









Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

Number: One individual; could not determine if an adult or juvenile

Date: 21 December 2009

Time: 15:15 – 15:40

Location: Lake Muhlenberg, Allentown, Lehigh County, Pa.

Observer: Peter G. Saenger, Dept. of Biology, Muhlenberg College, 2400 Chew St., Allentown, Pa 18104-5586
psaenger@muhlenberg.edu

Other Observers: Matt Loyko (found the bird) and Mike Moser

Habitat: City park lake (4 acres)

Distance to bird: Average 200 feet (62 meters) using 8 x 40 binoculars.

Viewing conditions: Bird first viewed into late day sun to the southwest, then in better light as it swam east through the lake, offering better viewing and lighting when looking to southeast.

Notes: Matt and Mike came to my office and showed me the photograph of the bird and we went to see it immediately. The bird was easily relocated swimming in the lake with about 100 Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*). It was obviously smaller (one third to half smaller) and overall darker than the surrounding geese, with a pale horizontal stripe along side. As we approached the shore, the bird, along with about half the Canada Geese swam toward the far shore and then to the southeast, keeping their distance from us, but offering us much better lighting. Compared to the Canada Geese swimming along side, the bird presented a shorter body, shorter neck, more rounded, all dark brown head, with a small, shorter bill, that was dark with a pink center stripe or band. The bird was



grayish/brown on back, more brown on front and sides, with the feather margins on the back showing whitish edges, and vent area white. Legs were not seen due to it being in the water.

Previous experience with species:

Very limited; I have seen this bird in Europe and also on three different occasions when it was documented in Berks County, at Oley.

Going back to my office and compared what we saw with all the geese species in National Geographic Field Guide to Birds of North America (5th edition) and

also Birds of Europe, Lar Jonsson. Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*) and Bean Goose (*Anser fabalis*) were eliminated on size and shape, and bill coloration. Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*) eliminated by bill color, and also lack of white shield or in case of juvenile, pale eye-ring.

Photograph by Matt Loyko.

PENNSYLVANIA RARE BIRD REPORT FORM

SPECIES: Pink-footed Goose, *Anser brachyrhynchus*

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS: 1 **SEX:** Unknown

AGE AND PLUMAGE: Appeared to be an adult.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: 12/22/2009 **TIME:** 0730 – 0746

LOCATION: Dorney Pond. Located next to Dorney Park, 3830 Dorney Park Road, Allentown, PA 18104.

EXACT SITE: Dorney Pond lies off Haines Mill road in western Allentown. The pond is located on the north side of Dorney Park (large amusement park). Off of Haines Mill Road to the west there is a service road entering Dorney Park. The pond is on the left side of this service road prior to the park entrance gate. The eastern end of the Steel Force Roller Coaster is located just to the south of the pond.

OBSERVER REPORTING:

Name: Robert E. Hoopes

Address: 5043 Elmhurst Drive

City: Schnecksville, PA 18078

Email: rehoopes@hotmail.com

Phone: 610-799-2346

OTHER OBSERVERS: None

HABITAT: Pond

DISTANCE TO THE BIRD: Between 30 and 50 yards.

VIEWING CONDITIONS: Weather was clear. Early morning light. Sun coming up to the east but direct sunlight had not yet reached the pond or this bird.

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED: Swarovski SLC 10x50 binoculars. Swarovski ATS 80 HD Scope with 25x50 zoom.

DESCRIPTION: Bird was first observed with binoculars near the far side of the pond. This location is by the eastern end of the "Steel Force Roller Coaster" at Dorney Park. Bird was among numerous Canada Geese. Bird was observed for more than 10 minutes using a spotting scope with the zoom lens set at approximately 40 power. Bird was obviously smaller than the Canada Geese by about a third, its neck shorter and bill stubbier. It did not have the black neck and white chinstrap of a Canada Goose. Its bill had black at the tip and at the base. The center section of the bill was pinkish orange, without a definite transition to the black at the tip and base of the bill. There was a little bit of white at the base of the bill. The body was light brown with lighter stripes

(barring). The back was darker than the body, with similar barring pattern. The head was darker than the neck. The neck showed a fine streaking pattern. When the bird raised up and flapped its wings, before settling back down in the water, clear gray showed on its lower back. The legs/feet were not observed.

BEHAVIOR: Bird was swimming slowly to the left and then to the right among the Canada Geese, moving steadily closer to me with each pass. At one point while moving to the left, the bird stopped, raised up, spread its wings and flapped them three to four times providing a clear view of its back and rump. At 0746 the bird took off with several Canada Geese and flew to the west, leaving the Dorney Pond area. Because I was observing the bird in the scope just as it took off, I was not able to observe the bird well after taking flight. By the time I switched over to binoculars, the bird was obscured by low hanging branches of a tree.

VOCALIZATIONS: None

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE: None

IF THIS IS A DEAD BIRD: N/A

SEPARATION FROM SIMILAR SPECIES: Did not have the white face band of the White-fronted Goose. Bill stubbier than the White-fronted Goose. Bill coloration was not the pink or orange that covers most of the bill of the White-fronted Goose.

DISCUSSION: N/A

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND/OR SIMILAR SPECIES: No previous experience with the Pink-footed Goose. Have observed the Greater White-fronted Goose on several occasions. Lots of experience with Canada Goose.

ARE YOU POSITIVE OF YOUR IDENTIFICATION: Yes. On the evening of 12/21/09, when the bird was first reported to me in person by Matt Loyko, I planned to visit the reported location, Lake Muhlenberg, on my way into work the next morning. I live 10 miles northwest of Allentown, PA and work in downtown Allentown. Lake Muhlenberg is about five blocks from my normal route. I studied both the Pink-footed Goose and the Greater White-fronted Goose in the National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America. I knew the two were similar in appearance and wanted to be sure of what to look for if I located the bird the next morning.

The morning of 12/22/09 I first scanned Lake Muhlenberg twice and did not locate the bird. On a hunch I decided to check Dorney Pond, which is about a mile to the west of Lake Muhlenberg. Dorney Pond is usually open water most of the winter and is frequented by migrating ducks. After locating the bird at Dorney Pond, I observed it in the spotting scope at about 40 power. I concentrated on the bill area, noting the small amount of white at the base of the bill was different from the white facial band on the White-fronted Goose. I also closely noted the coloration of the bill, black at the tip,

pinkish orange in the middle, and black at the base. This pattern is different from the White-fronted Goose's bill pattern.

REFERENCES CONSULTED: National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America, Third Edition, 1999.

DATE OF THIS REPORT: 12/25/2009

SIGNATURE OF OBSERVER: Robert E. Hoopes (via email)

PENNSYLVANIA RARE BIRD REPORT FORM

SPECIES: Pink-footed Goose, *Anser brachyrhynchus*

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS: 1 **SEX:** Unknown

AGE AND PLUMAGE: undetermined

DATE OF OBSERVATION: 12/21/2009 **TIME:** 1500-1540

LOCATION: Lake Muhlenberg, Located behind Muhlenberg College.

EXACT SITE: A small body of water located behind Muhlenberg College. Lake Muhlenberg is located on Parkway Blvd in Allentown.

OBSERVER REPORTING:

Name: Matt Loyko

Address: 5130 McKinley Ave

City: Whitehall, PA 18052

Email: phillies0810@yahoo.com Phone: 610-262-6867

OTHER OBSERVERS: Mike Moser, Peter G Saenger

HABITAT: Small Lake located in a city park.

DISTANCE TO THE BIRD: About 200 feet

VIEWING CONDITIONS: Partly cloudy, with late day sun. Sun was a little bit behind and to the right of the bird.

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED: Vortex Diamondback 8x40.

DESCRIPTION: Smaller goose than the surrounding Canada's. Brown head, light brown scaly pattern on the back, like that of geese. Horizontal white line on the side. Bill was black at the base with pink towards the front and was tipped with a little black. Feet were not visible.

BEHAVIOR: The bird was swimming with the flock of about 100 Canada Geese. As we approached the shore the bird came away from us along with the Canada's. It was wary of humans.

VOCALIZATIONS: None

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE: None

IF THIS IS A DEAD BIRD: N/A

SEPARATION FROM SIMILAR SPECIES: The bird showed no white facial markings of White-fronted goose. Also the bill was not right for White-fronted goose.

DISCUSSION: N/A

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND/OR SIMILAR SPECIES: No previous experience with either White-fronted goose or Pink-footed goose.

ARE YOU POSITIVE OF YOUR IDENTIFICATION: Yes. When I first found the bird I was scanning for Cackling Geese in among the Canada Geese. I came upon the Pink-footed and immediately noted the difference; I then handed my binoculars to Mike Moser and told him to keep an eye on the bird as I got my camera. I took pictures and contacted Peter Saenger at Muhlenberg College and told him I had some shots I wanted him to see. We arrived at his office about 3 minutes later and he noted we had something special. He said he thought Pink-footed Goose and Dr. Klem of Muhlenberg also agreed. The three of us, Mike Peter and I, went back down to the lake to study the bird some more. After carefully observing the bird and taking more pictures, we came to the conclusion our ID was correct. The ID was also confirmed by birders who got to see it the next day.

REFERENCES CONSULTED: National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America, Fifth Edition. Birds of Europe, Lars Jonsson.

DATE OF THIS REPORT: 12/29/2009

SIGNATURE OF OBSERVER: Matthew Loyko

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Pink-footed Goose Anser brachyrhynchus

Date of Sighting: 21 December 2009 to 22 December 2009

County : LEHIGH

Location : LAKE MUHLENBERG

Observer(s): Matt Loyko, Peter Saenger, Robert Hoopes

Date of Submission: 2009

Submitted by: Matt Loyko, Peter Saenger, Robert Hoopes

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
R. Wiltraut	X							
A. Guarente	X							
T. Johnson	X							
B. Coulter	X							
C. Rutt	X							
J. Heller	X							
G. Malosh	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary) Nick Pulcinella

Date: 6/6/10