

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2020-12-26 17:48:28
Observer's Name	Paul Budde
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Phone	6127496234
Observer's Address	4216 Mathewson DR NW Washington DC 20011 United States
Names of additional observers	Many, though none I knew by name.
Species (Common Name)	Tundra Bean-Goose
Species (Scientific Name)	Anser serrirostris
Subspecies (if known)	presumably A. s. rossicus
Number of individuals	1
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	Adult
Observation Date and Time	12-19-2020 10:00 AM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Yes
Link to eBird checklist	https://ebird.org/checklist/S77669552
County	Delaware
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Springfield
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	Springfield Township Golf Course
GPS coordinates of sighting	39.925, -75.35
Habitat	Open; a golf course
Distance to bird	150 meters (determined via Google Maps)
Viewing conditions	Clear day, good visibility
Optical equipment used	Primarily a Leica Televid 82 scope with a 25 - 50x eyepiece; images captured with a Canon 7D Mark II, 400 mm f5.6 lens

Description

This goose was associating with a large flock of Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*). Its body size was just a tad smaller than that of the Canada Geese. It's neck was obviously shorter, while its legs appeared to be a little bit longer as it stood taller than the Canada Geese next to it.

The body was grayish brown, not very dissimilar from the bodies of the Canada Geese. Its scapulars were squared off (not rounded, and hence an adult) with thin pale tips. Wing coverts showed a broader pale fringe to the entire feather. The bird's coloration was lightest on the breast and belly, apart from the pure white undertail coverts. The neck showed vertical streaks (striations), typical of the genus *Anser*. The head was slightly darker than the neck and somewhat boxy in shape, with a pointed forecrown in front of the eye, a flat top, and a rounded hind crown.

In flight it showed a sharply marked tail pattern: white - black - thin white tail tip.

Bare parts: The legs were bright yellow or orangey yellow. Eyes were dark. Bill had a dark base and nail, and a bright yellowish orange band that appeared to encircle the portion of the bill between the nail and the nostrils, though it was wider on the maxilla than on the mandible. The bill showed a grinning patch between the gape and the distal edge of the nostril. The culmen between the nail and the forehead fairly straight (i.e., not convex or concave), except for a bump at the distal edge of the nostril. The proximal end of the mandible was aligned with the chin of the goose; about half way to the tip it flattened out, right where the yellow band began.

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

Feeding and roosting (sleeping?); once in flight.

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

Pink-footed Goose (*A. brachyrhynchus*) has a smaller, more triangular bill that is generally with a pink distal band. It also lacks the yellow-orange legs and feet of this goose and has a very different tail (grayish band, unlike the sharp, black band seen on this bird).

Taiga Bean Goose (*A. fabalis*) is more similar, and some authors consider these two Bean-Geese conspecific. (Others would lump the European Taiga with the Tundra, but keep the Eastern Siberian subspecies of Taiga (*A. f. middendorffii*) as distinct.) Reeber (2015) is one who considers these two taxons as the same species. He does a nice job of discussing the differences between what he treats as subspecies: *A. fabalis rossicus* (here, the Western Europe subspecies of Tundra Bean Goose) and *A. f. fabalis* (here, the western Europe subspecies of Taiga Bean-Goose).

To paraphrase and quote Reeber, *A. f. rossicus* is "stockier, with a shorter neck and relatively longer legs". Head shape is "more squared or rounded than oval, with a more angular nape, higher crown and steeper forehead, clearly forming a break with the culmen line." It is "very similar to *fabalis* in plumage, but slightly darker overall, especially the head and cheeks, making the eyes often less conspicuous at a distance than in *fabalis*." "Overall coloration colder brown, lacking any gingery or cinnamon tones to the breast, neck and head, which are sometimes visible in *fabalis*." "The tail band is reportedly blacker and reaches closer to the tail tip." All of these features were observed on the Springfield goose, and on the side of *rossicus*/Tundra Bean-Goose.

Reeber describes more distinctions, but these are the ones I observed in the Springfield goose. Another important one is the length vs. height of the base of the bill. However, I wasn't sure of how to evaluate that ratio with this bird, though perhaps the attached photographs (and those of other submitters) will enable people more experienced with these taxons to make an evaluation.

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

Another Bean Goose (presumably a Tundra -- though that is up to the Ontario and Quebec rare bird committees to decide) had been seen near the Ottawa River, first on the Quebec and later the Ontario sides, 8-20 November 2020. This Delaware County goose may have been the same bird, though I'm somewhat skeptical of that theory as the angle between the culmen and the forehead seems consistently different between this individual and the goose in Canada (flatter in the Ottawa goose). On the other hand, having two Bean-Geese in eastern North America during the same season would be truly incredible.

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

Yes. Good photos.

After

(1) Howell, S. N. G. and Russell, E. 2014. Rare Birds of North America. Princeton: Princeton, N.J. (2) Reeber, S. 2015. Waterfowl of North America, Europe and Asia. Princeton: Princeton, N.J.

Supporting evidence (check all that apply)

Photograph

Upload images, audio, video or drawings



[236A9331 \(2\).jpg](#)



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