

Wheatear at Tobay Sanctuary, Long Island: At 3:35 P.M. on Sept. 18, 1967 I noticed a thrush-like bird on the ground near the tower at Tobay Sanctuary, Nassau County, N.Y. It flew up as I approached and passed within a few yards of me, landing in a small bush about 40 or 50 feet from where I was standing. My first glimpse as it was flying away revealed nothing more than a flash of white on the rump and tail against a generally cinnamon-colored body. The only landbird I had ever seen which had a white rump was a Flicker, and this was obviously not that. With 7× binoculars I studied the bird closely for the next 20 minutes in bright sunlight as it hopped along the path or flew away a few feet each time I got within 30 feet.

The bird appeared to be somewhat smaller than a Robin, about Hermit Thrush (*Hylocichla guttata*) size. Its posture as it stood on the ground was very erect and it bobbed its tail constantly. The bill was long, thin and dark. A mask of darker color contrasted with the uniformly gray-brown head and back. The wings and back were darker than the breast and belly. The wingtips were almost black. The white on the sides of the tail was conspicuous and contrasted with the black tip. When the bird flew the white on rump and tail was even more evident.

When I arrived home I looked in Peterson's *Field Guide* and was satisfied that I had been studying a Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*). Just to be sure, I checked a half dozen other books and was certain of my identification.

Incidentally, the inverted black "T" of the tail was not apparent to me. The tail was always in motion and the bird's flights were too short for prolonged observation. The impression was of a white rump and tail with a black tip.

William A. Farren, 1426 Dartmouth Street, Baldwin, N.Y. 11510

ED. NOTE: John Bull's *Birds of the New York Area* lists seven previous occurrences, all from Long Island.

Sabine's Gull at Cazenovia Lake: About 2 P.M. on Oct. 22, 1967 while checking birds at the south end of Cazenovia Lake, Madison County, we observed a small gull that flashed black and white as it rose from the water. One of the nearby Ring-billed Gulls seemed to be harassing it, causing it to fly up from the water frequently. The following observations showed it to be a Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*).

With a 20× scope we verified the distinctive triangular pattern of black, white and grayish brown we had first noted through binoculars. The tail appeared to have a black terminal band, but we could not be sure of the shape, so constant was the gull's movement during 15 minutes of observation. We tried to get closer, but a passing speedboat dispersed the gulls. Fortunately, the Sabine's Gull flew to a spot where we could study the coloring at closer range and in excellent light. Crown and sides of the head and neck were "mouse gray" as described in Bent. The back was a fairly uniform grayish brown, the throat and underparts pure white. The upper wing surface seemed to be divided into triangular patches of solid color: the primaries were jet black, the black tapering to a point at the wrist where the mouse gray coloring started; the secondaries were gleaming white, forming a pure white triangle against the black of the primaries.

Noisy power boats again interrupted our observation and we watched the gull disappear up the lake, flying with constant wingbeat and greatly resembling a graceful tern. We finally located it again. This time it joined three Horned Grebes, staying to feed among them for over an hour. As it landed we could plainly see the pointed wings and forked tail, dark legs and dark bill. It kept busily dipping its bill in the water. Its spinning actions were similar to those of a phalarope as it whirled in all directions to retrieve insects. Occasionally it would reach up to spear an escaping insect, and often it would flutter up from the water to grab food. At about 4:45 the gull flew away. We heard no sound from it during the time of observation.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles B. Farnham, Jr., 115 Ames St., Syracuse, N.Y. 13207