

PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE  
210 Welcome Ave. Norwood, PA 19074

7 February 2002

Mark McConaughy  
Bushy Run Battlefield  
Box 468  
Harrison City, PA 15636

Dear Mark,

Thank you for submitting documentation on the Townsend's Solitaire near Slickville on 15 January 2000. After careful review, the Committee regrets that it has voted not to accept this record.

The vote was three in favor of acceptance and four not in favor, and the record was placed in our Class IV-A: "a record for which there exists a majority of evidence in support of an observer's identification; the record is probably correct, but not beyond reasonable doubt."

The dissenting members listed a variety of concerns: the fact that the entire bird including the tail was not visible; the pinkish wash on the breast is not a character in this species, which raises the possibility that the bird might more likely have been a very dull first-fall female of one of the bluebird species; and no information on the length of the observation, distance and lighting conditions was provided for a more satisfactory evaluation of the record.

We emphasize that non-acceptance does not mean the birds was not a Townsend's Solitaire, but rather that a majority of the Committee did not consider other species ruled out conclusively.

We hope this does not discourage you from submitting documentation of rarities you may find in the future.

Sincerely,



For the Committee:  
Paul Hess, Chairman

Record No. 650-01-2000

**Subject: Townsend's Solitaire description and data for PORC**

**Date:** Wed, 19 Jan 2000 20:09:24 -0500

**From:** "TimeTraveler" <TimeTraveler@email.msn.com>

**To:** "Nick Pulcinella" <nickpul@bellatlantic.net>

650-01-2000

Nick,

The following is a description of the Townsend's Solitaire I saw near Slickville in Westmoreland County on 15 January 2000. The attached file is a poor (I can't do perspective very well!) drawing of what I saw. Unfortunately, I was not able to get a photo of the bird.

Mark A. McConaughy

## Townsend's Solitaire

### *Myadestes townsendi*

<?xml:namespace prefix = o ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />

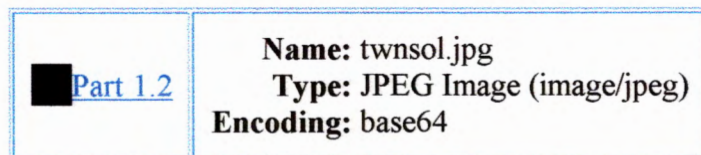
I was birding along Hoffman Heights Road in Westmoreland County (southwest of the town of Slickville) during the morning of Saturday, 15 January 2000, and noticed birds flying in front of me going from a forest on one side into a brushy (multifloral rose) woods on the other side of the road at around 11:30 AM. I stopped and started to check out the birds. It was a big flock of American Robins that were flying across the road and landing in the bushes. I also saw a Northern Flicker fly across the road, and a Northern Mockingbird in a multifloral rose bush. I started pishing to bring up more birds, and one popped up on top of another multifloral rose bush. It was generally gray in color and I first thought it was going to be another mockingbird. However, when I got my binoculars on it, the bird had a very distinct eye ring, the back was gray, the breast was a pinkish-gray (i.e., gray with a pinkish wash to it) and it had buffy/pinkish wing bars, unlike that of mockingbirds. The general size of the bird and the bill were also smaller than those of the mockingbird and it appeared to be closer in size to a catbird (although I could not see the tail). It was sitting so its tail was down behind the multifloral rose instead of cocked up as I would have expected if it had been a Northern Mockingbird. It was not a Gray Catbird since it was a lighter gray color than that of a catbird and had an eye ring and wing bars not present on catbirds. I decided it was a Townsend's Solitaire at that point. The bird then took off back into the brush. I never got a good look at the tail due to the position in which it was sitting on the bush. When it flew off, the bird dropped below the multifloral rose and I couldn't see it in flight. The attached JPEG drawing, although not the best, depicts the bird in the perspective in which I saw it with the features noted and described above. I was not able to get a photograph of the bird. I waited a little while to see if I could get it to come out again, but without success. At that point, after around 11:45 AM, I went out to a place where my cell phone had good reception and called Mary Jane Seipler and Dick Byers about the bird.

I went and got my 35 mm camera and headed back to the spot where I had seen the bird, arriving there around 12:20 PM. There were almost no birds flying around when I got back. Some Black-capped Chickadees, the Northern Mockingbird and some White-throated Sparrows were the only birds I found. Other members of the Westmoreland Bird Club arrived after that and we heard and saw a male Purple Finch, 1 Hairy Woodpecker, several flocks of Cedar Waxings (at least 40 or so of these) and finally the American Robins (~100) started flying around after about 1:10 PM. However, we did NOT relocate the Townsend's Solitaire. Since there was a Westmoreland Bird Club outing scheduled for 2 PM to go up to Elder's Ridge, we all left at about 1:40 PM. A check during the morning of 16 January 2000 between 9 and 11 AM by Ken Byerly and Mark McConaughy also failed to find the bird or flocks of robins at this location. It may be that the specific flock of robins with the Townsend's Solitaire moved on to another location.

The directions to the spot where the Townsend's Solitaire was seen is as follows. From US Route 22 just west of New Alexandria, turn north onto Route 819 (there is a red light at this spot and a BP Gas station at the northwest

corner of the intersection). Follow Route 819 north (bear right at the Y just after the light) and head north. Turn left onto Porter Run Road (also listed as TR-921 on the actual road sign, T-816 in the DeLorme Gazetteer). Take Porter Run Road for about 0.3 mile to Hoffman Heights Road (also listed as TR 728 on the road sign, T-921 in the DeLorme Gazetteer). Turn left onto Hoffman Heights Road and take it for 0.5 miles. You will go around a bend around the edge of a farm and down into a small creek valley where the road takes a dip. It is at this location that the bird was seen, on the north side of the road on top of one of the multifloral rose bushes.

Mark A. McConaughy



650-01-2000



**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Voting Ballot - Round One**

Species: Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*)

Date of Sighting: 15 January 2000 to 15 January 2000

Location: HOFFMAN HEIGHTS ROAD

County: WESTMORELAND

Observer(s): Mark McConaughy

Date of Submission: 2000

Submitted by: Mark McConaughy

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

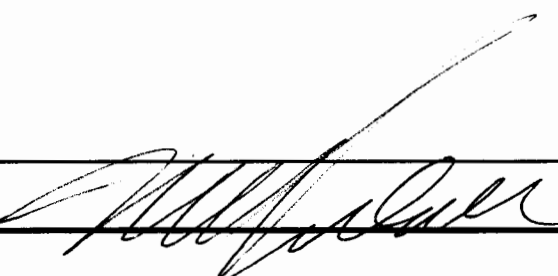
Recording: No

| Member       | Class I | Class II | Class III | Class IV-A | Recording: No |            |         | Abstain |
|--------------|---------|----------|-----------|------------|---------------|------------|---------|---------|
|              |         |          |           |            | Class IV-B    | Class IV-C | Class V |         |
| G. Armistead |         |          | X         |            |               |            |         |         |
| D. Couchman  |         |          | X         |            |               |            |         |         |
| P. Hess      |         |          |           |            | X             |            |         |         |
| R. Ickes     |         |          | X         |            |               |            |         |         |
| B. Reid      |         |          |           | X          |               |            |         |         |
| P. Rodewald  |         |          |           | X          |               |            |         |         |
| M. Sharp     |         |          |           | X          |               |            |         |         |
| TOTALS       |         |          | 3         | 3          | 1             |            |         |         |
| DECISION     |         |          |           | X          |               |            |         |         |

Comments: ~~Previously submitted with Class III documentation. Resubmitted now with Class I documentation~~

3/4/0

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

1/15/00