

REPORT OF AN UNCOMMON OR RARE SPECIES AND/OR HIGH NUMBERS

File:Brdrpts

SPECIES: Willet, *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus inornatus*OBSERVER(S) WRITING ACCOUNT: Paul Schwalbe & Glenna SchwalbeOTHER OBSERVERS: Mark SchwalbeDATE OF OBSERVATION: 14 August 1997DATE OF REPORT: 23 September 1997LOCATION: Bald Eagle State Park, Centre Co., Pa.SIGNIFICANCE OF OBSERVATION: This is a rare species in Northcentral Penna.

CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH OBSERVATION WAS MADE: Clear skies, no wind. Time was about 3:30 p.m.

HABITAT: The bird was in the \*Campground Pond\*, which is a small pond of about 0.5 acres in size, and is located just south of the major campground east of park headquarters. It is behind (south of) camping areas #'s 27 &amp; 29.

DESCRIPTION: This description is from notes taken in the field while watching the bird. When we approached the pond, we saw this bird standing in the water on our side about seventy feet away. One of our first thoughts was that we had a Hudsonian Godwit, except the bill was not upcurved, nor could we determine a supercilium. The bird appeared quite tame, and we approached within about 30 feet. By this time we realized that we had to have a Willet. We returned to the car (it was nearby) to get the scope for a close look to try to determine which race it might be. We studied it with the scope for several minutes, all three of us looking at it. We again returned to the car to write a description of what we saw in our note book. Wanting to see the wing and tail pattern, we again approached the bird and at about 20 feet, it still didn't fly, until we waved our arms and clapped our hands. It then flew to the far side of the pond where we continued to study it for several more minutes.

This bird was a very pale grayish, a neutral or pearl gray, not a bit of brownish was present. There was no barring on the flanks or breast. The upperparts were very uniform, no modeling, barring or flecking were apparent. The underparts were very pale, the belly and center of neck could be called white. The head was pale with little contrast. Glenna could see no supercilium whereas Paul thought that there was a suggestion of a

supercilium, but on THE LEFT SIDE ONLY! We have no explanation for this. The bird was in adult basic plumage.

The bill was very long, thus the initial impression that the bird could be a Hudsonian Godwit (It should be said here that this impression occurred before we knew of the similar experience of the folks that observed a Willet at West Fairview this August). The legs were long, but we could not say that they were exceptionally long or short for a Willet.

The bird was flushed so the rump pattern and wing stripe could be seen. The wing stripe extended all the way to the outer primaries, it did not seem to be diminished in this area. The rump patch was white but because of the paleness of the back and tail there was little contrast in this area.

We did not hear the bird call.

#### EXAMINATION OF RACES:

The real question here is which race, C. s. semipalmatus or C. s. inornatus, this individual represents. All factors indicate that this individual was the \*Western Willet\*, C. s. inornatus. The very long bill, the overall paleness, lack of contrast on the head, lack of any brownish on the upperparts, striking whitish on breast and neck, the wing stripe extending through the outermost primary, and its tameness (which according to Ian McLaren is a factor).

#### ELIMINATION OF OTHER SPECIES:

Even though the first view suggested a Godwit, little else would support this. The bill was not bi-colored nor upturned. The wing stripe was broadest at the outer primaries and extended to the outermost one. There was little contrast between the rump patch and the tail and lower back. No supercilium was present.

#### EXPERIENCE (with this and similar species):

We have observed the \*Eastern Willet\* many, many times on the east coast, and the \*Western Willet\* most recently in Utah, June of 1996. At this Utah observation, we noted how close we could get to the Willets without their flying off.

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT: B & L - 8 X 42 Elites and a Kowa TSN-4, zoom.

*Barbara Schwalbe*  
-----  
*Barbara P. Schwalbe*  
-----

**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*)

Date of Sighting: 14 August 1997 to 14 August 1997

Location: BALD EAGLE STATE PARK

County: CENTRE

Observer(s): Paul & Glenna Schwalbe

Mark Schwalbe

Date of Submission: 1997

Submitted by: Paul & Glenna Schwalbe

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					
P. Schwalbe		X						X
K. Parkes		X						
R. Ickes			X					
P. Hess			X					
J. McWilliams			X					
T. Floyd			X					
TOTALS		1	5					1
DECISION			X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

*J. C Haas*

Date:

*4-19-99*