

331-61-2007

Red Phalarope

Greencove Wetlands, Washington County

Here are my notes on the Washington County Red Phalarope from 11 September 2007. I quickly jotted down a page of notes in my field notebook while standing at the wetlands, then before going to bed that night, I fleshed those notes out in my birding journal.

Breezy and sunny with 35% cloud cover. A front had moved through the previous night and earlier in the day on 11 September. I visited the wetlands from 4:45-5:30 pm fully expecting to see some newly arrived shorebirds.

I arrived at the wetlands at 4:45. When I pulled into the parking area, a duck hunter with a black lab was standing at his car preparing to go hunting. I quickly got out of my car, grabbed my scope, and walked up to a spot to check the mudflats before the dog and hunter spooked any birds. As soon as the shorebirds saw me, several noisy Killdeer took to the air circling the large pond/mudflats area. I immediately noticed that there was a smaller bright white and black shorebird flying with them. I watched them circle several times through the 10X binoculars. Even though they were in the air, I noted the bird's elongated black eyepatch and black and white wings.

The hunter and dog moved on and the shorebirds eventually landed. I then watched the very active phalarope through the scope for the next 45 minutes. After taking a long look, I consulted my 4th edition NGS field guide. I quickly narrowed the bird's ID down to either Red-necked or Red Phalarope. I had never before seen either species. After consulting my field guide, I proceeded to study the bird carefully. At one point, the phalarope landed less than 50 feet in front of me allowing me to study it in detail through the scope at 20X.

****The bird appeared to be fully molted. It did not have the mottled appearance of a bird sporting both breeding and basic plumage.**

****The bird's back was a light slaty grayish-blue color. It had no feathers of any color other than grayish-blue on its back. There was absolutely no striping on the back nor were there any white or black feathers on the back - just light bluish-gray feathers of a uniform color. The back was light grayish-blue rather than a dark grayish-blue.**

****Nowhere did the bird have any rufous, orange, buffy, or brown feathers.**

****At first I thought the bird had some lower back feathers with a very minimal amount of white edging, however, I ultimately decided that I was actually looking at some wing feathers.**

****The bird had pinkish-gray legs. The sun was behind my back and I could see the leg color perfectly.**

**When the bird first landed, one of the first things that I noted was that the bill was black, short, and thick. I carefully looked for any evidence of yellow on the bird's bill, but didn't see any.

**The bird had an elongated black eye patch, which was plainly evident even in flight.

**The dark cap on the bird's head was not solid black, especially toward the forehead where it had a patchy mottled appearance. When looking at the bird from behind, the black cap narrowed as it descended down the back of the head and neck.

**The bird's breast and belly were bright white. The bird's sides just beneath the wings were mostly white with just a few off-white areas.

**During the entire 45 minutes that I observed the bird, I never heard it vocalize.

**The bird was very active feeding, flying, and foraging, however, it frequently would just sit down on the mudflats for a few seconds, then stand up and again continue foraging.

**At one point, the bird landed in the water and floated like a gull for a couple of minutes.

**The phalarope and a Lesser Yellowlegs stayed together almost the entire time that I watched it. They flew together and foraged together.

**I observed the phalarope in the same scope view with Killdeer, Least Sandpipers, and the Lesser Yellowlegs. It was obviously smaller than a Killdeer.

**I left Greencove Wetlands when the phalarope flew to the back side of the wetlands and out of my sight. The bird was still present when I left.

**When I left Greencove, I was 99% certain that I had seen a Red Phalarope. I realized that this was the rarest of the three phalarope species that might be seen in Washington County. I typically don't carry a cell phone, and at the time did not know any local birders to call even if I had one with me. It took me over an hour to drive home to Morgantown, WV. Upon arriving home, I posted my sighting on the PA birding listserv in hopes that someone else could see the phalarope.

**Over the course of the evening I looked at many phalarope images in my own books and on the Internet. When I went to bed that night, I was confident that I had seen a fully molted Red Phalarope at the Greencove Wetlands on September 11th.

John Boback, Ph.D.
Morgantown, WV

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Red Phalarope Phalaropus fulicaria

Date of Sighting: 11 September 2007 to 11 September 2007

County : WASHINGTON

Location : GREENCOVE WETLANDS

Observer(s): John Boback

Date of Submission: 2007

Submitted by: John Boback

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
R. Wiltraut			X					
A. Guarente			X					
T. Johnson				X				
B. Coulter			X					
E. Witmer			X					
J. Heller				X				
G. Malosh			X					
TOTALS			5	2				
DECISION								

Comments: 5/2- GO TO 2ND ROUND

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

6/21/09

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round Two

Species: Red Phalarope Phalaropus fulicaria

Date of Sighting: 11 September 2007 to 11 September 2007

County : WASHINGTON

Location : GREENCOVE WETLANDS

Observer(s): John Boback

Date of Submission: 2007

Submitted by: John Boback

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

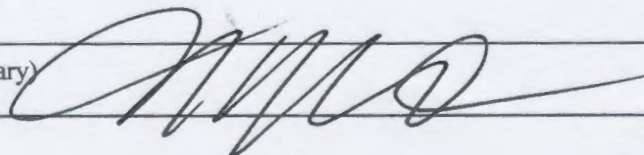
Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
R. Wiltraut			X					
A. Guarente			X					
T. Johnson			X					
B. Coulter			X					
C. Rutt			X					
J. Heller			X					
G. Malosh			X					
TOTALS			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments:

7/8

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

10/30/07