

August 26, 2005

Kyle McCarty

Thank you for submitting the description of the Anhinga you found April 27, 2003 at the North Lookout of Hawk Mountain. The report circulated through the committee twice and was finally voted 4-3 as **Class IV-A: 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.**

Anhinga reports are notoriously difficult to judge, and are probably rejected erroneously more than many other species. This is due mainly to the fact that there are few obvious fieldmarks to describe on a mostly dark bird usually seen soaring at high altitude. The committee members who voted not to accept the report felt that the description relied too much on relative distinctions of size or proportions which are nearly impossible to evaluate objectively.

Thanks again for sending in the description.

Sincerely

Matt Sharp
Chair: Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee.

074-01-2003

Species: Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*)

Date of sighting: April 27, 2003

Time of sighting: 1:56 – 2:00 pm

Location

The North Lookout at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Schuylkill/Berks County, PA (1700 Hawk Mountain Road, Kempton, PA, 19529).

Habitat

Ridge-top watchsite on the Kittatinny Ridge; Oak-maple forested mountain.

Conditions/weather

Clear, excellent visibility. No cloud cover. Occasional light wind. Temperature in mid-70°F range.

Details of sighting and description

The bird was observed during a count of migrating raptors. I initially sighted this bird without use of optics and identified it as a waterbird, then observed it using Swarovski 8.5x42 binoculars. It flew in from the west along a similar path that many of the raptors had also used that day, on the north side of the ridge, and began to soar directly over the lookout. In the clear blue sky, distance was difficult to judge, however the bird started at an elevation of a few hundred meters, then over the next 2-3 minutes it ascended quickly and drifted out of view.

The bird was backlit and appeared all dark, although the neck and head looked a little lighter. The neck and head were thin and held out straight, tapering to a point all the way to the tip of the bill. The tail was long and wider at the tip than at the base. Wings were somewhat rounded. During the observation, the bird was circling in a full soar, interspersed a couple times with a quick, fluttery flap (not a deep flap) that was more apparent at the wingtip rather than along the whole wing; it seemed to be an adjustment to thermal conditions and not a fully powered flap. No photograph was taken.

I spent 3 months on the Gulf Coast of Texas in 1999 and saw hundreds of Anhinga soaring, and have also seen Anhinga in Louisiana and Florida since then. The soaring behavior of the bird at North Lookout was like those Gulf Coast birds. The only species for confusion seen at Hawk Mountain is the Double-crested Cormorant, which I have also seen from the North Lookout, often occurring in small flocks, and which appear thicker-necked. I also have seen cormorants using flapping flight more than soaring. I'm confident in my identification based on the behavior and overall distinctive shape of the Anhinga.

Reported by: Kyle McCarty, Research Technician, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association ACCL, 410 Summer Valley Road, Orwigsburg, PA 17961.

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Additional notes from two other observers:

(1) Notes from Denny Ariola, counter from Montclair, New Jersey hawk watch:
Dark waterbird observed circling in thermal, gaining altitude west of observation point. cursory look at bird appeared to be double-crested cormorant. Bird then circled directly above observation point. Thorough look revealed fanned tail, wings at right angle to body fully extended, shallow flaps, and what appeared to be thin head at distance. Perhaps Anhinga, however head shape may have been obscured by distance.

(2) Notes from Toni Canzoneri, visitor and HMS member from Staten Island, New York:

- Long-necked
- Pointed beak
- Broad, flat wings
- Long tail
- Wings appeared flat-rounded and broad (not ruffled)
- Neck held straight out
- Tail long but not as long as neck

toni158@yahoo.com

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round ~~Two~~^{ONE}

Species: Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*)

Date of Sighting: 27 April 2003 to 27 April 2003

Location: HAWK MOUNTAIN SANCTUARY

County : BERKS/SCHUYKILL

Observer(s): Kyle McCarty

Date of Submission: 2003

Submitted by: Kyle McCarty

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

Recording: No

| Member | Class I | Class II | Class III | Class IV-A | Class IV-B | Class IV-C | Class V | Abstain |
|--------------|---------|----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|---------|---------|
| G. Armistead | | | | X | | | | |
| D. Heathcote | | | X | | | | | |
| P. Guris | | | | | X | | | |
| J. Stanley | | | X | | | | | |
| E. Witmer | | | X | | | | | |
| R. Leberman | | | | X | | | | |
| M. Sharp | | | X | | | | | |
| TOTALS | | | 4 | 2 | 1 | | | |
| DECISION | | | | | | | | |

Comments: 4/3 GO TO 2ND ROUND

Signature (Secretary)

Date:

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round Two

Species: Anhinga (Anhinga anhinga)

Date of Sighting: 27 April 2003 to 27 April 2003

Location: HAWK MOUNTAIN SACNTUARY

County : BERKS/SCHUYKILL

Observer(s): Kyle McCarty

Date of Submission: 2003

Submitted by: Kyle McCarty

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

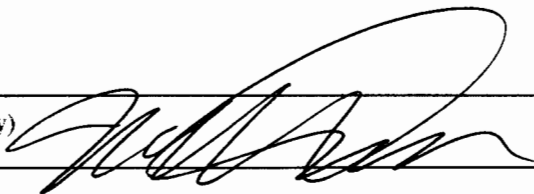
Specimen: No

Recording: No

| Member | Class I | Class II | Class III | Class IV-A | Class IV-B | Class IV-C | Class V | Abstain |
|--------------|---------|----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|---------|---------|
| R. Wiltraut | | | X | | | | | |
| D. Heathcote | | | X | | | | | |
| P. Guris | | | | X | | | | |
| J. Stanley | | | | X | | | | |
| E. Witmer | | | X | | | | | |
| R. Leberman | | | | X | | | | |
| M. Sharp | | | | X | | | | |
| TOTALS | | | 3 | 4 | | | | |
| DECISION | | | | X | | | | |

Comments: 3/4

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

3/7/05