

375-05-1996

Sooty Terns  
September 7, 1996  
Washington Boro - Conejohela Flats  
Lancaster County, Pa.  
Frank & Barb Haas

On 9/7/96, we were at the Susquehanna River to look for rare birds that might get blown in by Hurricane Fran. We were at the observation point located at Blue Rock Road. This is directly across from "Avocet Point," which is on one of the islands. Bob Schutsky, Tom Garner, Ed Pederson, and Bruce Carl were on Avocet Point. The distance between us was about 1/3 mile.

Schutsky had just brought his boat over to our location to tell us what they had had that morning and was heading back across the river when Frank spotted two dark birds approaching from the south. He quickly got the questar on them and shouted that they were dark terns. Barb looked at them and then started yelling and waving in order to get the attention of the observers on the island, who obviously had not noticed them yet. The birds were almost between us when the others finally saw them. We had them in view for a good five minutes as they flew up towards us, past us, and up the river.

The birds are described as follows. One bird appeared to be all dark, and the other was black above and white below. They were the same size and shape. The shape was that of a tern, long pointed wings, long pointed bill, and forked tail. The young bird was basically all dark brown with the underwing linings being somewhat lighter. We did not notice the lighter underbelly that young Sootys should have, but we understand that this was a common phenomenon for most of the Sooty Tern sightings that occurred at this time. Although Frank did not see the forked tail on the young bird, Barb did. We both saw the forked tail on the adult bird. The forked tail on the young bird rules out the only other all-dark tern, Noddy, and since both birds were the same size, the adult could not be a Bridled (a bridled would have been smaller).

The conclusion, therefore, was that this was an adult and juvenile pair of Sooty Terns. We understand that it is common after the breeding season for adults and juveniles to pair up like this. Many of the Sooty Tern sightings from Hurricane Fran were just such pairs.

# Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

## Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*)

Date of Sighting: 7 September 1996 to 7 September 1996

Location: WASHINGTON BORO - CONEJOHELA FLATS

County: LANCASTER

Observer(s): Frank & Barb Haas; Bob Shutsky

Date of Submission: 1996

Submitted by: Frank & Barb Haas; Bob Shutsky

Written Description: YES

Photo: YES

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		1	6					
DECISION			X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

*F. Haas*

Date:

8-22-97