

Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee

Kim R. Eckert, M.O.R.C. Chairman

There were two meetings of the Committee earlier this year, on 11 April 1999 and 29 August 1999. Among the items on the agenda at these (and previous) meetings were discussions of certain records, according to our procedures:

- those which are potential first state records;
- those for which there is a question of origin (i.e., whether or not the bird might have been an escape/release from captivity);
- those which are recirculated after inconclusive first-round votes;
- those with completed votes which are reconsidered at the request of a member;
- those primarily or entirely docu-

mented with a photograph or tape recording (which are difficult to circulate by mail).

Formerly, actual votes on these records were taken at the meetings themselves, but now members usually have the option of mailing in their votes later. Accordingly, the results of the votes of records discussed at the April meeting are included below, and the results of those discussed at the August meeting will be included in the Spring 2000 issue of *The Loon*.

The following records were voted on January – July 1999 and found to be Acceptable:

- Sharp-tailed Grouse, 28 February 1998, near Luverne, Rock Co. (record #98-21, vote 6–1). After the identification was accepted, there was a discussion and vote

on the question of origin at the August meeting; by majority vote, the record will be filed as a Regular (o) species: i.e., the possibility of this bird being an escape or release from captivity is considered to be about the same as the possibility of it being a naturally occurring vagrant.

- Brambling, 23 October 1998, Hoyt Lakes, St. Louis Co. (record #98-90, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 71:46-47).

- Western Tanager, 27 April – 1 May 1998, Monson L., Becker Co. (record #98-93, vote 7-0).

- Yellow-throated Warbler, 6 September 1997, Fridley, Anoka Co. (record #99-01, vote 7-0).

- Least Tern, 12 September 1998, Gabriel L., Lyon Co. (record #99-03, vote 7-0).

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, mid-November – December 1998, Lynd, Lyon Co. (record #99-07, vote 7-0)

- Lark Bunting, 25 August 1998, Richfield, Hennepin Co. (record #99-08, vote 7-0).

- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 24 October 1998, Grand Marais, Cook Co. (record #99-09, vote 7-0).

- Iceland Gull, 28 November 1998, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99-10, vote 7-0).

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 15 December 1998, near Alden, Freeborn Co. (record #99-12, vote 6-1).

- Great Black-backed Gull, 24 December 1998, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99-13, vote 7-0).

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 29 January – August 1999, Jasper, Pipestone/Rock counties (record #99-15, vote 6-1).

- Plegadis, sp., May 1998, Boon L., Meeker Co. (record #99-16, vote 7-0; the vote on this being a White-faced Ibis was Unacceptable, 0-7).

- Mew Gull, 13 December 1998, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99-17, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 71:154-156). Photographs were also taken of this bird, and by unanimous vote it was decided these photos are identifiable on their own. Since there had been no previous photos or specimens of this species, it is now included on the Ac-

cidental list without the “s” qualifier.

- White-eyed Vireo, 8 May 1999, Hok-Si-La Park, Goodhue Co. (record #99-19, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 71:168-170).

- Black-headed Grosbeak, 13 May 1999, Middletown Twp., Jackson Co. (record #99-20, vote 6-1).

- Lazuli Bunting, 19-21 May 1999, Boyd, Lac Qui Parle Co. (record #99-22, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 71:165).

- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 22-23 May 1999, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99-23, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 71:168).

- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 27 May 1999, near Nevis, Hubbard Co. (record #99-24, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 71:168).

- Red Phalarope, 29 May 1999, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99-25, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 71:166).

The following records were voted on January – July 1999 and found to be Unacceptable:

- Pomarine Jaeger, 11 October 1970, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #97-37, vote 3-4, **The Loon** 43:95). This published record, which occurred before the Committee was formed, had not been voted on; a vote was taken this year since some felt the documentation was not adequate. The identification was based only on “the large size and steady, heavy flight of this jaeger.” However, there was no direct size comparison with any identified species of gull, which leaves the impression of size subjective and in some question. Also, Parasitic Jaegers often fly with steady and slow wingbeats when not in active, close pursuit of a gull. Therefore, although it was agreed this may well have been a Pomarine (and it was originally published as such), the majority felt it is best to consider this jaeger unidentified.

- White-winged Dove, 21 April 1998, Bloomington, Hennepin Co. (record #98-42, vote 0-7). This dove was described as having a white “X-like pattern across the back” in flight and as being “an overall medium slate gray in color.” However, neither of these features is consistent with this species. In addition, the observers partly based their identification on it

having a different “butterfly-like” flight, even though manner of flight is not a field mark in any of the larger pigeons/doves. It was unanimously agreed that a more accurate description is needed for such an unusual species to be accepted (it would have represented a third state record), and the opinion was advanced that this might have been a Rock Dove with white on the wings.

- Black-headed Gull, 29 May 1998, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #98-59, vote 1–6). Although it was agreed that both birds involved in this record were probably correctly identified, the identification relied only on bill color and overall body size to eliminate the similar Bonaparte’s Gull, and for a potential fourth state record it was felt a more complete description was necessary. Most importantly, neither bird was seen in flight, so that this species’ most diagnostic feature — its under wing pattern — was not visible. Also, since the observer was looking somewhat into the sun at the time, with the gulls about 100 yards away, it was felt that the described bill colors might not have been seen clearly enough.

- Sabine’s Gull, 6 September 1998, Big Cormorant L., Becker Co. (record #98-81, vote 0–7). Although the description of the wing pattern seems to be diagnostic, the described colors of the head and secondary coverts are not consistent with a juvenile Sabine’s. Since the tail “had a terminal black band,” this individual was a juvenile, and in this plumage a Sabine’s crown, ear coverts and nape are a uniform grayish brown (the head is not “dirty white with a gray ear-spot”), and the secondary coverts are similarly grayish brown (and not “dark gray” as described).

- American Dipper, 25 July 1998, Judge C. R. Magney State Park, Cook Co. (record #99-02, vote 1–6). The only description given in the documentation is that it was “brown to gray” and “about the size of a dove.” While it was seen to swim underwater and perch on a rock, there is no indication as to why it wasn’t a duck or even a muskrat or other mammal.

- Pomarine Jaeger, 26 September 1998,

Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99-04, vote 3–4). The identification essentially relied on the jaeger being larger and “heavier bodied with slower wing beats and gull-like flight” than the jaeger flying next to it, and by its “blunt” projecting central tail feathers. However, the majority felt the possibility of the larger bird being a Parasitic Jaeger is not precluded, since the smaller jaeger with it might possibly have been a Long-tailed. (This smaller jaeger was described as having a “tern-like flight” and “pointed” central rectrices “maybe three inches long,” and both of these features would be consistent with a subadult Long-tailed.) And while the central rectrices of the jaeger in question were described as “blunt,” this is not synonymous with rounded. The possibility also remains that both jaegers might have been the same species (e.g., Parasitic), since female jaegers can appear noticeably larger than males of the same species.

- Clark’s Grebe, 30 August 1998, Agassiz N.W.R., Marshall Co. (record #99-05, vote 1–6). The most useful field mark to separate Clark’s Grebe from Western — bill color — was apparently not noticed or described. In addition, the description of the facial pattern is ambiguous, with the black cap extending “down to the top of the eye.”

- Turkey Vulture, 7 February 1999, Amherst Twp., Fillmore Co. (record #99-14, vote 1–6). The entire description of this bird, which was feeding on carrion, only includes mention of a “dull buff naked head.” While the behavior might suggest the identification was correct, the documentation is inadequate since there is no description of the bird’s size, shape, plumage, etc.

- Yellow-throated Warbler, 1 May 1999, Shoreview, Ramsey Co. (record #99-18, vote 1–6). While the identification may have been correct, the brief description only mentions “black streaks on the sides of the yellow throat, and all white below the yellow.” With no description of the head or upperparts, Pine Warbler and female Blackburnian Warbler are not precluded.

- Bewick's Wren, 16 May 1999, Faribault, Rice Co. (record #99-21, vote 2-5). The brief description of the plumage only includes mention of a "warm, reddish brown" back, a "prominent, white eye stripe," the white belly and chest, and "a little buff on its side." However, these features suggest Carolina Wren as much as they do Bewick's. Also, the identification was only made later from memory while the observer consulted a field guide (which may have influenced his memory of the bird).

- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 23 June 1999, North Germany Twp., Wadena Co. (record #99-26, vote 1-6). The identification was probably correct, since the bird was described as being a "medium-size passerine with an extremely long tail," as "light-colored with no obvious markings," and with a darker tail. However, the light conditions were poor at the time, the observer was not using optics, and the possibility of it being a Fork-tailed Flycatcher is not precluded.

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: David Alexander, Chuck Bailey, Al Batt, Peg Benedict, Betsy Beneke, Tom Boevers, Terry Brashear (two records), Judd Brink, Paul Budde, Philip Chu, Kim Eckert (two records), Fred Eckhardt, Wayne Edgerton, Paul Egeland, Audrey Evers, Janet Green, Anthony Hertzell (five records), Bob Janssen, Robbye Johnson, Jeanie Joppru, Curt McCamy, David Neitzel, Art Overcott, Pam Perry, Tom Ramsay, Jeff Stephenson, Peder Svingen (seven records), Tom Tustison, Warren Woessner, and Kevin Woizeschke.

There were also other observers who documented records which were not submitted for a vote to the Committee. Their documentations, though not mentioned here, are also appreciated.

Summary: 31 records voted on: 20 Acceptable (65%), 11 Unacceptable (35%).

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