

PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE
210 Welcome Ave. Norwood, PA 19074

12 February 2002

Scott Bastian
172 Bethany Road
Somerset, PA 15501

Dear Scott,

Thank you for submitting documentation on two reports from Somerset County: the Ross's Goose at Indian Lake on 26 November 1999 and the Sandhill Cranes observed by Dan Jenkins on 2 April 1998. After careful review, the Committee regrets that it has voted not to accept these records.

Ross's Goose: The vote was one member for and six against acceptance. Those who did not favor accepting the identification categorized it as "a record for which there exists a majority of evidence in support of the observer's identification; the record is probably correct, but not beyond reasonable doubt."

The committee felt in general that details diagnostic of the species may not have been possible to see because of the distance and weather conditions. As Ross's Goose continues its swift population growth, hybrid Snow x Ross's geese are becoming increasingly common, and the Committee believes that Ross's needs to be separated from these hybrids as well as from Snow Goose more conclusively than the observation allowed.

Sandhill Cranes: Members' opinions were divided, and the record went for two rounds of balloting (which is partly why a decision was delayed so long). Ultimately the vote was one in favor of acceptance and six not in favor.

Those who voted against accepting the record expressed concern that the three brief details, "red on top of head," "bustle tail," and "different look entirely than a Great Blue Heron" were not sufficient for a diagnostic identification, considering that a basic gray color was not described.

Non-acceptance does not mean the Committee believes these were not correctly identified, but rather that the details did not support the identification conclusively. We hope that this will not discourage you from submitting reports on any future rarities.

Sincerely,



For the Committee:
Paul Hess, Chairman

Record # 112-03-1999 (Ross's Goose), 248-01-1998 (Sandhill Cranes)

112-09-1999

ROSS'S GOOSE – Somerset County

On 11/26/99 I observed what I believe was a Ross's Goose at Indian Lake in Somerset County, PA. I was scanning through a flock of ~200 Tundra Swans when I found a bird that at first I thought would be a Snow Goose. I watched the bird for about 40 minutes [0810 – 0850 AM] until it flew (alone) from the lake. An unseen (but heard) flock of Canada Geese flew over which caused the lone white goose to rise. It was raining the whole time during the observation, so I had positioned my truck in order to scope the lake from inside the vehicle. Distance varied approximately 200 – 250 yards (?) away from me and I was observing with a Bushnell Spacemaster scope w/ 45x zoom.

General size impression was that it was distinctively smaller the swans that it was with – unfortunately no peers were with it. The bird was immediately recognizable as either a Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*) or a Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*). Black primaries were evident at rest and in flight. I saw a cue ball head that seemed rounded with a *forehead* evident. By this I mean that the bill did not seem to blend evenly into the top of the head (see accompanying drawings – one of which I made while observing the bird). The one prior experience I have with Ross's Goose was with a bird that I & many observed this March ('99) that stayed for ~ 1 week + in Butler/Allegheny counties. With that bird I had ample opportunity to observe the head characteristics of a Ross's that separate the two species. With the bird in question, I never observed the warty bill base of a Ross's (not close enough) and did not discern the grin patch of a Snow (but light and distance were borderline for that feature). The neck seemed short for a Snow Goose and the bill appeared stubby (short). What I studied most was the distinct separation of bill and head: the head had a stubby bill stuck on the front . . . *not* a head that 'flowed into' a bill. Snow Geese strike me as having a prominent bill that is confluent/coexists with the head. The bird vocalized as it lifted, but with all the squawking going on from the geese and the swans, I can only offer that it was distinct from those two groups.

No one else observed this bird (probably the worst curse on a lucky find). I called Jeff and Laurretta Payne shortly after I found it, but it had flown prior to Jeff's arrival. The weather patterns for the area during this day and the last produced fallout of numerous duck species (Oldsquaw, Scoters, etc...).

There has been a tremendous increase in Ross's Goose & Snow Goose numbers in the US lately. There also has been talk about intergrades, which would be a possibility in this case. In spite of the lack of some field marks, I think my sighting is consistent with Ross's Goose.

Duly submitted,



Scott F. Bastian

112-02-1999

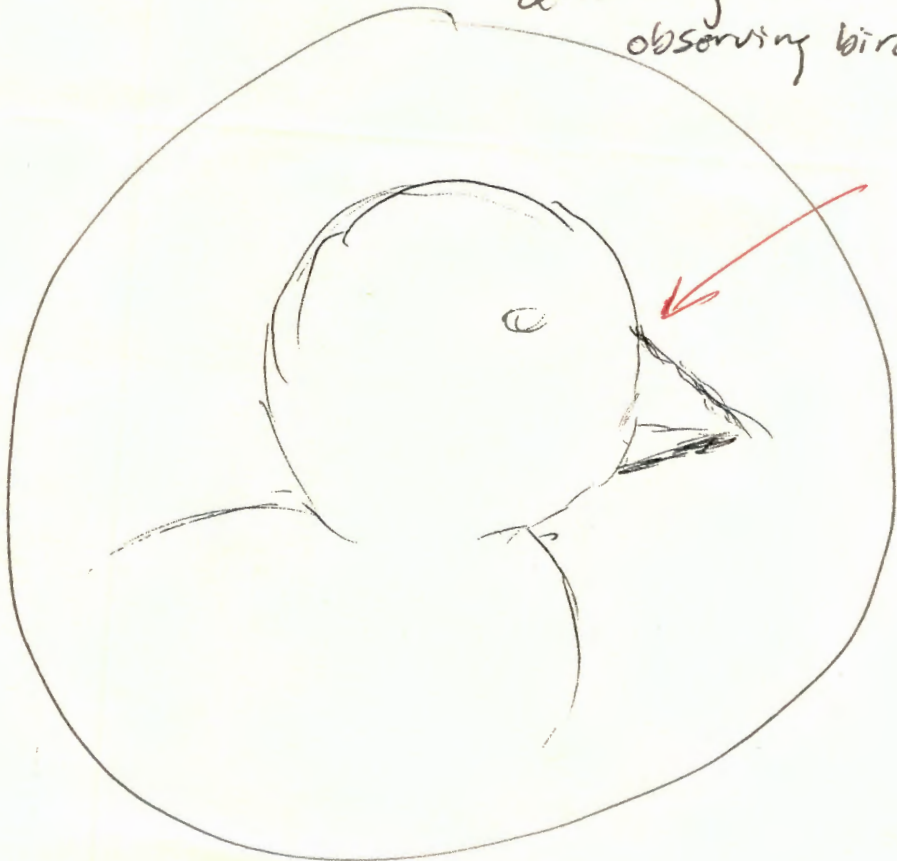
ROSS'S GOOSE

11/26/99

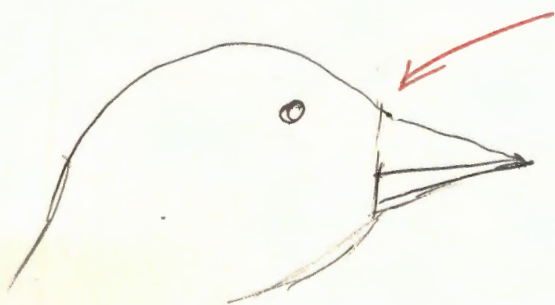
Somerset Cnty,

Scott P. Bustin

copy of original
drawing while
observing bird



"fore head"
w/ more
acute angle
at juncture



my idea of
a snow's bill -
"flows" w/
obtuse angle

112-08-1999



Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Ballot - Round One

Species: Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Date of Sighting: 26 November 1999 to 26 November 1999

Location: SOMERSET

County: INDIAN LAKE

Observer(s): Scott Bastian

Date of Submission: 1999

Submitted by: Scott Bastian

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

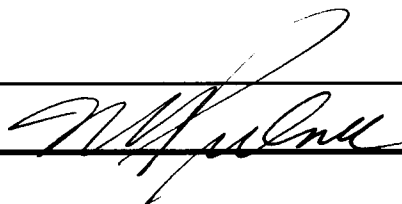
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead				X				
D. Couchman			X					
P. Hess				X				
R. Ickes				X				
M. Sharp				X				
B. Reid				X				
P. Rodewald					X			
TOTALS			1	5	1			
DECISION				X				

Comments: 1/6

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 3/12/01