

John Fedak  
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Thursday, October 28, 2004

There was no real question on the identification of this bird, as you said in the write up the only question concerns the provenance of the individual. Your added note that the bird lists at \$700 on at least 1 dealers website was a useful bit of information, however I am not sure that you could not get eggs or cygnets for less. Still I agree that the species seems to be a rare and valuable one on the exotic waterfowl market and that is a point in favor of natural vagrancy. I think a more thorough survey of local collections would be necessary before coming to any conclusion on this point before making, with any confidence, statements regarding the status of the species in collections. Three committee members did feel that the possibility of a natural vagrant was high enough to vote to place the bird on the provisional state list, however 4 members voted not to accept to that list since the possibility of an escape from captivity could not be ruled out.

I do want to thank you for taking the time for submitting documentation. Sorting out natural from feral waterfowl is of course difficult enough but the easiest way to approach the problem is to add documentation to the permanent record so future interested people will have information to use in looking for patterns of occurrence. By the way the 2003-2004 winter issue of North American Birds has an article on Whooper Swans in North America. I have an extra copy and you are welcome to if you are interested.

Sincerely

Matt Sharp  
Chair: Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee.

104-01-2002

## Whooper Swan

Galeton, Potter County 4/22/02

Temp 37 degrees f

Wind 5 to 10 mph from the west-northwest

Precipitation Snow flurries/sleet/freezing Rain

I drove to the lake in Galeton today after school. The time I arrived was about 5:00pm I left at about 6:00pm. The Whooper Swan was present during the whole time period along with the following:

## Whooper Swan

Observed through Leica 8 x 42 and Kowa TSN2 scope

Distance as close as 35 to 40 yards

Behavior - The bird was very skittish of me. There were no other people around. Even when I tried to slowly move in a direction diagonal to the bird to get closer, the bird swam away and vocalized. It kept me in sight at all times until the last 15 minutes when it started to dip its head and neck to feed.

Pictures - My batteries died in the digital camera from the time I left for work, to when I arrived in Galeton. I did go up to the local gas station and purchased a throw away camera. I tried to take some photos through the scope, but am doubtful as to their usefulness.

Description - It is a large white swan. It seems very close in size to a Trumpeter Swan, and bigger than a Tundra Swan. The legs were black, but I never actually saw the feet. There were no bands present on either leg, I saw both fairly well as it fed and as it swam away from me, but it never lifted its feet. Neck was rather long, but not curved like in a Mute Swan. The bill sloped straight off the forehead and was large looking. It appeared mostly yellow. The tip of the bill was black. The yellow extended past the nostrils on the upper mandible, but as the yellow rounded to the top, it went behind the nostrils. The yellow extended from the bill in a narrow line to the eye and the eye appeared to be rimmed with yellow. The iris of the eye was dark. The lower mandible also had a little yellow near the base and the yellow extended on the middle section of the very bottom of the bill (seen as it was feeding). I also noticed that unlike the pictures in the National Geographic Guide or in Madge and Burn's Waterfowl, the black on the upper mandible along the lip extended back and formed a seeming 'smile'. The plumage was in order and none seemed missing. The bird stretched its wings once when I was there and flapped. No feathers appeared to be missing and I observed no wing tags. This happened when I wasn't looking through the bins or scope though. The bird did seem to have a mark (a small dot) on its left jaw, about the size of a dime. I couldn't tell whether it was an injury or whether there were feathers missing, or whether it was dirt or vegetation.

Similar Species elimination - Too large for a Tundra Swan. Bill, neck and tail were larger and bill was not all black with a yellow cere. Bill was wrong color and shape for a Mute Swan and the neck and body also appeared different. Bill was not colored like a Bewick's Swan and the bird was larger than the Bewick's descriptions. Bill was wrong color to be a Trumpeter Swan, although the size and shape could have been close.

Vagrant or escapee - I don't know. The bird appeared very leery of me. More leery than the Pink-footed Goose at Lake Ontalonnee was. There were no obvious marks or tags or bands. Madge and Burn do mention that Whooper Swan has been recorded as a vagrant in New England. eNature states that outside of Alaska, the species is usually considered an escaped captive. Howell's Exotic Waterfowl lists a single

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Whooper Swan at \$700. I can not see spending that much money and letting the bird escape unbanded and unmarked. I guess I feel that if it is not proven otherwise, the bird could be wild and vagrant. After all, how many Mallards are 'real'? Also, we have seen other birds from Asia and Europe make their way here, why not Whooper Swan, they are strong flyers?

I think I will let PORC decide. Either way, the bird is worth the trip if it sticks around. It is beautiful. Thanks Gary Witmer et al for spreading the word!

Good Birding,  
John Fedak  
McKean County

## Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

### Tabulation Form - Round One

Species: Whooper Swan ( *Cygnus cygnus* )

Date of Sighting: 22 April 2002 to 22 April 2002

Location: GALETON

County: POTTER

Observer(s): John Fedak

Date of Submission: 2002

Submitted by: John Fedak

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

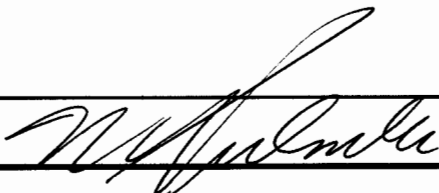
Specimen: No

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. Heathcote			X					
P. Hess							X	
J. Stanley			X					
E. Witmer							X	
R. Leberman			X					
M. Sharp							X	
TOTALS			3				4	
DECISION							X	

Comments: 3/4

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 1/8/03