

PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE
210 Welcome Ave. Norwood, PA 19074

12 February 2002

Devich Farbotnik
PO Box 252
Milford Square, PA 18935

Dear Devich,

Thank you for submitting documentation on the following four records. After careful review, the Committee regrets that it has voted not to accept these records.

Pacific Loon at Lake Nockamixon on 23 April 2000: One member voted in favor of acceptance and six did not. Three of the six viewed the documentation as indicating a record probably correct but not beyond reasonable doubt, while the other three considered the extent of detail in the description to be insufficient to evaluate adequately.

California Gull, Peace Valley Park on 11 May 2000: The Committee voted unanimously against acceptance based on the video. The gulls in the video appeared to be typical 1st winter/1st summer Ring-Billed Gulls.

Yellow-legged Gull, Tullytown landfill on 12 February 2000: The vote was one in favor of acceptance and six not in favor. Those who voted not to accept it emphasized that neither the description nor the video offered sufficient details to make this very difficult identification.

As David Sibley comments in *The Sibley Guide to Birds*, "Identification of adult is extremely complex, as all characters overlap with rare individual Herring Gulls. Positive identification requires careful and extended study and experience with all variations of Herring Gull. Even when all characteristics fit Yellow-legged, the possibility of Herring x Lesser Black-backed hybrids or of very pale-mantled Lesser Black-backed Gulls must be considered."

Slaty-backed Gull, Tullytown landfill on 28 February 2000: The vote was unanimous against acceptance -- again for lack of sufficient details. Three characters essential for identifying a Slaty-backed were not included in the description: trailing edge of the secondaries and inner primaries, tips of the outer primaries, and appearance of the tertial crescent on a standing bird.

As with Yellow-legged, Slaty-backed is a very difficult identification problem, with extensive details required to separate it from a dark-mantled Herring Gull and many rather frequent hybrid combinations of various gull species. As an example of the great range of details required, Ontario's second accepted record of Slaty-backed was supported by five pages of extensive description.

Non-acceptance does not mean that any of these birds were not those species, but rather that the Committee considered conclusive identifications impossible.

We hope these results will not discourage you from submitting further reports on any rarities you find, and we urge all observers to accompany photos and videos with extensive written descriptions especially for the possibility of features that may not be visible in the pictures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

For the Committee:
Paul Hess, Chairman

Record Nos. 002a-01-2000 (Pacific Loon), 346-01-2000 (California Gull),
350a-01-2000 (Yellow-legged Gull), 351-01-2000 (Slaty-backed Gull)

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation - Round One

Species: California Gull (*Larus californicus*)

Date of Sighting: 11 May 2000 to 11 May 2000

Location: PEACE VALLEY COUNTY PARK

County: BUCKS

Observer(s): Devich Farbotnik

Date of Submission: 2000

Submitted by: Devich Farbotnik

Written Description: No

Photo: No

Specimen: No

Recording: Video

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead						X		
D. Couchman								
P. Hess						X		
R. Ickes								X
B. Reid				X				
P. Rodewald				X				
M. Sharp						X		
TOTALS				2		3		1
DECISION				2		3		1

Comments: 0/5/1

Signature (Secretary):

Date:

11/2/01