

Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee

Kim R. Eckert, MORC Chairman

There was a meeting of the Committee on 20 July 1998, and among the items on the agenda were discussions on three potential first state records, four recirculated records (i.e., those with inconclusive first-round vote totals), and nine records documented with photographs. Of these 16 records, 11 were found to be Acceptable:

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 25 April – May 1998, Ortonville, Big Stone Co. (first state record #98-43, vote 10–0).

- “Brewster’s”-type Warbler, 14 October 1997, Hoyt Lakes, St. Louis Co. (recirculated record #98-04, vote 5–2).

- Painted Bunting, 24 May 1995, Blaine, Anoka Co. (photo record #98-27, vote 7–0).

- Black-headed Grosbeak, 24 May 1997, Ulen, Clay Co. (photo record #98-28, vote 7–0).

- Iceland Gull, 2 November – 8 December 1997, Grand Marais, Cook Co. (photo record #98-29, vote 7–0).

- Glaucous-winged Gull, 26 November – 13 December 1997, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (photo record #98-30, vote 7–0).

- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 15 May 1998, near Randall, Morrison Co. (photo record #98-49, vote 7–0).

- Bewick’s Wren, 21 May – June 1998, near Sherburne NWR, Sherburne Co. (photo record #98-56, vote 7–0).

- Eurasian Tree Sparrow, 6 June – July 1998, near Rollag, Clay Co. (photo record #98-61, vote 7–0).

- Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, 18 May – 22 June 1998, Summit Twp., Steele Co. (photo record #98-63, vote 7–0).

- Great Black-backed Gull (imm.), 13 December 1997, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (photo record #98-32, vote 7–0).

Four of the 16 records were found to be Unacceptable:

- Spot-breasted Oriole, 27 May 1998, Woodbury, Washington Co. (potential first state record #98-57, vote 0–10). The description of the bird only mentions its “orange head with the black mask and the very distinct black spots on the breast ...and white bars on its wings”. For such an unusual species, which probably never has been recorded in the U.S. outside of Florida, much more thorough documentation would be necessary, (e.g., no description of the back, belly or tail is given). In addition, the description of white wing bars is inconsistent with this species, which actually has an orange wing bar along and a larger white wing patch.

- Curlew Sandpiper, 9 October 1997, near New Germany, Carver Co. (recirculated record #97-67, vote 1–6). Although the majority of the Committee initially voted to accept this record, it was reconsidered as two problems with the documentation were pointed out. First, the description of the rump/tail is inconsistent and contradictory: although the sketch and parts of the written documentation indicate the rump was white, the description also states in two places that the rump and tail were black. Second, the overall shape of the bird is described as slender and yellowlegs-like, which would fit a Stilt Sandpiper more than a Curlew Sandpiper; though the black legs would seem to preclude the former, there is the possibility of the legs actually being greenish and covered with mud to make them appear black. For such an unusual sighting (there is only one accepted Minnesota record), it was felt the documentation — though well-written by an experienced observer

— should not include any ambiguities.

• Sage Thrasher, 4 May 1997, Prior Lake Scott Co. (recirculated record #97-76, vote 1-6). The majority first voted to accept this record of two individuals, but after being reconsidered and discussed the description of both birds was found to be inadequate. Since bill shape and eye color were not described, and the underparts streaks are described as gray, the possibility of Curve-billed Thrasher is not precluded. Also, there is mention of “white outer feathers on their tails”, although a Sage Thrasher’s tail only has white corners. It was also felt very unlikely that two such individual vagrants would appear simultaneously at the same location during migration.

• Great Black-backed Gull (ad.), 6 February 1998, Duluth Twp., St. Louis Co. (recirculated record #98-20, vote 0-7). After reconsideration, the Committee felt the record was in doubt for several reasons: e.g., the observer had incorrectly assumed others had seen this bird and, therefore, did not carefully study it; it is unclear if other gulls were present for direct size comparison, which leaves the overall size of the gull in doubt; and the description is only written from memory nearly three months after the sighting.

There was one record among the 16 discussed at the meeting for which voting has not yet been completed; however, the documentation was sent to an authority on the species who recommended the record should be found Unacceptable: Broad-tailed Hummingbird, 30 May 1998, Winona, Winona Co. (potential first state record #98-60).

The following records were voted on by mail January – July 1998 and found to be Acceptable:

• Nelson’s Sharp-tailed Sparrow, 17 May 1997, Winona, Winona Co. (record #98-02, vote 5-2).

• Ferruginous Hawk, 10 August 1997, McKinley Twp., Kittson Co. (record #98-03, vote 7-0).

• Laughing Gull, 29-30 November

1997, Grand Marais, Cook Co. (record #98-07, vote 7-0).

• Gyrfalcon, 21-27 November 1997, Minneapolis, Hennepin Co. (record #98-08, vote 5-2).

• Iceland Gull (ad.), 14 December 1997 – 5 January 1998, Black Dog L., Dakota Co. (record #98-09, vote 7-0).

• Great Black-backed Gull (imm.), 20 December 1997, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #98-10, vote 7-0).

• Iceland Gull (imm.), 22 December 1997 – 5 January 1998, Black Dog L. and Pine Bend landfill, Dakota Co. (record #98-11, vote 7-0).

• Sabine’s Gull, 5 October 1996, near Frontenac, Goodhue Co. (record #98-12, vote 5-2).

• Pacific Loon, 6 September 1997, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #98-13, vote 6-1).

• American Woodcock, 28 February 1998, Wiscoy Twp., Winona Co. (record #98-14, vote 7-0).

• Iceland Gull, 18 February 1998, Point Douglas Park, Washington Co. (record #98-15, vote 6-1).

• Barrow’s Goldeneye, 22-23 February 1998, Black Dog L., Dakota Co. (record #98-17, vote 7-0).

• Chipping Sparrow, 18 December 1997 – 11 January 1998, St. Louis Park, Hennepin Co. (record #98-18, vote 7-0).

• Chipping Sparrow, 20 December 1997 – 29 March 1998, Fergus Falls, Otter Tail Co. (record #98-19, vote 7-0).

• Gyrfalcon, 22 March 1998, Norway Twp., Kittson Co. (record #98-22, vote 7-0).

• California Gull, 5 April 1998, Thief River Falls, Pennington Co. (record #98-23, vote 7-0).

• Blue-winged Warbler, 20 April 1998, Northfield, Rice Co. (record #98-26, vote 7-0).

• Barrow’s Goldeneye, 7 December 1997 – February 1998, Blue Lake sewage ponds, Scott Co. (record #98-31, vote 7-0).

• Iceland Gull (ad.), 13 March – 9 April 1998, various locations, Dakota Co. (record #98-35, vote 7-0).

- Iceland Gull, 13 March 1998, Red Wing, Goodhue Co. (record #98-36, vote 7-0).

- Iceland Gull (imm.), 27 March 1998, Pine Bend landfill, Dakota Co. (record #98-37, vote 7-0).

- Iceland Gull, 14 April 1998, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #98-38, vote 7-0).

- Great Black-backed Gull (imm.), 14 April – 30 May 1998, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #98-39, vote 7-0).

- Black-headed Gull, 18 April – 20 May 1998, Grover's L., Jackson Co. (record #98-40, vote 7-0).

- Great-tailed Grackle, 18 April – May 1998, Grover's L., Jackson Co. (record #98-41, vote 7-0, *The Loon* 70:183).

- Clark's Grebe, 8-10 May 1998, Boon L., Renville Co. (record #98-44, vote 7-0).

- Tricolored Heron, 9 May 1998, Louisville Swamp, Scott Co. (record #98-45, vote 7-0, *The Loon* 70:170-171).

- Western Tanager, 9 May 1998, Frontenac State Park, Goodhue Co. (record #98-46, vote 7-0).

- California Gull, 13 May 1998, Roseau, Roseau Co. (record #98-47, vote 7-0).

[• *Plegadis*, sp., 16 May 1998, Grover's L., Jackson Co. (record #98-50, vote 7-0; also see Unacceptable White-faced ibis record).]

- Say's Phoebe, 16 May 1998, Felton Prairie, Clay Co. (record #98-53, vote 7-0).

- Mississippi Kite, 17 May 1998, Agassiz N.W.R., Marshall Co. (record #98-54, vote 6-1).

- Golden Eagle, 21 May 1998, Minnesota Lake, Faribault Co. (record #98-55, vote 5-2).

- White-eyed Vireo, 28 May 1998, Af-ton State Park, Washington Co. (record #98-58, vote 5-2).

- Clark's Grebe, 15 June 1998, L. Osakis, Todd Co. (record #98-62, vote 7-0).

- Mississippi Kite, 29 June 1998, Solway Twp., St. Louis Co. (record #98-64, vote 7-0).

The following records were voted on by mail January – July 1998 and found to be Unacceptable:

- Red-eyed Vireo, 28 April 1997, near Hines, Beltrami Co. (record #98-01, vote 1-6). The observers were unaware that this record was unusually early and only provided documentation written from memory eight months after the sighting. Other than the red eye, no actual description of the bird was provided.

- Smith's Longspur, 2 November 1997, near Ashby, Otter Tail Co. (record #98-05, vote 1-6). The documentation by an observer unfamiliar with this species indicates the identification was based on "the black triangle on the head" and "the buff on the breast", but Laplands in basic plumage also have similar facial markings and are somewhat buffy on their underparts. In addition, the documentation is inconsistent as to the number of birds identified as Smith's: 8-10 individuals is indicated at first, but later the number is given as 25.

- Swainson's Hawk, 12 November 1997, Hovland, Cook Co. (record #98-06, vote 0-7). The entire description only includes mention of "light underside with dark head and dark band on bottom edge of wide tail", which is too incomplete to make an identification; such a description could fit several raptors. Also, the observer was unaware this species is unusual at this time and location and is also apparently inexperienced with raptor identification, claiming to have seen dark-morph Swainson's several times before in this area.

- Ross's Goose (blue morph), 7 April 1998, near Faribault, Rice Co. (record #98-24, vote 0-7). The description only includes mention that it was a dark goose, with a white face patch and white under the tail, in the wings and on the lower breast, and that it had an orange bill. However, there is no indication why this was not a blue-morph or intermediate-morph Snow Goose, a Greater White-fronted Goose, or some sort of exotic waterfowl. In addition, an orange bill is inconsistent with a Ross's Goose.

- Western Tanager, 18 April 1998, Reads Landing, Wabasha Co. (record #98-25, vote 3-4). Although a male Western

Tanager in alternate plumage is difficult to confuse with anything else, the majority voted not to accept the documentation, which includes mention of a gray tail and gray wings which “had a checkered appearance between the pinion feathers and the shoulders”. Although this bird may have been correctly identified, the described features seem inconsistent with Western Tanager and might possibly match a male Summer Tanager in molt.

- Green Heron, 24 February 1998, Edina, Hennepin Co. (record #98-34, vote 3–4). This bird may well have been correctly identified, but the description is very brief and incomplete: “small dark heron, gray blue back and a brown red neck”. No indication is given as to how “small” it actually was, and the distinctive orange legs were not noted. Also, the observer’s experience is not given, she did not know it was unusual, and no optics were used.

- Kentucky Warbler, 14 May 1998, Duluth Twp., St. Louis Co. (record #98-48, vote 2–5). The description does not preclude — and the observer did not consider — the possibilities of a Canada Warbler or an immature male Common Yellowthroat, both of which have face patterns resembling a Kentucky Warbler. Also, the non-secretive behavior of this bird would seem inconsistent with this species. In addition, the observer did not know the species is unusual in this part of the state, and the description of the bird was written from memory three weeks later.

- White-faced Ibis, 16 May 1998, Grover’s L., Jackson Co. (record #98-50, vote 2–5). Although this flock of seven individuals was unanimously accepted as *Plegadis*, sp., and though it is likely all seven individuals were White-faced, the majority felt the documentation is not complete enough to indicate this. The only thing in the description indicating White-faced Ibis specifically is “the lighter area on the face”; however, it was felt such a description is too brief and vague, and it is unclear how many ibis faces were seen and were being described.

- Western Sandpiper, 16 May 1998, near Etter, Goodhue Co. (record #98-51,

vote 2–5). The identification of these two individuals was based on their drooped bills, which are described as longer than some adjacent Semipalmated Sandpipers, and on some rufous color on their backs, wings and ear coverts. However, a Western Sandpiper is not rufous overall on its back and wings, as the description suggests; such color is basically limited to its scapulars, ear coverts and crown. At this time of year, a Western would have some obvious spotting or streaking on the underparts, but none is noted in the description. Finally, there is nothing in the documentation to preclude the possibility of these simply being Semipalmateds, since some individuals have longer and droopier bills than others.

- Black-headed Gull, 16 May 1998, near jct. of I-90 & Minn. Hwy. 86, Jackson Co. (record #98-52, vote 2–5). Although the identification of this flying gull may well have been correct, the majority felt the description was not thorough enough for a third state record. The identification was based entirely on the description of the underwing pattern: “dark underwing primaries and also the darker secondaries but not as dark as a Little Gull (except the primaries)”. However, no mention is made of the Black-headed Gull’s contrasting white outer primary, the secondaries on the underwing of this species are not dark, and the underwing pattern as described could fit either a Laughing or Little Gull. Except for the head being described as not being black, nothing else about the plumage is mentioned, the bill color was apparently not seen, and the overall size of the gull is unclear since nothing else was present for comparison.

Summary: 60 records voted on; 46 Acceptable (77%), 14 Unacceptable (23%).

The efforts of all those observers who document their reports of unusual species are appreciated, whether or not those records are accepted. Accordingly, the Committee acknowledges with thanks those who provided documentation for the records listed in this article: Karl Bardon (11 records), Al Bolduc, Jerry Bonkoski, Terry

Brashear, William Brown, Paul Budde, Dave Cahlander, Anne Capistrant, Steve Carlson (two records), Dawne Dougherty, Kim Eckert (seven records), Bob Ekblad, Lane Ellwanger, Audrey Evers, Bruce Fall, Colin Gjervold, Bernice Groebner, Jay Hamernick, Tony Hertzler (five records), Ken and Molly Hoffman, Bob Janssen (three records), Paul Jantscher, William Jeffries, Chuck Krulas, Fred Leshner (two

records), Sue Levy (two records), Bill Litkey (two records), Sandra Lunke, Craig Mandel, Steve Millard, Steve Mortensen, Clem Nagel, David Neitzel, Carol Schumacher, Dave Sovereign, Paul Spreitzer, Forest Strnad, Peder Svingen (16 records), Steve Weston, Jim Williams.

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