

# Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee

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

The two most recent meetings of the Committee were held on 9 April and 13 August 2000. Besides the Chairman, in attendance at one or both of these meetings were the other Committee members: Renner Anderson (alternate), Karl Bardon, Paul Budde, Philip Chu (alternate), Bruce Fall, Anthony Hertzell, Bob Janssen (new alternate replacing Kim Risen), Peder Svingen, and Tom Tustison.

Among the items on the agendas of these meetings were discussions of certain records, including: potential first state records; those involving a question of origin; those recirculated after inconclusive first-round votes; those with completed votes which are reconsidered at the request of a Committee member; and those primarily or entirely documented with

a photograph or tape recording. The results of these discussions and votes on these records are included below with the other records handled entirely by mail.

The following records were voted on January – July 2000 and found to be Acceptable:

- Williamson's Sapsucker, 16 October 1999, Taconite Harbor, Cook Co. (record #99-62, vote 6–1, *The Loon* 72:115–118).
- Wilson's Warbler, 3–4 December 1999, St. Paul, Ramsey Co. (record #2000-01, vote 6–1).
- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 23 October 1999 (& previously), Fairmont, Martin Co. (record #2000-08, vote 6–1).
- Blackpoll Warbler, 3 November 1999, Northfield, Rice Co. (record #2000-09, vote 5–2).

- Yellow Warbler, 28 November 1999, St. Paul, Ramsey Co. (record #2000-10, vote 7-0)
  - Curve-billed Thrasher, late November 1999 – 24 March 2000, Brandrup Twp., Wilkin Co. (record #2000-12, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 72:177-178).
  - Sage Thrasher, 7 February – 4 March 2000, Edina, Hennepin Co. (record #2000-17, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 72:181).
  - Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, 17-27 February 2000, Connelly Twp., Wilkin Co. (record #2000-20, vote 6-1, **The Loon** 72:176-177).
  - Great-tailed Grackle, 1-9 April 2000, Grover's L., Jackson Co. (record #2000-23, vote 7-0).
  - Great-tailed Grackle, 9 April 2000, Sec. 29, Minneota Twp., Jackson Co. (record #2000-24, vote 6-1).
  - Lark Bunting, 20 May 1999, near Clarkfield, Yellow Medicine Co. (record #2000-27, vote 7-0).
  - Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, 8 October 1999, Hutchinson, McLeod Co. (record #2000-28, vote 6-1).
  - Osprey, 29 March 2000, Maple L., Polk Co. (record #2000-29, vote 6-1).
  - McCown's Longspur, 8 May 2000, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #2000-32, vote 7-0).
  - California Gull, 13 May 2000, Cottonwood, Lyon Co. (record #2000-33, vote 7-0).
  - Black-headed Grosbeak, 13 May 2000, Cottonwood, Lyon Co. (record #2000-34, vote 7-0).
  - Mississippi Kite, 14 May 2000, Bloomington, Hennepin Co. (record #2000-35, vote 7-0).
  - Pacific Loon, 6 January 2000 (& previously), Lynd Twp., Lyon Co. (record #2000-39, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 72:178-179).
  - Chipping Sparrow, 4 March 2000, Silver Lake, McLeod Co. (record #2000-40, vote 6-1).
  - Long-billed Curlew, 18-23 April 2000, Mitchell Twp., Wilkin Co. (record #2000-41, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 72:184-185).
  - White-faced Ibis, 13-14 May 2000, Washington Twp., Le Sueur Co. (record #2000-42, vote 7-0).
  - Lark Bunting, 13-14 May 2000, Stoney Pt., St. Louis Co. (record #2000-43, vote 7-0).
  - *Plegadis* ibis, sp., 14 May 2000, Appleton Twp., Swift Co. (record #2000-44, vote 7-0).
  - Yellow-throated Warbler, 13-18 May 2000 (& subsequently), Sibley State Park, Kandiyohi Co. (record #2000-47, vote 7-0).
  - Lazuli Bunting, 16-21 May 2000, Lynd Twp., Lyon Co. (record #2000-48, vote 7-0).
  - Black-throated Gray Warbler, 23-24 May 2000, Two Harbors, Lake Co. (record #2000-49, vote 7-0).
  - Black-necked Stilt, 24 May 2000, Pierce L., Martin Co. (record #2000-50, vote 7-0).
- The following records were voted on January – July 2000 and found to be Unacceptable:
- Red-throated Loon, 17-21 November 1999, French L., Rice Co. (record #99-70, vote 1-6). This loon may well have been correctly identified since it was seen by many observers over a period of days. However, only two descriptions were submitted, and neither was clear or complete enough to preclude other loons. The original observer's description of its smaller size was only based on a subjective impression since no direct comparison with Common Loon is stated; the other documentation, which states direct size comparison with Commons, is difficult to judge since it was written from memory four months after the observation. The bill's actual shape as described fits Red-throated Loon well, but neither observer described the bill as anything more than slightly or occasionally uptilted. Finally, the spots on the bird's back are described as "rounded, oval" by one observer as as "checkered" by the other, and this is more suggestive of a Pacific or Common loon.
  - Brewer's Blackbird, 18-19 December 1999, Detroit Lakes, Becker Co. (record #2000-02, vote 3-4). The bird's "brown/gray" eyebrow and the "fairly short" tail as described are both more suggestive of

the more likely Rusty Blackbird than a Brewer's. Any winter record of a Brewer's Blackbird, especially in northern Minnesota, would be exceptional and would need to be completely described and thoroughly preclude other possibilities, and the majority felt this documentation did not accomplish this.

- Gyrfalcon, 25 December 1999, near Pillager, Cass Co. (record #2000-03, vote 0-7). The observer only had a brief and apparently "going-away" look at this raptor, and the identification was made without the use of optics. The brief first impression of the bird being a "white Rock Dove" is inconsistent with the much larger Gyrfalcon. Only the undersides of the bird are described and said to be lacking any distinct markings, although even white-morph Gyrs have dusky tips on the outer primaries. An adult Northern Goshawk would fit the description since its undertail banding is faint and hard to see, its gray barring on the breast and belly is often faint and also hard to discern, and goshawks typically show a pointed-wing profile, especially when flying into the wind, as was the case here.

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 6-7 January 2000, Grand Rapids, Itasca Co. (record #2000-04, vote 0-7). The brief documentation does not address any differences which distinguish this species from Ringed Turtle-Dove, and the description even suggests the bird was actually a turtle-dove, since it was "very light color, almost white, sort of a creamy color."

- Little Gull, 25 March 1972, Red Wing, Goodhue Co. (record #2000-05, vote 2-8; all ten Committee members vote on potential first state records). This previously published record (*The Loon* 44:56), which predated the formation of this Committee, represented a first state record at the time. At the request of present Committee members, this record was considered and voted on. Although the two gulls in question may have been Little Gulls, the brief description does not clearly state their size and only vaguely describes their wing pattern. Nor is it clear that this species' distinctive blackish underwings were

seen; this important feature is only mentioned in passing as an afterthought in the final sentence: "these were not black, but dark enough to contrast with the white edgings." Though two Ross's Gulls here would be much less likely than Little Gulls, it is also significant to note there is nothing in the description to preclude Ross's Gull.

- Tufted Duck, 25 January - 8 February 1976, Black Dog L., Dakota Co. (record #2000-06, vote 1-9; all ten Committee members vote on potential first state records). This record had previously been published as Unacceptable on the basis of its probable captive origin (*The Loon* 48:78), but at the time it had not been voted on by the Committee. At the request of the present Committee chair, this record was considered and voted on. Regardless of the bird's origin, the relatively brief description is not critical enough to preclude the possibility of hybridization, and documented records of Tufted Ducks hybridizing with scaup or Ring-necked Ducks occur with some frequency. Any reported Tufted Duck, therefore, would need to address and preclude a hybrid before its identification could be accepted. (Since the identification was not accepted, the question of wild vs. captive origin is moot.)

- Mew Gull, 18 December 1999, Black Dog L., Dakota Co. (record #2000-11, vote 2-5). The majority felt that the two experienced observers, who are to be commended for the honesty and thoroughness of their documentations, were simply unable to see this gull well enough for a positive identification. The gull was never studied in flight, and the observers did not concur on such key features as the exact color or pattern on the bill, eye color, and the gull's overall size; and note one observer judged the overall size as "about" the same as a Ring-billed, which is inconsistent with the average Mew Gull. There was agreement on the gull's darker gray mantle color in direct comparison with the Ring-billed and Herring gulls present, but the light conditions at the time and the angle of the gull relative to

the observers are unclear from the documentation. For such an unusual record to be accepted (there are only three previously accepted), the majority felt more certainty and consistency in the documentation would be needed.

- Tufted Duck, 1 January – March 2000, Blue Lake sewage treatment ponds, Scott Co. (record #2000-13, vote 0–10; all ten Committee members vote on potential first state records). It was unanimously agreed (vote 10–0) that the identification of this bird was Acceptable, with the possibility of it being a hybrid satisfactorily precluded. However, the record was also unanimously found Unacceptable on the basis of its origin: i.e., all felt the probability of it being an escape from captivity was more likely than it being a wild vagrant. This opinion was based on a discussion in March with a waterfowl collector in the vicinity of the sewage ponds who had Tufted Ducks escape from his care not long before the initial observation. This collector also reported he observed the duck at the sewage ponds and was confident this was one of his escaped birds (see also *The Loon* 72:186–187).

- Northern Wheatear, 7–10 February 2000, Angora, St. Louis Co. (record #2000-14, vote 0–7). No optics were used by the inexperienced observers to identify this bird, which was more likely a shrike, since a mid-winter wheatear would be clearly unlikely and unprecedented here. Though the bird was seen in flight, there is no mention in the documentation of the wheatear's distinctive tail pattern. It was also seen perching in trees frequently, which is atypical for a wheatear, and there is no mention of tail wagging behavior, which is frequent and characteristic wheatear behavior.

- Pyrrhuloxia, 24 January 2000, Andover, Anoka Co. (record #2000-15, vote 1–9; all ten Committee members vote on potential first state records). The observers, who had no experience with this species, based their identification of this bird on its mostly gray plumage (with red limited to the crest, wings and tail) and its yellow bill. While such a description

seems more consistent with Pyrrhuloxia than Northern Cardinal, it does not entirely match either a male Pyrrhuloxia (which would also show red on the face and belly) or a female (which would not show much, if any, red on the wings and tail). There is also no mention of bill shape, which is distinctive in this species. Such a record would be quite unexpected and unprecedented since the Pyrrhuloxia has no history of vagrancy to the eastern U.S. As such, a more complete and convincing description would be needed for such an unusual species.

- Brewer's Blackbird, 26 February 2000, Denmark Twp., Washington Co. (record #2000-16, vote 2–5). Since reports of this species in northern states during winter have a long history of being erroneous, the majority of the committee feels that only records with flawless documentations should be accepted. In this report of a pair of Brewer's, the dark eye of the female is mentioned, but the described light conditions seemed unfavorable enough that a Rusty Blackbird's pale iris might appear dark. And the male is said to have had a "black head and dark greenish-blue body," but this description is not entirely consistent with a male Brewer's and could fit a male Rusty in early spring just as well.

- Ivory Gull, 13 March 2000, near Hastings, Washington Co. (record #2000-18, vote 3–4). The entire description of this gull only includes mention of its entirely white plumage and its black legs and feet. If correct, this indicates the bird was an adult, which would be most unusual, especially at this time of year. Accordingly, the majority was skeptical of this record, especially since the documentation does not discuss or preclude an albino gull of some species. In addition, the bill color of the gull was not noted, and the leg/foot color may not have been accurately seen, since the gull was observed at a range of 100+ yards without a spotting scope.

- Turkey Vulture, 18 December 1999, North Mankato, Nicollet Co. (record #2000-19, vote 2–5). This is another species with a history of erroneous reports

in winter, and accordingly the committee is cautious about accepting such records. In this case, neither the small-headed profile nor the two-toned underwing pattern, which are distinctive on a vulture, were noted in the brief, incomplete and casual documentation. And, while one late-lingering vulture might be credible, the majority was skeptical that five individuals were seen.

- Osprey, 14 March 2000, near Pelican Rapids, Otter Tail Co. (record #2000-21, vote 0-7). This flying bird was only viewed from a moving vehicle without the use of optics, indicating it was not observed carefully enough for a positive identification. Accordingly, the description is incomplete and does not include size, flight profile, or anything on the bird's upperparts. The identification seemed to rely primarily on the "black streak through the eye," but this feature is also found on sub-adult Bald Eagles.

- Great-tailed Grackle, 19 March 2000, Chaska, Carver Co. (record #2000-22, vote 1-6). The two "larger" grackles were documented from memory nearly two months after the observation, since no field notes were taken at the time. The description does not state whether the Common Grackles present with them were males or females; if females, this leaves open the possibility the two larger birds might have just been male Common Grackles since it is not stated how much larger they were. In addition, the "shiny metallic green color" on their wings would seem to fit Common Grackle better than Great-tailed.

- Canada Warbler, 15 April 2000, Duluth Twp., St. Louis Co. (record #2000-25, vote 0-7). Although the description of a "black necklace and bright yellow throat and belly" would seem to be consistent with this species, the date is three to four weeks earlier than this species normally arrives in northern Minnesota. For such an extremely early date, it was unanimously felt the documentation is not complete enough since it includes no description of the bird's back, wings, or tail, and it is unclear if there was an eye ring.

- Black Phoebe, 29 April 2000, near

Elizabeth, Otter Tail Co. (record #2000-26, vote 0-7). Although the observer had experience with this species in the southwestern U.S., she was unaware how unusual the species is here, which suggests the bird was not studied as critically as it should have been. In addition, the documentation is relatively brief, somewhat vague, and not as comprehensive as it should be for a second state record of a bird so far out of range. The description of the plumage only includes mention of "a grayish black back" and a "black chest." Also, the size of the bird is unclear, and there is no indication why the bird was a phoebe or flycatcher.

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 19 April – 1 June 2000, Leota Twp., Nobles Co. (record #2000-30, vote 0-7). Although the two birds were almost certainly correctly identified, the very brief description includes nothing to preclude the possibility of Ringed Turtle-Dove.

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, Betsy Beneke, Dave Benson (2 records), Tom Boevers, Terry Boldingh, Terry Brashear, Paul Budde (2 records), Steve Carlson, Cory Chopp, Philip Chu (5 records), Nelvina DeKam, Bob Dunlap, Kim Eckert (2 records), Paul Egeland (3 records), Dan Floren (2 records), Eve Freeberg, Colin Gjervold, Anthony Hertzell, Bob Janssen (2 records), Teresa Jaskiewicz, Michael Johnson, Roland Jordahl, Vija Kelly, Matthew Kenne, Frank Kraft, Violet Lender, Sue Levy (2 records), Jim & Sharon Lind, Bill Marengo, Barbara & Dennis Martin, Michael North, Bill & Donna Ongalo, Dan Peterson, Pat Rodewald, Steve Roman, John Schladweiler, Robert Schroeder, Roger Schroeder, Blaine Seeliger, Peder Svingen (9 records), Tom Tustison (3 records), Stuart Wagenius, Steve Weston, and Louis Yant.

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: 45 records voted on: 27 Acceptable (60%), 18 Unacceptable (40%).

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