

discovered by the usual vocal Solitary Sandpiper. We were unable to see any young sandpipers, too many places to hide. We did see one other adult Solitary Sandpiper feeding at the other side of the pond area but it seemed little upset with our presence.

On July 14th we again returned and found only one adult Solitary Sandpiper in the usual defense posture on the upper pond. The intensity of the attack was not as great as previously and the bird seemed to be defending the whole pond area. As long as we made no attempt to advance onto the mud and grass areas the adult would fly back from us and call from a distance, the "PitPitPit" call slowing to "Peet Peet" and finally to "Peet Weep." The adult flew into very thick marsh grass, two birds emerged and flew a short distance and disappeared into more of the thick marsh grass. The glimpse we had of the birds was too brief to be sure, but the second sandpiper may have been the chick we had seen on June 30th. The adult flew again into the dead tree tops and complained about our presence. The water was too deep for us to walk to where the second sandpiper had been seen to land and so we left.

At the upper pond on July 16th we were greeted by a single adult Solitary Sandpiper and, as on July 14th, the attack seemed much less intense. The adult did not long persist in the alarm

call and just remained watching from a tree top. It was the warmest reception we had yet encountered since our first visit.

On July 21st, our eighth visit, we found no activity in the upper pond and so moved to the lower pond. Our arrival there was not met with noise from any sandpiper but as we continued to search the pond area we discovered a very quiet secretive Solitary Sandpiper probing the mud behind a small grass island. It appeared to be an individual in juvenile plumage, much whiter on the breast and more olive-brown on the back than an adult. The head was most noticeably different from an adult in that the usually distinct eye ring seemed broken, as if a darker line were drawn from the beak through the eye causing a break in the eye ring on both front and back sides. Is this a stage in the plumage sequence? In its movements and "Peet Weep" call it was like the adult. It was wary and flew when we attempted to approach closer. Was this the chick we had observed first on June 30th? It is possible and we are inclined to believe it may have been. However, the fact that the Solitary Sandpiper becomes a strong powerful flier at an early age certainly precludes anything more than speculation as to the origin of the young bird we saw on this, our final visit.

—Gunflint Trail, Box 58, Grand Marais, MN 55604.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MINNESOTA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE

Kim R. Eckert, M.O.R.C. Secretary

Following is a list of all records voted on by M.O.R.C. from January through June of 1982. For an explanation of the format and purpose of this

report, see the two previous articles on this subject (Loon 53:129-131 and 54:42-46).

Records found Acceptable January-

June, 1982:

- Iceland Gull, 1-2 - 1-9-82, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 7-0, **Loon** 54:1,3-4)
 - Great Black-backed Gull, 1-3 - 1-9-82, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 7-0) **Loon** 54:66-67)
 - Townsend's Solitaire, 12-30-81 - 1-6-82, Duluth Twp., St. Louis Co. (vote 7-0, **Loon** 54:67)
 - Yellow-breasted Chat, 6-30 - 7-4-81, Burnsville, Daktoa Co. (vote 6-1)
 - Townsend's Solitaire, Nov. 81 - 1-7-82, Bagley, Clearwater Co. (vote 7-0)
 - Townsend's Solitaire, 12-19-81, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 5-2)
 - Prairie Falcon, 12-9-81, Rothsay W.M.A., Wilkin Co. (vote 7-0)
 - Turkey Vulture, 3-1-82, Minnetonka, Hennepin Co. (vote 6-1)
 - Ferruginous Hawk, 12-12-81, Clay Co. (vote 4-3)
 - Chipping Sparrow, 2-27 - 2-28-82, Golden Valley, Hennepin Co. (vote 6-1)
 - Cinnamon Teal, 4-16 - 4-18-82, Swan L., Nicollet Co. (vote 6-1)
 - Yellow-throated Warbler, 5-4 - 5-7-82, Wood Lake Nature Center, Hennepin Co. (vote 7-0, **Loon** 54:180)
 - Kentucky Warbler, 5-16-82, Bloomington, Hennepin Co. (vote 7-0, **Loon** 54:189)
 - Pomarine Jaeger, 5-20-82, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 7-0)
 - Prairie Falcon, 5-16-82, Cottonwood Co. (vote 7-0, **Loon** 54:179)
 - Ferruginous Hawk, 4-24-82, Big Stone N.W.R., Lac Qui Parle Co. vote 7-0, **Loon** 54:179
 - Say's Phoebe, 5-22-82, Blue Mounds S.P., Rock Co. (vote 6-1, **Loon** 54:188)
 - Arctic Loon, 6-5-82, Upper Rice L., Clearwater Co. (vote 7-0, **Loon** 54:178)
 - Ferruginous Hawk, 4-17-82, Chippewa Co. (vote 7-0)
 - Summer Tanager, 5-7-82, St. Louis Park, Hennepin Co. (vote 7-0, **Loon** 54:180)
- Records found Unacceptable January-June, 1982:
- Black Vulture, 10-10-81, Upper Mississippi River N.W.R., Houston Co. (vote 5-2, with 7-0 required for ac-

ceptance)

A very difficult record to evaluate. Although the observer was experienced with this species from the South and had a close, prolonged look at this individual, the "white underside wing spots" was the only diagnostic Black Vulture field mark observed. The minority was of the opinion that for a first state record more features should have been described, primarily the manner of flight and the head and tail shapes. Also the details submitted were dated one month after the sighting, suggesting the description is too dependent on the observer's memory.

—Ferruginous Hawk, 9-28-81, Wilkin Co. (vote 1-6)

Since the identification was based primarily on the "white with some pinkish" tail and on "white patches on the outer upperwing surface," the possibility of a paler Red-tailed Hawk was not precluded.

—Mew Gull, 9-12-81, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 4-3, with 7-0 required for acceptance)

Another frustrating record to vote on. The observer is known to be careful and experienced, the gull's smaller size was noted in direct comparison with Ring-billeds, and a "plain short yellow bill" was described. However, it was felt that, like the Black Vulture record above, more than just one field mark should be seen (e.g., eye and leg color were not observed). Also the observation was only a few seconds in duration, and this as well was thought to be inadequate for a first state record.

—Prairie Falcon, 9-11-81, Wilkin Co. (vote 1-6)

While the falcon was "large" and was "light brownish" above, no black axillars were seen even though the bird was seen in flight at close range. A size indication like "large" means little without comparison to another species, and the back color does not preclude Gyrfalcon, Merlin or Peregrine which can appear light brown in some cases.

—Black-legged Kittiwake, 11-11-81,

German Lake, Isanti Co. (vote 2-5)

The identification of this adult gull was based on "all black" wing tips, a "yellowish" bill, and "darkish" feet seen in flight. However, sub-adult Ring-billed Gulls also can have solid black wing tips, and the bill and feet colors described are too vague and were only seen while the gull was in flight when such features are difficult to observe.

—Golden-crowned Sparrow, 9-30-81, Lamberton, Redwood Co. (vote 2-5)

Although the observer watched this bird carefully and may well have seen this species, the only description submitted was "a yellow crown stripe with two dark bordering stripes." However, this sketchy description is inadequate for a first state record, and does not entirely eliminate immature White-crowned Sparrow which can have a tinge of yellow on the median stripe.

—Scarlet Tanager, 1-22-82, Cook Co. (vote 0-7)

This was identified as a male Scarlet Tanager because of the "red body and black wings and tail." However, winter males of this species lose their red plumage in winter, and it was thought this bird was probably a Red Crossbill.

—Prairie Falcon, 6-30-81, Anna Gronseth Prairie, Wilkin Co. (vote 0-7)

Although the falcon flew directly over the observer at relatively close range, no black axillars were seen. Also the "brown" back and distinct "single black moustache" suggest this was more likely an immature Peregrine.

—Swainson's Hawk, 1-4-82, Hastings, Dakota Co. (vote 2-5)

The sketch and written description provided by the experienced observer were almost convincing, especially since they included the white wing linings and dark flight feathers. However, the majority felt that this species is extremely unlikely in the northern U.S. in mid-winter (there are no previous acceptable winter records from any northern state). More troublesome is that misidentifications involving this species, even by relatively

experienced observers, are frequent, primarily because of the mistaken belief that a Buteo with a dark chest and tail with narrow light bands and a wider, darker sub-terminal band has to be a Swainson's (both these features were described here and may have been overly influential in the observer's identification; Red-tails can also have dark chests and melanistic Rough-legs often have tails as described above). The observer may have correctly identified this bird, but the record would have been more convincing if it were known if the observer was fully aware of the significance of the record and was unduly influenced by the dark chest and the tail pattern.

—Prairie Falcon, 7-30-81, Clear Lake, Sherburne Co. (vote 1-6)

Although it was quite possible the identification was correct, the observer only saw a "sandy colored back" on a "large" falcon while he was apparently driving at highway speeds. Since the black axillars were not seen, since some immature Peregrines can get quite pale brown on the back, and since it is difficult to see birds well and accurately while driving, it was decided to reject this record.

—Turkey Vulture, 2-28-82, Forest Lake, Washington Co. (vote 1-6)

The identification was based solely on the "V" posture of the wings and the "lighter flight feathers" from below, but such a description does not preclude a dark phase Rough-legged or Red-tailed Hawk.

—Broad-winged Hawk, 3-22 - 3-23-82, Wild River S. P., Chisago Co. (vote 2-5)

The majority voted not to accept based on the description of the "distinct whiteness of the breast, body" and "black wrist markings," which the Broad-winged does not have.

—Gray Jay, 3-22-82, Chisago Co. (vote 2-5)

The inexperienced observer sent in a long report of six possible Gray Jays, but the documentation did not describe the birds with any clarity. One Gray Jay south of its normal

range is not all that unusual, but six within a relatively short distance sitting uncharacteristically out in the open along a roadside did not seem plausible to the majority.

—Least Tern, 4-14-82, Lake Cornelia, Hennepin Co. (vote 4-2, with one abstention, and with 6-1 required for acceptance)

This was another difficult decision, with the majority convinced by the description of very small size in comparison with Herring and Ring-billed

Gulls standing nearby, the “white foreheads,” yellow bills, and “yellowish” legs. However, the minority was bothered by the lack of direct size comparison with other terns, the failure to note black tips to the bills, and the fact that the observer was looking south somewhat into the sun and may not have been able to determine bill and leg color accurately.

—9735 North Shore Dr., Duluth, MN 55804.

WINTER SEASON

(Dec. 1, 1981 - Feb. 28, 1982)

Kenneth J. La Fond

After two relatively mild seasons, the harsh reality of a Minnesota winter was brought home to the writer on January 9 at the Duluth dump. Gull watching with the wind chill index at -84°F. and a 30-40 mile per hour wind moving considerable debris across the landscape was an experience that will not soon be forgotten. Obviously, this season's weather was in sharp contrast to the preceding two years. In early December, from 5" to as much as 14" of snow fell in south and southwestern Minnesota. Temperatures in the southwest dropped as low as -25°F. at Pipestone in mid-December. December 21 saw a warming with highs in the 30's, even in the north. Cold and snow returned shortly thereafter and in early January, low temperatures of -25°F. in the south and -40°F. in the north were not uncommon. On the ninth and tenth, wind chills of -80° to -100°F.

were recorded. The Twin Cities set an all-time snowfall record with 17" on January 20 and then again set a new record two days later with an additional 18½". The latter storm was accompanied by thunder and lightning with wind gusts to 60 miles per hour. Temperatures dropped as low as -52°F. at Tower. The latter part of January saw some warmer weather with highs in the 30° to 40°F. range but high winds resulted in blizzard-like conditions. January in Minnesota averaged at least 10 degrees below average. February started out cold with lows of -15°F. in the south and -35°F. in the north. By mid-February, normal temperatures had returned and a warming trend set in by February 15, which resulted in temperatures as high as 70° in the southwestern corner of the state on February 22. The balance of the month was about average.