

PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE
210 Welcome Ave. Norwood, PA 19074

3 February 2002

Scott Killam
250 Old Tioga Tpk.
Shickshinny, PA 18655

Dear Scott,

Thank you for submitting documentation on the Red-necked Phalarope on 20 March 1996. After careful review, the Committee regrets that it has voted not to accept this record.

Members' opinions were divided, and the record went two rounds of balloting (which is partly the reason why the result was delayed). Ultimately the vote was four in favor of acceptance and three not in favor. The Committee's bylaws require a minimum vote of 6-1 for accepting a record.

Those who voted not to accept it had several concerns. One member said the description left him unable to get a clear picture of exactly what was seen.

In two other members' view, the bill -- through no fault of yours -- could not be described in sufficient detail to separate it adequately from with a Red Phalarope's bill, which is also "longish and tapered" but slightly thicker.

Members were concerned as well about the description of the back as "charcoal, almost black." Both Red and Red-necked should have pale (Red) to medium (Red-necked) gray backs in basic plumage, not blackish. In addition, though it would be slightly early for pre-alternate molt, not only a Red-necked but also a Red could begin to show the blackish back with pale streakings left from basic plumage.

We emphasize that non-acceptance does not mean the bird was not a Red-necked Phalarope, but rather that the Committee believes the description is not sufficient to separate the bird conclusively from a Red.

We hope this does not discourage you from submitting documentations on future rarities.

Sincerely,



For the Committee:
Paul Hess, Chairman

Record No. 330-01-1996

330-01-1996

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE

DATE: MARCH 20, 1996
LOCATION: JONESTOWN AREA, (MY HOME), COLUMBIA CO.
OBSERVER: SCOTT KILLAM
DURATION OF EVENT: ~ 2 MINUTES
WEATHER: LIGHT RAIN, TEMPERATURE ~ 40°F.

MARCH 19 WAS MILD IN THE A.M. WITH INCREASING WIND AND RAIN STARTING IN THE AFTERNOON. LAKE SURFACE FRONT OF MY HOME HAD 3/4 ICE COVER. A FEW MALLARD WOOD DUCK AND CANADA GEESE WERE PRESENT. DURING THE NIGHT OF MARCH 19 WINDS INCREASED TO GALE FORCE - >60 MPH RECORDED AT NEAR-BY WILKES BARRE AIRPORT. AND RAIN WAS HEAVY AT TIMES. TYPICAL NOR'EASTER.

BY MARCH 20 AM THE WINDS HAD SUBSIDED, LAKE SURFACE WAS CALM AND 3/4 FREE OF ICE. A VERY LIGHT RAIN WAS FALLING. AMERICAN WIDGEON, 2 PR. COMMON MERGANSER + ONE BUFFLEHEAD WERE PRESENT IN ADDITION TO THOSE PREVIOUSLY IN ATTENDANCE ON THE 19TH. AS I WENT ABOUT MY MORNING ACTIVITIES I WOULD OCCASIONALLY GLANCE OUT OF MY WINDOWS TO CHECK FOR NEW ARRIVALS OR DEPARTURES.

ON ONE OF THESE CHECKS, AS I WAS NAKED-EYING THE NUM. OF MERGANSERS, I NOTICED ~~WHAT~~ SOMETHING THAT LOOKED LIKE A WHITE LEAF FLOATING DOWN TO THE SURFACE OF THE LAKE. NO OTHER MOTION, I.E. WING BEATS, WAS OBSERVED. THERE WAS NO SPLASH OR WAKE WHEN THE OBJECT MADE CONTACT WITH THE WATER. IN THE WATER THE OBJECT WAS RECTANGULAR IN SHAPE AND SEEMED TO BE DRIFTING SLOWLY. ONLY WHITE SHOWED.

'BEAT-UP' 7 X 35 BINOCULARS REVEALED A BIRD. DISTANCE ~ 600-700 FT. WITH LIGHT RAIN STILL FALLING. THE BIRD HAD DARKISH, 'PEEP-LIKE' BILL, POSSIBLY A BLACKISH EYE AREA AND A LIGHT GREY BACK. THE SWIMMING CHARACTERISTICS WERE UNUSUAL: SHORT FORWARD SPURTS, RAPID PIVOTING - MAYBE 90° OR MORE - WITH EXAMINATION OF THE WATER SURFACE NEAR THE BI-

330-27-1996

I QUICKLY WENT TO MY LOWER LEVEL TO RETRIEVE THE DOWNSTAIR AT-THE-WINDOW 7X50 BINOCULARS AND "PETERSON: A FIELD GUIDE TO BIRDS EAST OF THE ROCKIES". I RETURNED TO THE UPPER LEVEL AND WAS JUST FOCUSING ON THE BIRD WHEN IT TOOK OFF. IT WAS COMING DIRECTLY TOWARD ME, SLIGHTLY BELOW EYE LEVEL. THE FLIGHT SOMEWHAT TERN LIKE WITH POSSIBLY A MORE RAPID WING BEAT. A DISTANCE OF ABOUT 100 FEET IT CURVED AWAY TO FOLLOW THE ICE-FREE BOUNDARY OF THE LAKE. IN DOING SO IT PRESENTED CLEAR LOOK-DOWN VIEW AND BY THAT TIME I HAD BEEN ABLE TO FOCUS THE BINOCULARS FOR A LESS FLUTZTY VIEW.

WHEREAS FROM THE EARLIER, GREATER DISTANCE THE BACK HAD APPEARED LIGHT GREY NOW THE WHOLE UPPER SURFACE - WINGS AND BACK - WERE DISTINCT DARK CHARCOAL, ALMOST BLACK. A BROAD WING BAND, STARTING BETWEEN THE WING WRIST AND TIP FUSED WITH THE BACK. THE BACK WAS THE SAME CHARCOAL AS THE ~~AT THE~~ UPPER WING SURFACE AND CONTAINED SEVERAL WHITE, OPEN ENDED "V" STRIPES. THE TAIL SEEMED UNIFORMLY DARK. THE HEAD, ALONG WITH THE REST OF THE BIRD, DISAPPEARED FROM SIGHT BEFORE MARKING AND BILL CHARACTERISTICS COULD BE EVALUATED FURTHER. EXAMINATION OF THE LAKE-ABUTTING FLOODED SWAMP IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER STIRRED UP ONLY THE LOCAL RESIDENTS. THE WHOLE EVENT, FROM FIRST SIGHTING TO DISAPPEARANCE, TOOK ABOUT 2 MIN

CONCLUSIONS:

SWIMMING CHARACTERISTICS - PHALAROPE LIKE

LOOK-DOWN VIEW PATTERN COMPARISON WITH PHALAROPE

WINTER PLUMAGE { WILSONS - NO WING OR BACK MARKINGS
RED - NO CONTRASTING BACK MARKINGS
RED-NECKED - FITS DESCRIPTION

PROBABLY A FALL-OUT OF THE PREVIOUS NIGHT SEVERE STORM

REFERENCES: PETERSON: A FIELD GUIDE TO BIRDS EAST OF THE ROCKIES
ROBBING, ... SINGER: BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC: FIELD GUIDE BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA

330-01-1996

Re submission

October 23, 1997

Nick Pulcinella
P.O.R.C.
2469 Hammertown Road
Narvon, PA 17555

Dear Nick,

I have received your report of the P.O.R.C. review of my Phalarope incident of March 1996. (Record # 330-01-1996) I am somewhat concerned that perhaps my description of the event may in part have been misinterpreted. I will attempt to clarify.

Weather conditions - "gale force winds and heavy rain"- were present the previous day and night but not on the morning of the sighting: only a very light rain and no wind. Overcast sky but no fog or haze made for respectable but not ideal viewing conditions. The distance of the bird along with the aged viewing equipment were the chief limitations at the beginning.

The "peep-like bill" description was intended to indicate a bill unlike that of a small gull or a plover and more like that of a peep: longish and tapered. I agree that a number of field guides, particularly those illustrated with artists renditions, show Red-necked Phalarope with an almost needle-like bill, similar to but shorter than Wilsons Phalarope. When actual photographs are chosen, however, the Red-necked bill can vary from peep-like to needle-like. For example Stokes shows a breeding bird with peep-like bill but a winter bird with a needle-like bill. The Audubon Field Guide examples reverse the breeding and winter bird characteristics. The Audubon Encyclopedia of N.A. Birds illustrates sort of intermediate shaped breeding bird bills while the winter bird is peep-like.

The back markings, seen clearly from above and at close range, were more diagnostic as to this birds identity. As I reported the back was dark, almost black, not gray. More significant was the definitive white vee markings.

Finally, the Audubon Society Encyclopedia of N.A. Birds describes migration of Red-necked Phalarope from late March into May.

I dont know if there is a court of appeals or a review of decision process in P.O.R.C. proceedings but if so, based on the above additional information, I humbly request such treatment for my sighting.

Sincerely,



 Mr. H. Scott Killam

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round Two

Species: Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*)

Date of Sighting: 20 March 1996 to 20 March 1996

Location: JONESTOWN

County: COLUMBIA

Observer(s): Scott Killam

Date of Submission: Original 1996. Resubmission 1998

Submitted by: Scott Killam

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

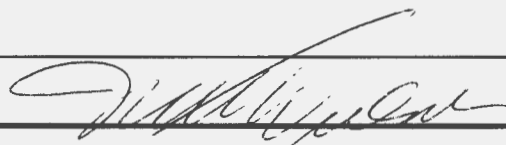
Specimen: No

Recording: No

| Member | Class I | Class II | Class III | Class IV-A | Class IV-B | Class IV-C | Class V | Abstain |
|---------------|---------|----------|-----------|------------|--------------|------------|---------|---------|
| | | | | | | | | |
| D. Couchman | | | X | | | | | |
| G. Armistead | | | X | | | | | |
| P. Hess | | | | X | | | | |
| R. Ickes | | | X | | | | | |
| J. McWilliams | | | X | | | | | |
| B. Reid | | | | X | X | | | |
| P. Rodewald | | | | | X | | | |
| TOTALS | | | 4 | 2 | 2 | | | |
| DECISION | | | | X | | | | |

Comments: 4/3/0 - rejected

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

02/24/01