

292-01-1979

Black-tailed Godwit in Pennsylvania  
October 1979

On October 16, 1979, Barbara Haas and John Ginaven were birding at the sewage ponds near the Philadelphia International Airport. They saw a large shorebird fly in and identified it as a godwit. Although they noticed an extra large wing stripe and some rustiness on the side of the head, they called the bird a Hudsonian Godwit, not being familiar with Black-tailed.

On October 19, John Miller observed the same bird in Tinicum National Environmental Center. He noticed the extra white in the wings and straight bill, but the bird was too far away and flew away before he could get a look at the underwings, which are diagnostic in differentiating godwits. Having seen Black-tailed Godwits overseas, John thought that this might be one. He called me on Oct 20, and asked if I could go down to Tinicum the next day to check it out, as he had other commitments.

On Oct 21, Barb, John Ginaven and I arrived at Tinicum around 9:00 AM where we met Keith Richards and others. The bird had been seen a short time before, but had disappeared, without showing its underwings. After waiting several hours for the tide to come in, we decided to go over to the sewage ponds and try there.

We arrived at the sewage ponds and split into two groups on either side of the pond in which it had been seen on the 16th. While waiting for the bird to arrive, a Sandhill Crane flew over! A few minutes later, the godwit circled in and flew low right over us. The light underwings were quite apparent and confirmed it as a Black-tailed Godwit.

The bird was seen on and off during the following week by many observers, and photographed by Alan Brady. It was last seen on Oct 26, 1979.

This is the first recorded sighting for Pennsylvania, and the fifth record for ~~XNE~~ North America. As of this writing, January 1980, there is a Black-tailed Godwit on Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. Could it be the same bird?

Franklin C. Haas  
Rte 36  
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Media, Pa. 19063

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292-01-1979

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## CALL COLLECT, ASK FOR BIRDMAN

Species	Date	Place	Witness
Purple Gallinule	3/10/79	Loxa Hatchery, N.W. Fla.	Paul H. Goff
Common Gallinule	1/2/79	Tamiami Trail, Fla.	JBE
European Coot			
American Coot	1/1/79	Everglades Nat. Park	JBE
Caribbean Coot	1/3/79	XMAS COUNT bird at Port St. Lucie, Fla.	JBE
North American Jacana			
American Oystercatcher	1/3/79	St. Petersburg, Fla.	JBE
Black Oystercatcher	4/19	Pacific Grove, Ca.	Rich Stallcup
Black-necked Stilt	4/19	Moss Landing	Rich Stallcup
American Avocet	1/3/79	McKay Bay, Tampa, Fla.	JBE
Double-striped Thick-knee			
Northern Lapwing			
Ringed Plover	6 June 79	St. Lawrence Is. Gambell, Alaska	Rich Stallcup
Semipalmated Plover	1/1/79	Flamingo, Fla.	JBE
Little Ringed Plover			
Wilson's Plover	1/1/79	Flamingo, Fla.	JBE
Killdeer	1/1/79	Homestead, Fla.	JBE
Piping Plover	4/25/79	Bolivar Flats, Texas	Victor I. Emanuel
Snowy Plover	4/19	Moss Landing, Ca.	Rich Stallcup
Mongolian Plover	6/6/79	Gambell, Alaska	PABuckley
Mountain Plover	4/21/79	Two Butte Area, C.	James P. Goffman, Victor I. Emanuel
Greater Golden Plover			
Lesser Golden Plover	4/25/79	Anahuac NWR, Texas	Victor I. Emanuel
Black-bellied Plover	1/1/79	Flamingo, Fla.	JBE
Dotterel			
Black-tailed Godwit	1/24/79	TINICUM AREA	John C. Smith
Hudsonian Godwit	2/6/79	Anahuac NWR, TX	John C. Smith
Bar-tailed Godwit	26 May	ATTU, Alaska	John C. Smith
Marbled Godwit	1/1/79	Flamingo, Fla.	JBE
Eskimo Curlew			

## APPENDIX B

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Species	Date	Place	Witness
Whimbrel	4/19	Pacific Grove, Ca.	Rich Stallcup
Bristle-thighed Curlew			
Eurasian Curlew			
Far Eastern Curlew			
Long-billed Curlew	4/18	Bolinas, Ca.	Rich Stallcup
Upland Sandpiper	4/25	Anahuac NWR, Texas	Victor I. Emanuel
Spotted Redshank	MAY 21/79	ATTU Is. ALASKA	H. Shammela Smith
Marsh Sandpiper			
Greenshank	MAY 20/79	ATTU Is. Alaska	Donald Rosenband
Greater Yellowlegs	1/17/79	Colusa NWR, Cal.	Walt Anderson
Lesser Yellowlegs	4/11/79	Canon Co., TX	Steve W. Blacklock
Solitary Sandpiper	4/11/79	Santa Ana NWR, TX	John C. Arvin
Wood Sandpiper	MAY 19/79	Colusa, Alaska	John C. Arvin
Willet	1/1/79	Flamingo, Fla.	JBE
Terek Sandpiper	4/16/79	Gambell, Alaska	W.H. Russell
Common Sandpiper	MAY 21/79	Attu Is. Alaska	John C. Arvin
Spotted Sandpiper	4/10/79	Hidalgo Co., TX	Steve W. Blacklock
Gray-tailed Tattler	14 Sept 79	Attu Is. Alaska	John C. Arvin
Wandering Tattler	4/19	Pacific Grove, Ca.	Rich Stallcup
Ruddy Turnstone	1/1/79	Flamingo, Fla.	JBE
Black Turnstone	4/18	Bolinas, Ca.	Rich Stallcup
Wilson's Phalarope	4/10	Laguna Atascosa NWR, TX	John C. Arvin
Northern Phalarope	5/16	Anchorage, Alaska	David W. Hornum
Red Phalarope	4/19	Pacific Grove	Rich Stallcup
European Woodcock			
American Woodcock	7/27	Lake Calumet, Chicago	John C. Arvin
Common Snipe	16 Jan 79	near Chukchi Lake, Ca.	Christ E. Brown
European Jacksnipe			
Short-billed Dowitcher	1/1/79	Flamingo, Fla.	JBE
Long-billed Dowitcher	1/17/79	Colusa NWR, Cal.	Walt Anderson





Eight sergeants who were among 24 top scorers in the examination had close professional or family ties to the top command of the police.

O'Neill said yesterday that "we are cooperating with Dr. Taylor in his

The June 30 examination was administered to 406 of Philadelphia's 463 police sergeants. A total of 288

placed in the top 24 previously aides to Parker. Robert A. Ber 33, who ranked fifth, is the son-

PHILA. INQUIRER 10/30/79



Philadelphia Inquirer / AKIRA SUWA

Is it here? Is it there? Dr. W.J. MacMurtrie (left) and Dr. William H. Miller scan Tinicum mud flats for stray godwit

## An odd bird brings a binocularized flock

By Murray Dubin  
Inquirer Staff Writer

There are birds and there are birds.

For the past 10 days, hundreds of birders (bird watchers) have flocked from all over the country to the Tinicum marshes in southwest Philadelphia. With tripods, telescopes and cameras, from Colorado, Mississippi and Indiana, they have raced the dawn to the marshes in the hope of seeing the black-tailed godwit.

The black-tailed what?

Godwit. There are, of course, a number of godwits (the Hudsonian godwit, for one), but the black-tailed godwit, a 16-inch-tall, long-billed and long-legged bird, is uncommon because it is a European bird, seen from England to Siberia but rarely in the

United States and never in Pennsylvania.

On Oct. 21, that all changed.

"The bird was first seen on the 16th by John Ginaven of West Chester and Frank and Barbara Haas of Ridley Creek," said Frank Gill, chairman of the ornithology department at the Academy of Natural Sciences, who has termed the finding of the godwit "the best regional sighting of the year."

Ginaven and the Haases reported the bird as a Hudsonian godwit, a good bird to spot, but by no means a black-tailed godwit. John Miller, a long-time birder from Prospect Park, saw it a few days later, Gill said, and thought it might just be a black-tailed godwit.

"The key marking is the white (See BIRD on 2-B)



Special to The Inquirer

The little European bird, captured in a bird book



By Roger Cohn  
Inquirer Staff Writer

Trace amounts of  
nide gas have been  
open holes leading  
doned mine in Pitts  
field crews have been  
the lethal substance  
week, environmental  
yesterday.

Crews discovered  
tible" traces yesterday  
to a borehole into the  
Coal Mine, according  
Massey, on-scene coo  
U.S. Environmental P  
cy (EPA). The gas  
concentration of one  
lion, which is below  
million level that is  
health hazard; he said.

The first traces w  
Saturday, when test  
parts per million of  
feet underground in  
hole, Massey said.

The two holes have  
and are constantly be  
by field crews, he s  
one in the backyard  
home and the other  
street, are about tw  
within the five squ  
under which the Bul

"At this point, there  
public health or safe  
"We're below the"  
hazard. But we're c  
level of concern."

Testing of the air  
began Oct. 22, afte  
learned that waste h  
dumped thousands o  
uid cyanide into th  
this year. Officials  
liquid cyanide could  
ly with acidic water  
produce hydrogen  
which could leak  
sphere.

As of yesterday, cre  
ed tests through bo  
than 50 locations  
mine area. Testing  
this morning and c  
through the week.

Massey said the pr  
gen cyanide gas, al  
amounts, "substanc  
cern" that the leth  
formed in the min  
through boreholes.

The gas can kill  
breathed at conce  
parts per million or  
trations of 40 parts  
more, it can cause  
and irritation to th  
respiratory tract.

Earlier tests fo  
amounts of cyanide



Bird watchers are calling the black-tailed godwit the top local sighting of the season

Special to The Inquirer

## At Tinicum, an odd little bird gets a binocularized flock of fans

**BIRD, From 1-B**  
underneath the wings as opposed to gray," Gill said.

On the 21st, Ginaven and the Haases returned to the marsh and saw the godwit again. White coloring noticed under the wings and an excited phone call to Gill caused the information to go on the area's "bird hotline." (567-BIRD) and the word spread faster than a carrier pigeon (now extinct) could have carried it.

"I never saw a crowd like it," said Dick Nugent, refuge manager at Tinicum National Environmental Center, the 600-acre, federally run portion of the marshes. "There were a couple hundred here on Saturday looking for the godwit."

The bird was last seen on Friday, causing most birders to believe that it is gone now. There's no explanation for how it found its way here. It may have been blown off course or

landed on a tramp steamer or wanted to watch an Eagles' practice.

Even though it is probably gone, there were still some stragglers out yesterday, searching the marshes for a glimpse.

"Yes, I'm from Alexandria, Va., and I've been interested in birds since I was a 12-year-old Boy Scout," said George Siegel, 65, trudging along a Tinicum path, tripod and telescope on his shoulder. "I've looked for birds in Texas, Nova Scotia, Florida and the West Coast."

Bob and May Yates of East Lansdowne cared less about the godwit than did the other birders at Tinicum.

"We like the Great American Bittern," Mrs. Yates said. "It's got green and yellow and brown feathers. It's so hard to see. It sort of sits back in the bushes and laughs at you."

She added that the flocking of bird-

ers this past week has not disturbed her or her husband. "Bird watchers are very tidy, responsible people," she said. "They always say, 'What have you seen today?'"

Gill of the Academy of Natural Sciences said the bird hotline has received 500 to 600 calls since the sighting, about twice as many as usual. "It was spotted on a Sunday, and there were large crowds at Tinicum on Monday," he said.

"If you're interested in birds and there is a rare bird around, you'll go anywhere to see it," said Dr. W. J. MacMurtrei, a surgeon from Ardmore who looked for the godwit yesterday with Dr. William H. Miller, a pathologist from Wynnewood.

"There's no place where there aren't birds," Miller said. "I've been to India, to Iceland to see birds. Even a rotten place like Tulsa, Oklahoma, has birds."

## Reporter won't reveal sources, is ordered jailed for contempt

**REPORTER, From 1-B**  
constitutional rights, Riley's took precedence.

home for the night because the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals was unable yesterday to consider her request for a stay of Judge L'Amore's

"is deeply concerned with the attack on news reporters' ability to gather news from confidential sources."

29.2-01-1979

2396 Highland Avenue

Allison Park

PA 15101

12/15/90

Dear Frank & Barb,

Enclosed please find a copy of a letter I just received from Richard Chandler concerning Alan Brady's godwit photographs from Tinicum.

In view of Richards expert opinion I would recommend that Black-tailed Godwit is not admitted to the Pennsylvania List until we have more conclusive evidence. I am personally in no doubt that Alan Bradys photos are of a Hudsonian. Have a good Christmas & New

Year,

Sincerely

Ed.

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292-01-1979

# British Birds

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(Telephone: 0689 853993)

27 November 1990

Ed Kwater  
2396 Highland Avenue  
Allison Park  
PA 15101  
USA

Dear Ed

Thank you for your letter concerning the Black-tailed Godwit record in Philadelphia in 1979.

I have had a careful look at the three photographs, and agree with you that they are more likely to be of a Hudsonian than a Black-tailed Godwit. I think that they are probably all of the same bird, since photo 2 shows a bird in wing moult, consistent with the plumage of 3, which as you say, is moulting from alternate to basic.

Taking each photo separately.

Flight → 1. Slightly upturned bill and apparent sooty, dark underwing both support Hudsonian. Additionally, I would expect the white wing-bar to extend across the inner-wing if it were a Black-tail.

Flight → 2. Again shows little white on the inner-wing, though in this photo the bird is seen to be in wing moult, and the absence of white may be due to the bird having moulted the inner secondaries.

Resting → 3. This photo fell out when I opened your letter, and my initial reaction was 'Bar-tailed', this being the impression given by the slightly upturned bill. To my eyes, Black-tailed always look straight-billed, not like this individual. The barring on the underparts could point to either species.

My conclusion is that on the photographic evidence alone the record of Black-tailed cannot be confirmed. Indeed, the photographs seem more likely to be of a Hudsonian Godwit. Do the written descriptions give clear statements regarding the white underwings of the supposed Black-tail? If so, I can only presume that the wrong bird was photographed. If not, then I suggest that the record of Black-tailed cannot be substantiated.

I hope you find these comments of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Richard





292-01-1979  
10/19/90

Dear Barb,

Here are my notes on the BROWN-TAILED GODWIT. They are not great, but they may be of use. I did not write any notes on the CURLEW SANDPIPER at Limicum, but as you know I saw it in breeding plumage and it was definitely a curlew sandpiper. (How's that for accurate description!)

I tried for the 'Franklin's' Gull on Wed. morning a week ago. Tim L. and I waited 3 hours with no luck. Thanks for the tip anyway.

Sore,  
John G.



292-01-1979

notes  
written  
on 10/23/79

SIGHTING OF BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (Limosa limosa)

Identified as Black-Tailed Godwit on October 21, 1979 at 2 PM at the Philadelphia Sewage Ponds.

Observed by ~ 8 people including myself, Bob and Frank Haas, Keith and Charlotte Richards and a few others.

The bird was first seen by me and Bob Haas on Tuesday, October 16, 1979 at about 12 noon at the Philadelphia sewage ponds. It flew in from the <sup>with ribbon T&S band</sup> direction of Tinicum NW. I saw the bird quite far away and watched it all the way into the ponds. It appeared as a large shorebird, but was back-lit until it came in to land <sup>about 100ft away</sup>. A very long bill was noted in flight. When it landed it glided in showing very flashy <sup>at the time</sup> (dark - "Willow-like") white wing stripes, a very large white rump patch and a <sup>wide</sup> black stripe at the end of the tail. ~~It~~ We mistakenly identified it as a "Hudsonian Godwit." We watched it feed <sup>with a swift spotting scope</sup> amongst some dead vegetation about a foot high on a mud flat. It probed in the mud inserting the long bill all the way up to into base.

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with Swift Spotting Scope  
About 15 minutes later we saw the bird -  
very good light about 50 ft away on a small open  
mud flat feeding with a Song-billed Dointer. The  
sun was behind us, so we could see the bird clearly.  
It showed aggressive behavior to the L.B. Dointer  
chasing it away from where it wanted to feed.  
I observed the very long bill and have subsequently  
examined skins of both Black-Tailed Godints and  
Hudsonian Godints together with Song-billed Dointer  
to compare bill sizes. Although I thought the  
bird was a Hudsonian Godint at the time, and  
never even thought it might be a Black-Tailed,  
I have tried to recall impressions I got of the  
bird. I don't think I ever got a clear look  
at its underwing lining, although I wasn't really  
looking for it. I don't recall noticing any light  
stripe or light appearance of the head or side of  
the face, although I again wasn't looking for it.  
The bill was flesh-pink on the basal half  
and dark at the tip, it was very long, much  
longer than the Song-billed Dointer (identified by  
its "long" bill, and fine lining on the tail). I don't recall.



292-01-1979

whether the bill was "straight" or slightly up-curved, but it wasn't extremely up-curved. When it was flying earlier I had the <sup>vague</sup> impression of a very large Greater Yellowlegs with a larger bill, all backlit, of course.

The next time I observed the bird was on Sunday, October 21, 1979 at 2pm ~~at~~ over the Philadelphia Sewage Ponds. The bird flew in low over the pond about 100 ft. away from me. I think it wanted to land, but saw the observer, turned, and flew off towards Girard Point. Again the lighting was good. I <sup>(with 7:35 AM)</sup> saw <sup>rich brown</sup> the very flashy white wing stripes, the white rump and black, quite a bit of chestnut in the back and head (but not near breeding plumage), and very light underwing linings all the way to the body.

I am convinced that the bird I saw on October 16 and the bird I saw on October 21 was the same bird. I am also convinced that the bird was a black-tailed Godwit because of the very light wing linings, the very long bill, the chestnut-gray <sup>on the</sup> head, and the very flashy white wing stripes.

292-01-1979

I haven't had much experience with Hudsonian Godwits, but I did have the impression that the white wing stripes on this bird were bigger and more extensive than on <sup>the few</sup> Hudsonian I've seen in flight. At 3 pm on October 21, 1979 Bob and Frank Haas and I examined skins at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, and I believe the underlying linings of the bird matched those of *Limosa linosa* and the bill length compared to the Long-Billed Dowitcher also supported *Limosa linosa*.

The bird was seen at Tinicum NWR on <sup>flown off bird</sup> Friday, October 19 by John Miller at <sup>near</sup> ~~low~~ <sup>average</sup> tide. <sup>birds</sup>  
It was seen by Keith and Charlotte Richards and others at about 9 am (low TIDE) <sup>on October 21, 1979</sup>. It was seen again at Tinicum NWR on October 21 by Evelyn <sup>flown off along body creek</sup> and George Kopf at about 5 pm (low TIDE).

John H. Gnaiven.



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# British Birds

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R.J.Chandler  
2 Rusland Avenue  
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(Telephone: 0689 853993)

27 November 1990

Ed Kwater  
2396 Highland Avenue  
Allison Park  
PA 15101  
USA

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I hope you find these comments of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Richard

# Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

## Voting Tabulation - Round #    of

Species:    **Black-tailed Godwit**

Date of Sighting:    **16 October 1979 to 26 October 1979**

Observer(s):    **Frank & Barb Haas, John Ginaven, John Miller**

Date of Submission:    **1991 Phil**

Submitted by:    **Frank & Barb Haas**

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V		
					A	B	C
E. Kwater				X			
B. Haas		X					
F. Haas		X					
R. Leberman		X					
G. McWilliams			X				
S. Santner			X				
P. Schwalbe		X					
TOTALS		4	2	1			
DECISION		X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

*Barb Haas*

Date:

*3/7/92*