

PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE

2459 Hammertown Road
Narvon, Pennsylvania 17555-9726

3 November 1989

Dear John and Becky,

Thank you for your report and especially the comments that accompanied the Rare Bird Report of the Vermillion Flycatcher. We had a similar experience with that same species this past Spring, although we have yet to receive any written report from the observer. In that particular case it was a novice birder on a walk-a-thon without binoculars! Amazing what you can see.

Back to your bird. Your comments will certainly be included with the review for P.O.R.C. Somewhere between your telephone conversation and the write-up he apparently added "also eye stripe."

All things taken together it seems it will not be an accepted record, but one begins to wonder with two sightings, albeit not confirmed, of the same species in the same year. Maybe some day it will be confirmed for Pennsylvania.

Hope your hawk watching efforts have been successful. Guess you are gearing up for the Golden Eagle onslaught this month.

Bob Schutsky, Harold Morrin and I had what may be the first state record for Sandwich Tern on the Susquehanna River 19 October. We will be sending what few photographs we have to Claudia Wilds for her interpretation as well. We three are the only ones who saw it sitting, but even in flight it was clear that the mantle was not as dark as a Common Tern. There were at least two Common Terns around for comparison. It was pretty exciting.

Keep in touch.

Sincerely,

Barbara M. Haas
Secretary

543-01-1989

October 29, 1989

Dear Barb and Frank:


Attached is a Rare Species Report of a Vermilion Flycatcher reported by Bill Womer. Although the report form states the sighting date as June 30, 1989, notes that I took when Bill called me on July 9 indicated that he saw the bird on Friday, July 7, 1989. I called him regarding this discrepancy and he agreed that my date (7/7/89) was correct.

I visited the site on Monday, July 9 between 5:30-7 am., but was not successful in locating the bird. Several other birders also checked the location later that day and the next.

Some observations that I noted in speaking to Mr. Womer on July 7, 1989 and reading his report form:

1. The incorrect date reported on the form suggests to me that he did not keep any field notes on the sighting.
 2. The first thing I asked Bill when he told me that he had seen a Vermilion Flycatcher was whether he noted an eyestripe on the bird, and his response was that when he sees another one he will look for it.
 3. He noticed that it was the same color as a Scarlet Tanager and that it had a small, dark bill and dark back.
 4. I asked him how the bird was acting, how it flew, but he had not observed anything in particular. In other words, it did not seem that he observed that it perched and flew like a flycatcher.
 5. He was carrying a camera with a 200mm lens but did not take any photographs.
- Unfortunately, he said that he did not realize that a Vermilion Flycatcher is a "super bird" in PA.

Sincerely,


John D. Pepiński

543-01-1989

RARE SPECIES REPORT

SPECIES: VERMILION FLYCATCHER		NUMBER SEEN: (1)
SIGHTING DATE: June 30, 1989		SIGHTING TIME: 4 P.M.
LOCATION: State Game LANDS #176 Centre County "THE BARRENS"	COUNTY & STATE: DISTANCE & DIRECTION FROM NEAREST TOWN: 5 mi. N.W. of State College DIRECTIONS, IF APPLICABLE:	
HABITAT: Next to "Scotia Pond" - in Aspen tree on edge of Power Line		
SIGHTING CONDITIONS:	LIGHTING: — Sunny day DISTANCE: — 30 YARDS EQUIP. USED: — 8x21 BINOCULARS LENGTH OF SIGHTING: — 4 to 5 minutes Perched on Tree Limb	
DESCRIPTION:	VOICE: n/a SIZE: 5"-6" PLUMAGE: Brilliant Red Head & Breast Black Wings & Tail - also eye stripe ANATOMY (bill length, leg color, etc.): Small-Black Flycatcher - Beak BEHAVIOR: Perched & Preening	
FAMILIARITY WITH THIS & SIMILAR SPECIES: n/a		
COMPARISON TO SIMILAR SPECIES: Did NOT possess BEAK OR BACK-colors of Scarlet Tanager		
HAS A PHOTOGRAPH BEEN TAKEN? No IF SO, BY WHO?		
Have any additional observers filled out a rare species report? If so, who? No		
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS (Use back of form for more space): Also seen by Carl Womer - my father *I feel certain of species due to length of limb it was seen in; I had field guide to refer to!		
SIGHTING & REPORT BY: Bill Womer		
ADDRESS: 352 Cottage Place Lewis town, Pa. 17044		PHONE # 717-248-7350
SIGNATURE William J. Womer		DATE: July 20, 1989

The area covered is Pennsylvania as far east as State College, a strip of eastern Ohio as far west as Youngstown, the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia, and a strip of West Virginia and Maryland south to Morgantown and Deep Creek Lake. I have the impression that the literature from the surrounding states was not as thoroughly covered as was that from Pennsylvania.

As of mid-1985 the author has recognized 368 species as having occurred in the region, and four additional species are mentioned in a footnote as having occurred after that date, too late for inclusion in the text. However no criteria for acceptance of records are given. Most of the records for unusual species are backed by specimen or photographic evidence, but some are apparently based only on sight records.

The distributional and ecological information is about as accurate as could be expected, although individual birders may quarrel with some of the information given. As usual most of the discrepancies between the birder's knowledge and the material in the book come from the lack of publication of the former. Some of these differences will be resolved by the forthcoming Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas, but it is unlikely that the atlas will change many of the classifications given here.

The introductory material includes a "Regional Bird Calendar" in which short accounts of the birding activity of each month are given. A section on "Aids to Local Bird Study" lists, with brief annotations, local bird clubs, general and regional books, and some periodicals of use to local bird students. A third section "Suggestions for Birding Trips" describes 13 areas which are particularly interesting for the birder. Unfortunately some of this information is out of date and the areas are no longer as attractive as they once were.

Two maps and a handsome cover portrait of a Golden-winged Warbler by Larry Barth add to the attractiveness of the pamphlet. I would expect that any birder who lives in this area will find this a useful addition to his library. ♣

George A. Hall
Morgantown, WV

KEEPING RECORDS

by Barbara Haas



We all see birds most every day. But how are our records kept of sightings? Some people write down everything in a diary in chronological order. Others may organize them into field check lists for each day of birding. Others may scribble notes to be "filed" later. The trick is being able to locate those records on demand. Can you? Can I, for that matter? It boils down to the fact that some people are more organized than others. There have to be some secrets to it.

How best can records be kept? We get this question a lot, especially from compilers or people just getting into record keeping. There are many excellent methods that have stood the test of time.

We would like to suggest a method that is superb for data collection for either submitting information to your county compiler or writing a report for a given time period, *i.e.*, quarter, year, etc.

Each species requires one page/card (to start) in a suitable holder, loose-leaf binder or file card holder. Ideally, they should be kept in AOU order, not alphabetically. This is the order that is found on checklists. There is no particular need to have a page for a species not yet seen. There is the thrill of adding a "page" just like a "lifer". As the species is seen, date and location can be entered. This gives one his/her own early/late date sightings, and the location adds to indicating, for example, a new county or other specific site. At the end of a quarter (year), a heavy or colored line is drawn on the page. If you are submitting data to a compiler then just pull the information from between the lines and submit. Years of data on a particular species can be easily gleaned for comparisons.

For example, you may look in your records and determine that you have found Great Blue Heron in Cameron County in all months except February. Now there exists a mini-goal for this short, cold month. Find a Great Blue Heron somewhere. Then if someone asks or you want to write up your own Birds of Cameron Co., it is documented that the species is found all months of the year (or, perhaps, all months except February).

Each spring you may want to try and "better" your early date for arrivals or late date for departures. Years of data will also show that most species arrive/depart within a very small window, but until the data are organized that window may be a mystery.

Data entry at the end of the day is quick and painless...but, more importantly, rewarding. Notes can be quickly transferred from field cards. It sure beats looking through dozens of field cards for that one date that you saw an Orange-crowned Warbler in October.

Rare Bird Reports: Another excellent habit to get into is to take field notes. Many noted authorities have stated that in this day and age of numerous, excellent field guides, the art of taking field notes is being lost. The addition of a small notebook and pencil to your jacket can be invaluable for that day a rarity is seen. On the next page is a formal report that can be utilized for final submission. But certain aspects should be done on the spot. For those of you with drawing skills (my shorebirds and warblers look awfully similar), a quick sketch can be quite valuable. A photograph would be ideal.

Learn the basic anatomy. Somewhere in the front of most field guides the topography of a bird is depicted. Concentrate on the points of difference to highlight. There's no sense in worrying about leg color when separating Boreal from Black-capped Chickadee.

Behavior can be of immense help in separating species and almost a must to describe for some *Empidonax*. Was that shorebird picking or probing? Was that *Oporornis* with the gray hood walking or hopping? Was more than one bird seen?

And, of course, try to find someone else to document the sighting. If it means calling your compiler or us, try and do so at the first opportunity. Independent confirmation is a very satisfactory means of positive reinforcement. You may be adding a new species for the County or someone else's state list. Who knows. We are all in this game together.

VIREO, at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, is housing the photographs of all first state records of species. The Records Committee will be the repository of all reports for the compilation of the official state list. Who knows what you may add by just watching your feeder or being out in the field. Unusual birds can be found in unusual places and should be looked for anywhere.

Once you get into the habit of keeping organized records, everyone will benefit. Most of all, you.

Thanks to Kerry Grim for the form on the next page. ♣

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # of

Species: **Vermilion Flycatcher**

Date of Sighting: **June 30, 1989**

Observer(s): **Bill Womer**

Date of Submission: **1989**

Submitted by: **Bill Womer thru John Peplinski**

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V		
					A	B	C
E. Kwater						X	
B. Haas							X
F. Haas							X
R. Leberman							X
G. McWilliams							X
S. Santner							X
P. Schwalbe							X
TOTALS						1	6
DECISION							X

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

B. Haas

Date:

11-10-90