



065-01-2002

Northern Gannet

Morus bassanus

Location: Presque Isle State Park

Date: Nov. 30 and Dec. 1, 2002

Time: 8:00 AM and 9:00 AM on Nov. 30 and 9:30 AM on Dec. 1

Weather: Cloudy, southwest wind on Nov. 30 and cloudy, northwest wind on Dec. 1

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Viewing conditions: good

Viewing distance: Perhaps as close as 150 yards

Optics: Zeiss 10 X 40 Binocular and TSN 4 Kowa scope at 35X

Description: It was a rather slow morning waterbird counting off Sunset Point when a large dark brown bird appeared from the west flying low over the water. Since it was flying so low it would disappear at times between the four or five foot waves, but despite the initial brief views I had no trouble identifying it as a Northern Gannet. As it passed Sunset Point very rapidly it would bank from side to side revealing its unique shape. The few times it flapped its wings the wing beats were noticeably shallow like a shearwater. Most of the time it was gliding on flat wings bent back at the wrists with long bill and tail extending straight out. The distinctive profile looked much like a cross. The bird was in view less than two minutes before it flew past and out of sight from Sunset Point. At 9:00 AM the gannet appeared again flying much closer and slower in a westward direction. I managed to real off at least a dozen photos before it disappeared around Sunset Point. The gannet was very large, about Canada Goose sized, with the long tail, bill, neck, and wings making look even larger. The bill was dark, long, and dagger-like sort of like a large loons bill. The head and neck was dark gray-brown and streaked darker brown. The entire upperside was dark brown including the tail. There was a narrow white u-shaped band over the rump at the base of the tail. The underside of the body was dusky, noticeably paler than the dark neck, undertail coverts, and tail. The axillaries were white contrasting with the dark underwings. The legs were short and blackish. The next day I found it feeding with a flock of mixed gulls, mostly Herring Gull. Its distinctive shape and large size made it easy to pick out of the gulls. It occasionally landed on the water with the gulls holding its long pointed tail and bill cocked upward. It even made a couple of shallow plunge dives.

This was only the second record for Erie County. Sam Stull and I found the first one. I have seen hundreds of gannets in all plumages along the Atlantic coast.

See photographs.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round One

Species: Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*)

Date of Sighting: 30 November 2002 to 1 December 2002

Location: PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

County: ERIE

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams, Ben Coulter

Date of Submission: 2002

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams, Ben Coulter

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

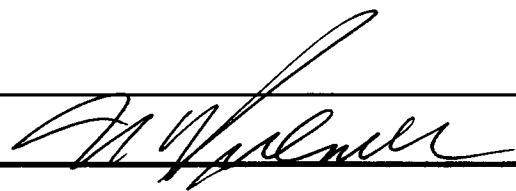
Specimen: No

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	6		1					
DECISION								

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 1/9/04