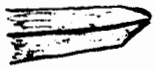


Gull-billed Tern 362-01-1996

On Sunday June 2, 1996 at 9:20 AM Jerry Book, Tom Garner and I were birding the Conejohela Flats of the Susquehanna River near Washington Boro, Lancaster County, PA. While birding at the head of a small island we refer to as sharp tailed island we noticed a tern slowly flying downriver toward us at 500 yds. + away. After a quick look it was noted to be most likely to be another Forster's Tern. Somehow I wasn't convinced, I thought the tern was too stocky. As it approached to about 200 yards away I alerted Jerry and Tom to get back on this Tern. I was certain that it was a Gull-billed Tern. Upon closer views the following was noted. Medium sized Tern, even pale gray upperparts, the underwing was also pale gray with the primaries' trailing edge darker (only seen from below) The bird was broader winged and more "robust" than a Com./ Forster's Tern. All black cap was complete from base of bill through eye and around the nape. The bill was all black and very heavy at the base, it was not exceptionally long. It had no chance of being yellow at the tip either. The lower mandible angled upward slightly at the tip. The tail was seen as the tern flew past us and away (downriver) It was white, short and slightly forked (no streamers). The flight was slow with shallow wingbeats. During the 1-1/2 minute observation of the Gull-billed Tern it never attempted to hit the water or chase anything in flight, or changed direction of flight quickly. It was never more than 30-40 ft above the river. It disappeared downriver below Green Island, and not relocated. All observations were made with 8x and 10x binoculars under good light and stable footing. All observers were familiar with Gull-billed Tern and Sandwich Tern from the Outer Banks of North Carolina and the Common, Forsters, and Caspian Tern regularly seen on the Conejohela Flats annually. This would constitute a second Lancaster County record. Jerry Book observed another Gull-billed Tern at a different location on the Conejohela Flats August 11, 1994.

J. Eric Witmer
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BILL SHAPE



TAIL

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Gull-billed Tern (*Sterna nilotica*)

Date of Sighting: 2 June 1996 to 2 June 1996

Location: WASHINGTON BORO - CONEJOHELA FLATS

County: LANCASTER

Observer(s): Eric Witmer

Date of Submission: 1996

Submitted by: Eric Witmer

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					
E. Kwater			X					
R. Ickes			X					
G. McWilliams			X					
P. Schwalbe			X					
S. Feldstein			X					
TOTALS			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

8-16-97