

293-02-1991

A LATE ADULT HUDSONIAN GODWIT Limosa haemastica

FIRST RECORD FOR LEHIGH COUNTY

by Rick Wiltraut

On November 12, 1991, a day after a strong easterly storm battered the New Jersey coastline, I observed an adult Hudsonian Godwit (Limosa haemastica) in a retention pond along Schantz Road near Allentown, Lehigh County. I arrived at the pond about 12:30 p.m. to check on an American Avocet (Recurvirostra americana) that had been discovered there two days earlier. As I scanned the pond, I noticed a second large shorebird standing next to the avocet. Through 10 x 50 binoculars at distances of 75-150 feet, I could see it was a godwit, based on its large size, long legs, and long bill. As I examined the bird more closely, I noticed that it was beautifully marked for a godwit at this time of the year and that it appeared to be an adult Hudsonian Godwit (Limosa haemastica) in fading breeding plumage. The bird was noticeably smaller than the avocet and appeared to be about the size of a Greater Yellowlegs (Tringa melanoleuca). The bird still had some rusty feathers on the lower breast/upper belly region as well as blackish barring on the lower belly and flanks. The upperparts were mainly gray with noticeable blackish feathers in the scapular region. The bird also had some unusual brownish coloring on the face at the base of the bill which appeared to be a stain from feeding in iron-tainted waters up north. I saw the bird fly on one occasion, revealing black axillars and wing linings. From above, the bird possessed a narrow white wing stripe, a black tail, and a white rump, reminding me of a giant White-rumped Sandpiper (Calidris fuscicollis).

Most of the field guides show the Hudsonian Godwit in either full breeding plumage or winter adult plumage. However, there is a beautiful photograph of a Hudsonian Godwit in fading breeding plumage taken by Frank Schleicher on August 7, 1982 at Line Island, Long Island which appeared on the cover of American Birds (Mar.-Apr. 1983, Vol. 37, No. 2). The plumage of the bird in the photograph closely resembles that of the bird I saw.

As with most shorebirds, adult Hudsonians migrate south earlier than the juveniles and are usually gone by the end of August. The following is an account of the southward migration of the Hudsonian Godwit from Bent's Life Histories of North American Shorebirds (Part One, p. 300):

"Doctor Sanford (1903) writes:

I have seen these birds on some of the islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in large flocks. They arrive late in July, the first comers being steadily augmented by new arrivals until by the first week of August their greatest abundance has been reached. From this time on the numbers rapidly decrease, and by the last of the month only odd birds are seen. The young appear about the middle of September, and until October 1 are common in the same locations. On the adjacent mainland and the shores farther south the birds are seldom met with, and then only as odd stragglers. Where they stop next and what their course is on departing is a mystery. Probably they keep well out to the open sea, and along with the golden plover wisely skip the United States in the fall flight south."

My previous experience with the species includes five birds in Pennsylvania and one at Cape May, New Jersey. This sighting represents the first record of a Hudsonian Godwit in Lehigh County.

References cited

Bent, Arthur Cleveland 1927. Life Histories of North American Shorebirds. United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. USA

205 Washington St.
Nazareth, PA 18064

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: **Hudsonian Godwit**

Date of Sighting: **11 November 1991 to 11 November 1991**

Observer(s): **Rick Wiltraut**

Date of Submission: **1992**

Submitted by: **Rick Wiltraut**

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V		
					A	B	C
E. Kwater			X				
B. Haas			X				
F. Haas			X				
R. Ickes			X				
G. McWilliams			X				
S. Santner			X				
J. Skinner			X				
TOTALS			7				
DECISION			X				

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

Bom Haas

Date:

2-27-93