

# Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

Thomas A. Tustison, Chairman

The most recent meeting of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee ("MOURC") was conducted electronically via Zoom 5 December 2021. In attendance and voting at this meeting were MOURC members Dedrick A. Benz, Rebecca R. Engdahl (alternate), Anthony X. Hertzell, Ann E. Kessen, Douglas W. Kieser, William C. Marengo, Steven P. Stucker, Andrew D. Smith, Howard Towle (alternate), and Thomas A. Tustison (chair).

At its most recent meeting on 5 December 2021, the Committee embarked on a re-evaluation of the status of the Whooping Crane in Minnesota. The last time the Committee reviewed the matter was at its 19 August 2018 meeting. At that time, Committee discussion centered on whether or not it should consider birds from the Wisconsin captive breeding population (Eastern Migratory Population) to be fully established. MOURC then concluded that the Eastern Migratory Population was not sustainable and consequently not countable in Minnesota.

According to the International Crane Foundation as of September 2021, roughly 24% of the Eastern Migratory Population is now raised in the wild; the issue remains whether this population is self-sustaining. Based on recent comments from the International Crane Foundation, the answer is apparently not. Here is a recent quote from Anne Lacy, Senior Manager at the International Crane Foundation:

"The flock is not considered self-sustaining yet. I would say that "self-sustaining" would be the ability for natural reproduction to outpace natural death in this population. We had another four chicks fledge in the wild this year, as last year. That is not quite enough to make up for birds that die or are termed "long term missing" by the reintroduction partnership. That simply means that we have not had a record of them in two years — no sightings or

remote telemetry data."

After discussion, the Committee determined that:

The Wisconsin birds are still in an experimental introduction phase.

The Committee should be cautious about considering these wild birds.

*The Committee is maintaining the status quo.*

Unless more evidence accumulates, the Committee still considers these Wisconsin birds to not yet represent wild individuals of a self-sustaining population.

The following records were voted on and were Accepted:

**Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** (*Dendrocygna autumnnalis*) [Accidental], 3 July 2021, near Sherburne, Sherburne County (record #2021-090, vote 7-0). Five adults, photographed. First county record.

**Black-bellied Whistling-Duck**, 25 September 2021, near town of Nicollet, Nicollet County (record #2021-071, vote 7-0). Adult, shot by hunter and photographed. First county record.

**Brant** (*Branta bernicla*) [Casual], 7 November 2020, near Hutchinson, McLeod County (record #2020-091, vote 7-0). Juvenile shot by a hunter and photographed. First county record.

**Brant**, 11 November 2021, northwest segment of Lake Winnibigoshish, Itasca County (record #2021-083, vote 7-0). Two adults, both of the pale-bellied subspecies (*B. b. brota*), were shot by a hunter and photographed. First county record.

**King Eider** (*Somateria spectabilis*) [Casual], 8 December 2021 – 3 January 2022, Lake Pepin, near Lake City, Goodhue and Wabasha counties (record #2021-088, vote 7-0). Apparent first-winter female, photographed. First county record for both Goodhue and Wabasha counties.

**Rufous Hummingbird** (*Selasphorus rufus*) [Casual], 27–28 July 2021, private residence,



**Rufous Hummingbird, 27 July 2021, Lake City, Wabasha County. Photo by Debra Rupp.**



**Limpkin, 2 June 2021, Hugo Farms WMA, Washington County. Photo by Anthony X. Hertzell.**

south of Lake City, Wabasha County (record #2021-058, vote 7-0). Adult male, photographed.

**Rufous Hummingbird**, 6 November – 4 December 2021, Peabody neighborhood, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2021-082, vote 6-1). Apparent adult female, photographed and video recorded. The bird was allegedly seen in the neighborhood as early as late October, but details are lacking specific dates.

**Limpkin** (*Aramus guaranauna*) [Accidental], 30 May – 19 July 2021, Paul Hugo Farms Wildlife Management Area, Washington County (record #2021-045, vote 10-0). Adult, photographed as well as video and audio recorded. First county and first state record.

**Black-necked Stilt** (*Himantopus mexicanus*) [Casual], 2 May 2021, Lyon/Yellow Medicine Conservation Easement, Lyon County (record #2021-092, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed.

**Black-necked Stilt**, 1-3 July 2021, Artichoke Waterfowl Production Area, Big Stone County (record #2021-060, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed.

**Black-necked Stilt**, 17 July 2021, Artichoke Waterfowl Production Area, Big Stone County (record #2021-091, vote 7-0). Two adults photographed. A stilt was seen here on 1 July 2021 (see above) which also may have been one of these two birds.

**Black-necked Stilt**, 2-5 August 2021, Marsh Lake, near Correll, Swift County (record #2021-059, vote 7-0). Four birds accepted;

however, only two birds were seen after the 2nd.

**Red Knot** (*Calidris canutus*) [Casual], 20-22 August 2020, Brighton Beach, St. Louis County (record #2020-096, vote 7-0). Juvenile, photographed.

**Red Knot**, 26 August 2020, near Correll, Big Stone County (record #2020-098, vote 7-0). Juvenile, photographed.

**Red Knot**, 14 August 2021, Interstate Island WMA / Port Terminal, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2021-093, vote 7-0). Six birds accepted.

**Red Knot**, 23-24 August 2021, Paynesville Sewage Ponds, Paynesville, Stearns County (record #2021-064, vote 7-0). Juvenile.

**Red Knot**, 30 August – 1 September 2021, Roberg Lake, approximately 3.4 miles south of Lake Park, Becker County (record #2021-066, vote 7-0). Three juveniles, photographed.

**Ruff** (*Calidris pugnax*) [Casual], 18 August 2021, Shell Rock River outlet of Albert Lea Lake, Freeborn County (record #2021-065, vote 7-0). Reeve, photographed.

**Red Phalarope** (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) [Casual], 21-24 October 2021, Somsen Wildlife Management Area, New Ulm, Brown County (record #2021-079, vote 7-0). Photographed. First county record.

**Pomarine Jaeger** (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) [Casual], 12 October – 6 November 2021, Minnesota side of the Superior Entry, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2021-077, vote 7-0). Dark-phase juvenile, photographed.



**Ross's Gull, 28 November 2021, Point Douglas, Washington County. Photo by Kimberly A. Emerson.**



**Tropical Kingbird / Couch's Kingbird, 30 September 2020. Photo by James W. Lind.**

**Pomarine Jaeger**, 1 December 2021, Elk River Landfill, Elk River, Sherburne County (record #2021-087, vote 7-0). Photographed. First county record.

**Black-legged Kittiwake** (*Rissa tridactyla*) [Casual], 29 October – 14 November 2021, Minnesota Point/Superior Entry, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2021-080, vote 7-0). Juvenile, photographed.

**Ross's Gull** (*Rhodostethia rosea*) [Accidental], 27–29 November 2021, Minnesota side of the St. Croix River, Washington and Dakota counties, (record #2021-085, vote 7-0). Juvenile, photographed. This bird was seen by over 200 observers in both Minnesota and Wisconsin waters (near Prescott). Unfortunately, it was in poor health and eventually died.

**Slaty-backed Gull** (*Larus schistisagus*) [Casual], 22 November – 3 December 2021, Lake Pepin, Lake City, Wabasha County (record #2021-084, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed. First county record.

**Wood Stork** (*Mycteria americana*) [Accidental], 2 September 2021, private residence, Ham Lake, Anoka County (record #2021-068, vote 7-0). Photographed in a residential lot with a small mitigation pond. First county record. Fifth state and third fall record.

**Neotropic Cormorant** (*Nannopterum brasilianum*) [Accidental], 10–11 August 2021, Lake Augusta, Dakota County (record #2021-063, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed. First county record. It is possible this is the same

adult Neotropic Cormorant which had been present since April at Richfield Lake in nearby (approximately 6.5 miles) Hennepin County.

**Ferruginous Hawk** (*Buteo regalis*) [Accidental], 15 August 2021, private residence, Old North Shore Road southwest of Two Harbors, Lake County (record #2021-089, vote 7-0). Juvenile light-phase, photographed. The bird was found and photographed alive. It was reported to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources by the landowner and subsequently found dead the following morning.

**Barn Owl** (*Tyto alba*) [Casual], 5–14 October 2021, Minnesota State Highway 60 bridge, Wabasha, Wabasha County (record #2021-075, vote 7-0). Five owlets were photographed at the nest site by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MN/DOT). The owlets were first discovered on 5 October 2021 by the MN/DOT staff while working on a bridge construction project on the Minnesota side of the Mississippi River.

**Tropical/Couch's Kingbird** (*Tyrannus* sp.), 30 September 2020, Scenic Highway 61 at County Road 9, 30 September 2020 (record #2020-097, vote 6-1). Adult, photographed. First county record. MOURC has now accepted four Tropical/Couch's Kingbird records since the first was documented in 2011. All are fall records from the counties of Lac qui Parle, Lake, Stearns, and St. Louis. The dates (by month) for all four accepted observations are 16 August 2020, 25 September 2020, 30 Septem-

ber 2020, and 28 October 2011.

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** (*Tyrannus forficatus*) [Casual], 10 October 2020, Duluth, Waabizheshikana Trail, St. Louis County (record #2020-092, vote 6–1). Adult, photographed.

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher**, 18 October 2021, about 0.5 miles southwest of Silver Creek Reservoir, Olmsted County (record #2021-078, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed.

**Mountain Bluebird** (*Sialia currucoides*) [Casual], 22–24 October 2020, Dart Road, Sax-Zim Bog, St. Louis County (record #2020-093, vote 7–0). Adult male, photographed and video recorded.

**Mountain Bluebird**, 25 October 2020, Lakeview Cemetery, Two Harbors, Lake County (record #2020-094, vote 7–0). Adult male, photographed.

**Mountain Bluebird**, 8 October 2021, Split Hand Road just west of River Road, Itasca County (record #2021-073, vote 7–0). Adult male, photographed.

**Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch** (*Leucosticte tephrocotis*) [Casual], 10 March 2021, private residence, Red Iron Road, Kasota Township, Le Sueur County (record #2021-094, vote 7–0). “Interior” form. Adult, photographed. First county and fourth spring record.

**Lark Bunting** (*Calamospiza melanocorys*) [Casual], 26 September 2021, ball fields on Park Point, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2021-072, vote 7–0). Photographed. Age and sex uncertain.

**Painted Bunting** (*Passerina ciris*) [Casual], 27 November 2021, Duluth Lakewalk, between Seventh and Eighth Avenue East, St. Louis County (record #2021-086, vote 7–0). Adult male, photographed.

The following records were voted on 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.)

**Black Rail** (*Laterallus jamaicensis*) [Accidental], 14 May 1962, Long Meadow Lake, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Hennepin County (record #1962-001, vote 0–7). MOURC unanimously agreed that the report lacked sufficient details to accept such an important observation.

**Red Knot** (*Calidris canutus*) [Casual], 1 May 2021, Clarkfield Wastewater Treatment Plant, Clarkfield, Yellow Medicine County (record #2021-022, vote 2–5). If a Red Knot, this bird would not only be a first county record, but would also represent the earliest date on record for Minnesota by one week (earliest date is 8 May). Using the entire month of April as a proxy for a next-day (1 May) observation, an examination of the eBird database for the past five years yields only a single inland record from Utah (this excludes overwintering birds from the Salton Sea in California only 78 miles from the Pacific Coast). Therefore, a significant degree of detailed documentation is required for this observation. Several members mentioned that the documentation did not adequately eliminate Sanderling, a species that did occur in three different Minnesota counties on the date of the observation.

**Pomarine Jaeger** (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) [Casual], 9 October 2021, Sham Lake, Lyon County (record #2021-074, vote 0–7). This identification seems to be based almost entirely on flight style and date with very little description of morphology. Coupled with the observer's relative inexperience with jaegers in general, some of the comments about flight style do not seem relevant. One member commented that “having been on numerous pelagic trips on both coasts, I have seen experts who have seen hundreds of jaegers get a [sic] identification wrong based on flight style.”

**Long-tailed Jaeger** (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) [Accidental], 18 September 2021, Wildlife Drive, Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, Sherburne County (record #2021-070, vote 1–6). The written description does not provide enough information to confirm the identification even though the single photograph clearly depicts a jaeger. Most members felt that even with a photograph there were not enough observable features to conclusively identify the jaeger at species level.

**Yellow-billed Loon** (*Gavia adamsii*) [Ac-

cidental], 7 September 2021, Mississippi River, Crow Wing State Park, Crow Wing County (record #2021-069, vote 0–7). MOURC members universally agreed that the photograph was more consistent with a Common Loon than the professed species.

**Sprague's Pipit** (*Anthus spragueii*) [Casual], 7 August 2021, Salt Lake, near Marietta, Lac qui Parle County (record #2021-061, vote 2–5). Neither distance nor duration of observation was given. There are very few reliable reports for the south region prior to 15 September for any year in the MOU database. It is very unlikely to be a Sprague's Pipit at this location and time of year. The observer did not specifically hear any vocalization, but made the statement "I may have heard the characteristic "squeet" call, but there were many swallows in the area, and the UPSA were making chatter sounds at the same time, so not confident in that." Since no distance or duration of the observation was given, it may have been nothing more than a Vesper Sparrow which is very common for this time of year and location.

**Lark Bunting** (*Calamospiza melanocorys*) [Casual], 19 September 2020, Kandi State Wildlife Management Area, Kandiyohi County (record #2020-057, initial vote 4–3, recirculated vote 2–5). Several members were unwilling to accept the observation based on limited details especially since no optics were mentioned.

**Kentucky Warbler** (*Geothlypis formosa*) [Casual], 30 August 2021, Arrowhead Lane Southwest, near Rochester, Olmsted County (record #2021-067, vote 2–5). Most members had difficulty with the challenges presented by this observation. The observer claims great familiarity with the species call notes on the wintering grounds in Guatemala where he has lived for the past 20 years. However, there are gaps in what one would expect in the written description. For example, the observer noted "the extensive black area below the eye", but fails to describe the crown or spectacles.

**Townsend's Warbler** (*Setophaga townsendi*) [Accidental], 29 August 2020, Wood Lake Nature Center, Hennepin County (record #2020-048, initial vote 4–3, recirculated vote 1–6). The observer states in the written documentation that "The throat and underparts were whitish" which is inconsistent with Townsend's Warbler. This bird is possibly one of the many known hybrids such as with Townsend's X

Black-throated Green warbler, Townsend's X Hermit warbler, or Townsend's X Black-throated Gray warbler. The photographs are regrettably backlit and somewhat out of focus so they are not necessarily diagnostic.

The efforts of all those observers who document unusual species are greatly appreciated, whether or not the records are Accepted. Though photographs are always welcome, observers are strongly encouraged to submit written documentation based on contemporaneous field notes for all records. The Committee acknowledges with thanks those who provided written descriptions for the records listed in this article: Travis Bonovsky, Brad Abendroth, Cynthia Atchison, Karl J. Bardon, Dave Bartkey, Lon Baumgardt, Steve Broste, Paul E. Budde, Thomas Burns, Rob Cahill, Philip C. Chu, Shawn Conrad, Clinton Dexter-Nienhaus, Ben Douglas, Robert M. Dunlap, Tod Eggenberger, Kimberly A. Emerson, Becca Engdahl, Jakob Etbauer, Paul & Koni Fank, Paul and Koni Fank, Andy Forbes, Liz Harper, Heidi Hermes, Anthony X. Hertzell, Pete Hoeger, Gerald Hoekstra, Sandy Hokanson, Luke Hollander, Ezra Hosch, Isaac Hosch, Paul E. Jantscher, Mark Junghans, Jordan D. Keil, Douglas W. Kieser, Beth Kuehn, Tim Lamey, Demelza Larson, James W. Lind, Craig R. Mandel, William C. Marengo, Terry Moffatt, David F. Neitzel, Thorild Nelson, Jason Osowski, William E. Parrish, Douglas L. Pierzina, Aaron Pietsch, Jerry Pruett, Abby Pulvermacher, Debra Rupp, Roger J. Schroeder, Kenneth M. Schumacher, Susan Schumacher, Pat Shortall, Andrew D. Smith, Brian T. Smith, Jimi Soupir, Mark "Sparky" Stensaas, Dana Sterner, Alex Sundvall, Peder H. Svingen, Tori Frye and Mary Thomas, Howard Towle, Abbie Valine, Josh Wallestad, Joshua G. Watson, Justin Watts, Garrett Wee, Mathew Zappa, and Roy Zimmerman. Many observers documented records of rare Regular species which were not voted on by the Committee; though not cited here, their efforts 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>>. Summary: 46 records voted on — 37 Accepted, 9 Not Accepted.

— Edina, MN.