

## WEST VIRGINIA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Number: WVBRC 2023-5 Species: Pacific Loon – Preston Co

**Vote (select only one)** \_X\_ For State List \_Hypothetical List \_Against \_Exotic

**Reasons voting FOR the record:** *(attach more pages if necessary)*

- CM1) Loons in non-breeding plumage can be difficult to tell apart. However, the photographs, although of poor quality, clearly depict a Pacific Loon. In addition, the description points out the field marks that identify this species and rules out other species of loon.
- CM2) The bird appears to be a juvenile Pacific Loon based on the photographic evidence provided. The neck, breast and back resemble a juvenile Pacific Loon as opposed to a juvenile Red-throated Loon, which would not show the barred back pattern and whitish throat or as much white on the breast. Bill is also horizontal as opposed to being tipped upward in Red-throated Loon.
- CM3) Description and pictures are accurate for this species.
- CM4) Decent photos show a distinctive “scaly back” pattern and hint of a “chin strap” that would separate this small billed, round headed loon from the only other consideration; Red-throated Loon. A juvenile Red-throated Loon would exhibit a dirty neck, no chin strap, speckling on the upperparts and in most cases have an upturned bill (but not always). This looks good for a juvenile Pacific Loon.
- CM5) Clear photographic evidence, details unique to the species apparent. Report was exhaustive, made by a highly experienced birder, with the bird in a plausible habitat. This bird is already on the review list.
- CM6) Detailed descriptions from a skilled observer with prior experience with the species. Observer provides thorough detailing of contrast with red-throated loon. Photographs, while not high quality, depict many key features.
- CM7) 1. Photographs:
  - a. Rounded head
  - b. Faint chinstrap
  - c. Scaly appearing feathers on back vs. spots
  - d. Beak does appear in images to be held more horizontally
2. Detailed description given by the submitter to support proper identification that looked at differences and similarities between Pacific and Red-throated possibilities.
3. Using the details provided along with the photographs, I researched the plausibility of this bird being a Red-throated Loon and concluded that this submission for a Pacific Loon will receive my approval.
4. The submitter's distinction as an avid birder with keen insights and knowledge.