

357-01-1991

PORC

1 American Avocet 9/24/57

1 Lesser Black-backed Gull 12/16/90

2 Black-legged Kittiwakes 3/31/91

Kittiwakes 3/31/91

Small pale bill; head white; did not see legs;
tail all white; underparts white; mantle pale gray
wth black tips (a hint of black up the leading edge
of first primary); size larger than Bonaparte's;
flight very tern-like; would not alight on water.

M. A.

357-01-1991



Second Berks County Record of BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE
Larus tridactyla

Rudy Keller

As Matt Spence and I were scanning Lake Ontelaunee for waterfowl at about 9:30 a.m. on 31 March 1991, two birds came in high from the southeast that proved to be adult Black-legged Kittiwakes (*Larus tridactyla*) in breeding plumage. At first I called them Bonaparte's Gulls (*L. philadelphia*) because of their small size, buoyancy and fast wingbeats, but as they dropped closer to the water, their pale bills, all-white heads and lack of contrast between gray mantle and flashing white outer primaries ruled out Bonaparte's Gull. When seen in scale with the Ring-billed (*L. delawarensis*) and Herring Gulls (*L. argentatus*) that were on the lake, the Kittiwakes appeared smaller, slighter, smaller-billed and shorter-winged with faster wingbeats and much more buoyant, graceful flight. They did not call.

The birds' behavior was very tern-like, even butterfly-like, as they hovered several feet above the lake, suddenly dropped to the surface and briefly dipped their bills into the water without alighting, then bounced back up to repeat the procedure. They repeated this behavior near a group of loafing Ring-billed and Herring

Gulls for 3 to 5 minutes, then disappeared behind a peninsula. A thorough search of the lake failed to relocate the birds. Perhaps they simply paused to drink, or perhaps they tested the waters, found them too fresh and flew away to look for the ocean.

The Kittiwakes had unmarked white heads, dark eyes and short bills that seemed very small at a distance because they were so pale. The underparts were white, as were the rumps and tails. The birds' tails were fully fanned the whole time they were in view, and we could see no cleft or fork. ~~But~~ Harrison (1983) notes that the cleft tail is less noticeable in adults than in juvenile birds. We also did not see the legs, which the birds kept hidden in their belly feathers.

The underwings were white except for black tips on the primaries, with black extending partway up the leading edge of the first primary. On one bird, the wingtips were solid black; on the other, a subterminal white spot contrasted with the black on perhaps the 4th primary of each wing. The leading and trailing edges of the wings were white up to the black wingtips. The mantles and backs were gray. The demarcation between the black and gray or white of the wings was clear, but more scalloped than straight-edged; it did not

'bleed' into the gray or white as it does on the bibs of some chickadees.

I observed the birds through 7X35 binoculars and a 60 mm zoom scope in good light under clear, almost calm conditions at distances of about 200 feet to more than 400 yds.

To my knowledge, this is the first sighting of Black-legged Kittiwake in Berks County since Dr. Earl L. Poole saw one at L. Ontelaunee 17 November 1935 during a severe northeast storm. The species was also listed by J. F. Hofmann in 1890, a record doubted by Poole because Hofmann did not list Bonaparte's Gull, which in winter plumage can be confused with Black-legged Kittiwake.

References:

Harrison, P. 1983. *Seabirds. An Identification Guide*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, Massachusetts.
Poole, E.L. 1947. *A Half Century Of Bird Life In Berks County, Pennsylvania*. Reading Public Museum And Art Gallery Bull. No. 19. Reading, Pennsylvania.

This came on disk only with Berks Co. report for Pa. Birds 5:1

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # of

Species: **Black-legged Kittiwake**

Date of Sighting: **March 31, 1991**

Observer(s): **Rudy Keller, Matt Spence**

Date of Submission: **1991**

Submitted by: **Rudy Keller**

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V		
					A	B	C
E. Kwater			X				
B. Haas			X				
F. Haas			X				
R. Leberman			X				
G. McWilliams			X				
S. Santner			X				
P. Schwalbe			X				
TOTALS			7				
DECISION			X				

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

Born Haas

Date:

11-6-91