

# Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

Peder H. Svingen, Chairman

The most recent meeting of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (MOURC) was conducted at the James Ford Bell Museum of Natural History in Minneapolis on 4 December 2005. In attendance and voting were MOURC members Paul Budde, Phil Chu, Ann Kessen, Jim Lind (alternate), Bill Marengo (alternate), Jim Mattsson, Drew Smith, Steve Stucker (alternate), and Peder Svingen (Chairman).

In accordance with its policy on term limits, the Committee reviewed nominations for membership and elected Steve Stucker as a regular member, replacing Tom Tustison. Karl Bardon was elected as an alternate member.

Among the items on the agenda was additional discussion of the Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*) in Minnesota. Steve Stucker and Phil Chu compiled data obtained from the Bird Banding Lab on 65 band recoveries in Minnesota of "small Canada Geese" that had been banded as chicks on their breeding grounds; 45 of these were from known *hutchinsii* populations, mostly on Baffin Island. These 45 band recoveries were voted on as one record. Excluded were 18 recoveries of chicks banded on the west coast of Hudson Bay, where there has been uncertainty regarding subspecies, and 2 recoveries from Southampton Island with incorrect recovery dates.

Further discussion of Carolina Parakeet (*Conuropsis carolinensis*) (record #2005-045, also see Breckenridge 1995, Hertz 2004) focused on the possibility of unpublished evidence from archaeological sites. Anthony Hertz volunteered to research this possibility and the record was tabled by a 7-2 vote.

Also discussed were five recirculated

records, i.e., those with inconclusive first-round votes; a potential first state record of the Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*); and an apparently mislabeled specimen of Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus caudacutus*) at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. The results of these discussions and votes on these records are included below. All of the other records were reviewed and voted on by mail.

The following records were voted on August – December 2005 and were Accepted (also see Not Accepted record #2005-064, which involved qualified Accepted votes).

- Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*), 17 October 2005, Rendsville Township, Stevens County (record #2005-073, vote 7-0). This adult was shot from a flock of Mallards coming in to a corn field; photographs of the specimen were submitted.

- Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*), 45 band recoveries at various fall dates and locations in Minnesota (record #2005-080, vote 7-0). This provided additional evidence of this species' occurrence in 11 north and 16 south counties; each of Minnesota's nine regions had at least one recovery. The earliest were 29 September 2003, Morrison County, and 30 September 2001, Stearns County. The latest were 6 November 1996, Chippewa County, 6 November 2003, Waseca County, and 13 November 1998, Nobles County.

- Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*), 28-31 March 2005, Verchota Landing, Winona County (record #2005-050, vote 7-0). A written description of this adult male was supplemented by photographs.

- Barrow's Goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*), 1 January 2005, Afton Christmas

Bird Count, Washington County (record #2005-052, vote 6-1). Two adult males on the Minnesota side of the St. Croix River.

- Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*), 16-27 July 2005, Little Spirit Lake, Jackson County (record #2005-048, vote 10-0). This immature was first found on the Iowa side of the border at Spirit Lake and fortuitously wandered into Minnesota (*The Loon* 78:11-14).

- Frigatebird, sp. (*Fregata* sp.), 19-21 September 2005, Big Lake off Echo Trail, St. Louis County (record #2005-064, vote 7-0). Please see Not Accepted records.

- Glossy/White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis* sp.), 23-28 September 2005, 180<sup>th</sup> Street marsh, Dakota County (record #2005-062, vote 7-0). Submitted as an unidentified *Plegadis* ibis and accepted as such; in spite of good photographs, the true color of its irides could not be demonstrated.

- Glossy/White-faced Ibis, 9-15 October 2005, Munnwyler Lake near Ortonville, Big Stone County (record #2005-069, vote 7-0). Though photographed about two weeks later than the juvenile in the preceding record, it was still not possible to distinguish reddish tones in the irides from an artifact of reflected light.

- Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), 16 May 2001, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2005-047, vote 7-0). Though submitted more than four years after the fact, documentation for this adult at the West Skyline Hawk Count was prepared the day of the sighting; its unanimous acceptance underscores the importance of contemporaneous field notes.

- Red Phalarope (*Phalacrocorax fulvifrons*), 1 October 2005, Lake Superior, St. Louis County (record #2005-067, vote 7-0). This juvenile was initially misidentified as a Red-necked Phalarope (*P. lobatus*); photographs revealed its true identity.

- Parasitic Jaeger (*Stercorarius parasiticus*), 7 September 2005, Chisago Lakes, Chisago County (record #2005-078, vote 6-1). This juvenile was hit by a car in a parking lot; photographs of the specimen were reviewed.

- Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*), 17 July - 17 October 2005, north



**Record #2005-067, Red Phalarope, 1 October 2005, Lake Superior, St. Louis County. Photo by Scott B Meyer.**

end of Spirit Lake and Little Spirit Lake, Jackson County (record #2005-049, vote 7-0). This adult was first found on the Iowa side of the border by Minnesota birders looking for Iowa's Brown Pelican! It was photographed on both sides of the border and was reported regularly on the Iowa side of the border through at least 11 November, but the last verified sighting in Minnesota was 17 October.

- California Gull (*Larus californicus*), 5-12 November 2005, Superior Entry, St. Louis County (record #2005-077, vote 7-0). This second-cycle gull had a blue-green, pencil-shaped bill with a sharply demarcated black tip, and blue-green legs; its size and plumage were compared to adjacent Ring-billed and Herring gulls. Photographs and written details were submitted by each of three observers. One of the two previous St. Louis County records was also in late fall (Eckert 1985).

- Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*), 4 September 2005, Park Point, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2005-055, vote 7-0). This juvenile was a harbinger of the amazing flock that followed.

- Sabine's Gull, 16-18 September 2005, Park Point, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2005-056, vote 7-0 for 60 indi-



**Record #2005-065, Sabine's Gull, 26–28 September 2005, Lake Rebecca, Hastings, Dakota County. Photo by Terence Brashear.**

viduals, vote 5–2 for 70 individuals). A total of 70 individuals was accepted, though two committee members considered 10 birds potential duplicates. Record-high count for Minnesota and the Great Lakes Basin.

- Sabine's Gull, 17 September 2005, Salt Lake, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2005-068, vote 7–0).

- Sabine's Gull, 26–28 September 2005, Lake Rebecca, Hastings, Dakota County (record #2005-065, vote 7–0). This injured juvenile was photographed at close range.

- Sabine's Gull, 1 October 2005, Lake Superior, St. Louis County (record #2005-066, vote 7–0 for first individual, vote 5–2 for second individual). Two juveniles were observed from a boat on Lake Superior. At least one was photographed but the two were not seen simultaneously, leading two members to accept one bird only.

- Sabine's Gull, 22 October 2005, Grand Marais, Cook County (record #2005-076, vote 7–0). One more juvenile capped off an incredible season for this species in Minnesota.

- Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*), 18 September 2005, Superior Entry, St. Louis County (record #2005-059, vote 6–1).

- Arctic Tern, 24–25 September 2005, Superior Entry and Lafayette Square on Park Point, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2005-063, vote 7–0). Though nearly a week apart, these two sight records may refer to the same adult. This species has now been found at the Superior Entry in four of the last six fall migrations — all within a narrow window between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of September.

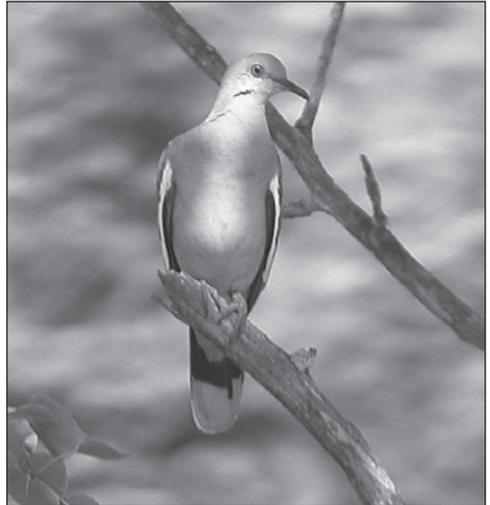
- Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*), 8–9 June 2005, Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, Sherburne County (record #2005-036, vote 7–0). This adult was photographed by several observers.

- White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*), 10–16 July 2005, near Devil Track Lake, Cook County (record #2005-046, vote 7–0). Photographed at a private residence northwest of Grand Marais.

- Common Ground-Dove (*Columbina passerina*), 16 October 2005, Two Harbors, Lake County (record #2005-070,



**Record #2005-036, Least Tern, 9 June 2005, Sherburne NWR, Sherburne County. Photo by Anthony X. Hertzler.**



**Record #2005-046, White-winged Dove, 11 July 2005, near Devil Track Lake, Cook County. Photo by Peder H. Svingen.**

vote 7–0). Sight record of an adult; second consecutive October in Lake County and third state record.

- Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*), 25 October 2005, Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Aitkin County (record #2005-074, vote 7–0). First county record and about a month later than any previous occurrence in the state.

- Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*), 17–21 October 2005, Taconite Harbor, Cook County (record #2005-071, vote 7–0). Seen and heard amongst the rocks sheltering this harbor of refuge along the North Shore of Lake Superior.

- Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*), 30 May 2005, Grand Marais, Cook County (record #2005-041, vote 7–0). A female was photographed (*The Loon* 77:239) on the rocks near the Coast Guard Station; third state record.

- Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*), Virginia, St. Louis County (record #2005-072, vote 7–0). Well-described but unfortunately not refound; sixth state record.

- Prairie Warbler (*Dendroica discolor*), 6 June – 2 July 2005, Ritter Farm Park, Dakota County (record #2005-038, vote 7–0). This territorial male attracted scores

of observers, but sadly no female Prairie Warblers.

- Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*), 27–29 May 2005, Castle Danger, Lake County (record #2005-051, vote 7–0). Adult male photographed at a feeder along the North Shore of Lake Superior.

- Lark Bunting, 30 August 2005, Schroeder, Cook County (record #2005-075, vote 5–2). Also along the North Shore of Lake Superior was this fall migrant in female-type plumage. Those voting against this record were concerned about the lack of field notes.

- Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*), 29 May – 16 June 2005, New Solum Township, Marshall County (record #2005-037, vote 7–0). An adult male sporadically visited a feeder during its 19-day stay.

- Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*), 18 May 2005, Greenleaf Township, Meeker County (record #2005-039, vote 5–2). This adult male was briefly described.

- Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*), 16 April 2005, Schroeder, Cook County (record #2005-044, vote 7–0). Photographed at a feeder during its brief stay. Fifth state record, three of which pertain to what was probably the same individual



Record #2005-038, Prairie Warbler, 16 June 2005, Ritter Farm Park, Dakota County. Photo by David Cahlander.



**Record #2005-051, Lark Bunting, 27 May 2005, Castle Danger, Lake County. Photo by LeRoger Lind.**



**Record #2005-044. Eurasian Tree Sparrow, 16 April 2005, Schroeder, Cook County. Photo by Carol and Jim Tveekrem.**

for three consecutive years.

The following records were voted on August – December 2005 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.)

- Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*), 19–21 September 2005, Big Lake off Echo Trail, St. Louis County (record #2005-064, vote 2–5; subsequently Accepted as *Fregata* sp., vote 7–0). The documentation clearly depicted a female frigatebird, but there were discrepancies between the sketch (black throat) and written description (white throat). The exact shape and extent of white on the breast was unclear. These seemingly minor points are critical for the elimination of certain age/sex classes of the Great Frigatebird (*F. minor*) and Lesser Frigatebird (*F. ariel*), both of which have been

reported in the interior of North America.

- Glossy/White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis* sp.), 17–24 November 2005, Spring Lake, Dakota County (record #2005-079, vote 1–6). The description of this exceptionally late ibis was submitted by an individual who did not actually see the bird.

- Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*), 9 April 2005, Three Rivers Park at Coon Rapids Dam, Hennepin County (record #2005-043, vote 0–7). A brief description of a very dark, soaring bird with a “relatively long tail” and a “relatively long head projection” drew no support.

- Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*), 30 May 2005, Spindler's Pond near Rice Lake State Park, Steele County (recirculated record #2005-042, first vote 5–2, second vote 3–4). Field notes were not taken and the bird was seen without binoculars from an estimated distance of 150 yards by the observer submitting documentation. This record was discussed at the December 2005 meeting and it was noted that some of the described details were likely visible only to the observer using binoculars; second-hand reports of plumage details — especially color, but also feather shape and anatomical placement — are potentially less reliable than first-hand accounts.

- Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*), 9 September 2005, Park Point,

Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2005-058, vote 3–4). This jaeger was observed in flight for one to two minutes from an estimated distance of 200 yards; its central rectrices either did not project past the tail tip or could not be seen at this distance. Much of the description suggested Long-tailed Jaeger, e.g., the apparent absence of an underwing flash and “its mantle a light [sic] shade of brown than the dark chocolate brown primaries and secondaries”. It chased after or was next to a Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) the entire time and was described as smaller than the gull — a comparison that equally fits Parasitic Jaeger (*S. parasiticus*). Of most concern was the statement “undertail coverts were white, contrasting heavily with dark brown tail, no noticeable [sic] barring, moving into a more dusky gray on belly”. According to Olsen and Larsson (1997), uniformly pale undertail coverts are never seen on Long-taileds; the only jaeger that can show a near-unmarked pale crissum is a pale juvenile Parasitic.

- Long-tailed Jaeger, 18 September 2005, Superior Entry, St. Louis County (recirculated record #2005-060, first vote 5–2, second vote 3–4). Based on plumage details, this pale-headed juvenile was considered a different individual than one reported the following day (see record #2005-061 below). Though possibly correctly identified, parts of the description also fit first-year Parasitic Jaeger and the statement “wing length was much longer vs [sic] a Ring-billed Gull” essentially eliminated Long-tailed Jaeger.

- Long-tailed Jaeger, 19 September 2005, Superior Entry, St. Louis County (recirculated record #2005-061, first vote 4–3, second vote 0–7). The primary observer participated in the discussion of this record at the December meeting and recommended that it not be accepted.

- Williamson's Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*), 22 August 2005, Maplewood State Park, Otter Tail County (record #2005-054, vote 1–6). This juvenile female sapsucker was seen by two experienced observers, only one of whom submitted documentation. Its identification may

have been correct, but committee members were concerned about reliance on the absence of a field mark to eliminate the much more likely possibility of a juvenile Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*S. varius*); the latter's white upper secondary-covert patch may be reduced, obscured, or very difficult to see. One of several examples of juvenile Yellow-bellieds with obscured white patches can be found at <<http://www.birdsofoklahoma.net/images/yb-sap004.jpg>>. Parts of the description such as “alternating lighter and slightly darker areas in the moustachial area” and “light pale brown” throat better fit Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

- American Dipper (*Cinclus mexicanus*), 19 May 2005, Cross Bay Lake, Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, Cook County (recirculated record #2005-027, first vote 5–2, second vote 4–3). This intriguing report of a small, gray, stubby-tailed bird submerging itself near a waterfall failed to gain the necessary support for acceptance after discussion at the December meeting. The observer acknowledged that he was not an experienced birder and had no knowledge of this species' status in Minnesota. The characteristic bobbing behavior of this species was not noted and its vocalizations, bill shape and color, and leg length and color were not described. This species has been reported multiple times by canoeists, hikers, and fly-fisherman in the BWCA; two early June sight records have been accepted, but the only record supported by photographs was along the North Shore of Lake Superior beginning 29 January 1970 (Green 1970, Muelhausen 1970).

- Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus caudacutus*), 5 September 1888, Minneapolis, Hennepin County (record #2004-115, vote 0–10). All 10 members vote on potential first state records. This record was first discussed and tabled at the December 2004 meeting after David Sibley re-identified American Museum of Natural History specimen #762276 as this species. The specimen had two different labels attached to it; Sibley determined that the bird was most

likely collected at New Haven, Connecticut instead of in Minnesota (Sibley 2005).

- Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*), 18 December 2004, Vadnais Heights, Ramsey County (record #2005-053, vote 0–7). The description of a bird seen with six robins during a Christmas Bird Count noted “black and white markings on the head”, “bright orange-red breast” and “white markings on wings”. These details were considered too vague and incomplete to determine species.

- Black-headed Grosbeak, 10 June 2005, Reine Township, Roseau County (record #2005-040, vote 0–7). Bill shape was not described and the color of its bill “yellow/light colored” eliminated Black-headed Grosbeak. The bird’s behavior — hiding under a low-growing juniper or the edge of a brush pile, then coming out to peck on the ground — was atypical for a grosbeak; the observers considered this when they wrote, “the white breast extended well up on the chest area, which made us think of a Rufous-sided towhee.”

The efforts of all those observers who document unusual species are greatly appreciated, whether or not the records are Accepted. A significant number of submissions include digital documentation; observers are strongly encouraged to also submit contemporaneous field notes for all records. Documentation can be submitted online by highlighting the “Reporting Birds” menu at the MOU website <<http://moumn.org/>> and clicking on “Enter RQD documentation”. Documentation forms can also be mailed upon request or downloaded from the MOU website.

In addition to those observers who provided photographs, sound recordings, or other forms of documentation, the Committee acknowledges with thanks those who provided written descriptions for the records listed in this article: Tom Auer, Tom and Elizabeth Bell, Mary Broten, Conny Brunell, Paul Budde, Deb Buria-Falkowski, Chris Benson, Dave Cahlander, Philip Chu, Kim Eckert, Steve Falkowski, Dan Floren, June Foss, Mike Hendrickson, Anthony Hertz, Bob Janssen, Oscar Johnson, Paul Johnson, Jeanie Joppru,

Doug Kieser, Linda Krueger, Janet Lerch, Jim Lind, Jim Mattsson, Michelle McDowell, Frank Nicoletti, Peter Rodewald, Drew Smith, Carol Sorsoleil, Shelley Steva, Forest Strnad, Peder Svingen, Dan and Sandy Thimgan, Carol and Jim Tveekrem, Bill Unzen, Sara Vacek, Jan Vieth, and Josh Watson. There were many observers who documented records of Regular species which were not voted on by the Committee; although these records are not cited here, the efforts of these individuals are greatly appreciated.

The Committee welcomes questions or comments from MOU members regarding any record in particular or our procedures in general. More information including our bylaws and current checklist can be found at <<http://moumn.org/mourc/index.html>>. Summary: 45 records voted on / 33 Accepted, 12 Not Accepted.

*Corrigendum:* The Sage Thrasher at Dodge Nature Center 26 June 2004 was in Dakota (not Ramsey) County (*The Loon* 76:156, 77:31–32).

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