

## Napa-Solano Audubon's Rare Bird Alert #6 - Yellow-billed Loon 1-28-2021

Greetings Napa Solano Audubon Members, Family & Friends:

**Location:** Periodically, we will send out Rare Birding Alerts of uncommon or rare species that have been seen in our area. Recently Lucas and I have observed a rare Yellow-billed Loon in 2 different locations. A Rare Bird Alert went out on January 14th for a Yellow-billed Loon discovered on a Bird Survey by Lynette Williams and Konshau Duman in an off limits area at the end of the road on Staten Island. Staten Island is a small island in the Delta located East of Rio Vista, South of Walnut Grove, North of Highway 12, between the North and South forks of the Mokelumne River. It is a Nature Conservancy Preserve established to protect Sandhill Cranes. Staten Island is also just South of the Consumnes River Preserve where NSAS's February 20th field trip is headed. It's almost crazy that this coastal bird would be found in this location, and is a 3rd eBird record for the Central Valley, but Delta birding in winter has many surprises! Fortunately, the Yellow-billed Loon can be accessed on weekends from a dike at the end of West Terminous Drive in the small town of Terminous. (The dike is closed during the week for a construction project.) For specific information on the location see our eBird Report found at: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S79428688> . Amazingly, the day after seeing this Yellow-billed Loon we were birding at Tomales State Park off Pierce Point Road in Point Reyes and Lucas spotted a second Yellow-billed Loon floating out in Tomales Bay at Indian Beach! The Loon has been seen many times since at both Heart's Desire and Indian Beaches in Tomales Bay State Park. This is approximately the 10th Marin County Record. Our eBird Report has more information and several distant photos located at: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S79522898> .

**Identification:** The Yellow-billed Loon nests in arctic tundra regions of North American and Eurasia. It is somewhat reasonable that the bird was found on the Mokelumne River as their preferred breeding grounds are inland lakes and slow moving rivers or on islands and shorelines North of the tree line. However, the 15-20 or so Bay Area sightings are almost entirely from Tomales or S.F. Bays or along the coast further North or South. For more information see Cornell's Birds of the World located at: <https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species/yebloo/cur/introduction> . The Yellow-billed Loon is very similar in size and structure with the Common Loon with a blocky head and large bill, but unlike the Common Loon, it's bill is dull yellow, and the light plumage on the face, head and neck along with significant speckling on the light brown back help to distinguish it during it's winter plumage. Although the loon we saw at Indian Beach was quite distant, the head structure, slightly upturned yellow bill, and pale face and neck coloration left no doubt. (The breeding plumage adult has a stunning bright yellow bill compared with the Common Loon's black bill!) Joseph Zeno, a friend of Lucas was able to take these photos at Indian Beach, when the loon was closer to shore!



