

# Louisiana Bird Records Committee

## Rare Bird Documentation

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*Species:* Red-necked Phalarope, *Phalaropus lobatus*

*Number of individuals:* 1

*Age and Sex:* Probable adult, unknown sex

*Date:* 9 October, 2014

*Location:* Denham Springs sewage treatment facility, Livingston Parish

*Other Observers:* JV Remsen, Paul van Els

*Original Observer:* JV Remsen

**Circumstances.** JVR originally found this bird the day before I observed it, on 8 October. However, due to environmental conditions as well as the bird's distance, he was unable to take acceptable documentary photographs, so he invited PVE and I along to try to refind the bird the next day. Conditions on 8 October were windy, with white caps on the ponds, but had settled down by the day of my observation.

We were able to quickly refind the continuing Phalarope swimming on the main northern pond of the sewage treatment facility. Although it was at the opposite end of the pond, we were able to study it through a telescope for a few minutes, confirming the identity. We then move around the pond closer to the bird's position. Here we spent 10-15 minutes studying the bird through our binoculars as well as the telescope and photographing the bird. After some time we approached too closely for its comfort and it flew out towards the middle of the pond. We then continued on a circuit of the facility.

**Description.** An obvious phalarope, mostly gray in color, with darker streaking on the back.

*Head:* The bird's crown was black, and extended down the back of the neck, connecting with the back. The bird also had a black mask, extending in a streak towards (but not reaching) the black back of the neck. This contrasted with the otherwise clean white face. The bill was medium length, black, needle-thin, and straight. The eye was dark.

*Body:* The upper parts and back were dark gray with distinctly black streaks. The chest, flanks, belly (seen in flight only), and neck were all clean white. In flight, the bird had the long necked look that I typically associate with the species. The feet, seen in flight, were dark.

*Wing:* The wings were rather long, extending past the tip of the tail, giving the bird an attenuated look on the water. In flight, the white stripe through the secondaries and inner primaries was obvious.

**Discussion.** To my eye this was an 'obvious' and 'classic' Red-necked Phalarope, a bird I am extremely familiar with. During my ten years of birding in California prior to moving to Louisiana, this was a common and expected fall bird on the coast and on pelagic trips, and I have probably seen 50,000+ individuals.

The other two species of Phalarope, Wilson's and Red, are the only two other potential confusion species. I was able to eliminate both easily.

Wilson's Phalarope: This species was eliminated by the dark plumage on the face and back, the dark legs, overall shape and structure, and behavior.

Red Phalarope: This species was eliminated by the bird's striped back, entirely dark, long, thin bill, and more extensive eye stripe. Additionally, the shape and structure of the bird (long and dainty) contrasted with the chunkier, more bulky structure I associate with Red Phalarope.





