification. Because of the glare, I moved to the west shore of the lake, where the sun was to my right and no longer in my eyes, in order to get photographs. The attached photographs were digiscoped using my phone and were taken from the west shore of the narrow north end of the lake.

Previous experience with this species:

I have had previous experience with this species in California during the winter, when winter-plumaged adults and juvenile birds are relatively common along the coast.

Experiences with similarly appearing species which are eliminated by your description: (Please be specific)

Pacific Loon in juvenile plumage could be confused with winter-plumaged Red-throated Loon, which has a similar body size and shape, as well as a similar thin, straight bill. However, Red-throated Loon tends to hold its bill at an upward angle, not horizontal. In addition, it would have a less rounded head, which can sometimes seem slightly pointed at the rear of the crown. Its head would never appear as smooth and rounded as that of this bird. The face of Red-throated Loon has extensive white, with the white extending well above the eye. In addition, Red-throated Loon has a white neck on which the white extends almost to the hind neck, leaving a thin, dark strip along the back of the neck. Finally, Red-throated Loon would have obvious white flanks down to the waterline.

Other observers: (Names, Addresses, E-mail please)

If the others agree with your identification they can sign this form here. If they care to provide additional details they can submit their own report.

N/A

Additional observer signature:

Additional observer signature:

Additional observer signature:

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

When I first saw the bird, at first glance I thought it was a winter-plumaged Red-throated Loon. However, the longer I looked at it, I realized it was a juvenile Pacific Loon. I consulted the "National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America" to confirm the identification.

How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?

I observed the bird on November 12, 2023, wrote a hand-written first draft on November 13, 2023, and typed the final draft on November 18, 2023.

Name:

Address:

Date:

Signature:

Mail to: WV Bird Records Committee  
Attn: Wil Hershberger  
170 Stallion Ct.  
Hedgesville, WV 25427  
Or E-mail to:  
wilhershberger@mac.com







