

360-02-1995



SABINE'S GULL

Xema sabini

Location: Presque Isle State Park

Date: October 15, 1995

Time: 4:30 to about 4:32 PM

Weather: Variably cloudy with occasional showers and hail. Wind 25 mph with gusts to 30 mph from the west. Viewing conditions good

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Optics: TSN 4 Kowa scope at 35X

Details of sighting and description: Beginning yesterday afternoon, the wind shifted from the southwest to west-northwest and the temperature dropped from about 65 F to 55 F in a short period of time. These conditions continued overnight with temperatures still dropping. Since I had to work, I couldn't get out to Presque Isle State Park until 4:00 PM. When I arrived at Beach 11 where I could get the best view of Gull point, I could see the waves over Lake Erie that the local news said was eight feet. As I suspected there was an abundance of Bonaparte's Gulls (*Larus philadelphia*) present. I estimated about 3,000 birds from this point. Some were actively feeding while others were migrating past the tip of Gull Point. There were also many gulls sitting on the water about 500 feet from Beach 11. While scanning the migrant birds at the southern tip of Gull point, I spotted a gull with a striking back pattern that I immediately identified as a juvenile Sabine's Gull. It was flying about twenty feet above the water in a rather leisurely flight in a northwesterly direction toward the lake. I was able to study the bird for only about two minutes before it disappeared behind the high vegetation at Gull Point. Even though my view of the gull was brief, I could clearly see the following field marks: The size of the bird was slightly larger and perhaps a little more robust than the Bonaparte's Gulls that were flying nearby. The very dark "M" across the upperside was the most prominent field mark. This pattern was formed by the black wedge of the outermost primaries and greater coverts tapering to a point at the wrist of the wing meeting the dark brown lesser coverts starting at a point at the wrist of the wing and widening over the forewing to include the median and the inner greater coverts. The dark brown extended across the mantle to the opposite wing repeating the bold pattern. The black and brown wing pattern surrounded the pure white inner portion of the wings (inner primaries, outer secondaries, and mid-greater coverts) creating a diagnostic broad white triangle. The nape was brown and slightly paler than the mantle.

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The head, tail, and undersides were white with the exception of a narrow dark brown tail band. The bill appeared to be entirely black. There was a hint of the same prominent upperwing pattern on the undersides of the wings. The gull was perhaps 1,000 or more feet away from me, so I could not break the details of the plumage down any more than described above.

I have seen Sabine's Gull at Niagara Falls and four of the five that have been recorded in Erie County.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul W. Miller".

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: **Sabine's Gull (Larus sabini)**

Date of Sighting: **15 October 1995 to 15 October 1995**

Location: **PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK**

County: **ERIE**

Observer(s): **Jerry McWilliams**

Date of Submission: **1996**

Submitted by: **Jerry McWilliams**

Written Description: **YES** Photo: **NO** Specimen: **NO**

Recording: **NONE**

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas			X					
N. Pulcinella			X					
E. Kwater			X					
R. Ickes			X					
G. McWilliams			X					
P. Schwalbe			X					
S. Feldstein			X					
TOTALS			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

F. C. Haas

Date:

2-22-97