

WILLET IN CRAWFORD COUNTY

Ed Kwater

On Saturday August 16th 1997 I was birding at Miller's Ponds, Pymatuning, in Crawford County, PA, with my wife Cheryl, Mike Fialkovich, Scott Kinzey and Joyce Hoffman. We were watching a group of shorebirds, *Charadriiformes*, on the pond closest to the gravel road adjacent to the Game Commission buildings. At about noon Scott drew my attention to a large, pale shorebird which had just appeared approximately 40 yards away on the far side of the pond. I was able to quickly identify it as a juvenile Willet, *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*, based on the following characters.

The bird was noticeably larger than a nearby Greater Yellowlegs, *Tringa melanoleuca*, with longer legs and a longer bill. It was in extremely fresh plumage indicating that it was a juvenile. The head, neck and upperparts were a rather uniform pale grayish-brown. All the mantle feathers, scapulars, tertials and upperwing coverts had crisp, whitish edges and thin dark subterminal crescents, with small white notches also on the tertials and scapulars. An adult Willet at this time of year would still be in worn alternate plumage or just beginning its pre-basic molt. The underparts were largely white with a very pale gray-brown breast. The bird had a bold white eye ring joined to the base of the bill by a white supraloral stripe. The lores themselves were blackish forming a dark stripe which did not extend behind the eye.

In flight the Willet revealed a striking black and white pattern on the wings. The primaries were jet black with white bases, forming a white diagonal stripe across the wing, continuous with the largely white secondaries. All the primary coverts were black and all the secondary coverts on the inner wing were the same pale gray-brown color as the mantle and scapulars. The underwings were mainly jet black with a broad white diagonal stripe formed by the secondaries and primary bases. This stripe was very similar in extent and position to the upperwing stripe.

In comparison to the associated Greater Yellowlegs the Willet had a longer, thicker bill which was blue-gray at the base and black at the tip. The legs were also distinctly blue-gray and long.

Although the bird was seen in flight several times it did not leave the pond. We observed it for approximately forty-five minutes in excellent light as the sun was shining after a particularly heavy rain shower which was probably responsible for forcing the migrating Willet to the ground. Optical equipment used consisted of x10 Zeiss Dialyt binocular and x30 Kowa spotting scope.

The Willet was still present the following day and was seen by Bob Machesney. This was the first record of a Willet in Crawford County for at least ten years.

222 Franklin Street
Evans City, PA 16033

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*)

Date of Sighting: 16 August 1997 to 16 August 1997

Location: PYMATUNING - MILLERS POND

County: CRAWFORD

Observer(s): Ed Kwater

Date of Submission: 1997

Submitted by: Ed Kwater

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					
K. Parkes		X						
R. Ickes			X					
P. Hess			X					
J. McWilliams			X					
T. Floyd			X					
TOTALS		1	6					
DECISION			X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

F. Haas

Date:

4-19-99