

AZFO Field Expedition highlights - White Mountain Reservoirs

Novemeber 1-2 2008

Trip Report

At Lyman Lake State Park on Sunday morning, I observed an immature PRAIRIE WARBLER. Though several Expedition team members gave chase with cameras in hand, the little bugger was exceedingly uncooperative and disappeared before it could be captured on film (or memory cards, as it were). My attention was first captured by a series of unfamiliar chip notes emerging from the juniper at the end of the driveway for Cabin 1 (they were reminiscent of weird, wet, junco-like chips). When the bird popped up to perch on the top of the juniper, I was startled to see a bright yellow-fronted warbler with thick, dark alternating streaks in the flanks. The sides of the face were blue-gray with a hazy white patch around the eye - nothing defined like an eye-ring or an eyeline. No wing bars or white under the tail jumped out at me. I'm calling it an immature based on the facial pattern, but it struck me as odd that a young bird would have such strong streaking in the flanks. Maybe this bird has already gone through part of its body molt? I haven't researched this bird's plumage yet, so maybe I'll find the answers soon. The chip notes were a 100% match with the recording on Stokes Eastern, but I haven't yet compared it with other species (and I've forgotten most of the warbler chip notes I learned doing field work in Pennsylvania).

The other big news from Sunday was at Big Lake, which is at the end of Hwy 273 about 18 miles south of Hwy 260 (accessed west of Eagar). It began with 2 loons found by Narca Moore-Craig, which we studied carefully for a minute or two before concluding with certainty that they were Pacific Loons - an exciting find. Moments later, while Alan Craig and Adam Sabatine were enjoying the first loons, I noticed another loon flying over a different part of the lake. When it landed, it joined 4 other loons in a small raft - only one of which was a Common! After a bit of disbelief and much careful study, it became clear to us that there were 6 PACIFIC LOONS and one COMMON LOON on the lake. It's nice that the Common Loon was so obligingly sidled up next to the Pacifics for comparison, or I may have been inclined to disbelieve my own eyes!

That's it for Sunday's highlights from my team, a fuller summary to follow soon. I haven't heard back from other teams yet (I think we all got back late!), so there may be more highlights to follow before a complete summary can be made.

Happy waterfowling,
John Yerger
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