

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2015-06-19 15:28:50
Observer's Name	Geoff Malosh
E-mail	pomarine@earthlink.net
Phone	412-735-3128
Observer's Address	Street Address: 450 Amherst Avenue City: Moon Township State / Province: PA Postal / Zip Code: 15108 Country: United States
Names of additional observers	None at the time of my sighting. Earlier, Ben Coulter et al. Later, Dan Weeks, Jeff Cohen, Tom Moeller.
Species (Common Name)	Kelp Gull
Species (Scientific Name)	Larus dominicanus
Number of individuals	1
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	Adult, alternate
Observation Date and Time	01-18-2015 6:50 AM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Yes
Link to eBird checklist	http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S21427813
County	Allegheny
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Downtown Pittsburgh
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	Ohio River between Point State Park and the West End Bridge
GPS coordinates of sighting	40.444800, -80.023168
Habitat	River
Distance to bird	Approx. 75 yards
Viewing conditions	Overcast morning at first light
Description	<p>Since this record is being submitted well after the fact, I have copied the entry I made to eBird on the day of the sighting below, verbatim.</p> <p>One black-mantled bird that I believe was an adult Kelp Gull. The bird rested on the water for the entire observation until it flew to leave the roost. I first spotted the bird in near darkness and was able to watch it on the water until about 7:20am when the bird departed in dim but more than sufficient light for</p>

observation. When the bird flew it first stretched its wings for a few seconds, at which time a very limited, single white spot appeared on the outermost primary on each wing. Once the bird was in flight the extent of white on the wingtip was much more limited than any adult Great Black-backed Gull (GBBG) in my experience, though I have even within the past two months seen literally hundreds of Kelp Gulls in New Zealand and this bird seemed to be consistent with those observations. When the bird was resting on the water before flying, it showed the following features: small for a GBBG, almost Herring Gull-sized or perhaps just a shade larger, and noticeably smaller than the (certain) GBBG nearby; clean unmarked white head; and nearly all black folded primary tips with very limited white spots.

A bird showing features of a Kelp Gull was found and photographed by Ben Coulter the previous evening 1/17. Ben's video of the bird taking flight shows pretty much the same wing pattern I recall on the bird this morning; moreover Ben's photos appear to show yellow legs, consistent with Kelp Gull (though I did not see the legs myself). Later in the afternoon on 1/18, this same bird was found and photographed by several birders at Duck Hollow on the Monongahela River, those photos do show both unambiguously yellow legs (there had been some uncertainty in Ben's somewhat distant photos) and the correct structure for Kelp Gull. Based on all the evidence pieced together between these three observations, I believe the bird is a Kelp Gull, the first for Pennsylvania. I am still entering it as a "gull sp." for now but only waiting for more opinions on the record considering its significance.

EDIT 1/21: changing this record from "gull sp." to Kelp Gull.

A video grab of the bird's extended wing by Ben Coulter on the evening of 1/17 is here: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/somatochlora/16288534556/>

A close photo of the bird at Duck Hollow made by Dan Weeks on the afternoon of 1/18 is here: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/118371714@N07/16313930185/>

Behavior (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)

See Description above

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

This bird was first seen by Ben Coulter et al. on the Ohio River late in the day 17 Jan. I saw it at first light on 18 Jan, and then the same bird was seen again by at least three observers on the afternoon of 18 Jan at Duck Hollow, on the Monongahela River about 6 miles (straight line) from downtown Pittsburgh. Though Ben and I strongly suspected Kelp Gull from our observations, there was still some room for uncertainty especially as to the exact color of the legs. It was the pictures obtained by three birders at Duck Hollow on 18 Jan that confirmed the ID in my opinion, based primarily on its smaller size, unambiguously yellow legs, and of course the wingtip pattern. Additional discussion of its separation from GBBG is in the eBird description I copied in to the "Description" field above.

Discussion – anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:

I am attaching several photos from Duck Hollow on behalf of other observers with their permission. I did not obtain any usable photos myself during my sighting early on 18 Jan due to low light and the fact that I was concentrating on watching the bird with a scope for a wing stretch, rather than watching through a camera. It is my understanding that only Ben Coulter has submitted this record as of now, so I wanted to make sure that the Duck Hollow photos were also presented to the committee for evaluation.

Six photos are attached, three by Jeff Cohen and three by Daniel Weeks. All of the attached files include the photographer name in the file name. All of those photos were obtained at Duck Hollow between 4:30pm and 5:10pm on 18 Jan. Additionally several photos by Tom Moeller, also taken between 4:30

and 5:10 on 18 Jan, are available at this link:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/104676662081154017882/KelpGullInPittsburgh>

Lastly Ben Coulter's photos and video from 17 Jan are at this link:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/somatochlora/>

Direct link to Ben's video is here:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/somatochlora/16314512565/> and the rest of his photos of this bird immediately precede the video in his photostream.

Are you positive of your identification ? (Why or why not)

Yes. In addition to my own observation of the extended wing, the photos seem to confirm Kelp Gull and I am confident they show the same bird I saw. Several experts were consulted (by Coulter) and nobody could make a strong argument against Kelp Gull.

Supporting evidence (check all that apply)

Photograph

Upload images, audio, video or drawings



[KelpGull_DuckHollow_20150118_DanWeeks1.JPG](#)























