







291-01-2005

LONG-BILLED CURLEW
Numenius americanus

Date: August 31, 2005

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Time 11: 15 AM

Weather: cloudy with heavy rain and winds in excess of 25 mph. Remnants of Hurricane Katrina, visibility fair to poor.

Optics: Zeiss 10 X 40 Binocular

Distance from bird: As close as 150 feet and as far away as 1000 feet

Details and description: I arrived at Gull Point at Presque Isle State Park at 10:00 AM under fairly stormy conditions to conduct the International Shorebird Survey and to look for birds brought in by Katrina. I immediately saw that there was good shorebird movement when I got to my post. There were birds in the air throughout the next three hours until the rain stopped and the wind began to die down when many departed. I had just watched a couple of Whimbrels fly in and set down within a hundred feet of me when I caught a glimpse of another large shorebird gliding in and slightly away from me. When I trained my binocular on the bird I thought I was looking at a Marbled Godwit because of its size, buffy color, and orange in the flight feathers. As the bird angled so that I could get more of a profile look, the long thin decurved bill got my attention. I readily recognized the bird as a Long-billed Curlew. It started to set down and I had the vegetation in the background so I could see color and plumage details a little better. Again I could see the over-all buffy appearance and the orange in the flight feathers, especially the inner primaries. I could also see the plain buffy unmarked head. It lifted back up and circled over me and then headed southwest over Thompson Bay. In the meantime while the bird was circling I was frantically digging for my camera in the backpack, which was a job since I had it wrapped in plastic. Needless to say, I had plastic flying everywhere. I managed to take a number of flight shots as it circled, but had problems getting the bird in focus because of the heavy rain and because the objective lens of the camera got spotted with water. However I did get some, what I believe are identifiable shots, though the quality especially sharpness of the images are not that good.

I never had the bird in view for more than a minute or so, but I managed to observe the following details of the bird. Most of the time I got just the silhouette of the bird since the light was not good and it was severely backlit most of the time as it flew overhead. It was rather large and reminded of a Marbled Godwit in shape and size. The bill was the most notable feature being very long, thin, and strongly down-curved. The head was plain and showed no dark head bands, which I noticed when it flew low with the vegetation in the background. The rest of the body appeared to be buff. I never could see the underwings clearly in good light to see the orange wing linings, but occasionally light showed through the orange inner primaries. The upperside was buff colored including the upperwing coverts which contrasted sharply with the dark outer primaries and primary coverts. The orange inner primaries were especially noticeable on the upperside when it turned. I did not get any detail on the tail pattern or color, but could see that it was short and that the feet extended beyond the tail. It made no sound as it circled the

point. I suspect this bird was a juvenile based upon the more buff than orange coloration of the body. Also, even though the bill was long, it was not extremely long like and adult, especially a female adult. I have seen and photographed many Long-billed Curlews in California, Arizona, and south Texas.

All other curlew-type shorebirds were ruled out based upon the orange inner primaries, overall buffy color, lack of head banding, and very long bill. Whimbrel was the most likely bird to confuse the curlew with, but Whimbrels have shorter bills, are not buffy, but more uniform gray-brown with little upperwing contrast, do not show orange in the flight feathers, and are smaller. Whimbrels almost always vocalize when taking off or landing. I am very familiar with Whimbrels, since I see them annually on the park and sometimes in numbers.

The images are distant and not of good quality, but aside from the long bill, which is evident in most of the images, some key features can be seen like the plain head in photo 4 & 5 and the orange inner primaries in photo 1.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Long-billed Curlew (Numenius americanus)

Date of Sighting: 31 August 2005 to 31 August 2005

Location: PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

County : ERIE

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Date of Submission: 2005

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

Specimen: No

Recording: No

| Member | Class I | Class II | Class III | Class IV-A | Class IV-B | Class IV-C | Class V | Abstain |
|----------------------------------|---------|----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|---------|---------|
| R. Wilbraut G. Matich | X | | | | | | | |
| A. Guarente | X | | | | | | | |
| P. Guris | | | | | | | | X |
| J. Stanley | X | | | | | | | |
| E. Witmer | X | | | | | | | |
| J. Heller | X | | | | | | | |
| M. Sharp | X | | | | | | | |
| TOTALS | 6 | | | | | | | 1 |
| DECISION | X | | | | | | | |

Comments: 6/0/1

Signature (Secretary)

Date:

9/5/06