

360-01-1989

#360

SABINE'S GULL

On September 23, 1989 upon entering Fisher Drive on Presque Isle State Park, I met Ed Kwater leaving Fisher Drive. He waved me down to announce that he had just discovered a first-winter Sabine's Gull (*Larus sabini*) off Leo's Boat Livery. I immediately drove to Leo's, arriving there at approximately 5:15 PM. Within seconds of getting out of the car and looking south over the bay I located the bird. It was about 1/2 to 3/4 of a mile away from me flying in my direction about 50' above the water. The size of the bird (Bonaparte's Gull size) and all dark leading edge of the wings as it approached me gave me a clue that this was probably the Sabine's Gull. Within moments it wheeled to the east and circled back to the west revealing the diagnostic upperwing pattern. The first 5 or 6 primaries were black with the black extending and tapering to a point at the wrist forming a black wedge contrasting with the white remaining primaries, secondaries, and most of the greater coverts. At the wrist a point of chocolate brown extended and widened to the base of the wing including all of the median coverts and lower greater coverts forming a second wedge. The brown plumage continued over the back of the bird so that only the tail and rump were white. After identifying the bird I ran back to the car to get my camera, and when I returned the bird could not be found again. With such a brief view of the bird I was not able to get any details on the head or tail, but even from this distance the bold dark "M" on the upperside of the bird was unmistakably the pattern of the Sabine's Gull depicted in all of the field guides. Viewing conditions were good under variably cloudy skies (stratocumulus and cumulonimbus). Wind velocity was approximately 25 MPH with wind gusts to 35 and 40 MPH from the north west. This cold front that arrived just after Hurricane Hugo also brought with it over 3,000 Bonaparte's Gulls (*Larus philadelphia*), 4 Little Gulls (*Larus minutus*), and about 1,500 Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*). Optical equipment used was a Zeiss 10 X 40 Dyalyt Binocular. In the last 10 years I have seen about 6 Sabine's Gulls, one other on Presque Isle and the rest at Niagara Falls.

Jerry McWilliams



See Account by Kwater

Pennsylvania Birds Volume 3, #3, Page 96

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # / of

Species: **Sabine's Gull**

Date of Sighting: **September 23, 1989**

Observer(s): **Jerry McWilliams, Ed Kwater**

Date of Submission: **1990**

Submitted by: **Jerry McWilliams, Ed Kwater**

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		5	1				1
DECISION		X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

B. Haas

Date:

8-15-91