

Submission Date	2012-09-18 11:58:23
Observer's Name	Chuck Chalfant
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Observer's Address	Street Address: 5626 Umbletown Road City: Gap State / Province: Pa. Postal / Zip Code: 17527 Country: United States
Names of additional observers	Meredith Lombard, Mike Epler
Species (Common Name)	Piping Plover
Species (Scientific Name)	Charadrius melodus
Subspecies (if known)	XXXXXXXX
Number of individuals	1
Have you submitted this to eBird?	
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	I think it is in-between breeding and non breeding plumage, due to the darkness of breastband in comparison to the lighter gray overall coloration on folded wings, and whiteness of neck, and belly. But it seemed to have lost the traditional darker crown stripe of an adult in breeding plumage.
Observation Date and Time	09-05-2012 7:00 PM
County	Lancaster
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Washington Boro
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	Conejohela Flats, Avocet Point
GPS coordinates of sighting	XXXXXXXXXXXX
Habitat	Sand spit, with muddy banks, near willow trees
Distance to bird	Approximately 350 yds +
Viewing conditions	Not good, were looking into a low setting sun, and birds were often in shadows of willow trees.
Optical equipment used	Kowa Scope--TSN-824M-Fluorite Lens--Zeiss-10X40-B Binoculars

Description

The most striking feature to me was the very paleness of the bird compared to the nearby Semi-palmated Plovers in the immediate area, which were feeding nearby. Secondly it was always very easy to pick out the Piping Plover because of its much whiter appearance. Even in flight it seemed very pale in body and pale in the underwing when it flew. And especially how the dark eye really was such a contrast with the very light colored face. The size was close in comparison with the Semi-palm. Plovers there, probably a little larger in appearance, which should rule out Snowy Plover. Some people can see yellow on the legs or bill in Meredith's photos, usually I cannot on my monitor, but occasionally I can see a hint of yellow on bill or legs. But these photos were taken under very harsh conditions.

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

The Plover was very actively feeding, as were the Semi-palm. Plovers but not in very close proximity of the Semi-palm. Plovers. The Piping would fly from place to place with the Semi-palms to different feeding spots but would usually feed separately, not in close approximation with the darker semi-palms. It was easy to spot the much lighter bird in flight against the dark background of the willow trees, and when it landed it stood out much more than the semi-palms with the darker backgrounds in the fading light. And the photographic evidence bears this out, there are not many photos with the Piping close to the Semi-palms.

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

The only other lighter-backed & winged plover likely in our area would be Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), which is a full inch shorter and weighs (according to Sibley), 40g. as compared to the 55g. Piping Plover. Our Plover was close to the same size as the nearby Semi-palm Plovers. A Snowy should appear smaller in all aspects, length, wingspan, and weight to a Piping. The structure of a Snowy seems different than a Piping also. And the Piping was much lighter in the face and the dark eye stood out greatly from the very light face, compared to a darker face of a Snowy. The eye just 'pops' out at you so much more in a Piping than a Snowy. Common Ringed are just as dark as a Semi-palmed, Black-bellied and Golden Plovers are so very different in size, and shape as to not be considered, Wilson's (wrong structure and darkness), Mongolian, Dotterel, Mountain, (we could only wish), just don't fit the size shape and paleness of a Piping Plover, Everything points to Piping Plover to me.

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

Even though the photographs are not "pristine", under the viewing conditions it is remarkable that Meredith got any pictures that could help in the identification process, and I think that these pictures weigh heavily on the ID. of this Piping Plover. I will refer you to Meredith's Lombard's Flickr Page for perusal, the links are below.

http://www.flickr.com/photos/caritas_nature/7945810486/

http://www.flickr.com/photos/caritas_nature/7945825416/

And I am sure Meredith will send you any others that she feels are helpful to the identification of this sighting.

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

Yes, I feel very good about the Piping Plover ID.--The structure and marking from the p Yes, Photographs, weighed heavily on this decision after much thought, and referencing field guides.

During

The Sibley Guide to Birds

After

The Sibley Guide to Birds, Nat.Geo.Complete Guide To Birds of North America.

Supporting evidence (check all that apply)

Photograph

Upload images, audio, video or drawings

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