

330-02-2002
Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*)
Imperial, Allegheny County
August 27, 2002

by Mike Fialkovich

On August 26, there was a post on the Pennsylvania Listserv that there was a Red-necked Phalarope at the pond on Bald Knob Road in Imperial, Allegheny County. Several local birders were able to see the bird on 8/26 and also posted and/or called to report it to me. . I was able to get out to see the bird on the evening of August 27, 2002.

When I arrived at the site, a few birders were present, but I was concerned because people were training their dogs in the area (this is a popular location for dog training). The people were tossing a lure into the pond, and blowing a whistle. The dogs responded by leaping into the water to retrieve the lure. Surprisingly, this did not seem to affect the bird. It continued to feed the entire time, and it came on shore very close to the people and dogs. It even flew toward, and landed within a few feet of the dogs and people, and continued to search for food.

The dark marks over the eyes, the thin bill, black and white plumage, thin necked appearance, and the active feeding behavior, immediately indicated this bird was a phalarope.

Description:

- Medium sized shorebird, larger than the Least Sandpiper, which was also feeding at the pond.
- The bill was fairly long, thin, needle like, and jet-black.
- The forehead was white, the crown was black. The black extended down the rear of the neck and connected with the black back. The sides of the neck were white. The back was black with buffy streaking, formed from the buffy edges of the mantle and scapulars. The tail was black.
- A black patch covered the eyes and curved downward behind the eyes.
- The remainder of the face, head, breast, sides and belly were white. There was a hint of a light buff along the base of the neck.

The bird was actively feeding the entire time I observed it (about an hour). It did not spin in the water, but swam about picking at the water surface. It came ashore a few times, running quickly, but returned to the shallow water where it captured insect larvae.

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Red-necked Phalarope description

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I saw the bird fly a few times, and in flight, it showed black wings with a white wing stripe, and a dark rump.

The buffy lengthwise streaking on the back, and the overall bright black and white plumage indicated this was a juvenile bird. Adult Red-necked Phalaropes do not have buffy streaking on the back.

Comparison with Other Phalaropes

Wilson's Phalarope has a long, thin bill, similar to Red-necked, however Wilson's in all ages lack a black patch over the eyes, they have a light gray patch which is much less obvious compared to Red-necked. Wilson's has a white rump, and lacks dark wings with a white stripe. Adult basic, and juvenile plumaged Wilson's don't have the "black/white contrast" plumage like Red-necked.

Adult Red Phalarope would have a plain gray back, with dark primaries. The white on the forehead tends to continue into the crown, giving a whiter head to the bird. Red Phalarope's eye mark tends to be shorter than Red-necked, and does not bend downward as obviously as Red-necked.

Juvenile Red Phalaropes lack the streaking on the back, they have buffy edges to the mantle and scapulars resulting in a more scale-like pattern, as opposed to a streaked pattern. The mark over the eye is not as dark as Red-necked, and the plumage is more brown than black.

Red Phalaropes have shorter, stouter bills compared to Red-necked. Red Phalaropes are not expected in Pennsylvania until October.

Experience: I saw and photographed a juvenile Red-necked Phalarope in Pennsylvania in 1993. I saw hundreds of Red-necked Phalaropes in California in August, 2000.

Optics: Meade Carbon Graphite 10 X 42 binoculars, Leica Televid 77mm spotting scope.

Mike Fialkovich
805 Beulah Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15235
(412) 731 - 3581
mpfial@sgi.net

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round One

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

Date of Sighting: 26 August 2002 to 27 August 2002

Location: IMPERIAL

County: ALLEGHENY

Observer(s): Mike Fialkovich

Date of Submission: 2002

Submitted by: Mike Fialkovich

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

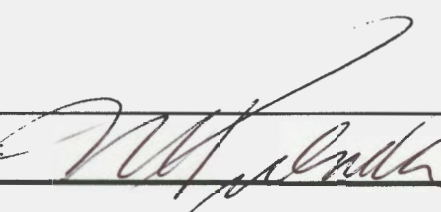
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead			X					
D. Heathcote			X					
P. Hess			X					
J. Stanley			X					
E. Witmer			X					
R. Leberman			X					
M. Sharp			X					
TOTALS			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 6/7/03