

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 via electronic media on 19 November 2022. In attendance and voting at this meeting were MOURC members Kimberly A. Emerson (alternate), Rebecca R. Engdahl (alternate), Anthony X. Hertzell, Ann E. Kessen, Douglas W. Kieser, Andrew D. Smith, Steven P. Stucker, Howard C. Towle (alternate), and Thomas A. Tustison (chair).

The following records were voted on at, or subsequent to, the meeting and were Accepted (Note: in general, dates given for each record represent the first and last days of observation; some records may not have been documented on each intervening date):

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) [Accidental], 11 July 2022, Grass Lake, Eden Prairie, Hennepin County (record #2022-075, vote 7-0). Adult. Third county record.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, 10 October 2022, pond near the state highway 36 and Stillwater Boulevard interchange, Lake Elmo, Washington County (record #2022-087, vote 6-1). Adult, photographed. First county record.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) [Accidental], 15 May 2019, Albany sewage ponds, Stearns County (record # 2019-016, original vote 5-2, recirculated vote 7-0, origin vote 7-1 as wild with a quorum of eight members). Adult male, photographed. First county and third state record.

King Eider, (*Somateria spectabilis*) [Casual], 16-18 November 2022, Agate Bay, Two Harbors, Lake County (record #2022-101, vote 7-0). First winter male, photographed.

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) [Casual], 25 July - 8 August 2022, private residence, Forest Lake, Washington County (record #2022-112, vote 7-0). Adult male, photographed. Second county record.

Broad-billed Hummingbird (*Cyananthus latirostris*) [Accidental], 23 July 2022, private residence, Elk River, Sherburne County (record #2022-072, vote 10-0). Adult male, photo-

graphed and video recorded. First county and state record (*The Loon* 94:166).

King Rail (*Rallus elegans*) [Accidental], 22 May 2022, Steele County (record #2022-106, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed.

Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) [Casual], 8 May 2022, Armstrong Wetland Restoration, Steele County (record #2022-109, vote 5-2). Three adults.

Black-necked Stilt, 1 June 2022, Albany sewage ponds, Stearns County (record #2022-060, vote 7-0). Adult.

Black-necked Stilt, 26 June - 14 August 2022, county road 61, 0.25 mile north of state highway 28, Graceville, Big Stone County (record #2022-066, vote 7-0). Adult female, photographed. This adult female was probably one of the four birds accepted in (record # 2022-111) below.

Black-necked Stilt, 23-26 July 2022, Indian Lake WMA, Sibley County (record #2022-108, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed.

Black-necked Stilt, 3-14 August 2022, wetlands near the intersection of county roads 61 and 28. Big Stone County (record #2022-111, vote 7-0). Two adults and two chicks photographed.

Black-necked Stilt, 6 August 2022, Armstrong Wetland Restoration, Steele County (record #2022-110, vote 7-0). Two adults.

Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) [Regular until 2019], 6 September 2018, Park Point Recreation Area, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2018-071, vote 7-0). Juvenile, photographed.

Red Knot [Casual], 27 September 2022, High Island Lake, New Auburn, Sibley County (record #2022-085, vote 7-0). Juvenile. First county record.

Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*) [Casual], 11 September 2022, High Island Lake Conservation Club, Sibley County (record #2022-082, vote 7-0). Juvenile, photographed. First county record.

Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) [Casual], 29-30 March 2022, Canal Park, Duluth,



Least Tern, 12 June 2022, Woodstock WMA, Rock Township, Pipestone County. Photo by Kimberly A. Emerson.



Fork-tailed Flycatcher, 17 September 2022, Stony Point, St. Louis County. Photo by Peder H. Svingen.

St. Louis County (record #2022-076, vote 7-0). Apparent first-cycle, photographed.

Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*) [Casual], 12-13 June 2022, Woodstock WMA, Pipestone County (record #2022-061, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed. First county record.

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) [Accidental], 13-15 August, 6 September, 5 October 2022, Yeomans Pond, Winona, Winona County (record #2022-073, vote 10-0). Adult, photographed. First county and state record (*The Loon* 94:160-164).

Neotropic Cormorant (*Nannopterum brasilianum*) [Accidental], 4-7 September 2022, Meeker County (record #2022-080, vote 7-0). Age uncertain, photographed. First county record.

Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*) [Accidental], 9-11 August 2022, Watonwan WMA, Blue Earth County (record #2022-077, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed. First county record.

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) [Casual], 1 September 2020, Yucatan Township, Houston County (record #2022-121, vote 7-0). Adult male found dead, photographed. The carcass was frozen and given to the International Owl Center, 8 September 2022. The finder's best estimate of the date of death was the fall of 2020.

Barn Owl, 1 April 2021, Sheldon Township, Houston County (record #2022-117, vote 5-2). Audio recorded.

Barn Owl, 16 May 2021, Chatfield Township, Fillmore County (record #2022-119, vote 6-1). Audio recorded.

Barn Owl, 23 October 2021, Amherst Township, Fillmore County (record #2022-120, vote 6-1). Audio recorded.

Barn Owl, 11 November 2021, Sheldon Township, Houston County (record #2022-118, vote 6-1). Audio recorded.

Barn Owl, 13 March 2022, Wabasha, Wabasha County (record #2022-124, vote 5-2). Audio recorded.

Barn Owl, 1 April 2022, La Crescent Township, Houston County (record #2022-122, vote 6-1). Audio recorded.

Barn Owl, 1 April 2022, Money Creek Township, Houston County (record #2022-103, vote 5-2). Audio recorded.

Barn Owl, 10 May 2022, Money Creek Township, Houston County (record #2022-115, vote 5-2). Audio recorded.

Barn Owl, 1 June 2022, Bancroft Township, Freeborn County (record #2022-123, vote 5-2). Audio recorded.

Barn Owl, 4 August 2022, Money Creek Township, Houston County (record #2022-116, vote 5-2). Audio recorded.

Barn Owl 18 September 2022, Oxbow Park, Olmsted County (record #2022-089, vote 5-2). Audio recorded.

Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) [Accidental], 2-5 July 2022, private residence, Corona Township, Carlton County (record #2022-071, vote 7-0). First county and third state record. This is the first summer record; all previous records were in the fall (*The Loon* 94:120-122).



Phainopepla, 29 October 2022, McQuade Small Craft Harbor, Duluth, St. Louis County. Photo by Michael W. Sack.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*) [Accidental], 17 September 2022, Stony Point, St. Louis County (record #2022-081, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed (*The Loon* 94:166-167). Fourth state record of which three were in the fall and one in the spring. All records are from the northern portion of the state.

White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*) [Casual], 29-30 October 2022, Grand Marais campground, Cook County (record #2022-091, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed.

Phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*) [Accidental], 29 October - 1 November 2022, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2022-090, vote 10-0). Apparent female of uncertain age, photographed. First state and county record.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*) [Casual], 20 December 2021, Bluestem Prairie, Clay County (record #2022-099, vote 6-1). Adult, photographed.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow, 15 - 23 April 2022, Tower, St. Louis County (record #2022-083, vote 7-0). Two birds were reported from this location, but the second bird was not documented so MOURC did not vote whether to accept a second bird.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow, 11 May - 5 June 2022, Park Point near 42nd Street, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2022-032, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed. Two birds were reported from this location, but the second bird was not documented so MOURC voted to accept only one bird (vote 3-4).

Eurasian Tree Sparrow, 13 October 2022 -

30 November 2022+, Goodhue County (record #2022-088, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed. First county record.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow, 24 November 2022, Polk County (record #2022-095, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed.

Yellow-throated Warbler (*Setophaga dominica*) [Casual], 8 May - 18 June 2022, Hillside Road, Reno, Houston County (record #2022-068, vote 7-0). Three adult males all vocalizing, photographed. This area is a known breeding area with many previous sightings. This species was documented here as late as 11 August 2022, but given the lapse of time, it is not possible to say with certainty this was one the three accepted birds or a random migrant.

Yellow-throated Warbler, 2 June 2022, 12th Street public access, Park Point, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2022-056, vote 7-0). Adult male, photographed and audio recorded.

Yellow-throated Warbler, 22 August 2022, Afton State Park, Washington County (record #2022-114, vote 7-0). Apparent adult.

Yellow-throated Warbler, 9 November 2022, east shore of Lake Winnibigoshish, Chippewa National Forest, Cass County (record #2022-092, vote 7-0). Apparent adult female, photographed.

Black-throated Sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*) [Accidental], 2-5 June 2022, private residence, Marshall, Lyon County (record #2022-055, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed. Apparently, a second-year bird based on molt characteristics seen in some of the photographs. First county and first summer record. Eighth state record (*The Loon* 94:167).

Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*) [Casual], 13 June 2022, in a residential development near Stillwater, Washington County (record #2022-062, vote 7-0). Adult male photographed. First county record.

Abert's Towhee (*Melospiza aberti*) [Accidental], 17 June - 19 November, 2022, Murphy Hill Park (a.k.a. Newton's Sliding Hill), Grand Rapids, Itasca County, (record #2022-063, vote 10-0). Two adults, photographed, video-recorded, and audio-recorded. First state and county record. The birds were apparently present a few days prior to the first above-listed date, but the exact date is uncertain. The birds were last reported by the homeowner. The identification of the birds is not in question. The Committee voted to accept the identification of this record

(10-0). It also voted (10-0) that the physical evidence, standing alone, was sufficient to confirm the identification of both birds.

Provenance, however, was clearly another matter. In fact, this totally unexpected occurrence represented one of the most unique and challenging records ever evaluated by this Committee. Immediately after this species was reported in Minnesota, there were rampant rumors and speculation online about how the birds might have arrived in the state with most saying they were somehow assisted. In fact, the speculation showed a distinct bias towards the theme that this could not possibly have happened naturally. However, none of these claims or theories was ever substantiated by any evidence. Even with the passage of time of over nine months to the date of this publication, no supporting evidence has ever been offered explaining how arrival actually occurred.

The literature appears scant regarding captivity with most references to captivity confined mainly to experimentation with the species. Furthermore, a check of the Minnesota Zoo revealed that this species has never been kept at the zoo. A search of a database of other zoos in the area by the avian manager at the Minnesota Zoo yielded no Abert's Towhees at other zoos.

The fact that there were two birds of the same species does not really seem to cut either way in favor of either wildness or assisted transport into the state. There are other instances of Accidental species in Minnesota occurring in pairs, such as two immature male Vermilion Flycatchers that were seen simultaneously in a remote woodland area of northern Minnesota (refer to *The Loon* 88:3), and the first state record of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in Minnesota was two individuals seen together (see *The Loon* 89:3). Secondly, because Abert's Towhees mate for life, it is not completely shocking that two might have been found together. These birds were an apparent mated pair photographed carrying nesting material, singing or calling to each other on many occasions, and copulating. No actual nest was ever found so nesting has not been documented in the state.

After significant debate, discussion, and deliberation among the members, the Committee by majority vote (vote, 8-2), accepted these birds as Abert's Towhees with the designation of an "o" subscript added to the record. By definition, an "o" subscript means that there is

reasonable uncertainty regarding its origin or wildness, or its natural occurrence or arrival in the state. It has been added to the state list as there is no evidence to support the theory that they arrived in the state under circumstances other than as natural vagrants. There are currently precedents of four other species designated with an "o" subscript in Minnesota. The only way to tell if the addition to the Minnesota list has been warranted will be the passage of a significant amount of time to see if any vagrancy of this known-to-be-sedentary species has changed. If not, the Committee may, under its existing bylaws, vote to reconsider the record and subsequently vote whether to remove the species from its state list. Conversely, if vagrancy does occur after significant passage of time, the Committee may also reconsider the record and vote whether or not to remove the "o" subscript entirely.

Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) [Casual], 11 November 2022, Agassiz Audubon Center, Polk County (record #2022-093, vote 7-0). Female, photographed. First county record.

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.)

Mottled Duck (*Anas fulvigula*) [Accidental], 21 August 2022, Pelican Lake WMA, Wright County (record #2022-078, vote 0-7). The Committee unanimously agreed the documentation of this species requires great attention to details to successfully eliminate other similar duck species. The same level of attention would also apply to the elimination of Mottled Duck hybrids. Unfortunately, sufficient details which would aid the identification of the species were lacking. Examples might include elaborate details of the tail, the presence or lack of a white border of the speculum, and the presence of a

black spot on the gape.

Rufous Hummingbird [Casual], 14 August 2022, private residence, near Centerville, Anoka County (record #2022-113, vote 0–7). While photographed, MOURC members felt that Allen's Hummingbird could not be eliminated based on the photographic evidence. All members appeared willing to accept the species at the genus level as *Selasphorus* sp.

Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) [Regular], 22 September 2022, Kalmar Reservoir near the intersection of 19th Street NW and 70th Avenue NW, Olmsted County (record #2022-086, vote 3–4). Lateness suggests caution when evaluating the observation. While possibly a correct identification, the Committee generally believed additional details would be required to eliminate Semipalmated Plover.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) [Casual], 25 August 2022, Bethany Hawkwatch, Mankato, Blue Earth County (record #2022-079, vote 2–5). The report was written by someone other than the actual observer. The description was apparently based exclusively on field notes that were not attached to the report. The description lacked significant details; most obviously, no mention was made of the actual size of the bird.

Mississippi Kite, 26 August 2022, north of New Albin where Winnebago Creek crosses Great River Road, Houston County (record #2022-094, vote 0–7). MOURC was concerned that the report was written nearly three months after the observation. This is especially concerning given that no supporting field notes were provided. There were photos of the bird in flight taken at a very considerable distance of approximately 563 to 724 meters as measured in Google maps. The distant photos were too obscure to be of much value in arriving at a final conclusion. Overall, there was not enough diagnostic detail to reach a definitive conclusion.

Mississippi Kite, 10 September 2022, Mankato, Blue Earth County (record #2022-107, vote 1–6). Evaluation of this observation at over one-half a mile is problematic. No details were provided other than a description of flight behavior of a distant silhouette.

Worm-eating Warbler (*Helminthos vermivorum*) [Casual], 30 August 2022, Wood Duck Trail, Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Carver County (record #2022-098, vote 1–6). Fall re-

ords of this species are exceedingly rare — enough so that extra caution is warranted in evaluating the record. The scant detail was insufficient to preclude other possibilities such as Red-breasted Nuthatch or Ovenbird (to mention just a couple).

Worm-eating Warbler, 26 April 2022, College Park, St. Paul, Ramsey County (record #2022-105, vote 3–4). The inexperience of the observer, coupled with an incomplete elimination of other similar possibilities, was fatal to the acceptance of this observation.

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: Judith E Van Andel, Denise Appleton, Sandy Aubol, Bethany Hawkwatch, Karla A. Bloem, Alex Burchard, Steve L. Carlson, Richard Clearman, Matt Crutchmer, Kim R. Eckert, Kimberly A. Emerson, Jolene Fredrickson, Tom Gilde, Lynn Hartmann, Chad Heins, Anthony X. Hertzell, Edward Hicks, Pete Hoeger, Ezra Hosch, Isaac Hosch, Steven C. Houdek, Heidi Hughes, Paul E. Jantscher, Rhonda Kath, Douglas W. Kieser, Tony Lau, Brandon Lentz, Craig R. Mandel, William C. Marengo, Nolan Meyer, Michael W. Sack and Molly Misfeldt, Andrew Nyhus, Douglas L. Pierzina, Jerry Pruett, Tate Putman, Kevin D. Smith, Dana Sterner, Peder H. Svingen, Mark Thieroff, Hannah Toutonghi, Howard Towle, Steve G. Wilson, Joshua G. Watson, Trey Weaver, Lori Whitehouse, Brian Winter, Dustin Wrolstad 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: 56 records voted on — 48 Accepted, 8 Not Accepted.

Edina, MN.