

TO P.O.R.C.

168- -1996

10/21/96

I APOLOGIZE FOR THE LATENESS OF THIS SUBMISSION OF A RARE BIRD REPORT, BUT DESPITE MY ELATION OF BEING PRIVILEGED ENOUGH TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO, I'VE BEEN TREPIDATED BY MY LACK OF EXPERIENCE IN PRESENTING SUCH IMPORTANT INFORMATION, ESPECIALLY TO A GOVERNING BODY OF AVIAN SUPERIORS! (LACK OF TIME AND A LITTLE PROCRASTINATION, ONE OF MY INFAMOUS FORTES, DIDN'T HELP EITHER!) I ALSO THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT, PERHAPS, TO PROVIDE MY BACKGROUND IN THE FIELD OF ORNITHOLOGY, THUS, THIS COVER LETTER.

I AM 45 YEARS OLD. ACADEMIC ENOUGH IN HIGH SCHOOL, I WASN'T OVERLY COMPELLED TO PURSUE ANY COLLEGE EDUCATION AND ESSENTIALLY HAVE BEEN A BLUE COLLAR WORKER, WITH PERIODS OF ARTS & CRAFTS VENTURES IN BETWEEN VARIOUS JOBS. AS SUCH, I'VE NEVER HAD ANY FORMAL TRAINING OR EDUCATION IN ORNITHOLOGY, BUT AFTER MOVING FROM THE "URBS" OF HARRISBURG TO THE COUNTRY IN 1988, I SLOWLY DEVELOPED A FASCINATION WITH THE NEW FEATHERED FRIENDS (WOODPECKERS!) THAT GRACED OUR "3-ACRE" FARMETTE" AND ITS SURROUNDING HABITATS (ORCHARDS, FIELD, AND WOODLANDS), BY THE FALL OF 1992, AFTER DISCOVERING MY 1ST WARBLERS, I WAS HOPELESSLY HOOKED! I TRIED A FEW TRIPS TO LOCAL GAMELANDS AND PARKS IN HOPES OF FINDING NEW SPECIES, BUT SOON BECAME FRUSTRATED BY THE TIME AND EFFORT SPENT FOR SPORADIC RESULTS AND VEXED BY THE THOUGHT THAT I COULD ONLY BE IN ONE PLACE AT A TIME, AND MAYBE MY "GRASS" WAS JUST AS "GREEN"! I THEN DECIDED TO DEDICATE MY OBSERVATION TO THE AVIFAUNA I COULD FIND ON, AROUND, AND ABOVE MY PROPERTY. - ON JAN 1, 1993, I BEGAN TO RECORD MY DAILY OBSERVATIONS IN A JOURNAL, CONSISTING OF AN OBSERVATIONAL DATA SHEET (A PAGE PER DAY DESIGN FOR CONDITIONS, TIME LINE, AND PRE-PRINTED, EXPECTED, SPECIES AND SPACES FOR WRITE-INS) AND A DIARY DESCRIBING THE DAY'S HIGHLIGHTS. I DEVELOPED A BIRDING SHORT HAND TO FACILITATE FIELD AND JOURNAL ENTRY, DESIGNATING SPECIES, LOCATION, AND GENERAL ACTIVITY / BEHAVIOR. ESSENTIALLY UN-EMPLOYED AND A HOMEBOY, I WAS ABLE TO COMPLETE 1993 WITH ONLY 5 DAYS OF NO OBSERVATION, RECORDING 145 spp. (DAILY ENUMERATIVE COUNTS FROM INHIBITED LOW TEENS TO A BEST OF 60) AND WRITING 500 PAGES OF DIARY. MY PASSION UNABATED, I CONTINUED INTO 1994 (SANS TIME CONSUMING DAILY DIARY) AND HAVEN'T STOPPED YET, MISSING ONLY 3 DAYS EACH IN '94/'95 AND NONE SO FAR THIS, MY 4th STRAIGHT YEAR OF DAILY AVIAN CENSUS. WITHOUT COMPLETE FINAL FIGURES (I SO BUSY WATCHING AND ENTERING, IT'S HARD TO FIND TIME TO COLATE EXACT STATS...OR WRITE THIS!) I ESTIMATE I'VE EASILY SPENT OVER 4000 HOURS OBSERVING MY AVIFAUNA (LOW OF 1 1/2 TO 8 HRS / DAY - SEPT '96 AVG - 6.5 / DAY) INCLUDING DOCUMENTATION OF ROOSTING WOODPECKERS AND LOTS OF VIDEO OF NESTING BIRDS, MAKING ME SOMEWHAT OF A LOCAL EXPERT. BUT THERE IS ALWAYS MORE TO LEARN AND MORE TO SEE. I'VE NOW LOGGED 170 spp. INCLUDING MY 1ST RARE (ACCIDENTAL) BIRD, WHICH IS WHY I'M WRITING TO YOU. COINCIDENTALLY, I PROCRASTINATED LONG ENOUGH TO JUST RECEIVE PA. BIRDS VOL 10. NO. 2. WITH IT'S APROPOS ED. LETTER RE: DOCUMENTATION. ENCLOSED IS A COPY OF MY DATA SHEET FOR DATE OF SIGHTING OF SWALLOW-TAILED KITE (AN INFREQUENT ANNOTATED 2-DAY FORMAT) WITH MY INITIAL NON-PROFESSIONAL, RAMBLING DESCRIPTION ON BACK, PLUS A MORE TECHNICAL ATTEMPT (MADE SEVERAL WEEKS LATER WHEN I GOT AROUND TO IT!), BASICALLY THE SAME, WITHOUT THE EXCITEMENT!

THANKS, Jeff Pleasant

AN ILL-WIND THAT BLOWS SOME GOOD!

1715. SOMEWHAT INTERRUPTED BY A MUCH-NEEDED BATH, I HAD JUST RE-LOADED SOME SEED AT THE ARENA FEEDER, AND WAS READY TO ONCE AGAIN TRUDGE HERE AND THERE IN SEARCH OF MORE PINNAE PAIS, STILL IN NEED OF SEVERAL TO REACH MY SPRINGWATER FOR THE DAY (MY AGE-45) AND EVER HOPEFUL THAT A SUDDEN WELSH WOULD CONTINUE THE RECENTLY RENEWED RUN OF 50'S! ARMED W/ MY OPTICS (BAUSCH LOMB 10X50 BINOCULARS AND A BUSHNELL 15(-00) X 60 SPOTTING SCOPE ON TRIPLOID) I HEADED TOWARD THE WOODS, BEHIND OUR BARN, EAGER TO FIND A COALESCENCE OF COLORS, A BAND OF FORAGING RESIDENTS; MIGRANTS, BUT, AFTER SEVERAL DAYS OF GLORIOUS BLUE SKIES, SUNSHINE, AND SIGNS OF MIGRATORY MOVEMENT, TODAY'S INCREASING CLOUDINESS (COURTESY OF THE 1ST OF A GROUP OF TROPICAL STORMS AND/ OR HURRICANES OFF THE SE COAST) DIMMED MY HOPES, THE BACKLASH EFFECT SEEMING TO CREATE A FADE IN SWELL ACTIVITY. BARELY 1/3 OF THE WAY, I REALIZED I HAD FORGOTTEN MY LIGHTER! (A MOST FORTUITOUS OVERSIGHT!) LEAVING THE SCOPE, I HURRIED BACK TO THE HOUSE, GOT IT, AND STARTED OUT AGAIN. A BIRD APPEARED IN THE GRAYING SKIES ABOVE THE EAST WOODS - DECIDEDLY "RAPTOROUS" - MY 1ST IMPRESSION ACCIPITER, THEN NOT, AS IT SWUNG IN ITS SOAR AND REVEALED AN ODORLESSNESS THAT NEEDED TO BE INSPECTED. FORTUNATELY, I HAD KEPT MY BINO'S AND AS I RAISED THEM, THE BIRD TURNED TOWARD ME REVEALING LONG & SHARPLY POINTED, BENT WINGS - STRONG CONTRAST OF BLACK & WHITE (OSPREY?...) AND A LONG, DEEPLY FORKED BLACK TAIL (!!! NOT !!) BEING A STRICT HOMEBODY BIRDER, MY EXPERIENCE HAS BEEN WITH THE EXPECTED. I'VE SEEN MANY SPP. AND PLENTY OF UNUSUAL (BUT NOT UNEXPECTED!) NOTABLES. MY SHORE-BIRD & WATERBOWL KNOWLEDGE IS LIMITED TO WHAT I CAN PICK UP PASSING OVERHEAD THRU OUR VALLEY (WHAT I SEE IS EXPECTED!) I DON'T REALLY PREPARE TOO MUCH FOR THE UNEXPECTED, BUT THAT ONE FIELD MARK INSTANTLY GAVE ME A START - THAT'S A KITE!! I DIDN'T KNOW WHICH (UNEXPECTED) BUT IT WAS A KITE! MY APPREHENSIVE PUMPED AS IT LOOPED AROUND AND STARTED FADING AWAY. I CURSED THE LACK OF THE SCOPE, STILL 50' AWAY. THE BIRD DROPPED BELOW THE TREES, THE ENCOUNTER TOO BRIEF AND DISTANT TO SECURE THE DETAILS I WANTED. THE DOUBTS STARTED IN...

ACCORDING TO THE RECORDS

... DESPITE MY POSITIVE GENUS IDENTIFICATION, WHAT IF IT HAD BEEN SOME KIND OF TERN! A DIFFERENT UNEXPECTED POSSIBILITY AND BEYOND MY IMMEDIATE RECOGNITION... BUT THEY DO HAVE FORKED TAILS! THE BIRD POPPED UP AGAIN, BUT FARTHER, LOWER, AND INSTANTLY GONE AGAIN. I RAN TO GET THE SCOPE, NOT WANTING TO MISS IT AGAIN... IF IT SHOWED AGAIN... WIDE-EYED I SCANNED... COME BACK! HOW CRAVEL TO BE LEFT W/ INDECISION!... COME BACK!... IT CAME BACK! LOWER AND TOWARD ME! THE SCOPE SUCKED IN THE IMAGE...

ALL WHITE HEAD AND BODY - PLUS EXTENSIVE WHITE PATCHES ON THE UNDERSIDE OF THE WINGS - WITH ALL FLIGHT FEATHERS AND THAT LONG DEEPLY FORKED TAIL, BLACK - ENTIRELY DARK ABOVE ON BACK AND WINGS. IT CIRCLED LEISURELY ALONG THE RIDGE. UNFAMILIARITY LED TO INABILITY TO SIZE THIS BEAUTY WITH NO COMPARATIVE SPP AROUND AND OPEN SKY DISTANCE IMPOSSIBLE TO GUAGE, THOUGH I WOULD HAVE CALLED IT MEDIUM LARGE (I WAS SURPRISED TO FIND IT TO BE AS BIG AS A RED-TAIL!) THE WINGS WERE LONG. STILL IGNORANT OF SPP. I WAS DECIDEDLY CONTENT THAT THIS WAS INDEED A KITE - THE DETAILS OF THE HEAD WERE NOT EASY TO SEE, BUT I COULD DISCERN A SMALL BULGED PROFILE AND ROUNDED, EYES HELD ANGLED AT THE WRIST - NEVER FLAPPING AS IT CIRCLED SLOWLY TO THE NORTH - EAST AND OUT OF SIGHT FOR GOOD. MY POST-OBS REFERENCE DISCLOSED THE SHAMEFULLY EASY IDENTIFICATION - THE ONLY KITE W/ A FORKED TAIL - A SWALLOW-TAILED KITE! MY 1ST REAL UNUSUAL, MY 1ST ACCIDENTAL! A RARE BIRD! FEWER THAN 15 PA. RECORDS - A LOVELY NO-BRAINER! A MISSISSIPPI COULD HAVE NERXED ME (MAYBE ONE HAS!?) BUT LET IT BE KNOWN THAT ON THIS DAY, THE BROOD OF SEPT. 1990, I, JEFF PHEASANT, WAS WITNESS TO THE WAYWARD APPEARANCE OF A SWALLOW-TAILED KITE HEADING NORTHEAST ACROSS THE EAST RIDGE OF THE VALLEY IN WHICH I LIVE, JUST NORTH OF SKI ROUNDTOP - MILES FROM THE SUSQUEHANNA RIVER (WEST OF). SAY IT AGAIN...

A SWALLOW-TAILED KITE!!!!

ANNOTATED LIST OF PA. BIRDS - 11 RECORDS (6 PA. 1900 TO 1900) - SEPT. 1920 (MON. CO.) - 5/11/52 (PHILA.) 6/17-13/80 (CHESTER) 7/5/24/91 (MORRIS) 6/12/21/91 (WESTMORE) + PA. BIRDS - 8/13/92 (CARROLL CO.) 5/23-6/16/95 (BECK'S LAKE) AND NOW #14 (HINEROWN - 1ST (17) YORK CO RECORD !

168-01-1996

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED FOR ACCEPTANCE AS CLASS III RECORD of RARE BIRD

SPECIES: SWALLOW-TAILED KITE (*Elanoides forficatus*)
STATUS: ACCIDENTAL

OBSERVER: JEFF PHEASANT 819 PINETOWN RD. LEWISBERRY PA 17339

EXPERIENCE: SELFTAUGHT BIRDER DEDICATED TO DOCUMENTING THE SPECIES THAT APPEAR ON, AROUND, OR ABOVE MY PROPERTY

OBSERVATION - DATE: 3 SEPTEMBER 1996

- TIME: 1715 HOURS

- WEATHER: INCREASING CLOUDINESS FROM SOUTH - FIRST IN A WAVE OF TROPICAL STORM / HURRICANE SYSTEMS AFTER SEVERAL DAYS OF CLEAR CONDITIONS (FROM NORTH) - BALMY MODERATE WINDS - HUMID - ~80°F.

- OPTICS: BAUSCH & LOMB 10x50 BINOCULARS + BUSHNELL 15(-60)x60 SCOPE

- LOCATION: ABOVE A WOODED RIDGE (ELEVATION ~800 FT.) BEHIND MY PROPERTY IN N. YORK CO. ABOUT 3.5 MI. NNW OF GIFFORD PINCHOT ST. PARK

- DISTANCE of SPECIES: BEST DESCRIBED AS "LOCAL" HEIGHT, ~100-200' FT ABOVE RIDGE AND ~1000-2000 FT AWAY FROM ME. OBVIOUSLY IN A SEARCH MODE AS OPPOSED TO HIGH MIGRATORY PASSING FLIGHT

- DURATION: 3 SHORT SHOWINGS - 1ST - ~10 SEC - BINO'S ONLY / 2ND - NAKED EYE - 2 SEC - DISTANT UP & DOWN - JUST ENOUGH TO RECOGNIZE / 3RD - CLOSEST & BEST - ~30 SEC. SCOPE (+ BINO'S)

DESCRIPTION - SIZE: SUBSTANTIALLY LARGE - DIFFICULT TO ASSESS - ALONE IN SKY AT ALL TIMES AND NOT NEAR ANY REFERENCE - EASILY PERCEIVED AS 18+ INCHES LONG (SURPRISED BY ACTUAL SIZE IN REF.)

- SHAPE: MARKEDLY LONG POINTED WINGS, HELD SLIGHTLY BENT AT WRIST - AND RELATIVELY FLAT DURING CONSTANT SOARING AND GLIDING. TAIL - RADICALLY FORKED WITH POINTED TIPS - CONTINUALLY (HELD) OPEN WIDE, ACCENTUATING THE SPLIT -

- COLORATION - ENTIRE HEAD, NECK, UNDERSIDE OF BODY, EXTENDING INTO LARGE PATCHES OF UNDERSIDE OF WINGS (ALL BUT FLIGHT FEATHERS) - BOLD WHITE / BACK - TOPSLOPE of WINGS, ALL FLIGHT FEATHERS, INCLUDING ENTIRE TAIL - BLACK

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*)

Date of Sighting: 3 September 1996 to 3 September 1996

Location: WARRINGTON TWP

County: YORK

Observer(s): Jeff Pheasant

Date of Submission: 1996

Submitted by: Jeff Pheasant

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			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

J. C. Haas

Date:

8-16-97