

PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE
2469 Hammertown Road
Narvon, PA 17555

September 23, 1997

Mark McConaughy
5373A Manayunk Road
Harrisburg, PA 17109-6332

Dear Mark,

Thank you for submitting documentation on the Barnacle Goose you saw at Middlecreek WMA on 2 March 1996 to P.O.R.C. After careful review and much discussion, we regret that we are unable to accept this record. The identification of the Barnacle Goose is not in question but the "wild origin" of the bird is suspect. Barnacle Geese are popular in many waterfowl collections and escapes are inevitable. The possibility of an escaped individual joining a wild migrant flock is not out of the question. However, some committee members feel that some of the Barnacle Geese reports are probably of true wild birds that have strayed to North America. Thus there is the dilemma, how can a particular Barnacle Goose be proven one way or the other to be a wild bird. P.O.R.C. feels it is better to err on the side of caution and not accept a record of a Barnacle Goose unless it can be proven without a doubt, preferably by means of a leg band or neck collar, that the bird is of a "wild origin"

We hope that this does not discourage you from submitting documentation on any rare birds you find in the future. Please be encouraged to send as much detail as possible when submitting a report.

Sincerely,

Nick Pulcinella
Chairman

Record # 115-01-1996

115-01-1896

3 March 1996

Nick Pulcinella
Apt. 6, 201 Elm Street
Swathmore, PA 19081

Dear Nick,

I am providing a written description and a drawing of a Barnacle Goose that I saw at Middle Creek, PA on 2 March 1996. I was not the original discoverer of the goose. I saw a note posted in the Visitor Center that one had been spotted off Willow Point and went out to see if I could find it. If the original discoverer sends in a description, this letter will provide support.

I went out to Willow Point on the Willow Point Trail at about 11:45 am to see if I could find the Barnacle Goose. Two other people with scopes were also there trying to find it when I arrived. There were probably 30,000+ Snow Geese on the lake with 1000's more arriving all the time. It was a cloudy day with a light haze. Lighting was flat with few shadows. I joined the other two people scanning the geese for the Barnacle Goose. One of the other people spotted it out among some Snow Geese in the eastern portion of the Lake. I picked it up in my scope around 12 noon, and it definitely was different from the Blue-phase Snow Geese nearby. The bird was far out on the lake and basically a scope bird. I viewed it at about 35x with my 15-60x zoom Mead Pathfinder scope. It was too far away for any type of photograph (at least with my equipment). I have provided a profile and head-on drawing of what I saw to supplement the following description. I only saw the Barnacle Goose swimming in the water. I did not observe it in flight. I observed the bird for about 45 minutes. I left Willow Point around 12:45 pm.

The bird was smaller than the Snow Geese, by about a quarter head. The solid dark "hood" over the head was noticeable and very different from that of the Blue-phase Snow Geese's white heads and streaky necks. The beak of the Barnacle Goose was also dark. The white "mask" around the eye seemed to be divided, though. There was white above the eye and a decided cheek patch. The dark line from the bill to the eye seemed to go through the eye back to the "hood." That might have been an optical illusion due to the distance, but it might also be a variation that could mark this bird. There was a noticeable whitish or light notch running from the belly to up in front of the wing. It really marked this bird when it was swimming straight toward me. I could see two white "commas" on each side of the body when it was swimming toward me. The upper body was more brownish-gray or a lighter gray than the darker gray backs of the Blue-phase Snow Geese (more like the back of a Canada Goose shade of color). The Barnacle Goose did not have a neck band and did not appear to have wing clips (but I never saw the wings unfolded). That was all I could see of the bird.

115-01-1996

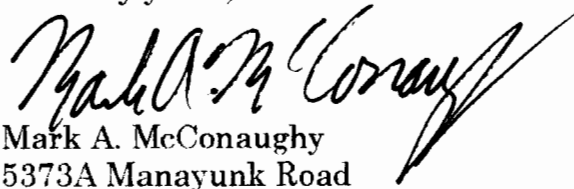
I also saw a Brant at West Fairview, PA (Harrisburg, on the Susquehanna River) in November (it was first reported to me in October). It wasn't listed on the PA check list I have as a bird needing special description for confirmation. Thus, I did not think I needed to submit a report to you at the time. However, I saw that you did make a ruling about one in an issue of Pennsylvania Birds for June 1995. Thus, I will submit a description and photos of that bird for your committee.

by me.

The Brant was observed on 5, 11, 12, and 19 November 1995 from the West Fairview Boat Ramp. It was coming in with some Canada Geese for feed provided by people living their (there is a man who lives at the corner house who regularly feeds the water fowl with corn and other meal). Don, the man who feeds the waterfowl, notified me that he had seen a Brant coming in for food with the Canada Geese in late October. I finally saw the bird on 5 November when I took the photos that accompany this report. The Brant was the size of a Mallard and was quite a bit smaller than the accompanying Canada Geese. I suspect it was a first year bird. The wedge on the front of the neck was not very distinct, but was present. The breast, neck and head of the bird were completely black. Its back was a brownish-gray. The bird was observed by numerous people over this period.

Please let me know if you require other information about either of these birds. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,



Mark A. McConaughy
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(717) 540-9165 (answering machine and I always let it answer to screen my calls).

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or

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mmcconau@sparky.cmic.state.pa.us

PROFILE VIEW

115-01-1996

IT SEEMED AS IF THE
WHITE ABOVE
THE EYE WAS
SEPARATE FROM
THE WHITE BELOW
THE EYE.

WINGS ON
BACK
LIGHT - WOULD TO
PICK UP
AT THIS DISTANCE.



NOTICEABLE
"WHITE
NOTCH"
IN FRONT
OF WING.

WHITE
FACE
MASK



HEAD ON

"NOTCHES"
NOTICEABLE
IN HEAD ON
VIEW, TOO.

BARNACLE
GOOSE
SEEN AT
MIDDLE CREEK, PA
3/2/96
BY
MARK A. MCCONNELL
+
OBSERVED FROM
~ 12 NOON TO 12⁴⁵ PM.

THIS BIRD WAS
SLIGHTLY SMALLER
THAN THE SNOW
GESE. IT WAS
SWIMMING ALONG
BY ABOUT 1/4 HEAD.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: **Barnacle Goose (Branta leucopsis)**

Date of Sighting: **2 March 1996 to 2 March 1996**

Location: **MIDDLECREEK WMA**

County: **LANCASTER**

Observer(s): **Mike McConaughy**

Date of Submission: **1996**

Submitted by: **Mike McConaughy**

Written Description: **YES** Photo: **NO** Specimen: **NO**

Recording: **NONE**

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas			X					
N. Pulcinella					X			
E. Kwater			X					
R. Ickes					X			
G. McWilliams					X			
P. Schwalbe			X					
S. Feldstein					X			
TOTALS			3		4			
DECISION					X			

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

F. C. Haas

Date:

2-22-97