

338 - 01 - 1999

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September 25, 1999

Nick Pulcinella
Rare Bird Reports Editor
210 Welcome Avenue
Norwood, PA 19074

Dear Nick:

Enclosed please find a written description for a Franklin's Gull to submit to P.O.R.C. for review.

This was a first for me in Pennsylvania, so I was excited to see the bird. It was present at Shenango Reservoir for at least two days. It was discovered by Russ States, and seen by Dave Darney and Debbie Yovanovich on Saturday, August 14. On Sunday August 15, many birders were present to see the gull.

Let me know if you have any questions about my description. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Mike Fialkovich
Allegheny and Fayette County Compiler

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**Franklin's Gull
(*Larus pipixcan*)**

**Shenango Lake, Mercer County
August 15, 1999**

by Mike Fialkovich

I received a call from Dave Darney on August 14 informing me there was a Franklin's Gull at Shenango Lake, found by Russ States. Dave Darney and Debbie Yovanovich also saw the bird.

I searched for it the following day and arrived at the site where there were many other birders, most were part of a Westmoreland Bird Club shorebird outing. The group saw the bird which flew off just before I arrived. I searched the lake and found the bird in flight. I recognized its distinctive wing pattern and noted the size difference compared to the Ring-billed Gulls flying nearby.

DESCRIPTION:

- A small gull, noticeably smaller than Ring-billed Gulls which were also present.
- Head: white with a partial black hood. The hood was confined to the cheeks and the nape. The black was darkest on the sides of the face and mottled on the nape. Two bold white crescents around the eye; one crescent above and one along the bottom of the eye.
- Back and wings: gray. Primaries black with white mirrors. The black in the primaries and the gray of the wings was separated by a white area visible in flight.
- Bill: black, intermediate in size, not thin like a tern or Bonaparte's Gull, but not as bulky as a Ring-billed Gull. Legs black. Tail: unmarked white.
- Age and plumage: adult, basic plumage.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER GULLS:

Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) - Many Ring-billed Gulls were present at the lake allowing direct comparison with the Franklin's. Ring-billed Gulls are noticeably larger and lack the white separation between the black primaries and gray in the remainder of the wings.

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Franklin's Gull Description
Mike Fialkovich

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Bills on adults are yellow with a black subterminal ring. Non-adult Ring-billed Gulls have flesh colored, black tipped bills. The legs of non-adult Ring-billed Gulls are pinkish, those of adults greenish or greenish yellow. The legs and bill of the Franklin's Gull were black. Ring-billed Gulls never show a partial hood, or bold eye crescents.

Bonaparte's Gull (*Larus philadelphia*) - Bonaparte's Gulls are slightly smaller than Franklin's. At this time of year, adults would be in various stages of molt, some showing completely black heads while others would have mottled black and white heads. First year birds lack any signs of a hood, instead having black ear spots. The bill of a Bonaparte's is much thinner compared to a Franklin's Gull. In flight, Bonaparte's are more ternlike than Franklin's, with a completely different wing pattern. The white wedge on adults and the brownish carpal bar on basic one birds is very different from the adult Franklin's wing pattern. Bonaparte's also have pointed wings whereas the Franklin's are less so.

Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*) - A similar species is the Laughing Gull, which is very rare inland in Pennsylvania. An adult Laughing Gull shows eye crescents, and a complete hood in breeding plumage, with a dark red bill. An adult in basic plumage lacks a hood, and the traces of one are faint. Franklin's Gull retains the dark vestiges of a hood, darkest on the cheek and faint on the crown and nape. In flight, the wing pattern of Laughing Gull differs from Franklin's--the black in the primaries is not separate from the gray in the remainder of the wing by white; the black meets the gray.

EXPERIENCE:

I have seen hundreds of Franklin's Gulls in Texas.

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18 August 1999

Nick Pulcinella
210 Welcome Avenue
Norwood, PA 19074

Dear Nick:

I saw the adult, winter plumage, Franklin's Gull at Shenango Reservoir on Sunday, 15 August 1999. I have enclosed a drawing I made based on what I saw of the bird. Unfortunately, I didn't think to take a picture of it when it was at its closest point to me since I was out with the Westmoreland Bird Club on an outing and we wanted to make sure everyone got a good look at the bird through a scope. It was standing on a sandbar in good profile and the red-tipped bill was quite noticeable, along with the partially hooded head.

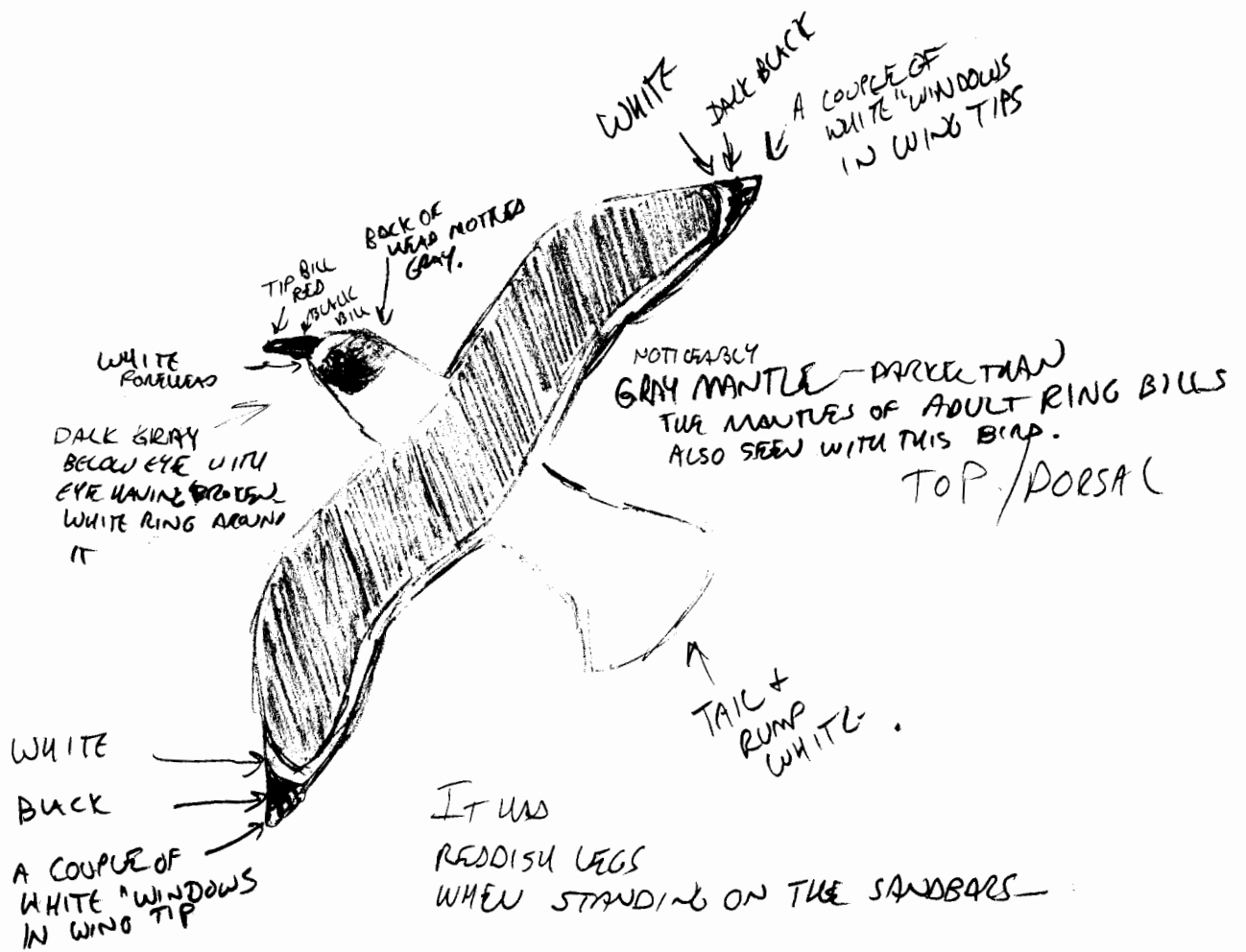
Franklin's Gull
Larus pipixan
Shenango Reservoir
Golden Access Area
15 August 1999.

The bird was first seen standing on a sand/gravel bar with Ring-billed Gulls and Caspian Terns. It was noticeably smaller than the Ring-billed Gulls and Caspian Terns. At first I thought it was just a Bonaparte's Gull that had not completed molting into winter plumage. However, a closer look at the bird revealed it had a reddish-tipped beak that was not totally black as would be expected with a Bonaparte's Gull. Also, the legs were more reddish than I am used to seeing on a Bonaparte's Gull. It was then I realized it was not a Bonaparte's in incomplete molt, but a Franklin's in winter plumage.

The head had an incomplete "hood." The forehead, front of the face and "chin" were white. The back of the head looked "dirty" and was a mottled gray that covered it all the way across the back of the head. The check and area around the eye were still fairly dark gray and there was a broken white eye-ring around the dark eye.

The bird was observed in my scope for a long period as it was flying along the northern edge of the reservoir. The mantle color was a decidedly gray color, darker than the mantles of the Ring-billed Gulls. The wing tips were dark gray or black with noticeable white patches or "windows" (or "mirrors") in the tips of the primaries. There also was a decidedly white break between the gray mantle and black on the primaries. The dorsal rump and tail were white. The underside body and tail were whitish. The underwing was gray, but a lighter gray than the mantle color, again with a white break, dark gray or black ends of the primaries with white "windows" in the ends of the primaries.

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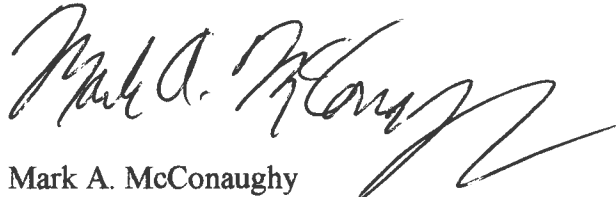
FRANKLIN'S GULL - MARK A. MCNAUGHY
 8/15/1999 AT SHENANGO RESERVOIR,
 GOLDEN ACCESS AREA.

BIRD WAS SMALLER THAN THE RING BILL
 GULLS AND ABOUT THE SIZE OF A
 BONAPARTE'S GULL. I FIRST THOUGHT IT
 WAS A BONAPARTE'S GULL UNTIL I
 REALLY LOOKED AT IT WHEN IT WAS STANDING
 ON A SANDBAR.

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The wing and bill pattern indicated to me that it was an adult Franklin's Gull in winter plumage.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark A. McConaughy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Mark A. McConaughy
3787K Logans Ferry Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15239-3910
TimeTraveler@email.msn.com

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Ballot - Round One

Species: Franklin's Gull (Larus pipixan)

Date of Sighting: 14 August 1999 to 14 August 1999

Location: MERCER

County: SHENANGO RESERVOIR

Observer(s): Mike Fialkovich, Russ States, Dave Darney, Debbie Yavanovich, Mark McConaughy

Date of Submission: 1999

Submitted by: Mike Fialkovich, Mark McConaughy

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

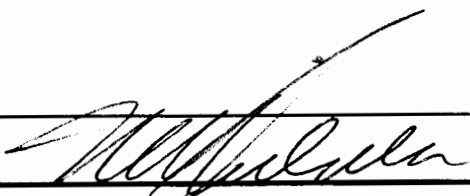
Specimen: No

Recording: No

| Member | Class I | Class II | Class III | Class IV-A | | | | Abstain |
|--------------|---------|----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|---------|---------|
| | | | | | Class IV-B | Class IV-C | Class V | |
| G. Armistead | | X | | | | | | |
| D. Couchman | | X | | | | | | |
| P. Hess | | X | | | | | | |
| R. Ickes | | X | | | | | | |
| B. Reid | | X | | | | | | |
| P. Rodewald | | X | | | | | | |
| M. Sharp | | X | | | | | | |
| TOTALS | | 7 | | | | | | |
| DECISION | | X | | | | | | |

Comments: 7/0/0

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 11/2/01