

Red Phalarope

Phalaropus fulicaria

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Location: Sunset Point, Presque Isle S.P., Erie, Pa.

Date: October 28, 2013

Time: 9:00 and again at 10:00 AM

Weather: Variably cloudy, wind NE to 10 mph, temp. 45 F

Viewing distance: about 150 to 200 yards offshore

Optics: Swarovski 8 X 42 Binocular and Kowa TSN 884 Prominar spotting scope from 30X to 60X.

Description: I spotted what I thought was a phalarope drop down on the water at around 9:00 AM, but it was a split second view as it disappeared behind a wave. At about 10:00 AM Roger Donn spotted the bird again and this time I was able to confirm that it was a phalarope. We watched it jump up and make brief flights of not more than six or seven feet before touching down on the water again. The lake was rough with about three to four foot waves, so we had difficulty getting good looks at it when it was sitting on the water. It seemed to stay down in the troughs. However, fairly decent looks of it in flight confirmed that it was a Red Phalarope and not a Red-necked Phalarope. It was pale across the back and upper wings with a white wing stripe that was not as bold as in Red-necked Phalarope. Red-necked Phalaropes are dark across the back, even adults in basic plumage which show dark gray mantles, and the wings are blackish which makes the white wing stripe quite prominent. The bird was bulky and was built much like a Sanderling. Nice looks at the wing linings showed a clean unmarked bright white. The wing linings of Red-necked Phalarope are white, but with various amounts of dark feathers, especially along the leading edge of the wings. This bird showed no black feathers in the wing linings. I have seen several Red Phalaropes throughout the years at Presque Isle S.P. There are few records of Red-necked Phalarope after September in Erie County with Red Phalaropes appearing as early as the second week of October with records continuing into early December.