

## BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE

*Rissa tridactyla*

357-01-2007

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Location: Sunset Point at Presque Isle State Park, Erie Co., Pa.

Date: October 18, 2007

Time: 9:00 AM

Weather: Mostly cloudy, wind southerly to less than 5 mph, temp. 60 F

Optics: Kowa TSN 4 with variable objective lens set at 35X

Details: I was conducting my waterbird count when loose flocks of Bonaparte's Gulls began streaming by the point beginning around 8:30 AM. Mixed with the Bonaparte's were Common Terns and all were flying in an easterly direction. As I counted the gulls and terns I was carefully looking at each individual in hopes of spotting a Little Gull, Sabine's Gull, or Black-legged Kittiwake, since all three of these species are nearly always seen with Bonaparte's Gulls. At exactly 9:00 AM I identified a Black-legged Kittiwake in basic I plumage flying with the Bonaparte's Gulls in an easterly direction. It was well offshore, perhaps as far away as  $\frac{3}{4}$  to a mile from me. However even at this distance the classic field marks could easily be seen. The kittiwake was larger than the Bonaparte's Gulls with obviously longer wings. The kittiwake's wing beats were slow and shallow while the Bonaparte's wing beats were more tern-like, more of a deep rowing or sweeping movement. The upperside pattern was unmistakable. I could clearly see the bold black "M" pattern across the otherwise white upperside, created by the combination of the black outer primaries and leading edge of the outerwing, with the diagonal black bar crossing the forewing. The black bar across the upper part and sides of the neck distinguished it from the similarly patterned Little Gull and Ross's Gull. The only other field marks that could be seen from this distance was the narrow black terminal tail band and the gray mantle. The rest of the bird including the head was white. Because of the distance, I could not clearly see the dark spot behind the eye. The kittiwake continued flying east and then out of sight. It only took a couple of minutes for it to pass the point. A photograph could not be obtained because it was too far away.

In the past, I have identified kittiwakes here, Niagara Falls, and in the North Atlantic. Even though it is likely to be annual at Presque Isle S.P., it is only reported about once every two or three years.

Jerry McWilliams

**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Voting Tabulation – Round One**

Species: Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

Date of Sighting: 18 October 2007 to 18 October 2007

County : ERIE

Location : PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Date of Submission: 2007

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

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			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary)



Date: 6/21/08