

## IDENTIFICATION QUIZ



The low-slung neck and protruding feet of this flying bird are characteristic of loons, grebes and whistling-ducks, but the thick, bulky neck and bill shape clearly identify this bird as a loon. Although experienced seabird watchers may have little difficulty identifying flying loons, a single photograph like this one may present problems even to experts.

Most field guides stress differences in the face patterns of winter loons, but when you are looking at a flying bird it is best to look at the feet first. The

Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) has proportionally larger feet than Arctic (*G. arctica*) or Red-throated (*G. stellata*) loons. All loons have big feet, but only Common and Yellow-billed (*G. adamsii*) loons have feet that appear unusually massive and heavy.

An angled profile to the forehead is said to be characteristic of Common and Yellow-billed loons, but Arctic Loons occasionally show a similar head shape. The apparently angled forehead in this photograph is the protrusion of bone forming the upper margin of the eye socket, which appears when the head is angled away from the observer. It would not show up in profile.

Our bird has relatively well-proportioned feet and a fairly thin bill and is therefore either Arctic or Red-throated. Winter Arctics have more contrast between the hindneck and the foreneck, often looking darkest at the margin along the side of the neck, especially in adults. This gives Arctics a crisp, neat appearance. Most Arctics of the race *G. a. pacifica* also show a row of small brown spots across the throat forming a "chin-strap" in winter. This mark may be difficult to see in the field unless the bird is very close and in good light.

Field guides portray the winter Red-throated with more extensive white on the face and neck, but this is true only of adults which have just a narrow strip of gray down the back of the neck. Immature Red-throateds have considerable gray extending forward to the front of the neck, as seen here. This immature Red-throated Loon was photographed at Berkeley, California, in January 1973 by Albert Giorso.

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## **BULLETIN BOARD**

### **REQUEST FOR OBSERVATIONS OF GOSHAWKS AND WILLOW FLYCATCHERS**

The California Department of Fish and Game is undertaking studies of the Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) and the Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*) in California to document distribution, abundance, habitat requirements, and reproductive success. Please send any reports of recent sightings (within the past decade) of breeding Goshawks and Willow Flycatchers to Ronald W. Schlorff, California Department of Fish and Game, 1416 Ninth Street, Sacramento, CA 95814. Please include your name, address and phone number, along with the following: location of sighting (if possible, include township, range, section, 1/4 section, and ideally, a copy of a topographic map), date of observation, behavioral notes, and any other relevant information such as threats to habitat or evidence of flycatcher nest parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*). Goshawk nest locations will be kept confidential and will be made available only to those persons involved in legitimate research and management of the species. This information will assist State and Federal agencies in developing habitat protection and species management plans for these species of special concern.