

and bobber as first thought, but rather that its movement had been inhibited by a large spherical growth (5 cm diameter) attached to the middle toe of the right foot (Fig. 1). The growth's surface was papillose, covered with sand and algae, and quite odoriferous. The growth was amputated at the distal joint, weighed (61 g), frozen, and sent to the National Wildlife Health Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin, for analysis. The tumor was diagnosed as being of squamous cell origin with a dense connective tissue core. It may have been a carcinoma of low grade malignancy, possibly of skin gland origin.

Most likely the tumor would have proved fatal to the bird had it not been removed. The bird's swimming movements were impaired which would decrease feeding efficiency and subsequently would cause deterioration in the bird's body condition. The tumor also would have interfered with flight capability by dragging and creating an unbalanced condition during take-off. This could have stranded the bird on its natal waters into freeze-up.

The loon was banded and released. Swimming appeared to be normal after removal of the tumor.

We thank Dr. Lynne M. Siegfried of the National Wildlife Health Laboratory in Madison for analysis of the tumor.

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*¹Wetland Wildlife Populations and Research Group, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 102-23rd St., Bemidji, MN 56601

²Nongame Wildlife Program, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 315 Charles St. N.W., Brainerd, MN 56401

Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee

by Kim R. Eckert, M.O.R.C. Secretary

As reported in *The Loon* 57:34, this committee at its December 1984 meeting had worked out a procedure for handling records of possible escapes. However, before this procedure was applied to any record, it was clear that there would be flaws in it, and the procedure was never implemented. Finally, on February 15, 1986, four members of MORC met and proposed a new procedure which will hopefully be more workable: 1) After a record is voted on and its identification found Acceptable, if any member feels the bird involved is an individual possibly escaped or released from captivity, he indicates this to the MORC Chairman. 2) If the chairman agrees that the member's opinion

is worth pursuing he then has research conducted into this possibility; the Chairman may do this research himself or ask MORC members to complete it. This research involves; checking with game farms, zoos, falconers (in the case of hawks), Richard Ryan of New Jersey (a recognized authority on birds kept in collections; asking the observers of the individual to report on the bird's plumage condition, behavior, presence of bands, and other factors which might indicate captive origin; checking to see if there were other extra-limited records about the same time in other states which might indicate a pattern of vagrancy (sources might include *American Birds*, journals and records committees from

other states, etc.); and checking on the species' history or tendency to migrate or wander out of range (sources might include the A.O.U. Checklist of North American Birds and the official checklists of nearby states). 3) After enough research has been completed to the satisfaction of the Chairman, the committee is informed by mail of the research. 4) After the research and all details are considered each member will vote on the record as follows: either 1) Unacceptable (i.e., the bird is a probable escape), 2) Acceptable as an A(a) or A(b) record (i.e., the bird is probably wild — A(a) species are accidentals substantiated by specimen or photo, A(b) species are acceptable sight records), 3) Acceptable as an A(c) record (i.e., the evidence does not clearly indicate either wild or captive origin); or 4) Research is not conclusive enough to reach a decision; discussion and vote should take place at a meeting of MORC. A simple majority determines the final decision; in some cases more than one vote might be necessary before a majority opinion is reached. (Regular and Casual species, not just Accidentals, can also be voted on in the same way; with such species, the third vote described above means the record is still accepted in the official record of Minnesota birds, but noted as an R(c) or C(c) — i.e., in the same way as an A(c); "there is a question as to the origin or wildness of the bird.")

In other action, two records were sent to experts out of state, and on the basis of their opinions a decision was reached on their acceptability without a formal vote of the committee. A gull identified as a California was found at Lake Harriet in Minneapolis November 7, 1985; the bird died later. The specimen was retrieved, prepared and sent to Joseph Jehl and Guy McCaskie of California who confirmed its identity as a California Gull. The other record was of a suspected Spoonbill Sandpiper seen in Duluth August 16, 1975. This record was never voted on by the committee, but the documentation was submitted to Dan Gibson of Alaska who felt it was best to "treat the report as of a bird that got away, species unknown." He also writes: "Nothing about the description of plumage, soft-part colors, or behavior sounds conclusive in any direction to me . . . Both mandibles [of the Spoonbill Sandpiper] are spatulate, each in a rounded diamond shape

not circular . . . and not, to my mind, bulbous or lobed (like the descriptions and drawings of your bird of 16 August 1975). This record was also sent to Ben King of the American Museum of Natural History and he said: "Your description certainly sounds like you had a Spoon-billed Sandpiper. The appearance and jizz of the bill as you describe it are similar to what I saw on a Spoon-billed Sandpiper in Sri Lanka some years ago. In sum, Spoon-billed Sandpiper sounds convincing but I am not sure how I would want to treat the record. I leave that more vexing task to you."

The following records were voted on July-December, 1985, and found **Acceptable**:

—House Finch, 7/6-7/85, Le Sueur, Le Sueur Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 57:134).

—Worm-eating Warbler, 5/24/85, near Rochester, Olmsted Co., (vote 6-1; *The Loon* 142-143).

—Anhinga, 4/27/85, Cottonwood, Lyon Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 58:46).

—Ruff, 7/19/85, Cottonwood, Lyon Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 57:183-184).

—Arctic Tern, 6/6/85, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 6-1).

—House Finch, 9/2/85, Pipestone Natl. Monument, Pipestone Co. (vote 7-0).

—Least Tern, 8/11-12/85, Cottonwood, Lyon Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 58:48-49).

—Sabine's Gull, 9/3-17/85, near Warroad, Lake of the Woods Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 57:180).

—Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 10/2/85, Grand Marais, Cook Co. (vote 5-2; *The Loon* 57:181).

—Rufous Hummingbird, 7/30-31/85, Cascade River S.P., Cook Co. (vote 5-2; *The Loon* 57:181).

—California Gull, 11/2/85, Silver L., Clay Co. (vote 6-1).

Although the record was accepted, the observers decided that the bird was only a possible California Gull, based on the comments of the person voting against the record.

—Western Wood-Pewee, 8/25/85, Lower Red L., Clearwater Co. (vote 6-1; *The Loon* 58:50).

—Great Black-backed Gull, 11/17/85, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 6-1; *The Loon* 58:46-47).

—Whooping Crane, 10/12/85, Nelson Prairie W.M.A., Mahanomen Co. (vote 6-1; *The Loon* 58:45).

The following records were voted on July-December, 1985, and found Unacceptable:

—Dickcissel, 4/20/85, near Fergus Falls, Otter Tail Co. (vote 2-5).

Although the observers had a close look at the bird and the warmer than normal April weather might have brought in a record early Dickcissel, the observers were not aware of how early this record was and thus their documentation was very brief (the only thing provided was a crude sketch showing a "black diamond" on the upper breast and a "yellow" area below this). Most agreed, however, the identification might have been correct, and no one could think of what else the bird could reasonably have been.

—Brant, July 1985, near Evansville, Douglas Co. (vote 0-7).

There was no real description provided, only a crude sketch which could have just as easily fit Mallard or some exotic, barnyard waterfowl.

—Black Skimmer, 9/26/85, Minnesota Valley N.W.R., Hennepin Co. (vote 2-5).

Although this species is so distinctive and the observers noted "the bill was an orange-red color and . . . the lower mandible was longer than the upper", there were too many doubts for this to be accepted as a first state record. The only plumage description given was "its back and head were dark; underparts white"; not only is this too sketchy but a skimmer should have a bold white forehead. A skimmer also has a black and orange bill, not just orange-red; further, it was stated that "the lower bill was as wide or wider at the end than at the head", but this does not fit Black Skimmer or anything else similar. Finally, the bird was only watched for a few seconds in flight, and the observers did not use binoculars.

—Golden Eagle, 7/22/85, Agassiz N.W.R., Marshall Co. (vote 3-4).

The identification as an adult Golden Eagle was based on its large size and its "entirely dark" underwings with "no white streaks or patches". It was agreed that the identification may have been correct, but the majority felt that with no direct comparison the impression of size may have been wrong, the plumage description was too brief, and that the distance involved (150 yards) and the bird's low altitude might have made it difficult to clearly see the underwing pattern. It was therefore

felt that immature Bald Eagle or a melanistic Buteo might have been seen.

—Yellow-throated Warbler, 9/7/85, Theodore Wirth Park, Hennepin Co. (vote 2-5). The majority felt that the details were too brief for acceptance, since the description only mentioned a yellow throat, white belly and dark-coloured back; however, other warblers could also fit this description.

—Whooping Crane, 10/13/85, near International Falls, Koochiching Co. (vote 2-5).

This individual was identified by its larger size in comparison with the Sandhill Cranes with it, and as an immature due to its "reddish brown coloring throughout the head and neck region" which extended to the back. However, the crane's larger size may have been due to it being a "Greater" Sandhill in with a group of the "Lesser" subspecies. Also, the rusty coloration on the head, neck and back can fit both immature Sandhill and Whooping Cranes.

—Clark's Grebe, 4/24/83, Marsh Lake, Lac Qui Parle Co. (vote 3-4).

Formerly considered just a race of the Western Grebe, the Clark's Grebe was recognized as a full species by the A.O.U. in 1985. As a result of this decision, this record was submitted, which included brief field notes stating "that in one individual the black of the crown ended above the eye [i.e., indicating Clark's Grebe] and that on another nearby Western Grebe the black of the crown extended below the eye." It was unanimously agreed that the bird was probably Clark's, but the majority felt that for a first state record a more complete description was needed, especially noting the bill color (bright yellowish-orange in Clark's, dull greenish-yellow in Western), which is said to be more diagnostic than the extent of the black cap.

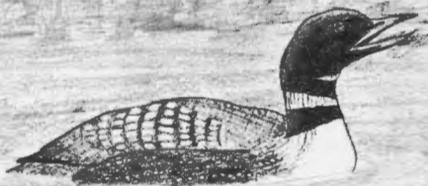
—Arctic Loon, 11/1/85, L. Lida, Otter Tail Co. (vote 2-5).

The identification was based on its smaller bill and body size and on the fact that the bill was not upturned. However, there was apparently no direct size comparison, thus making the observer's impression of size questionable; besides, small size alone is never enough to identify an Arctic since smaller Common Loons can overlap that species in size.

—Golden-crowned Sparrow, 10/20/85, Rogers L., Crow Wing Co. (vote 4-3 with 7-0 required for acceptance).

The majority was convinced by the observers having seen Golden-crowns out West and being familiar with immature White-crowns (which also have a hint of buff or yellow on the crown, and which the observers first considered the sparrow to be), and by the description "the crown was a lemon-yellow oval, sharply defined by black." It was

unanimously agreed that the bird may well have been a Golden-crowned, but some felt that for a first state record a more complete description would be necessary; i.e., nothing was mentioned about bill color, plumage of the underparts, wings, back, etc. **9735 North Shore Dr., Duluth, MN 55804.**



NOTES OF INTEREST

WHOOPING CRANES IN MAHNOMEN COUNTY — On Saturday, October 12, 1985 at approximately 1100 hours, I observed what I suspect were three Whooping Cranes. The sighting occurred at Township 146 N. Range 42 W. Section 14 (Mahnomen County) near the Nelson Prairie Waterfowl Production Area. From the ground (standing near my vehicle) I spotted three large birds flying at an elevation of about 100 feet and approximately ¼ to ½ miles from my position. The birds had apparently just left the WPA and were headed west. The sky at that time was overcast with heavy blue-gray clouds and an approximate ceiling of 1200 feet (maximum). Upon initial observation (with the naked eye) I noted a "swan-like" sheen as the birds flew. Further investigation using 7x32 field binoculars revealed that the birds were in fact cranes, i.e., very long neck with outstretched legs. To my surprise I noticed very distinct black wing tips (primaries) in contrast to the white wings and body. I glassed the bird for approximately three to four minutes as they flew east to west in front of me. (I focused and refocused, my binoculars several times to insure proper I.D.). At the time of the sighting I was working the reservation moose season in that area. I have been employed as the Reservation Wildlife Biologist for almost two years. I have a bachelor's degree in Biology and have worked for the FWS, DNR and other state agencies in a biological capacity for the past seven years. My experience with cranes is somewhat limited, but over the years I have observed numerous large flocks of migrating Sandhill Cranes as well as many pairs of nesting individuals in this area. Also, I have been active in waterfowl censusing (all species) for several years in an official capacity as a wildlife biologist. **Doug Bellefeuille, P.O. Box 418, White Earth, MN 56591**

Editor's Note: This record was carefully considered by the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee (M.O.R.C.) and found to be acceptable. The first acceptable record for Whooping Cranes in Minnesota since 1951!