

PENNSYLVANIA RARE BIRD REPORT FORM

375-02 2005

This form is presented as a convenience and guide. It can be used if desired, but is not necessary for submitting a report. Species requiring documentation are those on the Review List or not on the Official List of Birds of Pennsylvania. Send documentation to:

Nick Pulcinella, Secretary
 Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee
 613 Howard Ave.
 West Chester, PA 19380

Nickpulcinella@comcast.net

SPECIES (common and scientific name) Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*)
 Subspecies (if known) _____

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS 1 SEX(ES) u/n

AGE(S) AND PLUMAGE(S) (e.g. immature; adult in breeding plumage; year for gulls; basic or alternate if you prefer those terms; state of molt if applicable): juvenile

DATE OF OBSERVATION 8/31/05 TIME ~ 2:00-2:30

LOCATION (city, borough, township) Washingtonville, Derry Twp., Montour Co.

EXACT SITE (e.g. name of park, lake, road) PPL Washingtonville power plant flyash basin

OBSERVER REPORTING:

Name Wayne Laubscher
 Address 749 E. Croak Hollow Road
 City Lock Haven State PA. ZIP 17745-8153
 e-mail (optional) wlaubsch@dcub.kcnvnet.org phone (optional) 570-748-7511

OTHER OBSERVERS (only those who saw and identified the bird with you):

Steve Pinkerton, Dan Brauning

HABITAT (e.g. mowed field, woodland edge, any other details) large flyash basin pond

DISTANCE TO BIRD ~ 80-100 yds.

VIEWING CONDITIONS (sky, weather, position of sun relative to you) very cloudy, overcast

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT USED Pentax 8x42 binoculars

DESCRIPTION (Include as much detail as you observed – size relative to other species present; "jizz"= e.g. posture, body shape, and proportions; colors and patterns of plumage; bill, eye, and leg characteristics; other features relevant to this individual): The bird was a medium-large very dark tern. It appeared to be all dark due to the overcast light conditions. The tern had a deeply forked tail and long narrow wings pointed sharply and bent back at the wrists. The bill was pointed and of medium length.

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

The bird did a short duration flyover of the ash basin of approximately one minute. It had strong deep wingbeats. It did not land or perch. The bird left the ash basin area flying in an easterly direction. It appeared to have originated from a northerly direction.

VOCALIZATIONS

None

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE IF ANY:

Photograph _____ Video recording _____ Audio recording _____ Drawing _____

Photographer/recorder/illustrator:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

e-mail (optional) _____ phone (optional) _____

Please include a copy of the photograph or recording with your report, and accompany it with a complete written documentation if the identification is obvious to you. If you made a drawing, please include it.

IF THIS IS A DEAD BIRD:

General condition _____

If collected (by permit), location and number of specimen if known _____

SEPARATION FROM SIMILAR SPECIES (how you eliminated others)

The bird was much larger than a Black Tern - one of which was present nearby to compare with. It was also too dark to have been a Black Tern. Also, it was too dark to have been a Bridled or a White-winged Tern. The tail was deeply forked - ruling out Noddies. The bird in question had no obvious white on the head, breast, and wings, also ruling out these other terns.

DISCUSSION - Anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it

The timing of this sighting coincides with the passage earlier that day of the Hurricane Katrina front from the Gulf of Mexico along with the direction of its origin and the direction it took when it left the area. These circumstances support the identification of the tern as a Sooty Tern which was pushed into the ash from the tropical storm front. This is quite plausible.

(Please use an additional page if necessary)

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THIS AND/OR SIMILAR SPECIES

Black Terns, Bridled Tern, White-winged Tern

ARE YOU POSITIVE OF YOUR IDENTIFICATION? (why or why not)

Yes, because of the aforementioned physical characteristics, behavior, and the convergent tropical storm front. The only possible conclusion is that it was a Sooty Tern.

REFERENCES CONSULTED:

During observation _____ National Geographic

After observation _____ Sibley, Kaufman

DATE OF THIS REPORT:

10/19/05

SIGNATURE OF OBSERVER

Wayne N. Faulstich

From Don Brauning:

Sooty Tern observation: August 31, 2005. Early afternoon at the Montour Fly Ash Basin. With Steve Pinkerton and Wayne Laubsher.

Steve Pinkerton first pointed to a bird flying almost directly overhead, in a NE to SW direction. My immediate reaction was to note the dark coloration, long wings, and jerky flight pattern (against a steady, but not particularly strong southerly wind flow).

The bird continued its flight pattern, giving us a view of less than ½ minute during which time it was flying away from us, but it turned slightly to its right a few times. The primary field marks were long, back-swept pointed wings and deeply forked tail. Wings, head and upper tail were black (or at least dark brown). The tail was deeply forked. The over-all appearance was of a dark bird, although lighting was subdued with a heavy overcast. The bird was fairly large, although we didn't have a good comparison in flight—upwards of the size of a ring-billed gull? It was notably bigger than the black tern observed just a minute or 2 later. The deep, jerky wingbeat was notable (but I'm not sure it helps in the ID).

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Sooty Tern (Sterna fuscata)

Date of Sighting: 31 August 2005 to 31 August 2005

Location: WASHINGTONVILLE

County : MONTGOMERY

Observer(s): Wayne Laubscher, Steve Pinkerton, Dan Brauning

Date of Submission: 2005

Submitted by: Wayne Laubscher, Dan Brauning

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

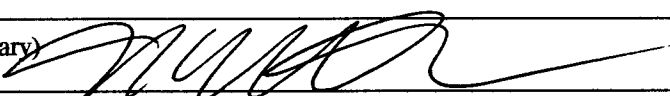
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
R. Wiltraut		X						
A. Guarente		X						
P. Guris				X				
J. Stanley			X					
E. Witmer			X					
J. Heller			X					
M. Sharp		X						
TOTALS		3	2	1				
DECISION		X						

Comments: 6/1

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

8/5/05