

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2015-08-08 22:19:18
Observer's Name	Andy McGann
E-mail	andrew.mcgann@gmail.com
Phone	717-891-8145
Observer's Address	Street Address: 1905 Gregory Drive City: Newark State / Province: DE Postal / Zip Code: 19702 Country: United States
Species (Common Name)	Gull-billed Tern
Species (Scientific Name)	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
Number of individuals	5
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	unknown
Observation Date and Time	08-08-2015 10:40 AM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Yes
Link to eBird checklist	http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S24534442
County	Philadelphia
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Eastwick
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	John Heinz NWR
GPS coordinates of sighting	39.890641, -75.259447
Habitat	Shallow north end of the main impoundment at Heinz NWR. Flying over the shallow, vegetated impoundment.
Distance to bird	100 m
Viewing conditions	Clear sky, great lighting, with the sun behind me. The birds were well illuminated.
Optical equipment used	Swarovski SLC HD 8x42

Description	<p>Calling! ID'd first by voice and then seen, mediocre video clip obtained, digi-bin style. Video clip obtained through bins but distant. ID'd by call first. Tone was in between Black Skimmer and Laughing Gull. Throaty, sarcastic sound. Semi two-noted calls, like when two words run together. 'Arrr-uh!' Bill thick, jet black, viewed in good lighting with sun behind me. Swollen look to the bill. Upper wing/mantle very very light gray. No noticeable dark markings on outer primaries when viewed from above. Noticed that the primaries were far too light for Caspian Tern when viewed from below. Too far away to notice whether they had full black cap on their heads or not. Caps seemed light though. Larger than Forster's Terns. Closer to Caspian Tern in flight style and size. Very bouyant, easygoing flight. The call was the clincher, but I got a good look and then just barely had time to get a video clip. (12 seconds of video)</p>
Behavior (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)	<p>5 Flying together at treetop level coming up from I-95, over boardwalk by visitor center and then exiting refuge over Darby Creek to the west/NW.</p>
Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)	<p>The calls were the clincher, it was a call that I knew before I even saw the birds. However, it happened quickly, and I took a moment to really look at the birds. They were noticeably bigger than Forster's/Common Terns, and closer to the size and flight characteristics of Caspian Terns. However, they did not have extensive dark primaries of the Caspian Tern, and their calls were not calls of the Caspian Tern. I got a decent look at the bill, and it was heavy and jet black. (No backlighting whatsoever.) Ruled out Royal Tern as well.</p>
Discussion – anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:	<p>I was able to get a gentleman birder standing next to me on the birds. I said, "Oh! Oh my god, that's a Gull-billed Tern call!" and he got on the birds. He had a decent look, however, I wasn't sure if he would have made a positive ID if I didn't announce it. Anyway, for what it's worth, he did not express any doubt about the ID, and remarked that he had never seen so many together at once (which could very well be true).</p>
Are you positive of your identification ? (Why or why not)	<p>Yes, the call was the clincher. The visual impression confirmed. Flyover, yet enough time to consider all possibilities</p>
During	<p>None</p>
After	<p>None</p>
Supporting evidence (check all that apply)	<p>Video</p>
Upload images, audio, video or drawings	<p>GBTE_75mb.mov</p>
Click to edit	<p>PORC-webform00261</p>