





PENNSYLVANIA RARE BIRD REPORT FORM

This form is presented as a convenience and guide. It can be used if desired, but is not necessary for submitting a report. Species requiring documentation are those on the Review list or not on the Official List of Birds in Pennsylvania. Send documentation to:

Nick Pulcinella, Secretary
Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee
613 Howard Ave.
West Chester, PA 19380
nickpul@bellatlantic.net

SPECIES (Common and Scientific Name): Greater White-fronted Goose, *Anser albifrons*

Subspecies: *flavirostris*

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS: 2 **SEX(ES):** likely a male/female pair from their behavior

AGES(S) AND PLUMAGE(S) (e.g., immature; adult in breeding plumage; year for gulls; basic or alternate if you prefer those terms; state of molt if applicable):
Both are adults

DATE OF OBSERVATION: 1 March 2004 **TIME:** 4:00 PM to 5:10 PM

LOCATION (city, borough, township): Farm pond in Conemaugh Township just east of Saltsburg, Indiana County and along the bank of the Conemaugh River in Loyalhanna Township, Westmoreland County

EXACT SITE (e.g., name of park, lake, road): see preceding description

OBSERVER REPORTING:

Name: Mark A. McConaughy
Address: 3787K Logans Ferry Road
City: Pittsburgh State: PA Zip: 15239-3910
Email (optional): TimeTraveler@msn.com
Telephone (optional): 724-527-5585 (work/day); 724-733-5299 (home)

OTHER OBSERVERS (only those who saw and identified the bird with you):
Walt and Dana Shaffer, Scott Kinsey and Marcy Cunkleman while I was there; Dennis Lauffer (who called me to tell me the birds were there, but wasn't present at the same time as I); also Mary Ann and David Dunmire who own the farm pond and first identified

the Greater White Fronted Geese; Margaret Higbee who was notified by the Dunmires and who posted about it on PABIRDS.

HABITAT (e.g., mowed field, woodland edge, any other details):
Farm Pond and the Conemaugh River

DISTANCE TO BIRD: Viewed in flight over the pond as they were flying down to the Conemaugh River at 500 yards and at approximately 75 yards across the Conemaugh River where I was able to take the accompanying photographs.

VIEWING CONDITIONS (sky, weather, position of sun relative to you):
Partly cloudy, warm day with the sun well above and behind the farm pond as it was viewed and behind us as we were viewing the geese in the Conemaugh River (which was largely in muted light due to the river bluffs.

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED: Leica 10x42 binoculars and a Kowa scope brought by Scott Kinsey (I didn't have my own scope with me since I just came from work).

DESCRIPTION (Include as much detail as you observed – size relative to other species Present; “jizz”= e.g. posture, body shape, and proportions; colors and patterns of plumage; bill, eye, and leg characteristics; other features relevant to this individual):
The Greater White-fronted Geese were both at least a head smaller than the Canada Geese from the flock they were staying with at the time. They also were larger than the American Black Ducks and Mallards that were present. The head, neck, mantle, wings, breast, belly and tail of these two specimens were largely a brownish to slaty gray color, with the wings and tail slightly darker than the rest of the bird. There was a strong dark gray to black barring of the chest and belly. The undertail coverts were white. There was a white terminal band on the tail and a white upper tail coverts that were noticeable when the birds were in flight (and slightly noticeable in the side view photo included with this report). The bill was an orangish-color and there was a noticeable white front facial area around the bill with a darker gray line around the white frontal area. Both birds also displayed a white flank line just under the wings while walking around on land or in the pond and river. The feet were a bright orange color.

BEHAVIOR (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing):
The two birds behaved like a mated pair. They rarely got more than 3 yards apart and tried to stay close to one another all of the time. If one would walk down to the edge of the river, the other followed, etc. Both were observed swimming in the Conemaugh and then walking along the Westmoreland County side bank of the river, occasionally stopping to take a drink of water from the river.

VOCALIZATIONS: I did not hear them calling while I was there.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE, IF ANY:

Photograph Video recording Audio recording Drawing

Photographer/recorder/illustrator:

Name: Mark A. McConaughy

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IF THIS IS A DEAD BIRD:

General condition: _____

If collected (by permit), location and number of specimen if known:

SEPARATION FROM SIMILAR SPECIES (how you eliminated others):

No other expected wild goose has the white frontal area seen in these geese. The white areas on the faces of Canada Geese (which were present for comparison), blue-phase Snow Geese and Barnacle Geese are all located in different areas of the face or cover a much larger area of the face of the birds than what was seen in these two specimens. The closest goose to these two is the domestic Graylag Goose. They were separated from the Graylag Goose by a generally darker brownish to slaty gray color of the birds versus the more muddy gray color of the Graylag, the slaty-colored belly with dark black barring which is usually lacking on the Graylag and the Graylag has a deep, white belly not seen on these birds, and the orange legs versus more yellowish legs seen on Graylags. Other bird species with white facial shields around their beaks can be eliminated because these were clearly geese and the others are not (e.g. Great Cormorant, White-faced Ibis, etc., with a decidedly different type of bills and body forms than the orange goose bills on these two specimens). As for assignment to the Greenland (*flavirostris*) subspecies of Greater White-fronted Goose, this was based on the orangish-colored bill and relatively dark body of these two specimens. The tundra form tends to be much paler than the two birds seen here. The taiga (*elgasi*) subspecies has a more pinkish bill. The well-developed white frontal area around the bills indicate both birds are adults and not immatures, which would not have such pronounced white frontal areas.

DISCUSSION – Anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:

I recently saw a Graylag Goose that was flying around with some Canada Geese at nearby Beaver Run Reservoir and reported about it on PABIRDS Listserv (and took some blurry photos that I had up on my web site for a couple of weeks). These two specimens were not the same type of goose.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND/OR SIMILAR SPECIES:

I have seen Greater White-fronted Geese in southeastern Pennsylvania when I lived in Harrisburg and I also saw one in Juniata County. I've also seen domestic Graylag Geese before and feel confident I can separate the two species.

ARE YOU POSITIVE OF YOUR IDENTIFICATION? (why or why not):

Yes, they are not domestic Graylag Geese, and none of the other expected wild forms really match these two specimens.

REFERENCES CONSULTED:

During observation: None

After observation: *The Sibley Guide to Birds, National Geographic Field Guide to Birds of North America* Third Edition.

DATE OF THIS REPORT: 2 March 2004

SIGNATURE OF OBSERVER: _____

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Greater White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons)

Date of Sighting: 29 February 2004 to 1 March 2004
 Location: CONEMAUGH TWP/LOYALHANNA TWP
 County : INDIANA/WESTMORELAND
 Observer(s): Mark McConaughy et al.

Date of Submission: 2004
 Submitted by: Mark McConaughy

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	Abstain
R. Wiltraut	X							
D. Heathcote	X							
P. Guris	X							
J. Stanley	X							
E. Witmer	X							
R. Leberman	X							
M. Sharp	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

02/26/05