



362-01-1997

See photo

To: Nick Pulcinella -- Rare Bird Report

From: Alice L. Fuller

Two Gull-billed Terns at Bald Eagle State Park, May 25, '97

Sunday, May 25, Memorial weekend was overcast with occasional drizzle. My husband, Ted, and I were headed to Hublersburg, a few miles from Bald Eagle State Park, where he was to play in a small band at a memorial service in a cemetery there. We left early to make a quick pass into Bald Eagle and fortunately we left before receiving the message that the band part of the ceremony was canceled because of rain. We headed directly to the beach area of the park a little after 1 p.m. There we spotted a flock of ring-billed gulls loafing on the beach area beyond the bathing pavilion and drove to the parking lot above that stretch of beach.

As soon as we stopped I noticed a tern make a couple passes at the beach and then apparently spotted a place to suit it and dropped down on the sand among the gulls. By its orange bill I recognized it as a Forster's tern, a regular migrating visitor in the park. Then we noticed a couple feet from this tern were two more terns. To my surprise they both had black bills and black legs and feet. I figured they had to be gull-billed terns but I also was quite sure they had not been recorded before in central Pennsylvania, a fact confirmed later by John Peplinski. My binoculars are Leitz 7 x 35's and Ted's are Sawyer 10 x 40's.

To be even more positive of the identification Ted set up our spotting scope-- a Kowa with zoom lens, 20x to 40x. Both individuals had black crowns and napes; both had the stout black bill, typical of Gull-bills; and both had black legs and feet. We also had a nice size comparison with the larger ring-billed gulls and the similar-sized Forster's tern. We both had seen Gull-billed Terns at Brigantine (Edwin Forsythe) National Wildlife Refuge in New

Rare Bird--Gull-billed Terns, cont'd. -2-

Jersey the previous Monday. We also have seen Gull-bills in Florida.

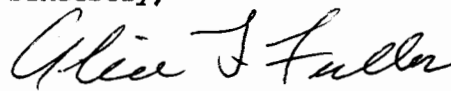
After observing them for a few minutes we headed to the Hublersburg cemetery and after preceiving there would be no band action we headed back to the park. We stopped en route in the village of Howard to call Bob Snyder, a State College Bird Club member, and he said we would join us immediately at the beach. Only one tern was left on the beach and fortunately it was one of the Gull-bills.

Also fortunately Bob, who is an avid wildlife photographer, brought a camera and moved closer to the beach, getting several pictures of the tern. The camera he used was a Nikon 6006 with a Tamron 200-400 mm lens. Attached to the lens was a tele-extender, making the lens essentially 600 mm. His camera was mounted on a tripod and he used a cable release and flash. Enclosed is one of his slides of the tern. (We eventually would like to have the slide returned.)

Bob showed the tern slides at a SCBC meeting and afterwards received the following notation from fellow member, Steven Feldstein: "In photographs with the wings raised, bird had a light brown secondary bar. This suggests that the bird is not an adult, even though it had a completed dark crown; also noted that outer primaries had dark outer webs...that the above characteristics of the wing plumage, together with the black crown indicates a bird in second year plumage."

Trust I have included all necessary data in making a rare bird report.

Sincerely,



Alice L. Fuller  
Box 268, Pine Grove Mills, Pa.  
16868

**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

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

Date of Sighting: 25 May 1997 to 25 May 1997

Location: BALD EAGLE STATE PARK

County: CENTRE

Observer(s): Alice Fuller; Bob Snyder

Date of Submission: 1997

Submitted by: Alice Fuller; Bob Snyder

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							
P. Schwalbe	X							
K. Parkes			X					
R. Ickes	X							
P. Hess	X							
J. McWilliams	X							
T. Floyd	X							
TOTALS	6		1					
DECISION	X							

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

*F C Haas*

Date:

*4-19-99*