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Nebraska Ornithologists' Union

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GREATER SCAUP IN LANCASTER COUNTY

On October 20, 1990, Paul and Karla Kaufman spotted a Greater Scaup in Lancaster County. The following is a report from Paul Kaufman regarding this occurrence:

The bird was a male, first spotted off Lieber's Point at Branched Oak Lake. It was a cloudy day with fair light, light rain, and north winds 15 to 20 mph temperature 52° F. The sighting was in the early afternoon. We observed the Scaup with our 15-60 zoom spotting scope while looking for anything on the lake. After our initial sighting of it, it moved closer in to shore, which we felt was unusual. We were studying the bill shape trying to make out the large nail at the tip as we were already fairly convinced it was a Greater Scaup based on the head shape (profile with flatter forehead) and broad looking bill. As the bird neared shore, we became aware that the "nail" we were seeing on the end of the bill wasn't a nail at all. The tip of the Scaup's bill had been shot off, probably with a shotgun (it was during hunting season). The bird kept moving toward shore, and we kept watching it. At one point it raised its wings, revealing the white stripe on its secondaries, which extended well out into the primaries, which confirmed our identification of Greater Scaup.

The bird was alone and eventually came all the way up to shore. It weakly pulled itself out of the water and onto the bank. It preened for a short time, and we could see obviously bloody feathers on its breast and flanks. Before we left, it put its head over its back as if to roost. I do not believe it would have survived the night. We felt it was very sad that this beautiful bird had to die such an awful death.

---Paul Kaufman, 1101 No. 78th, Lincoln, NE 68505