



# PENNSYLVANIA RARE BIRD REPORT FORM

This form is presented as a convenience and guide. It can be used if desired, but is not necessary for submitting a report. Species requiring documentation are those on the Review List or not on the Official List of Birds of Pennsylvania. Send documentation to:

Nick Pulcinella, Secretary  
Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee  
613 Howard Ave.  
West Chester, PA 19380  
nickpul@bellatlantic.net

331-01-2003

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SPECIES (common and scientific name) Red Phalarope Phalaropus fulicaria  
Subspecies, if known \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS 1 SEX(ES) male

AGE(S) AND PLUMAGE(S) (e.g. immature; adult in breeding plumage; year for gulls; basic or alternate if you prefer those terms; state of molt if applicable): adult in breeding plumage

DATE OF OBSERVATION 5/25/03 TIME 0830 to 1130 am

LOCATION (city, borough, township) Lower Mount Bethel Township

EXACT SITE (e.g. name of park, lake, road) Martins Creek Flyash Basin owned by PPL

## OBSERVER REPORTING:

Name Michael Schall  
Address 1149 Mickley Ave  
City Whitehall State PA ZIP 18052  
e-mail (optional) mdtjschall@yahoo.com phone (optional) 610-435-2781

OTHER OBSERVERS (only those who saw and identified the bird with you): Rick Wiltrout, Adam, Kathy, and Floyd Miller, Derick & Steve Farbatnik, Dave DeReamus, perhaps another 10 people

HABITAT (e.g. mowed field, woodland edge, any other details) Flyash Basin

DISTANCE TO BIRD 75 to 100 yards

VIEWING CONDITIONS (sky, weather, position of sun relative to you) Overcast, some mist when I found bird but it stopped after first hour

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED 10X42 Pentax Binoculars, Leica APO-Televid 77 Scope

DESCRIPTION (Include as much detail as you observed – size relative to other species present; "jizz"= e.g. posture, body shape, and proportions; colors and patterns of plumage; bill, eye, and leg characteristics; other features relevant to this individual):

See the attached sheet for my description. My description was written using my notes taken on May 25

BEHAVIOR (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing) It bobbed back and forth and side to side picking at the water with its bill but did not spin in a complete circle. It was very busy pecking at the water surface a high percentage of the time it was observed. The side to side spin was about 180°. It flew several times, staying close to the water but not traveling more than 50 yards at a time. The few short flights made happened before other observers arrived.  
VOCALIZATIONS None

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE IF ANY:

Photograph Yes Video recording \_\_\_\_\_ Audio recording \_\_\_\_\_ Drawing \_\_\_\_\_

Photo taken with digital camera through LEICA spotting scope.

Photographer/recorder/illustrator:

Name Floyd Miller

Address 2197 George Lane

City Bath State PA ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ phone (optional) 610-759-2065

Please include a copy of the photograph or recording with your report, and accompany it with a complete written documentation if the identification is obvious to you. If you made a drawing, please include it.

IF THIS IS A DEAD BIRD:

General condition \_\_\_\_\_

If collected (by permit), location of specimen if known \_\_\_\_\_

SEPARATION FROM SIMILAR SPECIES (how you eliminated others)

See my attached sheet

DISCUSSION - Anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:

Many skilled birders were able to view this bird and none had any doubts that it was something other than a Red Phalarope. This is the first county sighting and I believe a rarity in PA in breeding plumage. The photos taken are very good and should leave no doubt to identification of the Red Phalarope.

(Please use an additional page if necessary)

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND/OR SIMILAR SPECIES In Dec 2002, Saw 100+ Red Phalaropes on a Pelagic all in Winter Plumage. Have seen Red-necked Phalarope on 2 occasions in Northampton County (winter plumage)

ARE YOU POSITIVE OF YOUR IDENTIFICATION? (why or why not) This is a positive ID. The Phalarope was in breeding plumage and a quick check in the 2 field guides I had available made it a no doubter.

REFERENCES CONSULTED:

During observation Peterson Field Guide & Nat. Geographic "Birds of North America"

After observation Sibley Guide to Birds

DATE OF THIS REPORT: 7/4/03

SIGNATURE OF OBSERVER

Michael L. Shall



**Red Phalarope description:**

5/25/03

I found the Phalarope on the Flyash Basin at around 0830 with a mist/drizzle coming down. A stalled storm system on the East Coast may have brought this bird inland. After viewing the bird through my scope for 5 minutes, I went to my vehicle to check my field guides. I thought it was a Red Phalarope because of the reddish neck and underparts and thick bill but wanted to be sure. After checking my 2 guides, I grabbed my cell phone and went back to the flyash to make sure it was still there. I called Rick Wiltraut and a few other birders so someone else could verify my find. Rick arrived in 35 minutes and others arrived later. Floyd Miller brought a digital camera for pictures. Amazingly the bird stayed until the next morning allowing other birders a chance to see this rare bird.

The bill was thick and yellow in color with a black tip. It was shorter and thicker than the 2 Red-Necked Phalaropes I have seen, which had long needlelike black bills. The neck and underparts were chestnut-red with no streaks or markings. The head had a dark brownish cap and forehead and there were white cheek patches that partially encompassed its dark eyes. The upperparts were dark brown with buff or golden feather fringes. Part of the white wing stripe could be seen when it was sitting. Most of the time it was jabbing its bill at the water's surface, moving side to side but never spinning in a complete circle. Several times it flew to a new spot but always within a short distance. This got me nervous because no one else had arrived. In flight, the white wing stripes could be seen on the upperparts. Underneath, the body looked dark and the wing linings were white. It was a consensus among the birders that it was a male because the reddish underparts were not extremely bright and the white face patches were not extremely pronounced as seen in the field guides. It stayed in the water the entire time and was by itself. The legs were not seen well and size estimated at about 8 inches.

**Comparisons:**

Paging through my Sibley Guide for shorebirds that might be similar, which have reddish underparts and less than 10 inches that might be possible alternatives yielded only 2 species. Red Knots in breeding plumage have similar reddish underparts but are larger, stocky birds with black bills, a grayish back, and no white face patches. Curlew Sandpipers are reddish underneath but have a very different long decurved black bill and rufous color on its back and no white face patches when in breeding plumage.

The most likely confusing birds would be the Red-Necked and Wilson's Phalaropes. Bill length, color, and shape eliminates these 2 species. Both have long needlelike, black bills. The Phalarope observed had a shorter thick bill that was yellow with a black tip. The Red Phalarope was in breeding plumage, which makes it easier to distinguish from the other species. Neither have the complete reddish underparts like the Red Phalarope. The two Red-Necked Phalaropes I have seen (both in winter plumage) had longer thinner necks compared to the shorter, thick neck of this Red Phalarope. The white cheek patch is not present on a Red-Necked Phalarope and Wilson's has a white throat with a dark stripe going thru the head and a gray cap which eliminates these two species. In flight, the Red-Necked and Wilson's show primarily white underparts and this Phalarope had completely dark (reddish) underparts.

# Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

## Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Red Phalarope (Phalaropus fulicaria))

Date of Sighting: 25 May 2003 to 25 May 2003

Location: MARTIN'S CREEK FLYASH BASIN

County : NORTHAMPTON

Observer(s): Michael Schall, Rick Wiltruat, Devich Farbotnik, Dave DeReamus mobs

Date of Submission: 2003

Submitted by: Michael Schall

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
<del>G. Armistead</del> R. Witmer	X							
D. Heathcote	X							
P. Guris	X							
J. Stanley	X							
E. Witmer	X							
R. Leberman	X							
M. Sharp	X							
TOTALS	7							
DECISION	X							

Comments:

Signature (Secretary)



Date: 3/1/05