

372-01 - 1994

September 1, 1994

LEAST TERN
(*Sterna antillarum*)

DATE: 1 September 1994.

LOCATION: John Heinz NWR. at Tinicum, Philadelphia/Delaware Counties, Pennsylvania.

TIME: 1845-1915

OBSERVER: Nick Pulcinella.

WEATHER: A cold front had passed through during the early morning hours and it was now partly sunny, with several layers of stratus and cumulus clouds present. Wind NW 5-10 MPH. Temperature 75.

OPTICS: LEITZ 10X40 binoculars.

DISTANCE: 100-300 yards.

I initially saw the bird at its farthest distance and suspected from its small size that it was a Least Tern. It was actively flying and diving during the entire observation sometimes accompanied by a Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*) but mostly it was seen by itself.

I watched it for about thirty minutes until it flew west out of the impoundments towards Darby Creek, where I suspect it went to roost on the mudbars with the Forster's Terns that gather there in the evening. By crossing over Darby Creek it flew from Philadelphia Co. into Delaware Co.

Description: The general appearance was a small grayish-white tern, much smaller than a Forster's Tern. The forehead was white with a dark area on the nape and the face contained a dark line through the eye to the nape. The back, rump and tail were white. The wings were narrow, the upperwing was grayish-white and had a dark carpal bar that extended through the entire leading edge of the wing to the dark wing tips. The underwing appeared grayish-white. The tail did not appear forked from the distance I was from the bird. The underparts were grayish-white. The bill was dark. I didn't get a good look at the legs. The wingbeats when compared to the Forster's were quicker and not as deep and the flight seemed more buoyant. No call was heard. I think the bird was probably in first winter plumage.

Least Tern nested in this general area in 1950 and 1961. Non-breeding individuals were seen in 1953, 1957, 1958 and 1959. The most recent sighting from this area was a single bird 15 August 1985.

cc: P.O.R.C.

Dave Cutler Audubon Field Notes .

Ed Fingerhood PA Birds Phila. Co.

Al Guarente PA Birds Del. Co.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*)

Date of Sighting: 1 September 1994 to 1 September 1994

Location: JOHN HEINZ NWR AT TINICUM

County: PHILADELPHIA

Observer(s): Nick Pulcinella

Date of Submission: 1994

Submitted by: Nick Pulcinella

Written Description: YES Photo: NO 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					X
E. Kwater			X					
R. Ickes			X					
G. McWilliams			X					
P. Schwalbe			X					
J. Skinner			X					
TOTALS			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary): *F. C. Haas*

Date: *3-31-95*