

Mr James Hill, III
13258 Union Rd
Waterford, PA 16441

July 11, 2010

James,

Thank you for your submission of your sighting of a Long-billed Curlew in Presque Isle, Erie, Pa from July 26, 2009. The Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee appreciates the time and labor involved in submitting your record.

After one round of voting, the sighting was unfortunately not accepted. Although the committee members felt that the bird could have been a Long-billed Curlew, and that the description was suggestive of one, some members thought that there were still some reasonable doubts about the identification.

Your sighting could very well be correct, unfortunately the committee has to go by the written description and some members felt that description fell a little short of a positive identification.

Thanks again for your report and please don't let this discourage you from future submissions. The committee depends on reports like yours to further the knowledge of Pennsylvania ornithological studies.

Sincerely,

Al Guarente
Chairman

Record #

-----Original Message-----

From: James R. Hill, III <psubis@earthlink.net>

To: Jerry McWilliams <jerrymcw@aol.com>

Sent: Wed, Jul 29, 2009 11:45 am

Subject: Long-billed Curlew on PISP?

Jerry,

On Sunday, July 26, 2009, at about 1830 hrs., I, James R. Hill, III was standing on the water's edge of Lake Erie just south of the guarded section of Beach 6, Presque Isle State Park, Erie, PA, watching friends surf kayak in the large waves crashing against the sandy beach. I had my 10x Swarovski binoculars around my neck and a Canon HD video camera in my hands. For the past hour all I had been seeing in the way of birds, were Ring-billed Gulls and Purple Martins, but I was focused on videotaping the surf kayakers as opposed to bird watching. It was a sunny, but windy day. All of a sudden, a large rusty brown bird flew over at a distance of about 200 feet away over the breakwaters, 60-80 feet off the water. I got my binoculars on it. The bird was conspicuously larger than a Ring-billed Gull, (5 of which were flying loosely around it), but smaller than a Herring Gull. The most conspicuous field mark was the 5-6² long, strongly decurved bill. The bird flew pass to the left in the direction of the base of the peninsula, then circled back around flying in front of me again to the right. I had a good naked eye view of it for about 15 seconds, at which point I identified it as a Long-billed Curlew, then I watched it for an additional 25-35 seconds via binoculars. The only two possibilities are Whimbrel and Long-billed Curlew, both of which I have seen in the wild just a handful of times in the past 2-3 decades, typically along the mudflats or beaches bordering the Gulf of Mexico. Based on my comparative size estimate, estimated bill length, and overall color impression, I believe the bird I saw at Presque Isle was a Long-billed Curlew. In hindsight, I realize I had the time and the means to shoot definitive video of this bird, but, it wasn't an Ivory-billed Woodpecker, so the thought never crossed my mind. Duh!

Jerry, how common is this? Have you seen Long-billed Curlews or Whimbrels on PISP? Wouldn't a Whimbrel at this time of year have an overall grayish plumage as apposed to a rusty brown one? I'm positive on the size (conspicuously larger than the Ring-billed Gulls it flew past at equal distances from me), color (rusty brown all over), bill shape (strongly decurved), and bill length (5-6² long < bill 3-4 times the length of the bird's head).

Later that day, at 20:20 hrs., I was at the Waterworks floating dock (I was there to observe the martin roost), I saw a Least Bittern fly from the cattails and phragmites right on shore, from one side of the dock to the other.

Jamie Hill
Waterford, PA

From: Jerry McWilliams <jerrymcw@aol.com>

Date: Wed, 29 Jul 2009 19:22:10 -0400

To: "James R. Hill" <psubis@earthlink.net>

Subject: Re: Long-billed Curlew on PISP?

Hi Jamie,

WOW! Long-billed Curlew is a good sighting. There is only one accepted record in Pennsylvania and that was the one that I found and photographed as it circled Gull Point on August 31, 2005. Other than the super long bill, the rufous remiges, especially the inner primaries, and wing linings are diagnostic. Whimbrels have brownish remiges and are an even dull brownish-gray over-all. Also, Whimbrels have strong head striping while Long-billed Curlews have a rather plain head with the only stripe on the head being the one crossing through the eye.

This sighting should be passed on to the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee for review. I sent a written description and photos of my bird to PORC. Since it represented a first state record, in order to make the official list it had to be photographed or collected. Now that it is on the official list, any other sightings could be accepted with only a written description.

I would be happy to send this to PORC for review if you like, or you could send it yourself. Let me know what you would like to do.

Thanks,

Jerry

-----Original Message-----

From: James R. Hill, III <psubis@earthlink.net>

To: Jerry McWilliams <jerrymcw@aol.com>

Sent: Wed, Jul 29, 2009 9:20 pm

Subject: Re: Long-billed Curlew on PISP?

Jerry,

Please go ahead and submit it for me. Thanks. Dang! I had no idea it was so unusual at PISP (and in PA) or I would have videotaped it. One final point, this bird had no head striping. It (and its head) were all plain rusty brown. It was a really large shorebird. The Long-billed Curlews I remember seeing along the Gulf Coast had bills 7-8" long. This bird's bill appeared more like in was in the 5-6" long range, so I'm guessing it was a juvenile.

James R. Hill, III

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Long-billed Curlew Numenius americanus

Date of Sighting: 26 July 2009 to 26 July 2009

County : ERIE

Location : PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

Observer(s): James R. Hill

Date of Submission: 2009

Submitted by: James R. Hill

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

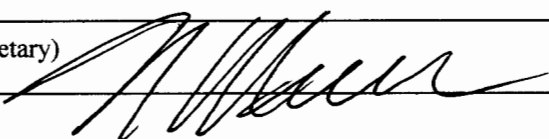
Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
R. Wiltraut				X				
A. Guarente			X					
T. Johnson					X			
B. Coulter				X	X			
C. Rutt				X				
J. Heller			x					
G. Malosh					X			
TOTALS			2	2	3			
DECISION					X			

Comments:

2/5

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

2/25/10