

331-02 -1998

1-3-99

On Thursday Dec 31, 1998 I stopped at Moraine S.P. somewhere between 10 and 11:00 A.M. I saw a section of open water roughly 200-300 yds from shore and I began scanning with a 90mm Celestron scope using a 35X eyepiece. I noticed in a small raft of Ruddy Ducks a small, whitish looking bird that reminded me of a Bonapartes Gull. I saw that it was roughly half the size of the Ruddys and it was acting very hyper; swimming quickly like it was a wind-up toy. I knew right away something was different - that it was not a gull, but I wasn't completely sure. The only bird that I could think of that would look like that was a Phalarope. I studied it for about 1/2 hour and basically saw some black behind its head, some black around the eye and at certain angles I thought I was seeing some orange on the bill. Also the bill looked rather thick and when I checked my field guides, (Petersons + Nat'l Geographic) I guessed it to be a Red Phalarope. I did come back around 1:30 or 2:00 and the bird was still there. It never did any spinning, it did not fly and it always kept its neck pulled down.

Later that afternoon I called Dave Darney and told him what I saw, but that I just wasn't completely certain. The following day, Friday, Jan 1, 1999, Dave arrived at the park early and confirmed it as a Phalarope. We ran into Joyce Hoffman and her friend Dave (I can't remember his last name) as they were calling the bird in to Mike Flakovich. They spotted the bird independently of us and they both felt that it was a Red Phalarope. We then went back (the 4 of us) and looked at the bird through Dave Darney's 8 in. Celestron using a 76X eyepiece. We all could see the gray back, orange at the base of the thicker looking bill and a black mark near the eye. The top of the head was whitish with black behind the head.

By this time other birders were arriving and approximately 10 people observed it. A lengthy snow squall moved through and when it was done the bird was never relocated. We checked for it again on Saturday Jan 2 but did not see it again.

Debbie Yoranovich
Butler PA

331-62-1998

Red Phalarope
Lake Arthur, Butler County
January 1, 1999

I had the benefit of seeing the bird in good light using Dave Darney's 100mm Celestron scope. With the extra magnification, both Debby Yovanovich and I were able to see yellow at the base of the bill. The other ID marks were evident through my Nikon FieldScope II-ED, but the bill color was only visible with the larger scope.

I based my determination on the lack of striping on the back, the black eye stripe, the black on the head being well back on the neck, the relatively short and stubbier bill as well as the yellow on the bill.

I had just recently seen many Red Phalaropes as well as Wilson's at Mono Lake in September.

Dave Rieger
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331-02-1998

**Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicaris*)
Moraine State Park, Butler County
January 1, 1999**

by Mike Fialkovich

I received a call from Joyce Hoffmann alerting me to the presence of a Red Phalarope at Moraine State Park, Butler County on January 1, 1999. I drove up to see the bird and found it in an area of open water in the company of Ruddy Ducks. Several other observers were present and we studied the bird together.

Description:

- Small bird, looking like a tiny gull sitting on the water. The nearby Ruddy Ducks looked very large in comparison.
- When I first saw the bird I knew it was a phalarope by the basic gray and white color, small size, black eye patches, and the observation that it was swimming. No other members of any other shorebird group would be swimming away from shore.
- Back and wings pearly gray, lacking any striping, mottling, or other markings. The primaries were blackish.
- In flight, the black primaries showed well along with a white wing stripe.
- The tail was black (visible when the bird flew).
- Head and neck: head and front of neck pure white; a black patch covered each eye. Crown and forehead white. Rear of neck, blackish--the black ran up from the base of the neck (where it meets the back) and ended at the nape. The hindneck color was darker than that of the back and wings. The neck appeared short and thick.
- Breast, foreneck, and sides, white.
- The bill was black. At the distance I viewed the bird, detail on the shape of the bill could not be determined, however it struck me as a short, blunt bill, not long like a Wilson's Phalarope.
- The bird was observed swimming, flying, bathing, and preening. While preening, the detail on the head and neck could be seen as the bird tilted its head down to reach its breast feathers. It was not observed employing the familiar feeding behavior of spinning rapidly in the water.

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Red Phalarope description

Comparison with Other Phalaropes

Red Phalaropes are expected to be seen as migrants in Pennsylvania in late autumn, usually late October to mid-November. This bird could be a straggler from the fall migration. Wilson's Phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*) and Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) are expected during August as migrants in Pennsylvania.

Wilson's Phalarope has a much longer, thinner bill compared to this bird. Wilson's also lacks the white wing stripe the red and red-necked show in flight. Wilson's in all ages lack a black patch over the eyes, rather having a light gray patch which is much less obvious compared to Red and Red-necked. This bird had the obvious black patches over the eyes, and a white wing stripe.

Red-necked Phalarope has a similar pattern to the red. The red-necked shows more extensive black on the crown compared to the red, and the black can extend onto the forehead. This bird had a white crown and forehead, the black being confined to the nape. Red-necked Phalaropes in juvenile plumage show buffy streaks on the back, and winter adults show some light streaking on the back. This bird was plain gray on the back. Red-necked Phalaropes tend to show a long, thin neck. This bird's neck was short and thick.

Unfortunately, the bird was too distant to photograph.

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Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round One

Species: Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicaria*)

Date of Sighting: 31 December 1998 to 1 January 1999

Location: MORaine STATE PARK

County: BUTLER

Observer(s): Debbie Yavonovich, Dave Rieger, Mike Fialkovich, Joyce Hoffman

Date of Submission: 1999

Submitted by: Debbie Yavonovich, Dave Rieger, 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	
D. Couchman		X						
T. Floyd								X
P. Hess		X						
R. Ickes		X						
J. McWilliams			X					
B. Reid		X						
P. Rodewald		X						
TOTALS		5	1					1
DECISION		X						

Comments: 6/0/1

Signature (Secretary):

Date:

12/8/00