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A RED PHALAROPE IN PIERCE COUNTY, NEBRASKA

The Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicaria*) is seen yearly in the central portion of the United States, from the Great Lakes to Texas. More than 85% of these sightings are from fall, with 75% of the total from September to November (Dinsmore et al., 1984). This species is, however, considered a very rare or accidental migrant through the Plains States (Johnsgard 1980). A single specimen, taken on 15 October 1921 at Dad's Lake, near Wood Lake in Cherry Co. (Conover 1934) represents the only previous record of this species in Nebraska. The following represents the first record for this species for Pierce Co., and the second record for Nebraska.

On the evening of 23 September 1985 we observed a Red Phalarope at the south side of Willow Creek Recreation Area, Pierce Co. We watched the bird for approximately 20 minutes at a distance of 20-100 feet, using 10x40 binoculars and 15-60x spotting scopes. The bird was easily approached as it foraged in a shallow inlet.

The bird was in the company of a Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) and differences between the two species were readily observed. Both individuals were in winter plumage. There was an apparent size difference between the two birds, with the Red Phalarope being the larger by approximately 2 inches. The Red Phalarope also had a lighter colored solid gray back and lacked the whitish streaks which were highly evident on the other species. Unlike the long needle-thin bill of the Red-necked, the larger bird presented a black, thick killdeer-type bill that appeared to nearly equal the diameter of the bird's head. Both birds exhibited a white face and breast and had a black patch extending from the back of the eye. The eye stripe of the Red Phalarope appeared thicker and angled more down from the eye, at an approximate 45 degrees, while the eye stripe of the Red-necked was thinner and ran more horizontally before curving down. Another noticeable characteristic between the two species was crown color. The Red Phalarope had a white forehead and crown, with black starting near the posterior two-thirds of the head, while the other bird showed white above the bill, with the crown being all black. The amount of black extending in from the sides of the breast was more evident in the Red Phalarope.

In flight both individuals exhibited white wing stripes. Call notes (a sharp "whit") were given from both birds, and although very similar, were separable to species. Both were actively feeding when we left at sundown. We returned the next afternoon to take photographs, but found no evidence of the Red Phalarope. Near sunset, a Red-necked Phalarope did return to the same inlet and offered Layne Johnson and us another chance to view this species.

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