

Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*)

Age: worn adult breeding

Date: July 18, 2005, ~ 6:30 PM-7:45 PM

Location: Gull Point, Presque Isle State Park, Erie County

Site: sandspit at the tip of Special Management Area, at boundary of regions 2 and 3

Observer: Ben Coulter
3431 Argyle Ave
Erie, PA 16505-1804
814-838-9773
aeridia@velocity.net

Habitat: Sandflats with sparse vegetation on a sandspit at the tip of the point.

Distance to bird: The bird was maybe 150 yards away at the closest.

Conditions: Mostly cloudy, with a thunderstorm approaching from the west. Temp about 80° F.

Optics: Swarovski 8.5x42 binoculars, Leica 77mm APO scope w/ 20-60x eyepiece, Nikon Coolpix 995

Description: The Marbled Godwit is a very large shorebird, with a bulky body, a long neck, upturned bill, and long legs. The bird is roughly 2/3 the bulk of a Ring-billed Gull, but looks rather larger due to its lanky extremities.

The head was sandy overall, palest around the base of the bill, with dense dark brown streaking on the crown and nape. There was a brown loreal stripe from the eye to the bill base. The supercilium was sandy brown, sharply defined ahead of the eye, becoming diffuse behind it. There was also a fainter brown postocular stripe on the upper margin of the ear coverts. The ear coverts were faintly streaked brown. The eyelids were pale. The neck was sandy, streaked dark brown.

The upperparts were dark brown, with pale sandy notching or barring, especially the mantle and scapulars. The underparts were sandy to buffy, with faint brown barring along the sides of the breast and stronger bars on the flanks. The undertail coverts and vent were off-white. The secondaries, inner primaries, and some secondary coverts were mostly cinnamon, which showed as large triangular panels on the spread wing. The rest of the coverts were sandy brown, barred with dark brown, some showing extensive wear. The outer primaries were mostly blackish-gray, showing buffy on the inner webs, and with a pale shaft on the first primary. The tertials were barred, and were very heavily abraded and faded to light brown. The greater primary coverts were blackish. The whole of the underwing coverts and axillaries were bright cinnamon. The tail was buffy, barred with dark brown, while the central tail feathers were more orange-red than the rest. The uppertail coverts were brown, with darker barring.

The iris was dark. The bill was about twice the length of the head, and slightly recurved, mostly blackish, with some dull pink on the basal third. The upper mandible was mostly dark, including all the way up the culmen to the bill base, while the lower mandible showed more pink along the sides and underside. The very tip of the upper mandible was slightly expanded into a ball shape. The legs and feet were dark bluish-black, and about as long as the bill. The right leg appeared slightly crooked as a result of a healed injury.

Behavior: The bird was found standing among loafing gulls and terns at the tip of Gull Point. It remained within 100 ft. of the original location for the entire time of

observation. It was observed sleeping and lying on the ground for much of the time. It also lethargically picked for food briefly. It performed a number of comfort movements, including head scratches and wing stretches, and it preened a good deal of the time. The bird walked with a smooth, strolling gait, generally with the neck pulled partway onto the shoulders, and the bill angled down. The godwit also called frequently, and seemed rather nervous most of the time.

Vocalizations: The godwit called at frequent intervals. It mainly gave a deep two-syllabled *ger-ack* and similar variations. The bill opened narrowly when it gave these calls.

Supporting Evidence: see photographs by Ben Coulter.

Similar species: Bar-tailed Godwit is proportionately shorter-legged, and all subspecies lack cinnamon on the underwing or tail. Hudsonian Godwits have black axillaries and underwing coverts in all plumages, and also show a black tail and white uppertail coverts. Long-billed Curlew, while superficially similar in pattern, is a good deal larger, with a very long, decurved bill.

Discussion: This individual godwit had a crooked right tarsus, possibly a result of a healed fracture, as the bird was able to walk normally. When viewed from the side, the right tarsus was bowed backwards. There were also several pale discolorations on the right leg, but I couldn't make out what they were at that range. These did not appear to be metal FWS bands.

Prior experience: This is my fourth observation of this species in the state of Pennsylvania, and I have also seen it in Ohio, Texas, and North Carolina. I also have experience with Hudsonian Godwit and Long-billed Curlew.









Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round ~~Two~~ ONE

Species: Marbled Godwit (Limosa fedoa)

Date of Sighting: 18 July 2005 to 18 July 2005

Location: PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

County : ERIE

Observer(s): Ben Coulter

Date of Submission: 2005

Submitted by: Ben Coulter

Written Description: Yes

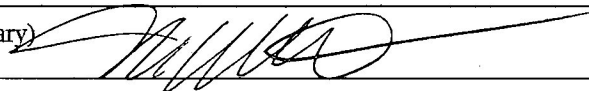
Photo: Yes

Specimen: No

Recording: No

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

Comments: 6/0

Signature (Secretary) 

Date: 7/29/06