

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2014-03-22 21:18:39
Observer's Name	Matthew Sabatine
E-mail	mattsab12@yahoo.com
Phone	570-656-9531
Observer's Address	Street Address: 115 B Fox Gap Ave. City: Bangor State / Province: PA Postal / Zip Code: 18013 Country: United States
Species (Common Name)	Pink-footed Goose
Species (Scientific Name)	Anser brachyrhynchus
Number of individuals	2
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	both appeared to be in adult plumage, and one was clearly larger than the other, with a larger bill and head, a longer neck, and a more robust body; it's indicative of a male and female, and probably a pair.
Observation Date and Time	03-21-2014 10:30 AM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Yes
Link to eBird checklist	http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S17540285
County	Centre
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Howard
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	marina/boat rental of Bald Eagle State Park
GPS coordinates of sighting	41.028631, -77.655587
Habitat	the geese alternated between swimming on the lake itself and feeding/resting along the shoreline, which at this point in the year is an expansive mudflat
Distance to bird	at closest, maybe 75 yards?
Viewing conditions	clear day, though the morning lighting was challenging; since the birds were moving around a fair amount, it alternated between being decent and poor lighting; a clear sunny day though, with moderate winds
Optical equipment used	Nikon Prostaff spotting scope

Description

while driving along route 150 just after crossing the bridge from Howard, I noticed a large group of migrating geese dropping into the lake off the ridge line to the south. When I arrived at the marina, I began scanning through them, and found the two Pink-footed's right next to each other but still within the larger Canada group.

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

the initial spotting was of the birds swimming in the lake with the other geese just off the boating docks. Most of the geese began tucking in and sleeping (indicative of a long flight), and the Pink-footed's did this for a short while. After resting for 20 minutes or so, they swam over to the shoreline and began foraging on the exposed mudflat. They did this for another 20 minutes or so before retreating back into the lake and swimming, along with many of the other geese, to an area further east along the lake shore. They, along with many of the Canadas, walked up onto the shore and tucked in to continue to rest for the morning/afternoon. I observed them for over an hour, and they were still tucked in and sleeping when I left.

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

In my opinion, the only geese that could be confused with Pink-footed Geese would be Tundra and Taiga Bean-Geese, and even then only if seen in really poor lighting or at a distance. I knew they were Pink-footed's because in comparison to Bean-Geese, the Pink-footed's exhibited pink (not orange) speckling on an otherwise black bill, had bright, bubblegum pink (as opposed to orange) legs, and showed noticeably small bills compared to the larger, more robust bills of Bean-Geese.

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

the birds were very obviously actively migrating with a wild group of migrating Canada Geese, and all signs point to them being wild birds. They showed no bands on the legs, and acted in a way that was not noticeably odd or peculiar for a wild bird. The birds were not present on the lake the following day (3/22/14), and they are presumed to have continued their migration with the group of Canada's they came in with. Pending acceptance by PORC, this may represent the western-most record of this species on the continent of North America, and may represent only the 3rd instance of more than one individual at one time. Although Pennsylvania has a sizable number of records of this species, this will represent the furthest west, as they are typically seen in the southeastern PA counties.

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

yes. I have seen Pink-footed Goose before, and they are a fairly straightforward identification. I knew immediately when I spotted them what they were, for reasons noted above. Numerous observers throughout the day came to see the birds and identified them as Pink-footed Geese.

During

www.gobirding.eu (a reference to Tundra Bean-Geese, to ensure they were not that species)

Supporting evidence (check all that apply)

Photograph

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