

364-02-2003

RARE BIRD REPORT

Species: Royal Tern Date of this Observation: Sept 20, 2003

Date Found: 9/20/03 Last Date Seen: 9/21/03

Location: Susquehanna River just south of Columbia

Township/City: ManorTwp County: Lancaster

Person Writing this report: Franklin Haas

Address: 2469 Hammertown Rd, Narvon, PA 17555

Phone: 717-445-9609

Other Observers: Barbara M. Haas

Who found the bird first: Eric Witmer

Other documentation included: (Circle all appropriate items)(Make sure all attached items are fully labeled)

Photograph Audio Recording Video Recording

If a Specimen, where is it stored? _____

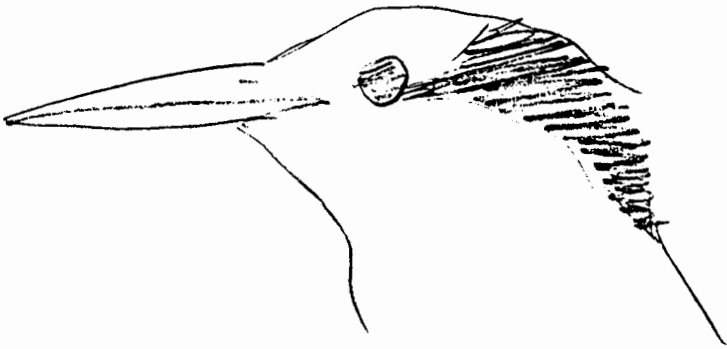
Description: (Attach additional pages as needed —Please do not write on back of this form)

The bird was sitting on a rock in the river several hundred yards away. The bird was observed through a 50X Questar scope.

The bird was an obvious tern, tern-like with a long pointed bill, grey back, white underparts. It was slightly smaller than the nearby Ring-billed Gulls, ruling out the smaller terns (Common, Forster's, etc.). The bill was large and yellow-orange in color. The bill was not as long and thin as Elegant Terns that we have seen in the past. The back and wings were gray. The wing tips were dark.

The black on the head was the distinguishing mark. The forehead and lores were white with black extending from the eye to the back of the head.

We did not see the bird in flight.



Royal Tern in Lancaster County

Date: September 20, 2003

Location: The 'Rocks.' An area of exposed rocks on the Susquehanna River just south of Columbia.

Observers: Initially found by Jonathan Heller and Devich Farbotnick and then seen by Jerry Book, Eric Witmer, Tom Garner, Dueane Hoffman and many others.

Devich and I had spent the morning on the Conejohela Flats unsuccessfully trying to relocate any of the rarities found the day before. About 11:00 a.m. we decided to go to the rocks to try to relocate the Sabine's Gull that Dueane Hoffman had seen at first light that morning. After about a minute of observation we noticed a large tern that was partially visible on a rock in the middle of the river. At first glance it appeared to be a Royal Tern in basic plumage. The key marks that were visible were the clear, white crown surrounded by a band of black. The bill also appeared a bit lighter and not as dark in coloration as a Caspian Tern. The bill appeared more orange rather than a darker reddish orange. A basic plumaged Caspian Tern was also present nearby for comparison. The Caspian Tern had very obvious streaking on the crown and a heavier, darker red bill.

At this point we were definitely leaning in the direction of Royal Tern, but the identification was clinched when the bird raised its wings and later when it actually flew around the area for awhile. The underside of the primaries and wing was almost completely white. There was a very narrow and well defined dark edging on the trailing edge of the underside of the primaries. In flight, the top of the primaries showed darker and the coloration was not as well defined. In contrast, the nearby Caspian Tern exhibited extensive dark under the primaries. Devich was also able to document this bird using his video camera through a Leica and a Questar scope.

We feel that the identification as a Royal Tern is without doubt. The only other species it could possibly be confused with is an Elegant Tern. While I have seen thousands of Royal Terns, I have never seen Elegant Tern although some other observers present were familiar with the species. However, I do not believe that the bill was nearly slender and pointed enough for that species.

Jonathan Heller

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Royal Tern (Sterna maxima)

Date of Sighting: 20 September 2003 to 21 September 2003

Location: SUSQUEHANNA RIVER south of COLUMBIA

County : LANCASTER

Observer(s): Frank Haas, Barbara Haas, Jonathan Heller et al.

Date of Submission: 2003, 2004

Submitted by: Frank Haas, Barbara Haas, Jonathan Heller, Devich Farbotnik

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

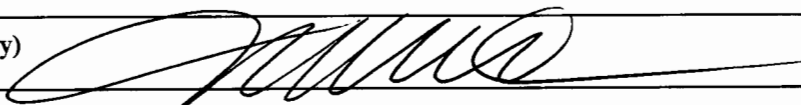
Specimen: No

Recording: Video

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
R. Wiltraut								
D. Heathcote <i>Gerente</i>	X							
P. Guris	X							
J. Stanley	X							
E. Witmer	X							
R. Lehman <i>Heller</i>	X							
M. Sharp	X							
TOTALS	6							
DECISION	X							

Comments: 6/0

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

9/17/04