



HOUSE SPARROW

Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee

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At its annual meeting December 4, 1984, two decisions were made which will affect our voting procedures. First, if a Committee member is the observer involved in a record voted on, that observer will no longer vote on that record, but be replaced by an alternate. Renner Anderson, Don Bolduc and Terry Savaloja were named to this list of alternates initially, others will probably be added to the list in the future, and it will be up to the Chairman which alternate will be chosen to vote on a record.

Second, a new voting procedure was established for records which involve possi-

ble escaped or released exotics: 1) the record will be voted on as usual, taking into account only whether or not the species was correctly identified; 2) if identification is acceptable, research will then be done regarding the likelihood of the bird's "wildness"; 3) that information will then be circulated and voted on — if an Accidental species, a 7-0 vote in favor of wild means Acceptable on the A(a) or A(b) list, a vote of 6-1, 5-2, or 4-3 means Acceptable on the A(c) list (for a definition of the categories of Accidental species, see the "Checklist of Minnesota Birds" published as a supplement to the March 1983 *The*

Loon); if Casual or Regular species, a vote of 4-3 or higher means Acceptable; a vote of 3-4 or less on species in any category means Unacceptable.

The following records were voted on July-December, 1984, and found Acceptable:

- Anhinga, 5/26/84, Louisville Swamp, Scott Co. (vote 7-0; **The Loon** 56:203).
- Western Tanager, 5/28/84, Lac Qui Parle W.M.A., Lac Qui Parle Co. (vote 7-0);
- Western Tanager, 5/15/84, Tamarack Nature Center, Ramsey Co. (vote 7-0; **The Loon** 56:269).
- Lazuli Bunting, 5/18/84, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 7-0; **The Loon** 56:262).
- Lazuli Bunting, 5/22-26/84, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 7-0; **The Loon** 56:262).
- Little Gull, 8/14-15/84, Worthington sewage ponds, Nobles Co. (vote 7-0).
- Ruff, 8/12/84, Carlos Avery W.M.A., Chisago Co. (vote 6-1; **The Loon** 56:263).
- Western Wood-Pewee, 8/16/84, Duluth Twp., St. Louis Co. (vote 7-0; **Loon** 56:263-264).
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 8/18/84, Forest Rd. 424, Lake Co. (vote 6-1).
- Sabine's Gull, 9/9/84, near Adams, Mower Co. (vote 7-0; **The Loon** 56:265-266).
- Sharp-tailed Sparrow, 4/10/84, Carver Park, Carver Co. (vote 6-1; **The Loon** 56: 274).
- Sabine's Gull, 9/24/84, near Warroad, Lake of the Woods Co. (vote 7-0's; **The Loon** 56: 266-267).
- Rock Wren, 5/12/84, Gooseberry Falls S.P., Lake Co. (vote 6-1; **The Loon** 56:270-271).
- Arctic Loon, 10/14/84, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 6-1; **The Loon** 56:276-277).
- Little Gull, 10/24/84, Lake of the Woods, Lake of the Woods Co. (vote 7-0; **The Loon** 56:265).
- Brant, 10/28/84, Fergus Falls, Otter Tail Co. (vote 7-0; **The Loon** 56:270).
- Ross' Goose, 11/24/84, Rochester, Olmsted Co. (vote 7-0).
- Arctic Loon, 11/3/84, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 7-0; **The Loon** 57:61).

— California Gull, 11/25-12/15/84, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 7-0; **The Loon** 57:60-61).

— Barrow's Goldeneye, 12/7/84, Black Dog L., Dakota Co. (vote 6-1; **The Loon** 57:61-62).

— White-faced Ibis, 10/4-12/84, Fort Snelling S.P., Dakota Co. (vote 7-0; **The Loon** 57:59).

The following records were voted on July-December, 1984, and found Unacceptable:

— Townsend's Warbler, 5/9/84, Bloomington, Hennepin Co. (vote 4-3, with 7-0 required for Acceptance.)

It was unanimously agreed that a Townsend's may have been seen, but the minority felt that a report as unusual as this should have had a more complete description — e.g., the underparts were not completely described, and there was no mention of throat color, back color or wing bars. The observer also had never seen this species before and did not know it was unusual here.

— Yellow Rail, 7/22/84, near High Forest, Olmsted Co. (vote 1-6).

The description did not fully preclude immature Sora, and the color of the under tail coverts in particular seemed to indicate Sora rather than Yellow Rail, since they were described as "buffy" — a Yellow Rail has brown under tail coverts. Also, no white wing patch was seen, and the observer seemed unsure about the overall size and back pattern.

— Band-tailed Pigeon, 8/11/84, Golden Valley, Hennepin Co. (vote 3-4).

The majority felt that the description was too brief for such an unusual species: e.g., the tail pattern was not seen and there was no mention of the black-tipped bill. But the biggest problem with the record was that a black ring was seen on the nape below the white ring, a feature inconsistent with Band-tailed Pigeon.

— Black-shouldered Kite, 8/19/84, near Morris, Stevens Co. (vote 4-3, with 7-0 required for Acceptance.)

The minority felt that this report of a bird in juvenile plumage was primarily flawed by the description of a muti-banded tail—the Black-shouldered Kite only has one sub-terminal band. The details seemed to indicate the bird may have been a pale,

immature Swainson's Hawk, especially in the description of the under wing pattern and wing shape.

— King Rail, 6/14-15/84, Carlos Avery W.M.A., Anoka Co. (vote 1-6).

There were two main problems with this report: first, the bird was never actually seen for sure (a shape was briefly seen in the direction of the vocalization heard, but no visual features were seen); second, the identification was based entirely on a call which could fit either the King or Virginia Rail (i.e., "bup-bup-bup", a call often attributed to the King Rail, is also given by the Virginia Rail).

— Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 8/19/84, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 3-4).

Although it was agreed that the bird was probably a Scissor-tailed, the observer only had a brief look as it flew over and was therefore unable to provide anything more than a sketchy description of the size and shape of the bird.

— Smew, 10/6/84, Mahnomon Co. (vote 4-3, with 7-0 required for Acceptance).

The description did fit a female Smew quite well in all respects, but, because of the extreme rarity of this species, the minority were uneasy about the possibility of it being an escape, of it being a hybrid or aberrant individual of some other species, and because the early fall date is inconsistent with other extralimital Smew records.

— Common Barn-Owl, 9/30/84, near Madison, Lac Qui Parle Co. (vote 3-4).

The majority felt that the possibility of Short-eared Owl was not sufficiently precluded: some paler Short-eareds can appear quite white on the face and underparts, as was described here, and the marsh habitat and diurnal activity of the owl seen is more consistent with Short-eared.

— Black Vulture, 10/29/84, Minnetonka, Hennepin Co. (vote 3-4).

Everyone agreed that the bird may very well have been a Black Vulture — espe-

cially suggestive were the shape and position of the white wing patches. However, the majority had reservations about there being only one observer, relatively inexperienced, that the head shape and color were not seen, and that the description of the manner of flight did not rule out other raptors. Also, the observer eliminated immature Golden Eagle and melanistic Rough-legged Hawk (both of which can have white wing patches), on the mistaken belief that they would have shown obvious white on the tail, but both can have tails which appear all dark.

— Groove-billed Ani, 10/21/84, near Warren, Polk Co. (vote 5-2, with 6-1 required for Acceptance).

The minority agreed that the bird probably was an ani, but there were reservations about it only being seen at a distance of 50 yards without binoculars, that the bill shape, though suggestive of an ani, was not seen or described completely, and that the plumage was only described as "dark colored", and not black.

— House Finch, 9/9/84, near Two Harbors, Lake Co. (vote 7-0).

The entire description of this female was "head was all dark, a few faint stripes on the top of the head, breast with fine streaking." Such details, however, do not preclude an immature Purple Finch (which is highly variable in head pattern), Pine Siskin or juvenile crossbill.

— Ross' Goose, 10/27/84, Mille Lacs Co. (vote 0-7).

The identification was only based on the smaller overall body size. However, this smaller goose could have been a female with larger males, an individual of the Lesser race with Greater Snow Geese, or a Ross' X Snow hybrid. Overall size alone is never enough to identify a Ross'; the diagnostic features involve the bill size, shape and color.

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