

# Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

Kim R. Eckert, MOURC Chairman

The following records were voted on January – July 2002 and found to be Acceptable.

- White-faced Ibis (eight individuals reported), 17 April 2002, near Rochester, Olmsted County (record #2002-32, vote 6-1: three individuals accepted as White-faced, and the other five accepted as *Plegadis*, sp.).

Although these ibis were seen by many observers, only one of them provided documentation. While it is likely all eight birds were White-faced, the lone description received refers to “white around the eyes” on only three of the individuals. Accordingly, only these could be accepted as White-faced Ibis, with the other five accepted as unidentified *Plegadis* ibis.

- White-faced Ibis, 23 April 2002, Mott Lake, Waseca County (record #2002-33, vote 7-0).

- White-faced Ibis, 5 May 2002, Thielke Lake, Big Stone County (record #2002-34, vote 7-0).

The descriptions provided with this and the previous record (2002-33) include mention of red eyes and facial skin along with white visible around the back of the eyes.

- White-faced Ibis (five individuals), 10 May – 2 June 2002, Southwick/Slayton Wildlife Management Areas, Murray County (record #2002-16, vote 7-0).

All five individuals are described as having “distinct white feathering completely surrounding reddish facial skin.”

- *Plegadis* ibis, 28 September 2001, near Hawley, Clay County (record #2002-06, vote 6-1).

Because of the difficulty in separating White-faced from Glossy Ibis in late summer and fall, most ibis records then

will eventually be accepted and filed as unidentified *Plegadis* ibis.

- Brant, 10 April 2002, near Coon Creek Wildlife Management Area, Lyon County (record #2002-17, vote 7-0, ***The Loon*** 74:179-180).

This individual was an adult of the Atlantic race *brotta*; most previous Brant records in Minnesota have also been of this same race. The documentation includes field notes and sketches made at the time of the observation along with some marginally identifiable photos.

- King Eider, 7-20 May 2002, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2002-18, vote 7-0, ***The Loon*** 74:180-181).

The documentation of this female, which was eventually seen by many observers, includes field notes and sketches made at the time of the observation. This is only the second documented spring record of this species in Minnesota.

- Mississippi Kite, 26 April 2002, Golden Valley / Minnetonka, Hennepin County (record #2002-19, vote 5-2).

- Mississippi Kite, 27 May 2002, Western Township, Otter Tail County (record #2002-35, vote 5-2).

Those in the minority not accepting this and the previous record (2002-19) were concerned that several details were unclear or missing in the documentations — i.e., whether or not optics were used, light conditions, distance from the birds, and duration of the observations.

- Mississippi Kite, 9 June 2002, Golden Valley, Hennepin County (record #2002-38, vote 7-0).

This was an adult with the diagnostic white patch visible on the upper surface of the secondaries. It is possible that this and the other four Twin Cities records included in this article (2002-19, 36, 37, and

39) could all refer to the same individual.

- Gyrfalcon, 31 March 2002, Grand Plain Township, Marshall County (record #2002-28, vote 6-1).

This was apparently an immature gray-morph individual.

- Sharp-tailed Grouse, 18 March 2002, Big Stone County (record #2002-29, vote 7-0).

This individual probably wandered in from nearby northeastern South Dakota. In Minnesota, the nearest Sharp-tailed Grouse are found in Polk County, about 150 miles north of Big Stone County.

- Western Sandpiper (two individuals), 2 May 2002, Mud Lake, Traverse County (record #2002-20, vote 7-0 one individual / vote 6-1 both individuals, **The Loon** 74:182).

The observer, who is very experienced with this species in other states, included field notes, sketches, and a marginally identifiable photo with the documentation. This represents only the fifth documented record ever in Minnesota, although this species was formerly (and probably erroneously) considered Regular here.

- White-rumped Sandpiper, 10 August 2001, New Germany, Carver County (record #2002-02, vote 5-2).

This record was accepted on a second-round vote after the first vote was an inconclusive 4-3. Those in the minority still unable to accept the record in their second vote were concerned that the observer had no previous experience with this species, a bird whose relatively rare status in fall and its identification difficulties then are relatively unfamiliar to many birders.

- Ruff, 23 May 2002, Lake Byllesby, Dakota County (record #2002-21, vote 7-0).

This female was seen by many birders and thoroughly documented by two of the observers.

- unidentified jaeger, sp., 1 August 2001, Cass Lake, Cass County (record #2002-01, vote 7-0).

The observer reported this as a probable adult Parasitic Jaeger, but he also

stated that he (and the description provided) could not entirely rule out the possibility of it being a Long-tailed. The record was accordingly accepted only as an unidentified jaeger.

- California Gull (two individuals), 25 April 2002, Clay County landfill, Clay County (record #2002-22, vote 7-0 one individual / vote 6-1 both individuals).

- California Gull, 3 May 2002, Athens Township, Isanti County (record #2002-23, vote 7-0).

Two of the three individuals involved in this and the previous record (2002-22) were full adults, with the other a bird in nearly adult plumage. All diagnostic field marks were described by the observer who is very familiar with the difficulties of gull identification.

- Sabine's Gull, 21 September 2001, Paynesville, Stearns County (record #2002-05, vote 6-1, **The Loon** 74:120).

This was a juvenile bird with its diagnostic wing pattern clearly described.

- Black-legged Kittiwake, 12 November 2001, near Grand Marais, Cook County (record #2002-10, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 74:122).

Clearly identifiable photos of this juvenile/first-winter bird were included in the documentation.

- Black-legged Kittiwake, 30 November 2001, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2002-12, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 74:176-177).

There is the possibility that this and the other two kittiwake records (2002-10 and 13) all refer to the same individual.

- Black-legged Kittiwake, 2 December 2001, near Sandstone, Pine County (record #2002-13, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 74:58-59).

This gull was found under unusual circumstances: it was feeding on a deer carcass on the shoulder of Interstate 35.

- Common Tern, 27 October 2001, Bemidji, Beltrami County (record #2002-09, vote 6-1, **The Loon** 74:118).

With late fall reports of Common Terns, it is necessary to preclude the possibility of both Forster's and Arctic terns, as this observer does in his documenta-



**Anna's Hummingbird, 3 December 2001, Minneapolis, Hennepin County. Photos by Dave Cahlander.**

tion.

- Arctic Tern, 19 September 2001, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2002-04, vote 6-1, *The Loon* 74:120-121).

This adult was seen on both the Minnesota and Wisconsin sides of the Superior Entry, the shipping channel separating Park Point from Wisconsin Point. The

identification is primarily documented by excellent photos showing the diagnostic pattern on both the upper and under sides of the primaries.

- Arctic Tern, 27 May 2002, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2002-24, vote 6-1).

This tern was seen well in flight in

direct comparison with Common Terns by an experienced observer who took field notes at the time of the observation. These notes include the combination of its different shape, flight style, wing pattern of the upper and lower surfaces, grayer underparts, and contrasting whiter cheeks.

- Eurasian Collared-Dove (two individuals reported), May – August 2002, Caledonia, Houston County (record #2002-42, vote 6–1 one individual only).

Although seen by many observers with three individuals eventually reported, including a juvenile, only one observer submitted any documentation. This description is of two birds: one an apparent female on the nest (which at the time could not be seen well enough to rule out the possibility of Ringed Turtle-Dove), and the other a male calling nearby. Accordingly, the documentation for only one individual was accepted. This location was the same as the nesting area of 2001, and it seems obvious a pair again nested in 2002; however, without further documentation this cannot be confirmed.

- Burrowing Owl, 6 May – 2 June 2002, Lowville Township, Murray County (record #2002-43, vote 7–0).

This individual was seen by many observers and photographed. Although observed in and near an apparent badger hole, the owl apparently disappeared after a few weeks and no nesting evidence was ever reported.

- Anna's Hummingbird, 1–26 December 2001, Minneapolis, Hennepin County (record #2002-14, vote 7–0).

This bird was seen and photographed by many observers during its month-long presence at a feeder.

- Say's Phoebe, 29 April 2002, near Gonvick, Clearwater County (record #2002-44, vote 6–1).

Field notes were written at the time of observation before any field guides were consulted. (See comment below on the Rock Wren record 2002-47.)

- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 25 May 2002, near Split Rock Lighthouse State

Park, Lake County (record #2002-45, vote 7–0).

The pale head and pinkish color visible on the belly and under wings as mentioned in the description preclude Fork-tailed Flycatcher.

- White-eyed Vireo, 15 May 2002, Bloomington, Hennepin County (record #2002-46, vote 7–0).

Although not heard singing, this vireo's diagnostic pale eyes and other features were adequately described.

- Rock Wren, 21 April 2002, Moorhead, Clay County (record #2002-47, vote 7–0).

Field notes were written at the time of observation before any field guides were consulted. As with the above Say's Phoebe record (2002-44), a record's documentation is always strengthened if field notes on the bird's appearance are written before the observer looks at any references. A field sketch, no matter how crude, is also recommended. When consulting a field guide first, it becomes too easy to end up describing what the bird looked like in the book (i.e., what it should have looked like), rather than describing the actual appearance of the bird in the field.

- Hooded Warbler, 21 November 2001, St. Cloud, Stearns County (record #2002-11, vote 7–0, *The Loon* 74:179).

Although an extremely late record for this Minnesota rarity, this adult male was well described and is difficult to confuse with any other species.

- Great-tailed Grackle (seven individuals), 6 May 2002, Grover's Lake, Jackson County (record #2002-25, vote 7–0).

The three males and four females were all described, with the males heard vocalizing and precluding the very unlikely possibility of these being Boat-tailed Grackles.

- Brambling, 16–31 December 2001, near Battle Lake, Otter Tail County (record #2002-15, vote 7–0, *The Loon* 74:122–123).

This individual was seen by many observers and photographed during its appearance at a bird feeder.



**Burrowing Owl, 7 May 2002, Lowville Township, Murray County. Photo by Dave Cahlander.**

The following records were voted on January – July 2002 and were found to be Not Acceptable. Also see the three Acceptable records above which in part involved a Not Acceptable vote: White faced/unidentified Ibis (2002-32), unidentified/Parasitic jaeger (2002-01), and Eurasian Collared-Dove (2002-42).

(It is important to note that a record which is not accepted only means the provided documentation was not complete or convincing enough to include the sighting in *The Loon*, the journal of the MOU. Such a vote does not necessarily mean the observer misidentified the bird. In this sense, therefore, MOURC is only acting as an editor of the records submitted to the MOU.

Also, a summary of the reasons why a record was not accepted is included in these “Proceedings” articles. They are, of course, in no way intended to be critical of the observer. The only purpose is instructional: that is, to show the difficulties an observer had in identifying or documenting a bird so that these might be avoided by other observers when documenting future reports of this and similar species.)

- Pacific Loon, 27 October 2001, near Grand Marais, Cook County (record #2002-08, vote 1–6).

The brief documentation mentions this small loon’s “chin strap,” but no other field marks are given to identify this as a Pacific Loon and preclude other species.

Several other observers had seen and documented a Red-throated Loon about the same time at this location, and it is likely this is what the present observer saw.

- Black Vulture, 31 August 2001, near Hastings, Dakota County (record #2002-03, vote 1–6).

The field notes written at the time of the observation only describe a black bird smaller than nearby Turkey Vultures with “white on tips of wings.” For a report of such an unusual species (a potential second state record), a much more complete description is necessary. Some additional documentation was written later, but it is still incomplete and apparently written only from memory two months after the observation.

- Black Vulture, 23 October 2001, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2002-07, vote 0–7).

The description only includes that the bird was smaller than a Turkey Vulture, with light-colored wing tips, a short tail, and it flew with more flapping and less gliding. As with the previous record (2002-03), much more complete documentation is needed for such an unusual species.

- Mississippi Kite, 9 May 2002, Eden Prairie, Hennepin County (record #2002-36, vote 3–4).

This was a difficult record to evaluate, as indicated by the 3–4 vote. A sketch of the bird, made ten minutes after the sighting and before any field guides were consulted, shows a kite-like bird with a whitish head, blackish flight feathers, and a blackish tail. However, the majority was unable to accept the documentation because no optics were used, and it is unclear how far away the bird was when any field marks were visible. Additionally, the light conditions were described as “intensely bright” and “sharp,” with the head appearing unnaturally white, and the bird’s underparts in heavy shadow and looking darker than normal. The combination of unfavorable light conditions and lack of optics suggests this bird was probably not seen very well.

- Mississippi Kite, 25 May 2002, Murphy-Hanrehan Regional Park, Scott County (record #2002-37, vote 0–7).

The identification may well have been correct, since field notes were written 15 minutes later before consulting any field guides. However, the only feature mentioned in the description to indicate this species over other possibilities is the “tail square at end and flared at tip.” Additionally, nothing was seen or described of the bird’s actual plumage, since it “appeared uniformly dark against the bright overcast noonday sky.”

- Mississippi Kite, 12 June 2002, Minnetonka, Hennepin County (record #2002-39, vote 0–7).

The bird was first seen in flight without any optics used, and it was only then seen as a small dark raptor with pointed wing tips that did not fly like an accipiter. With binoculars, the observer saw the bird perched and only described it then as having a “lighter head with a small bill on a dark body.” Such documentation is not complete enough to determine the identification of this bird.

- Ferruginous Hawk, 30 March 2002, Big Stone State Park, Big Stone County (record #2002-26, vote 0–7).

The identification was based on the bird’s apparent lack of a dark patagium and its limited amount of red in the tail. Since the observer mentions in the documentation that he had no experience with this species or Krider’s-type Red-tailed Hawks, the description provided could just as easily fit a Red-tailed.

- Prairie Falcon, 30 March 2002, Lake Traverse, Traverse County (record #2002-27, vote 3–4).

This bird may well have been correctly identified, since it was described as having a falcon shape, brown overall plumage, lighter underparts, and a “band of dark feathers in the center of the wing from the shoulder to the wrist.” While this last feature seems to indicate a Prairie Falcon’s blackish wing linings, it is somewhat unclear from the description where exactly the dark feathering was on the wing, and Gyrfalcons also have

somewhat similar dark wing linings. Additionally, the size of this bird is unclear from the description, and nothing was seen of the head pattern.

- Wilson's Plover, 2 April 2002, near Faribault, Rice County (record #2002-40, vote 0-7).

This would be only the third state record of a species far from its normal range. As such, the documentation would need to be completely consistent with this species. However, the bill was described as "thin" (a Wilson's bill is thick); the legs were seen as both "yellow" and "dark" (a Wilson's are pinkish); "the end of the tail was white, and then a black band, and then white up to the body" (a Wilson's tail pattern is different than this); and its back was darker than the head (they are the same shade on a Wilson's).

- Thayer's Gull, 11 April 2002, Chaska, Carver County (record #2002-30, vote 1-6).

Many gulls in spring and summer appear unnaturally pale due to feather wear, fading, or molt, and accordingly they are difficult to identify. Without attention paid to a gull's plumage condition at this time of year, even experienced observers frequently mistake these abnormally pale Herrings and other gulls for a Thayer's, Iceland, or Glaucous gull. This observer indicated he had no experience with Thayer's Gull, and he was uncertain of the age of this gull. In addition, the bird's size is described as the same or "slightly larger" than a Herring Gull, which would be possible but atypical for a Thayer's.

- American Tree Sparrow, 6 June 2002, Flandrau State Park, Brown County (record #2002-31, vote 3-4).

This was yet another difficult 3-4 vote, with this sparrow quite possibly correctly identified. The observer knew this was an unusually late date for this species, but the spring had been unusually late and cold. The identification of this rusty-crowned sparrow was only based on the "dark central spot on its breast." However, sparrows which normally have an

unmarked underparts can sometimes show a real or apparent breast spot due to a variety of factors. Since no other markings were described to preclude a Field or other sparrows (the bill color and presence or absence of an eye ring were not seen), the majority was unable to accept this record.

The efforts of all those observers who document 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: Mark Alt, Karl Bardon (five records), Betsy Beneke, Terry Brashear, Paul Budde, Dave Cahlander, Reggie Carlson, Philip Chu (three records), Tim Dawson, Herb Dingmann, Bob Dunlap (two records), Eddy & Judy Edwards, John Ellis (three records), Chris Fagyal, Steve Hansen, Anthony Hertz, Bob Janssen, Doug Johnson, Oscar Johnson, Robbye Johnson, Jeanie Joppru, Dale Kane, Jim Lind, Craig Mandel, Smiley Meehan, Steve Millard (two records), Mark Otnes, Paul Pedersen, James Pomplun, Roger Schroeder, Brian Smith, Drew Smith, Dave Sovereign, Jeff Stephenson, Shelley Steva, Sharon Stiteler (two records), Forest Strnad, Peder Svingen (seven records), Dan & Sandy Thimgan, Tom Tustison, Carol Tveekrem, Terry Wiens, and Dennis Wiesenborn.

There were also other observers who documented records which were not submitted for a vote to the Committee; although these records are not cited here, their documentations are also appreciated.

The Committee Chairman welcomes questions or comments from MOU members regarding any record in particular or our procedures in general. He can be contacted at the address below or by e-mail at <kreckert@cpinternet.com>.

Summary: 46 records voted on — 35 Acceptable (76%), 11 Not Acceptable (24%).

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