



March 8, 1993

Report of: ANCIENT MURRELET

Date Nov 8, 1992

Site Lake Ontelaunee, BERKS COUNTY, PA

Observer: Matt Wlasniewski; witnesses: Matt Spence
and Harold Lebo

Equipment: Tasco 7x35 Binoc's

Bausch & Lomb Discover, 10-60x Zoom

WEATHER: Mostly sunny, 40-45°, wind 5 mph or so

TIME: 10 AM - 2 PM

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Sunday morning, November 8, 1992 - I received a phone call from a rather excited fellow birder, Matt Spence. He had raced home to Reading from Lake Ontelaunee to call local birders to rendezvous at Lake Ontelaunee on Route 73 southeast of Leesport. His call found me watching sparrows at my backyard feeder. He told me to meet him at the main parking lot by the lake on Route 73. Risking a very expensive speeding ticket, I raced south from Hamburg to see what would be one of the birds of my lifetime - an Ancient Murrelet.

Once there, I met Matt who had his scope trained on the water in a northeast direction from the lot. My 7x35 binoculars found a small dark gray bird with a white throat. Its profile and position

in the water reminded me of a Dovekie but not as chunky. A look through Matt's scope gave ~~an~~ clearer definition to the bird drifting in the waves lapping at its sides but not obstructing our view of it. The scope enabled me to see these field marks: a gray back, a black crown, a white throat patch appearing to be crescent shaped, and a light-colored (yellowish) bill which could be seen when the bird raised its head above level. The tip of the bill seemed to be dark.

The bird went beneath the surface a couple of times never resurfacing any closer than 500 feet (an estimate). The bird ~~was~~ was moving away from us toward the portion of the lake referred to as Maiden Creek station, so Matt and I, joined by Harold Lebo, decided to drive to the parking area at the station.

Once there we walked the path along the lake to the left through the pines to gain a higher perspective since picking the small bird out of the water that is almost above eye level is difficult indeed.

We took a path to an old duck blind and set up our scopes. The bird was sighted briefly until it again dove to feed. For the next 10 minutes we scanned from several spots but to no avail. We thought the bird might have swum past us towards the dam, but I decided to scan the area in front of the station one more time. Two birders from Lancaster County arrived just as I found the bird about 300 feet away. The excellent light and elevated position from the rock ledge gave me an excellent view.

At no more than 30x I could pick out every field mark especially the light colored bill and the marked distinction between the head and back of the bird. The white throat patch was marked and a dark eye was visible.

At this time, the bird was either unaware or unthreatened by the 5 of us awestruck birders conveniently began to swim or drift from right to left in parade view fashion at a distance of no more than 200 feet. At 20x the murrelet seemed to fill my scope's view.

The bird seemed to be between the size of a Dovekie and a Puffin. I continued to watch the bird for 20 minutes then left to make as many phone calls as I could think of. There is no greater frustration than to have such exciting news and have only a pay machine to talk to. But some of my calls hit pay dirt like the birders who left Hawk Mt's north lookout to swap a possible Golden Eagle for a definite Ancient Murrelet.

Photographs were taken by one of the birders from Lancaster County with a camera mounted on a ~~Celestron~~ Questar.

A footnote from the 1992 Birding Review of the Brookline Bird Club of Massachusetts. The author, Robert Hymel, reported that three (3) out-of-state birders identified an Ancient Murrelet at Halibut Point in Rockport, Mass in late November. The same bird making state birding records in two states? Seems likely to me!

Matt Wlosniowski
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On Sunday, Nov. 8, 1992 I received word that an Ancient Murrelet was found at Lake Ontelaunee, Berks Co. PA. After several phone calls and a "long" 45 minute drive Tom Garner and myself arrived about 11³⁰ AM. The murrelet was on the East side of the lake several hundred yards from shore. Matt W —, Harold Lebo and Matt Spence (the person who discovered the bird) were there and had watched it dive/feed earlier in the AM. By 11³⁰ it was finished feeding and no longer diving. It swam several hundred yards from shore parallel to it for quite a distance.

This small Alcid was dark gray above with a darker black nape and crown. The throat was dark but did not continue down toward the breast, (indicating the bird was an imm.) This area was white to at least the water line. The flanks were also white, with the sides appearing dusky. The pale yellow bill was short and stubby (not thin).

On one occasion the murrelet raised up and flapped its wings several times and the white wing linings and dark border at the base of the wing and body were noted by Tom Garner.

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Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: **Ancient Murrelet**

Date of Sighting: **8 November 1992 to 8 November 1992**

Observer(s): **Eric Witmer**

Date of Submission: **1992**

Submitted by: **Eric Witmer**

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V		
					A	B	C
E. Kwater	X						
B. Haas	X						
F. Haas	X						
R. Ickes	Abstain						
G. McWilliams	X						
S. Santner	X						
J. Skinner	X						
TOTALS	6						
DECISION	X						

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

Date:

7/2/93