

SECOND UNUSUAL RECORD OF COMMON LOON, *GAVIA IMMER*, FOR COAHUILA, MEXICO, AND ITS FIRST REPORT FOR THE CUATRO CIÉNEGAS BASIN

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ABSTRACT—The common loon (*Gavia immer*) has occasionally been reported inland in northern Mexico. The first record in Coahuila, Mexico, was collected at El Tulillo reservoir in November 1986. The present record is more unusual, because it was collected on 12 June 2003, a late date for any location at this latitude. Damage caused by shotgun pellets to the ventral surface of both wings apparently prevented flight. This represents the second record for the state of Coahuila and the first record for the Cuatro Ciénegas Valley.

RESUMEN—El somorgujo común (*Gavia immer*) está reportado como ocasional en tierras interiores del norte de México. El primer registro para el estado de Coahuila, México, fue colectado en la Presa El Tulillo en noviembre de 1986. El presente reporte es más inusual, dado que fue colectado el 12 de junio del 2003, demasiado tardío para cualquier área en esa latitud. El daño causado por los perdigones de escopeta a la parte ventral de ambas alas le impidió volar. Este representa el segundo registro para el estado de Coahuila, y el primero para el Valle de Cuatro Ciénegas.

The valley of Cuatro Ciénegas, Coahuila, Mexico, known worldwide for its endemic biota and as one of the most important protected natural areas in Mexico, continues to offer new avifaunal records as the study of faunal elements intensifies (Contreras-Balderas et al., 2004). To date, 155 species of birds have been documented in the region, 38% of which have been recorded during the last 15 y (e.g., Contreras-Balderas et al., 1997, 2004; González-Rojas et al., 1999).

During an ornithological survey in the valley of Cuatro Ciénegas on 12 June 2003, a common loon (*Gavia immer*; Fig. 1) was found swimming slowly near the edge of Laguna Playitas (26°54'36"N, 102°00'05"W; elevation 700 m above sea level), a large pond with a depth >2 m and a sandy and rocky bottom. The water was blue and clear. The individual was captured manually by the lead author (AJCB) and later transported to the laboratory for examination and preparation.

During the examination of the specimen, we found small injuries resulting from shotgun pellets on the ventral surface of both wings. This likely explains why we found this individual alive and alone in June. Food availability at the site

probably allowed the survival of the individual until this date. We do not attribute this record to a range expansion for the species, but it is unusual and late for a migrant species (Howell and Webb, 1995; AOU, 1998). Our specimen was a juvenile with first summer plumage. The voucher specimen was cataloged and deposited in the bird collection of the Facultad de Ciencias Biológicas, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (UANL-2441). The body measurements of this specimen and its comparison with other Pacific and common loons from northern Mexico are in Table 1.

The common loon has a mainly Nearctic distribution, with a breeding range between 48°N and the Arctic Circle. In some places, they are found south to about 40°N, and north to about 78°N. In the north Atlantic, common loons also breed in Greenland, Iceland, and possibly Scotland (Carboneras, 1992). Its winter distribution along the Pacific coast ranges from the Aleutian Islands to Baja California and Colima, Mexico; along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, it is found from Newfoundland south to southern Florida and west to Tamaulipas (AOU, 1998).



FIG. 1—Common loon (*Gavia immer*) prior to capture on 12 June 2003 at Laguna Playitas, Cuatro Ciénegas, Coahuila, Mexico. Photograph by Armando J. Contreras-Balderas.

Common loons exhibit a greater affinity for coastal environments (bays, lagoons, and estuaries), although they are occasionally found in inland waters (AOU, 1998). Inland records in Mexico are known for the states of Coahuila, Nuevo León, Hidalgo, Veracruz, and México (Howell and Webb, 1995). Considering the

almost 450-km linear distance between the Cuatro Ciénegas valley (Coahuila) and the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, as well as the absence of common loon records within this range, the specimen reported here possibly represents a wandering individual that accidentally arrived at the ponds of Cuatro Ciénegas.

TABLE 1—Body measurements (mm) of specimens of *Gavia immer* and *G. pacifica* from northwestern Mexico. TL = total length, WS = wingspan, W = weight, EC = exposed culmen, C-N = culmen to nostrile, NM = not measured.

Specimen	TL	WS	W (g)	Tarsus	EC	C-N
UANL-2441- <i>G. immer</i> (juvenile) Cuatro Ciénegas, Coahuila	692	1,196	1,671	78.10	69.62	54.77
UABC-1059- <i>G. immer</i> (juvenile) Arroyo San Vicente, San Vicente, Baja California	670	900	2,000	83.49	70.12	53.24
UABC-733- <i>G. pacifica</i> (female) Percebú, Gulf of California	630	690	1,900	73.39	58.20	43.95
UABC-1294- <i>G. pacifica</i> (breeding adult) Playitas, Bahía Todos Santos, Baja California	659	1,047	1,350	72.19	52.40	44.45
UABC-0120- <i>G. pacifica</i> (juvenile) La Salina, Ensenada, Baja California	510	NM	1,000	70.42	59.42	44.15

The common loon examined here constitutes the first record of this species in the Protected Natural Area of Cuatro Ciénegas Basin, and the second for the State of Coahuila. The first report of this species in Coahuila was by Garza De León (1987) in November 1986 at El Tulillo reservoir.

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