

Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

Peder H. Svingen, Chairman

The two most recent meetings of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (MOURC) were held on 18 April and 8 August 2004. In attendance and voting at one or both of these meetings were Renner Anderson (alternate member), Paul Budde, Philip Chu, Anthony Hertzell, Ann Kessen (alternate), Jim Mattsson, Drew Smith, Steve Stucker (alternate), Peder Svingen (Chairperson), and Tom Tustison.

Among the items on the agendas of these meetings were discussions of four potential first state records; two of these were unanimously Accepted (Wood Stork and Green Violet-ear), bringing the state list to 429 species. Preliminary discussion on the addition of Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*) to the Minnesota list (45th Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds, *Auk* 121:985–995) included review of the North American distribution and regional occurrence of identifiable forms of the Canada Goose complex; no formal vote was taken since additional research is needed and records are still being compiled. The Committee welcomes information on the status and occurrence of the Cackling Goose in Minnesota, particularly records documented by written details, photographs, or sound recordings. Please send dates, specific locations, number of individuals and how identified, along with photographs and any additional information pertaining to this species in Minnesota, to Peder Svingen (address below).

Also discussed were recirculated records, i.e., those with inconclusive first-round votes; records involving a question of origin; and records documented primarily or entirely by photograph or tape

recording. The results of these discussions and votes on these records are included below. All other records were reviewed and voted on entirely by mail.

The following records were voted on January – July 2004 and were Accepted (also see Not Accepted records #2004-013 and 2004-035, which involved qualified Accepted votes).

- Brant, 21–22 March 2004, Paynesville wastewater treatment ponds, Stearns County (record #2004-020, vote 7–0).

Distant photographs and written documentation supported its identification as the Atlantic race (*Branta bernicla brota*).

- Cinnamon Teal, 15 April 2004, Caerulean W.M.A., Lac Qui Parle County (record #2004-038, vote 6–1).

Hybrid Cinnamon X Blue-winged Teal are variable in appearance and some may closely resemble “pure” male Cinnamon Teal except for the presence of spots or short bars on the underbody. One committee member voted not to accept this record because these hybrid characteristics were not specifically considered.

- Cinnamon Teal, 9–17 May 2004, Otrey Township, Big Stone County (record #2004-024, vote 7–0).

In this case, characteristics of hybrid teal were discussed and eliminated in the written description, and photographs supported the identification.

- Sharp-tailed Grouse, 5 January 2004, Walter Township, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2004-001, vote 7–0).

This female was found dead and photographed. The photos showed no evidence of hybridization with Greater Prairie-Chicken (hybrids have been documented in Minnesota and elsewhere). This record

and record #2004-002 complement recent occurrences in Wilkin (16 October 1996) and Big Stone (18 March 2002) counties, and may indicate immigration of Sharp-taileds from the eastern Dakotas.

- Sharp-tailed Grouse (three individuals), 26 February 2004, Odessa Township, Big Stone County (record #2004-002, vote 7-0).

- Red-throated Loon, 29 April 2004, Lebanon Hills Regional Park, Dakota County (recirculated record #2004-040, first vote 4-3, second vote 6-1).

This small loon was seen only in flight for a relatively brief period of time by an experienced observer, who noted the bird's tendency to repeatedly move its head up and down, and back and forth. There were lingering concerns that a pale-looking, basic-plumaged Common Loon could not be ruled out under these circumstances.

- White-faced Ibis, 16 April 2004, Lake Byllesby, Dakota County (record #2004-009, vote 7-0).

Independently prepared, written details from two observers noted this bird's red eyes, pink or reddish facial skin, and white feathering surrounding its bare facial skin, thus eliminating the possibility of Glossy Ibis or hybrids thereof. Like the next three records, it was an adult ibis in alternate plumage and was photographed.

- White-faced Ibis, 19-21 April 2004, Scott-Cray W.P.A., west of Fergus Falls, Otter Tail County (record #2004-010, vote 7-0).

- White-faced Ibis, 25-28 April 2004, west of Lake Osakis, Douglas County (record #2004-012, vote 7-0).

- White-faced Ibis, 2 May 2004, Haven Township, Sherburne County (record #2004-029, vote 7-0).

- White-faced Ibis, 13-14 May 2004, Mayer waste water treatment ponds, Carver County (record #2004-030, vote 7-0).

Though neither was photographed, for this record and the next, Glossy Ibis and hybrid Glossy X White-faced Ibis were ruled out by written details.

- White-faced Ibis, 24-25 May 2004, Corvuso, Meeker County (record #2004-



Record 2004-076. Wood Stork, 17 June 2004, Grand Marais, Cook County. Video image by Boyd A. Blomberg.

045, vote 7-0).

- *Plegadis* ibis, 30 April 2004, Lewiston wastewater treatment ponds, Winona County (see Not Accepted record #2004-013).

- Black Vulture, 26 May 2004, Encampment Forest, Lake County (record #2004-042, vote 7-0).

This third state record was thoroughly documented by contemporaneous field notes and sketches.

- Wood Stork, 17 June 2004, near Grand Marais, Cook County (record #2004-076, identification Accepted 10-0 / origin Accepted 10-0 / physical evidence Accepted 10-0).

All ten MOURC members vote on potential first state records, on questions of origin, and on whether or not the identification can be made based on physical evidence alone (in this case, a videotape). This species has been predicted to occur in Minnesota based on records in nearby states and provinces. It was discovered by a 3 and 1/2 year old boy in his backyard and was videotaped by his father. Full details will be published in ***The Loon***.

- Swallow-tailed Kite, 18 August 2003, near Morristown, Rice County (recirculated record #2003-84, first vote 5-2, second vote 7-0).

This record was discussed at the April meeting and was unanimously accepted after the observer was contacted and confirmed that descriptive notes written on a



Record 2004-047. Snowy Plover, 4 June 2004, Albany, Stearns County. Photo by Karl Bardon.

seasonal report form represented contemporaneous field notes.

- Gyrfalcon, 5 December 2003, county roads 64 & 67, Big Stone County (record #2004-004, vote 7-0).
- Gyrfalcon, 19 December 2003 – mid-March 2004, Duluth-Superior harbor, St. Louis County (record #2004-005, vote 7-0).
- Gyrfalcon, 19 January 2004, Rosemount, Dakota County (record #2004-003, vote 7-0).

This species was formerly Regular in Minnesota.

- Snowy Plover, 4-5 June 2004, Albany wastewater treatment ponds, Stearns County (record #2004-047, vote 7-0).

This adult was well-described and photographed by many observers.

- Black-necked Stilt, 14 April 2004, Lakeside Park in Mounds View, Anoka and Ramsey counties (record #2004-014, vote 7-0).
- Black-necked Stilt (three individuals), 16-27 May 2004, Belle Plaine wastewater treatment ponds, Scott County (record #2004-015, vote 7-0).

Each of these three birds was documented separately by written details and each was photographed separately by the same photographer.

- Black-necked Stilt (three individuals), 16-17 May 2004, Spindler's Pond near Rice Lake State Park, Scott County (record #2004-016, vote 7-0 for one individual, vote 6-1 for all three).

This record was documented by a written description of one bird and several photographs, but only one bird was depicted in each image and it was unclear how many different individuals were actually photographed. This highlights one of several problems that may occur when records are documented by physical evidence but not supported by adequate written documentation.

- Black-necked Stilt, 18 May 2004, Lake Lillian Township, Kandiyohi County (record #2004-031, vote 6-1).

A brief written description of this distinctive species satisfied all but one committee member. Collectively, these four records almost doubled the number of Accepted records of this species in the state.

- Curlew Sandpiper, 16-17 May 2004, near Clinton, Big Stone County (record #2004-023, vote 7-0).

Like Minnesota's only previous record on 21-22 May 1994, this adult male was identifiably photographed.

- Ruff, 9 May 2004, Otrey Township, Big Stone County (record #2004-025, vote 7-0).

Photographs and written details from two observers were submitted.

- Ruff, 17 May 2004, Lake Byllesby, Dakota County (record #2004-041, vote 6-1).

In flight, this bird showed "long white sides to the tail" which prompted one vote against acceptance; comprehensive field notes, sketches, and distant photographs convinced everyone else.

- Ruff, 25-29 July 2004, Otrey Township, Big Stone County (record #2004-078, vote 7-0).

Photographed and rebound by many observers.

- California Gull, 9 April 2004, East



Record 2004-044. Arctic Tern, 15 May 2004, Breckenridge, Wilkin County. Photo by Jim Lind.

Grand Forks wastewater treatment ponds, Polk County (record #2004-069, vote 5-2).

Though experienced, the observer was unaware of this species' status in Minnesota and did not take field notes. Curiously, the folded primaries of this adult bird were described as dark brown.

- Arctic Tern, 15 May 2004, Breckenridge wastewater treatment ponds, Wilkin County (record #2004-044, vote 7-0).

Fourteenth state record, but only the third to be photographed and the only Accepted record away from Duluth.

- Arctic Tern, 23 May 2004, Park Point, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2004-066, vote 6-1).

The uniform light gray upperwing of this "neck-less" adult tern was carefully studied over an extended period of time to ensure that it lacked Common Tern's dark wedge; however, whitish secondaries and translucent primaries were not noted, which precluded unanimous acceptance. Contemporaneous field notes and sketches showed a black cap extending to the base of its dark red bill, contrasting white cheeks, grayish under-parts, and a thin black trailing edge on the underside of its outer wing.

- White-winged Dove, 8-15 May 2004, Ely, St. Louis County (record #2004-021,

vote 7-0 on identification, vote 10-0 on physical evidence).

All ten members vote on whether or not the identification can be made on the basis of physical evidence alone (in this case, photographs). The latter vote removes the "s" subscript from this species on the state checklist.

- White-winged Dove, 14 May 2004, county road 9 marsh near Rochester, Olmsted County (record #2004-022, vote 7-0).

This record was documented only by recognizable photographs.

- White-winged Dove, 16 June 2004, Gnesen Township, St. Louis County (record #2004-053, vote 7-0).

Documented by a recognizable photograph, plus written details from two of the observers.

- Burrowing Owl, 5-13 May 2003, Moyer Township, Swift County (record #2004-008, vote 7-0).

This individual was found dead on the latter date and the specimen was turned in to the Bell Museum of Natural History (BMNH #44835).

- Burrowing Owl, 21 April 2004, Perry Township, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2004-032, vote 6-1).

Field notes and sketches were submitted of a bird observed through a spotting scope at an estimated distance of 80 yards for 20 minutes beginning "just after 8:30 P.M." According to the U.S. Naval Observatory Astronomical Applications Department, sunset was at 8:18 P.M. and civil twilight ended at 8:50 P.M. The dissenting vote was based on light conditions.

- Burrowing Owl (two individuals), 22 May - 2 June 2004, near Lewisville, Watonwan County (record #2004-026, vote 7-0).

This mated pair was photographed near a burrow, but the burrow was subsequently taken over by a fox.

- Green Violet-ear, 12 June 2004, Linwood Township, Anoka County (record #2004-077, identification Accepted 10-0 / physical evidence Accepted 10-0).

All ten MOURC members vote on potential first state records and whether or not the identification can be made based



Record 2004-026. Burrowing Owl, 30 May 2004, Lewisville, Watonwan County. Photo by Anthony Hertzell.

on physical evidence alone (in this case, the identification was based on a series of digital images originally submitted as a Magnificent Hummingbird, which were recognized by several MOURC members as depicting a Green Violet-ear). The images were reviewed and the identification endorsed by Nancy Newfield, Van Remsen, and Shari Williamson. Full details will be published in a future issue of *The Loon*.

- Say's Phoebe, 8 May 2004, near Felton, Clay County (record #2004-051, vote 7-0).
- Say's Phoebe, 19 May 2004, Blue Mounds State Park, Rock County (record #2004-050, vote 7-0).
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 12 May 2004, Camden State Park, Lyon County (record #2004-052, vote 7-0).
- White-eyed Vireo, 5 June 2004, Buffalo River State Park, Clay County (record #2004-079, vote 7-0).

This bird was netted and banded at a

MAPS banding station and photographed in the hand.

- Rock Wren, 2-3 May 2004, Split Rock Creek State Park, Pipestone County (record #2004-049, vote 7-0).
- Rock Wren (two adults and four fledglings), 8 May - July 2004, Felton Prairie, Clay County (record #2004-011, vote 7-0).

An adult was found singing on top of a pile of rocks in a quarry 8 May, and it, or another adult, was subsequently observed carrying nesting material. Two adults were reported in early June and both adults were documented with four recently-fledged young on 17 July. Full details of this first Minnesota breeding record will be published in *The Loon*.

- Sage Thrasher, 11-12 May 2004, Schroeder, Cook County (record #2004-027, vote 7-0).
- Sage Thrasher, 26 June 2004, Dodge Nature Center, St. Paul, Ramsey County (record #2004-075, vote 7-0).

This bird was documented only by an in-flight photograph showing a thin, relatively short, and slightly decurved bill, yellow iris, crisply streaked breast-sides and flanks, and white tips on the outermost three or four rectrices.

- Prairie Warbler, 20 May 2004, St. John's University, St. Cloud, Stearns County (record #2004-028, vote 7-0).

Three observers each submitted convincing written details. Independently prepared documentation from multiple observers, especially if accompanied by contemporaneous field notes, greatly enhances the validity of sight records.

- Painted Bunting, 13 May 2004, Hoyt Lakes, St. Louis County (record #2004-017, vote 7-0).
- Painted Bunting, 13-17 May 2004, near Detroit Lakes, Becker County (record #2004-018, vote 7-0).
- Painted Bunting, 19-20 May 2004, Moorhead, Clay County (record #2004-019, vote 7-0).
- Painted Bunting, 9-11 June 2004, near Marshall, Lyon County (record #2004-070, vote 7-0).

Each of the above four records in-

volved adult males at feeders, and all were documented by written details and photographs. Written descriptions of behavior, plumage, and condition of bare parts are especially important when the possibility of prior captivity is considered; in all four cases, the birds' behavior appeared normal, and there was no evidence of unusual wear, coloration, or damage to their plumage and bare parts. The dates are congruent with this species' recent pattern of vagrancy to the Midwest.

- Painted Bunting, 17 or 18–22 June 2004, Rochester, Olmsted County (record #2004-071, vote 7–0).

This record was documented only by photographs, but the origin of this immature male was not questioned. This represents Minnesota's first modern record of a non-adult male.

- Great-tailed/Boat-tailed Grackle, 12 April 2004, Lac Qui Parle State Park, Lac Qui Parle County (see Not Accepted record #2004-035).

The following records were voted on January – July 2004 and were Not Accepted.

(Please note that a record which is Not Accepted only means that the documentation was not complete or convincing enough to include the sighting in *The Loon*, the journal of the MOU, or in the MOU's archives of confirmed bird records. Such a vote does not necessarily mean the observer misidentified the bird or did not see it. Summaries of the reasons why a record was Not Accepted are included here. These are in no way intended to be critical of the observer. The only purpose is to highlight the difficulties an observer may encounter while identifying or documenting these and similar species.)

- Cinnamon Teal, 25 March 2004, East Landfill Reservoir, near Rochester, Olmsted County (record #2004-048, vote 1–6).

This may have been a sighting of a pure Cinnamon Teal, but less than two weeks later at the exact same location, a bird reported to be a male Cinnamon Teal was photographed and the photographs clearly show hybridization with

Blue-winged Teal. Committee members were reluctant to endorse the identification of the 25 March bird since the 6 April bird was not recognized in the field as a hybrid, yet both were studied by the same observer through the same Celestron spotting scope for 40–45 minutes from less than 50 yards. The observer providing documentation had no previous experience with Cinnamon Teal or hybrids thereof, and acknowledged being less than 100% certain that two different individuals were involved.

- Cinnamon Teal, 29 April 2004, Big Stone N.W.R., Lac Qui Parle County (record #2004-039, vote 2–5).

This male teal was seen only in flight, and the majority felt that a hybrid could not be excluded under these circumstances, especially since no information was provided on distance, light conditions, and time of day.

- Cinnamon Teal, 29 May 2004, Rosemoen Island, Chippewa County (record #2004-055, vote 3–4).

The observer stated, “no indications of hybridization” but it was unclear whether the observer had any experience with hybrid teal or knew what to look for when considering this possibility. Light conditions and time of day for this sight record were not specified. Elimination of hybrid Cinnamon X Blue-winged Teal requires careful scrutiny under optimal conditions (see Record #2004-048). Observers are encouraged either to use the “Request for Documentation” form or follow its format exactly (the form can be mailed upon request or downloaded at <<http://cbs.umn.edu/~mou/>>). This form was designed to guide observers through the documentation process and reminds us to include field notes, photos, and pertinent information such as distance, light conditions, time of day, and previous experience with the species in question.

- Smew, 11–17 March 2004, Oronoco and Rochester, Olmsted County (record #2004-072, identification Accepted 7–0, origin Not Accepted 0–10).

All ten members vote on questions of origin. Close-up photographs of this adult

male confirmed its identification, but showed frayed or damaged flight feathers. Though not necessarily indicative of captive origin, the bird allowed close approach and seemed tame. Captive origin was implied by the following observation: "With my scope I could see that the right hallux (or rear toe) was missing. Looking closely, it clearly appeared to have been clipped, not having been torn or otherwise missing due to injury — judging from the clean and nicely healed scar. The left hallux was intact and complete. A clipped right rear-facing toe is usually indicative of an escaped bird since, as a general rule, captive bred waterfowl are marked in this manner (but also by other methods)."

This represents the second known occurrence of an escaped or released Smew in Minnesota; the first was an adult female with a clipped hallux and frayed flight feathers (*The Loon* 75:44–45). This species is included on the state list with an "o" subscript, i.e., the possibilities of captive vs. wild origin are about equal, based on one Accepted record at Anderson County Park, Jackson County, 17 March 1999 (*The Loon* 73:72–77).

- White-faced Ibis, 30 April 2004, Lewiston wastewater treatment ponds, Winona County (record #2004-013, Not Accepted 1–6 as White-faced Ibis / Accepted 7–0 as *Plegadis ibis*, sp.).

Though unanimously Accepted as a *Plegadis ibis*, the written description and distant photographs eliminated neither Glossy Ibis nor hybrid White-faced X Glossy Ibis (see *North American Birds* 57:136–139). Documentation from other observers might have addressed these identification challenges, but only one of the observers submitted details.

- Mississippi Kite, 11 May 2004, Odesa Township, Big Stone County (record #2004-056, vote 2–5).

A standard documentation format was not followed (see comments under Record #2004-055) and there was no information about the observer's previous experience with this species, light conditions, time of day, sun angle, and whether field guides

were consulted before or after field notes and sketches were completed. This bird was described as similar in size to a Peregrine Falcon but with "broader" wings that were held up in a dihedral and "reminded me of a Swainson's Hawk wing shape". The wingspan of a Mississippi Kite averages ten inches less than a Peregrine Falcon with no overlap between these two species according to *The Sibley Guide to Birds* (Sibley 2000) and *A Field Guide to Hawks of North America* (Clark and Wheeler 2001). Lastly, the observer described the dorsal and ventral surfaces of the wings in detail, yet failed to note Mississippi Kite's characteristic short outermost primary.

- Black Rail, 22 May and 12 June 2004, Big Stone N.W.R., Lac Qui Parle County (record #2004-058, vote 2–5).

This tantalizing report included drawings of tracks in the mud and a written description of "khee-khe-err" and "khe-khe-urr" calls, but most MOURC members did not consider a brief glimpse of a small dark bird sprinting across an opening in the marsh sufficient documentation for a species that has not been recorded in the state for 25 years. A standard documentation format was not followed, so the report lacked basic information including the observer's previous experience with this species, how other species were eliminated, and whether or not field guides were consulted.

- King Rail, 14 May 2004, Plover Prairie, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2004-057, vote 0–7).

This brief observation of a bird flying with a flock of Blue-winged Teal garnered no support from the committee. The observer was driving and unable to use binoculars until just before the bird dropped into the marsh.

- Whooping Crane (two individuals), 17–18 April 2004, Manannah Township, Meeker County (record #2004-068, identification Accepted 7–0 / origin Not Accepted 0–10).

These two females (band #3-02 and 15-02) were known to be from the introduction project at Necedah N.W.R., Wis-

consin, and as such were Not Accepted on the basis of origin. Interestingly, three birds (band #4-03, 4-06, and 17-03) lingered near Reno, Houston County, 17–20 April 2004, and the same two females as above (band #3-02 and 15-02) visited Winona County, 24 April 2004; their presence was verified by Richard Urbanek, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Lara Fondrow, International Crane Foundation (*vide* R. Russell, Jr.). None of these other 2004 sightings and none of the previous Minnesota reports of Whooping Cranes attributed to the introduction project has been documented, including one at Carlos Avery W.M.A., Anoka County in May 2003, and one in Dodge and Steele counties in early July 2003. Observers are encouraged to document all sightings of this species, including birds from the introduction program, and to report all sightings promptly to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

- Western Sandpiper, 6 May 2004, Madison Township, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2004-059, vote 3–4).

This may have been a Western Sandpiper, but there were concerns about the description of its hindneck and back, and its apparent size. Based on side-by-side comparison, the bird was said to be the “same size as a Semipalmated Sandpiper, but just slightly shorter” which does not fit Western Sandpiper. Streaking across the chest was mentioned in the narrative, but was not depicted in either of the two sketches. The observer did not cite any previous experience with this or similar species, and failed to consider and eliminate White-rumped Sandpiper, one of several potential confusion species.

- Ruff, 13 August 2003, Walter Township, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2004-060, vote 3–4).

This 2003 record was submitted in June 2004 when the observer reviewed a photograph of a misidentified yellowlegs and noticed what appeared to be a Ruff in the extreme corner of the photo. The bird was not identified as a Ruff at the time and in the absence of a written description, the majority found this unfocused

image unsatisfactory.

- Ruff, 6–7 May 2004, Perry Township, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2004-061, vote 3–4).

Although this record was supported by two field sketches completed on separate days, the majority opinion held that a “young male” Ruff would not be in the plumage described for this bird in early May. It was unclear whether the observer had any experience with this species, and similar-looking species were not adequately considered.

- California Gull (two individuals), 20 April 2004, Thielke Lake, Big Stone County (record #2004-033, vote 2–5).

Mantle color was described as both “dark” and “much darker gray than an adult Ring-bill’s” which does not fit California Gull (Howell, S. N. G. 2003. Shades of gray: a point of reference for gull identification. *Birding* 35:32–37). The observer did not compare wing span or wing width with adjacent Ring-billed Gulls when the birds took flight, and missed an opportunity to describe underwing pattern — e.g., adult California Gull’s more extensive and crisply defined black wingtip.

- Thayer’s Gull, 22 April 2004, Walter and Perry townships, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2004-034, vote 0–7).

The identification was based largely on eye color, but a small percentage of Herring Gulls are dark-eyed even as adults. The diagnostic underwing pattern of Thayer’s Gull was not noted even though the bird was seen in flight four times.

- Magnificent Hummingbird, 12 June 2004, Linwood Township, Anoka County (record #2004-054, vote 0–7).

A brief description and digital images of a large hummingbird at a feeder were submitted; though not sharply focused, the images showed a mostly dark greenish bird with dark blue-purple ear-patches, a blue-purple patch on the lower-breast/upper-belly region, and a slightly downcurved bill. These features eliminated Magnificent Hummingbird and prompted resubmission of the record as a Green Violet-ear (see record #2004-077).

- Say’s Phoebe, 4 May 2004, Walter

Township, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2004-062, vote 3–4).

Though quite possibly a Say's Phoebe, similar-looking species were neither considered nor eliminated, and the observer's experience was unstated.

- Tropical/Couch's Kingbird, 6 June 2004, Grand Marais, Cook County (record #2004-067, vote 2–8).

All ten MOURC members vote on potential first state records. This non-vocalizing kingbird was found by an out-of-state observer who previously had observed both Tropical and Couch's kingbirds in the southwestern U.S. The bird was seen at close range but only for about 90 seconds, and the observer was less than 100% certain of its identity. The possibility of a molting or heavily worn Western Kingbird was not completely eliminated. The observer is to be commended for submitting complete documentation on this bird even though she considered it a "hypothetical" sighting for Cook County.

- Fish Crow, 2–4 February 2004, near Ortonville, Big Stone and Lac Qui Parle counties (record #2004-006, vote 1–9).

All ten MOURC members vote on potential first state records. Field notes, sketches, and distant photographs were submitted, but vocalizations, the most important criterion for the separation of this species from other crows, were not recorded and it was unclear whether the observer was experienced in distinguishing these species by call. Several MOURC members commented that voice recordings, close-up photographs, and/or a specimen would be needed to accept this species onto the state list. The location and early February date would be extraordinary for a Fish Crow, which might be expected to occur in bottomland forest associated with small streams in southeastern Minnesota, and in spring rather than mid-winter.

- Common Raven, 13 February 2004, county roads 33 & 31, Lac Qui Parle County (recirculated record #2004-007, first vote 4–3, second vote 3–4).

The identification was based primarily on shape and vocalizations, but it was

unclear if the observer had any experience in separating ravens from crows using these criteria.

- Sprague's Pipit, 7 April 2004, Walter Township, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2004-036, vote 2–5).

This would be extraordinarily early for Sprague's Pipit, not only for Minnesota but also compared to record-early dates in North and South Dakota. A standard documentation form was not used, so important information including the observer's experience and how other species were eliminated was missing. White wing bars are fairly obvious on Sprague's Pipit, but were not noted on this bird despite its being observed on the ground from a distance of only 15 feet. Its "stocky, stiff appearance" in flight and "quick sputtering wingbeats followed by short glides" suggested species other than pipit.

- Sprague's Pipit, 26 April 2004, Yellow Bank Township, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2004-037, vote 3–4).

The documentation was strikingly similar to the previous record, e.g., its "stocky appearance in flight" and "rapid, stiff wingbeats followed by short glides." White wing bars were not noted and leg color could not be seen. The observer's experience with this species and how other species were eliminated were unclear.

- Lark Bunting, 16 May 2004, near Nashwauk, Itasca County (recirculated record #2004-046, first vote 4–3, second vote 3–4).

This out of range bird perched in a tree may have been a male Lark Bunting, but the size, shape, and exact location of its wing patches were not described, and blackbirds with albinistic wing patches were not considered. More importantly, Bobolink was neither considered nor eliminated by the description. Field notes were not submitted. The description was apparently written more than two weeks after the sighting and may have been influenced by field guides.

- Lark Bunting, 18 May 2004, near Marshall, Lyon County (record #2004-074, vote 3–4).

This sighting was initially posted to

MOU-net as a “probable” Lark Bunting seen without binoculars. The observer, while driving, flushed a small bird from a roadside ditch; by the time the observer pulled over to the side of the road, the bird was an estimated quarter mile away and could not be refound.

- Black-headed Grosbeak (female), 8 May 2004, Lac Qui Parle State Park, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2004-064, vote 2–5).

Despite being observed at close range “for about a minute” the description was incomplete, e.g., no mention of back pattern, wing-bars, rump, tail, and leg color. Wing linings were not seen. The observer’s experience with this species was not outlined, and light conditions, time of day, and position of bird with respect to the sun were unknown. The committee has been circumspect regarding reports of non-adult male Black-headed Grosbeaks; only 4 of the 21 accepted records of this species are of adult females.

- Black-headed Grosbeak (male), 29 May 2004, Lac Qui Parle State Park, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2004-065, vote 2–5).

This bird was seen flying through the trees for a distance of 40 feet before it perched on a log for about five seconds and then disappeared. Understandably, the description was incomplete and although sketches were submitted of the bird in flight, it was unclear how well the underwing and upperwing pattern were seen as it flew through the trees. Brief observations for seconds at a time do not permit careful scrutiny for hybrid characteristics such as back streaking, rose tinges to an orange breast, or orange tinges on a yellow underwing. The observer described the back of this grosbeak as black, but if the back was really black then the grosbeak could not have been a pure Black-headed: in pure Black-headed Grosbeaks the back is streaked (Anderson and Daugherty. 1974. Characteristics and reproductive biology of grosbeaks (*Pheucticus*) in the hybrid zone in South Dakota. *Wilson Bulletin* 86:1–11).

- Great-tailed Grackle, 12 April 2004,

Lac Qui Parle State Park, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2004-035, Not Accepted 3–4 as Great-tailed Grackle / Accepted 5–2 as Great-tailed/Boat-tailed Grackle).

Although the status of Great-tailed Grackle is now Regular in Minnesota, the description of this female *Quiscalus* suggested Boat-tailed Grackle and the record was therefore evaluated, and ultimately Accepted only as a large grackle.

The efforts of all those observers who document reports of unusual species are appreciated, whether or not the records are Accepted. Accordingly, the Committee acknowledges with thanks those who provided documentation for the records listed in this article: Melissa Anderson, Karl Bardon, Boyd Blomberg and family, Diane Brudellie, Conny Brunell, Dave Cahlander, Philip Chu, Shawn Conrad, Nelvina De Kam, Herb Dingmann, Bob Dunlap, Kim Eckert, Eddy & Judy Edwards, Bob Ekblad, Dan Floren, Steve Foss, Randy Frederickson, Eve Freeberg, Joe Gartner, Rebecca Gracey, Mike Hendrickson, Anthony Hertzell, Tim Houghton, Jeanie Joppru, Jim Lind, Bill Marengo, Jim Mattson, Craig Menze, Sue Morton, David Nelson, Gary Nielsen, Bob O’Connor, Paul Pedersen, Carol Reed, Bob Rogers, Roger Schroeder, Dory Spence, Jeff Stephenson, Peder Svingen, Dan & Sandy Thimgan, Bill Unzen, and Josh Watson.

There were also many observers who documented records of Regular species which were not voted on by the Committee; although such records are not cited here, the efforts of these individuals are greatly appreciated. The Committee wishes especially to acknowledge Conny Brunell, and Dan and Sandy Thimgan for documenting many such records.

The Committee welcomes questions or comments from MOU members regarding any record in particular or our procedures in general. Please contact the Chairperson by e-mail at <psvingen@d.umn.edu> or at the address below. Summary: 77 records voted on / 53 Accepted, 24 Not Accepted.

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