

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2017-08-18 12:31:10
Observer's Name	Rich Hanlon
E-mail	rhanlon@susumc.org
Phone	412-992-6648
Observer's Address	60 Waln Street Wellsboro PA 16901 United States
Names of additional observers	Kathy Riley, John Corcoran
Species (Common Name)	white-winged tern
Species (Scientific Name)	Chlidonias leucopterus
Number of individuals	1
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	adult beginning transition from breeding to non-breeding plumage
Observation Date and Time	08-10-2017 11:30 AM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Yes
Link to eBird checklist	http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S38575451
County	Tioga
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Wellsboro, PA
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	Nessmuk Lake
GPS coordinates of sighting	41°43'36.4"N 77°17'25.6"W
Habitat	Shallow marsh at south end of the lake, containing pylons and snags sticking out of the water which made for good perches.
Distance to bird	30 yards
Viewing conditions	Clear day, excellent visibility
Optical equipment used	Redfield Rebel 8x42 binoculars, Nikon D7100 camera with 300mm lens
Description	Initial thought was that of a black tern when it was sitting on a post facing me head on; I notified John and Kathy who came right over. It soon took flight. As we watched it fly, Kathy suggested that she thought it looked more like a white-winged tern. Sure enough, the white tail, underside of wings that are black on the inside up to the shoulder and pale whitish on the primaries and secondaries, upper wings that are very pale whitish. WOW!!!

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

I was told by the Cornell crew that one of the reasons the tern decided to settle at Nessmuk was because the habitat is very good for it. I was told that in Europe, white-winged terns are primarily found in healthy shallow marsh habitats that have good perches close to the water's surface. That is also a description of what we currently see at Nessmuk Lake.

It seemed that every time the white-winged tern would leave its perch during the day, barn swallows would mob it repeatedly, and waxwings always seemed curious about its presence, but not as aggressive as the swallows.

My favorite experiences with the white-winged tern were in the evenings, just before dark, when it would go into a feeding frenzy making pass after pass over the shallow marsh at the south end of Nessmuk Lake in company with chimney swifts and cedar waxwings. The chimney swifts especially seemed to welcome the white-winged tern and there were moments when it seemed to assimilate with their flock, moving in unison with the swifts through areas of densest insect activity. I think the evening flights of the white-winged tern, its shape, movement, and behavior, very closely resemble that of a feeding common nighthawk (may speak to the swift's acceptance).

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

Most similar in appearance would be black tern. With a black tern I would expect a pale underwing, whereas the tern being observed had black underwings up to the shoulder and whitish flight feathers. I'd also expect the upper tail feathers of a black tern to be gray and moderately forked. The tail of the tern being observed was more squared at the end and was very white. Also, upperwing of the bird being observed was much paler than the typical gray back of a black tern. In addition, the tern being observed was never seen plunge diving like a black tern may occasionally do when catching prey items.

Discussion – anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:

Roughly 300 visitors came to see the bird, including a team from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, who confirmed the identity of this individual as being white-winged tern.

Are you positive of your identification ? (Why or why not)

Yes, based on the field marks, behavior, and conversing about the ID with others

During

Sibley's Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America (2003)

After

National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America (Sixth Edition)

Supporting evidence (check all that apply)

Photograph
Video



[white winged tern 11.jpg](#)



[white winged tern 13.jpg](#)



[white winged tern 16.jpg](#)



[white winged tern 18.jpg](#)



[white winged tern 19.jpg](#)



[white winged tern 22.jpg](#)

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2018-03-20 19:45:28
Observer's Name	Mike Fialkovich
E-mail	mpfial@verizon.net
Phone	4127313581
Observer's Address	805 BEULAH RD PITTSBURGH PA 15235-4209 United States
Names of additional observers	MICHAEL P. FIALKOVICH
Species (Common Name)	White-winged Tern
Species (Scientific Name)	Chlidonias leucopterus
Number of individuals	1
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	Adult, starting to molt into non-breeding plumage.
Observation Date and Time	08-12-2017 8:30 AM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Yes
Link to eBird checklist	https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S39486241
County	Tioga
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Nessmuck Lake, just outside of Welsboro
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	Parking lot on south end of the lake, opposite side of the lake from the dam.
Habitat	Small lake.
Distance to bird	Hard to judge but quite close, perhaps 20 yards.
Viewing conditions	Excellent. Sunny morning, bird at extremely close range.
Optical equipment used	Leica Ultravid 10X42 binoculars, Leica Spotting Scope with 20 - 60X zoom eyepiece.

Description

Discovered the previous day by a local birder, which caused quite a lot of excitement. When I arrived the bird was perched on a piling in the water just offshore. An obvious tern with streamlined body, long pointed bill, webbed feet.

Black head and underparts with white mottling due to the onset of plumage transition from breeding to non-breeding plumage. Bill long, pointed and black. Eye black. Legs and feet dark orange red with partial webbing.

Mantle dark gray, wings lighter gray and white at the shoulder extending along the wing and blending into the gray. Whiter wings than a black tern.

In flight, rump, tail and vent area white. Wing linings black unlike black tern.

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

The bird was perched on the piling for most of the time I observed it. It flew around the lake a few times and would dip in the water to capture prey from the surface (it did not dive).

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

The black wing linings and whitish wings separated it from Black Tern. Much whiter tail than Black Tern which has a gray tail.

Discussion – anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:

Additional photos in my ebird checklist.

Are you positive of your identification ? (Why or why not)

Yes. Black wing linings and white rump and tail separated it from Black Tern.

During

None.

After

Sibley Guide to Birds, Seabirds, An Identification Guide and Seabirds of the World

Supporting evidence (check all that apply)

Photograph

Upload images, audio, video or drawings

[White-winged Tern, Digiscope, Lake Nessmuk, Wellsboro, PA 8-12-2017 \(4\).JPG](#)



[White-winged Tern, Lake Nessmuk, Wellsboro, PA 8-12-2017 \(15\) Crop.jpg](#)



[White-winged Tern, Lake Nessmuk, Wellsboro, PA 8-12-2017 \(63\).jpg](#)



[White-winged Tern, Lake Nessmuk, Wellsboro, PA 8-12-2017 \(88\).jpg](#)



[White-winged Tern, Lake Nessmuk, Wellsboro, PA 8-12-2017 \(97\).jpg](#)