

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2017-02-03 16:56:44
Observer's Name	David Yeany II
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Phone	814-221-4361
Observer's Address	3801 Saxonburg Blvd Cheswick PA 15024 United States
Names of additional observers	Michael David, Shannon Thompson, Dave Wilton, Jeff McDonald, Brian Shema, Aidan Place, Jack Chaillet, Mary Birdsong, Katie Anderson, Ian Gardner, Ted Nichols, and several others who I did not know
Species (Common Name)	Slaty-backed Gull
Species (Scientific Name)	<i>Larus schistisagus</i>
Number of individuals	1
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	Adult (4th cycle)
Observation Date and Time	01-29-2017 4:20 PM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Yes
Link to eBird checklist	https://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S34028960
County	Erie
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Millcreek Twp
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	Presque Isle State Park, Vista 3
GPS coordinates of sighting	42.1248299,-80.1467335
Habitat	Open water of Presque Isle Bay
Distance to bird	estimated at 950m
Viewing conditions	100% overcast, darker light conditions
Optical equipment used	Kowa TSN-772 scope w/ 20-60x lens

Description

Around 5:00pm, distant view across bay along shore below houses west of Erie Yacht Club. Dark gray mantled gull, similarly sized to nearby Herring Gulls. On closed wing, prominent white wide tertial crescent and noticeably large white scapular spot. Prominent white spotted tips on black primaries. In flight, wide white trailing edge to wing seen extending along all secondaries and well into primaries. Dark oval smudge over eye. Faint streaking on back of neck. Bill appearing straight edged on top and bottom. Digiscoped video obtained. From video, the classic "string of pearls" along primaries can be seen. Underwing shows P10 white mirror, black on P9-8, blending into gray with white sub-terminal spots on P7-5. Broad wings and overall with gray underside. Upperwing showing P10 white mirror, mostly black tipped P9-8, and white sub-terminal tongue tips on roughly P7-5. Also broad white trailing edge to wing. See photos and video. Believed to be same bird photographed at Presque Isle Downs & Casino on 1/27/2017 by Jerry McWilliams.

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

Swimming and resting on water with other gulls, then finally flying to relocate farther NE on bay.

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

Dark mantle and upperwings eliminates HERG, smaller size and dark gray, not black mantle and upperwings separate from GBBG. Only other similar species would be LBBG or hybrid gulls. Dark gray mantle and upperwings was darker than nearby LBBG, prominent tertial crescent and large scapular spot combined with limited streaking on head & neck with dark horizontal smudge through eye to mostly rule out LBBG. Clincher was the "string of pearls" observed on the open wing primaries as described above and seen in photos.

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

Even before seeing the open wing, consensus on gull ID forums (i.e. Gulls of North America Facebook group) was that this bird was a classic adult Slaty-backed Gull. Open wing photos and video should remove all doubt of possible hybrid origin.

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

Yes, convincing characters include 1) primary "string of pearls" with P10 mirror seen on open wing, 2) very wide tertial crescent visible on closed wing, 3) large scapular spot visible on closed wing, 4) dark gray mantle and upper wing with wide white trailing edge, and 3) head and neck lack prominent streaking with dark vertical oval smudge over eye.

After

Howell and Dunn. 2007. Gulls of the Americas.

Supporting evidence (check all that apply)

Photograph
Video

Upload images, audio, video
or drawings

[SBGU.20170129.flight.mp4](#)

[SBGU.PISP.20170129_flight_stable.mp4](#)

[SBGU.PISP.20170130.flight.slow.mp4](#)



[SBGU.PISP.upright1.png](#)



[SBGU_wing2.png](#)



[SBGU_wing3.png](#)

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