

017-01-1985

4 Beaver Branch Road, Box 364
Pa. Furnace, PA 16865
November 18, 1985

Mr. Dan Brauning
Academy of Natural Science
19th and Parkway
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Dear Dan:

I appreciated the chance to talk with you this morning about the Northern Fulmar that my wife and I observed on Saturday, November 16, 1985, prior to the Penn State/Notre Dame football game.

Both my wife and I recognized the bird as a Northern Fulmar; realizing that this would be an extremely rare bird in Pennsylvania, we were very cautious as to how we handled the sighting. We tried to avoid discussing the sighting during the game, and as soon as we arrived home after the game, we jotted down our observations independently. Copies of these notes, as well as a drawing, are enclosed. Neither of us consulted a field guide before writing notes or before I made the drawing; as a matter of fact, we still have not consulted any field guide. It is unfortunate that we were not able to get photographs of the bird, but we have not ruled out the possibility that game films exist that might have a shot of the bird. We are continuing to investigate this possibility and will let you know what we find out.

We have discussed this sighting with a meteorologist who is a member of our bird club, who indicated that there were easterly winds for the previous 18-24 hours, with freezing rain and snow in northern New Jersey/southern New York and extending throughout the northeastern quarter of Pennsylvania. Measurable snow fell in the New Jersey and New York areas. We feel that these weather conditions, combined with the ridge and valley topography in our area, might explain the occurrence of such a rarity in central Pennsylvania.

As I indicated on my field notes, we have a good deal of experience with fulmars, having seen numerous birds on pelagic trips off both the east and west coasts.

Mr. Dan Brauning
Page 2
November 18, 1985

We realize that this is an extremely unusual sighting for Pennsylvania and are aware that confirmation of the sighting without a photograph is unlikely. We are 100 percent certain of our sighting, however, and because of this we feel that it is important that information such as this be made available for others to review. We very much appreciate the offer by you and the DVOC to review the sighting.

Sincerely,

John D. Peplinski

John D. Peplinski
(814-865-1847 - office
814-238-6541 - home)

Species: N. Fulmar

Date: 11/16/85 Time: 3:20 - 3:25 pm

Observers: John D. Peplinski
Becky L. Peplinski

Exact location: Beaver Stadium; University Park, PA

Sighting Conditions

Distance: 40 to 50 yds at closest

- Observed for 5 minutes during which it flew around the stadium and behind the pressbox of the stadium. Our seats are located in row 76 (about 4 rows from the top).

Weather: Overcast, low clouds, steady rain, winds SW at 10 MPH, temp 35°F

- Though light conditions were not perfect, the fulmar was seen well when flying near the stadium lights.

Most of the time that the fulmar was observed we did not have binoculars, but binoculars (7x35) were borrowed from a nearby spectator and it was observed for about 20 seconds before it headed off out of view to the SW.

Plumage:

Upper surface of wings, back rump generally gray; no black markings on wings though primaries slightly ~~the~~ darker.

- head, neck, throat, belly white
- undersurface of wings and tail white

Size: Ring-billed Gull

Physical Features:

Especially noticeable was the white, rounded head and thick neck

- Wings short and narrow appearing in comparison with plump looking body; wings also seemed to have rounded tips.

Bill light colored with tubercle seen

Behavior:

Flight - wingbeat rapid on stiffly held wings and unlike leisurely flapping of a gull. Shallow depth of wing stroke made it somewhat resemble a giant chimney swift.

There were short intermittent periods of gliding on downward bowed wings.

This was very clearly seen when flying head on. The bird made several sharp (180°) banking turns while gliding - rising upward as turn made. Circled entire stadium twice before disappearing to SW

Previous experience:

Both observers have seen hundreds of fulmars on pelagic trips during the past couple of years and are familiar with the flight pattern and color phases

Trips on which N. Fulmars have been observed:

Washington - out of Westport Sept 8, 1985 light, dark, intermediate phases

California - Monterey Bay Aug 1985

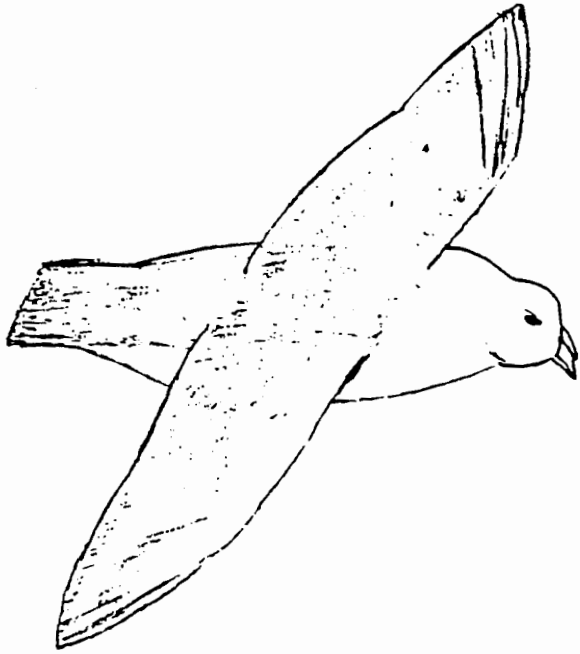
California - Monterey Bay Christmas Count Dec 1984

Maryland - Ocean City (R. Nansen) pelagic April 1984

Mass. - Provincetown (Cage Cod) Sept 83.

Notes. This description ^{and drawings} ~~was~~ made before any field guides were consulted.

017-01-1985



Wicky Pepinski

017-01-1985

saturday, 11/16/85

Beaver Stadium, University Park, Pa (PSU-Notre Dame game)

Time: about 3:15-3:20 pm

Weather: cloudy, rain / lights on in stadium

Observation made without binoculars.

aw bird flying around flagpole (south end of stadium) and scoreboard; it flew close to the pressbox, circled twice, and flew away towards the southwest.

At first glance I thought it was a gull; I immediately recognized that it wasn't, because:

1) instead of flapping and soaring like a gull, this bird ~~rapidly~~ had rapid, shallow wingbeats, interspersed with short glides. This was very obvious.

2) the wings were short and narrow in proportion to the body

3) the body was thick throughout - fat neck, thick body, short tail

Also noted: body and wings gray above, light below
no black on wings or body
neck obviously white and fat

Shape of wings when gliding: 

Best look: slightly above eye level at 40-50 yards, flying under lights. Note - the white of the body was distinctive even when the bird was not under the lights.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # / of /

Species: **Northern Fulmar**

Date of Sighting: **Nov. 16, 1985**

Observer(s): **John & Becky Peplinski**

Date of Submission: **1990 Centre**

Submitted by: **John & Becky Peplinski**

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V		
					A	B	C
E. Kwater		X					
B. Haas		X					
F. Haas			X				
R. Leberman			X				
G. McWilliams			X				
S. Santner		X					
P. Schwalbe		X					
TOTALS		4	3				
DECISION		X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

B. Haas

Date:

11-10-90