

Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee

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There was a meeting of the Committee on 9 August 1992, and the agenda included discussions and decisions on four species: all Mute Swan records, a photographic record of a Ruff, a published Barn Owl record, and a previously accepted Williamson's Sapsucker record.

—Most Mute Swan records will no longer require a vote on "wildness": all birds "in the vicinity of" Lake Superior are considered Acceptable and "wild", the assumption being they most likely came from the established populations in northwestern Wisconsin; all birds in a "park-like" location are considered Unacceptable escapes or releases; and birds in all other areas, assuming nothing in their appearance or behavior suggests captive origin, are considered Acceptable (c) records on the Regular list. A wildness vote in now needed only with ambiguous situations for which a member requests a vote. (For an explanation of wildness votes and the (c) annotation, see *The Loon* 58:42–43.)

—A record of a Ruff (9 May 1992, near New Germany, Carver Co.) documented only by photographs was discussed and found to be Acceptable (vote 6–1).

—The Committee decided to reaffirm its Unacceptable vote on a 1985 Barn Owl record from St. Louis Co. (see *The Loon* 59:72–76). After the original vote, additional information about the record was received, including a tape recording of the owls' vocalizations and some opinions from owl researchers on this tape. Although these researchers did not agree on the identity of these vocalizations, the record was published. Since publication of a record implies that it was Accepted, this record was discussed, and it was agreed that our original Unacceptable vote was correct and should remain since there was still uncertainty about the taped vocalizations.

—A previously Acceptable and published Williamson's Sapsucker (*The Loon* 53:232–234) was discussed and found to be Unacceptable (vote 0–7). The most convincing part of the documentation had been the pub-

lished sketch; however, this sketch was apparently made from memory two months after the sighting and after field guides had been consulted, so that it might not have been accurate. And all the features included in the written details—two white head stripes, white wing stripe, red under the bill, black on the breast, yellow on the belly—are also Yellow-bellied Sapsucker field marks.

The following records were voted on January – July 1992 and found Acceptable:

—Long-billed Curlew, 3 October 1991, Glencoe, McLeod Co. (vote 7–0; *The Loon* 64:61–63).

—Carolina Wren, 25 December 1991, Coon Rapids, Anoka Co. (vote 7–0; *The Loon* 64:123).

—Black-legged Kittiwake, 3 November 1991, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 6–1; *The Loon* 64:123).

—Great Black-backed Gull, 3–28 February 1992, Knife River, Lake Co. (vote 7–0; *The Loon* 64:119–120).

—Iceland Gull, 29 December 1991 – 8 February 1992, Knife River, Lake Co. (vote 7–0; *The Loon* 64:119–120).

—Lesser Black-backed Gull, 31 March – 1 April 1992, Grey Cloud Island, Washington Co. (vote 7–0; *The Loon* 64:127).

—California Gull, 7 April 1992, L. Breckenridge, Wilkin Co. (vote 7–0; *The Loon* 64:125).

—Red-throated Loon, 29 April 1992, Rice Lake S. P., Steele Co. (vote 7–0; *The Loon* 64:165).

—Black-legged Kittiwake, 18 November 1991, Temperance River S. P., Cook Co. (vote 7–0; *The Loon* 64:124).

—Iceland Gull, 9 November 1991, Black Dog L., Dakota Co. (vote 7–0; *The Loon* 64:123–124).

—Ruff, 29 April 1992, near Rosen, Lac Qui Parle Co. (vote 7–0; *The Loon* 64:169).

—Iceland Gull, 30 April 1992, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 7–0).

—Ross' Goose, 12 May 1992, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 7–0).

—Worm-eating Warbler, 11 May 1992,

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Minneapolis, Hennepin Co. (vote 7-0).

—Ross' Gull, 16 April 1992, Goose L., Pennington Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:156-158).

—Worm-eating Warbler, 12 May 1992, Faribault, Rice Co. (vote 7-0).

—Worm-eating Warbler, 9 May 1992, Rice Lake S. P., Steele Co. (vote 6-1).

—Fork-tailed Flycatcher, 3-14 May 1992, Grand Marais, Cook Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:118-119).

—Ruff, 16 May 1992, Hegleland Twp., Polk Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:167-169).

—Green-tailed Towhee, 12-15 May 1992, Lowry Nature Center, Carver Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:156,157).

—Tricolored Heron, 25 May 1992, Winona, Winona Co. (vote 5-2; *The Loon* 64:171-172).

—Gyr Falcon, 11 January 1992, near Eyota, Olmsted Co. (vote 6-1).

—Ruff, 16 May 1992, near New Germany, Carver Co. (vote 6-1; *The Loon* 64:173-174).

—King Rail, 7-14 June 1992, Bloomington, Hennepin Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:170).

—Sharp-tailed Grouse, 12 April 1992, Skree Twp., Clay Co. (vote 5-2).

—Prairie Warbler, 6 June 1992, Blue Mounds S. P., Rock Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:174-175).

The following records were voted on January - June 1992 and found Unacceptable (note that several of these records had previously been voted on, accepted and/or published):

—Chestnut-collared Longspur, 21 March 1976, near Cascade R., Cook Co. (vote 1-6); previously voted on, accepted and published (*The Loon* 48:79). The identification was based on the bird's "chestnut collar... black cheek stripes, a black breast... a beige throat"; the tail pattern was not seen. However, this description also fits Lapland Longspur, especially a male molting into breeding plumage.

—Kentucky Warbler, 4 June 1978, Itasca S. P., Hubbard Co. (vote 2-5); previously voted on, accepted and published (*The Loon* 50:169). Although the observers' composite description is consistent with this species, viewing conditions were difficult and none of the observers was apparently able to independently identify the bird. The identifica-

tion was also largely based on the song, but the description on this song does not fit Kentucky Warbler.

—Brant, 21 April 1984, near Grand Marais, Cook Co. (vote 1-6); previously voted on, accepted and published (*The Loon* 56:194). The flock of five birds was seen only in flight and at a distance, and the only description was of "blackish" heads and necks, "light grayish" belly and "dark brown" wings. Such a description could also fit immature blue-morph Snow Geese, scaup, or Ring-necked Ducks.

—Sharp-tailed Grouse, 12 May 1979, near Barnesville, Clay Co. (vote 1-6); previously voted on and accepted. The description was not written until more than a year after the observation, light conditions were unclear, and field guides were consulted in order to make the identification, which seemed to be based entirely on "very light outer tail feathers". These uncertainties now suggest this record should be considered doubtful.

—Swainson's Hawk, 26 March 1989, near Sauk Centre, Todd Co. (vote 0-7). The written description included in the published documentation (*The Loon* 61:119-121) only mentions a "dark brown breast patch", hardly enough to identify a Swainson's Hawk, and one of the sketches shows the folded wing tips stopping far short of the end of the tail, contrary to what a Swainson's should look like. While another sketch certainly suggests Swainson's Hawk, it is unknown when it was made and how so much detail could have been seen since viewing conditions were unfavorable due to fog and since no binoculars were used.

—Whooping Crane, 12 October 1985, near Bejou, Mahanomen Co. (vote 2-5); previously voted on, accepted and published (*The Loon* 58:45). The entire description of the three birds flying in the distance mentioned "very long neck and outstretched legs... black wing tips (primaries) in contrast to the white wings and body." However, as several observers learned while looking for a Whooping Crane in Polk Co. in October 1990, in certain light conditions Sandhill Cranes in flight can often appear whitish with black wing tips.

—Worm-eating Warbler, 24 May 1985, Rochester, Olmsted Co. (vote 2-5); previously voted on, accepted and published (*The Loon* 57:142-143). The entire description

only mentioned "an unstreaked breast, black eyestripe and light eye-brow", and that the bird had a song "similar to a Chipping Sparrow". While it is possible the bird was correctly identified, the documentation submitted still does not preclude Chipping Sparrow.

—Red-throated Loon, 20 October 1990, Good Harbor Bay, Cook Co. (vote 3-4); previously voted on, accepted and published (*The Loon* 62:228). The observer based the identification on the lack of "white near the rear flank", an upturned bill, and the eye "visible within the white boundaries of the side of the face." However, Pacific Loons also lack flank patches and often hold their bills up at an angle, and, while the face pattern would seem to fit Red-throated rather than Pacific Loon, there was no indication of the distance and light conditions involved or how well the face pattern was actually seen.

—American Dipper, early 1970's, Big Falls, Koochiching Co. (vote 3-4). The appearance, behavior and habitat were all consistent with this species, but the documentation was not submitted until about ten years after the observation, suggesting that the description was based entirely on memory. To accept such an unusual species, more timely documentation, preferably based on notes taken at the time of observation, would be needed.

—Osprey, 27 December 1975, Rochester, Olmsted Co. (vote 1-6); previously voted on and accepted. The identification was apparently based on the "mostly white wings with black or very dark patches at the front or wrist". However, the underside of an Osprey's wings are darker and more heavily marked than described, and the possibility of Rough-legged Hawk is not precluded.

—Osprey, 25 February 1984, Black Dog L., Dakota Co. (vote 3-4); previously voted on and accepted. The entire description only mentioned "white" underparts and "dark brown and white striped head and the crooked narrow wings." Since the under wing pattern was not noted, sub-adult Bald Eagle, which can have white on the underparts, a brown and white head and which often glides on "crooked" wings, is not precluded.

—Broad-winged Hawk, 16 March 1980, Becker, Sherburne Co. (vote 1-6); previously voted on and accepted. The identification was based on its "wide tail banding" and "buteo features in flight". However, the description of the tail is not specific enough

to preclude other species; in addition, it does not preclude accipiters which often appear buteo-like when circling in flight.

—Broad-winged Hawk, 16 March 1980, Anoka, Anoka Co. (vote 1-6); previously voted on and accepted. The entire description was: "Circling hawk with characteristic buteo shape, with wide black and white tail bands on its tail." As with the previous record, such a description of the shape of the tail is not specific enough to eliminate other species.

—Broad-winged Hawk, 10 March 1985, Rochester, Olmsted Co. (vote 2-5); previously voted on and accepted. After the original vote, a sketch of the tail belatedly became available, and it shows a pattern of narrow black bands and much wider white bands, which is inconsistent with Broad-winged Hawk.

—Gyr Falcon, 18 December 1977, Eden Prairie, Hennepin Co. (vote 1-6); previously voted on and accepted. The entire description was: "very large bird... light underparts and darker on top of head and near eye... long pointed wings, yellow legs, long tail." Such a description does not preclude Northern Goshawk, which often appears pointed-winged in flight, or Peregrine Falcon.

—Fieldfare, 12 April 1988, Whyte Road, Lake Co. (vote 0-10; all 10 members vote on potential first state records). The observer had only a brief view and was only able to describe a robin-sized bird with a "pale butterscotch" breast with "something of a necklace across this" and with "a stripe or perhaps a spectacle" at the eye. It was felt that such a description is insufficient to accept such an unusual species.

—Painted Bunting, 17 May 1992, Faribault, Rice Co. (vote 0-7). The entire description was: "It had a bright red breast, and eye ring, the head was blue." This brief description is also insufficient to document such an unusual species.

—Red-throated Loon, 30 May 1992, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 3-4). The description of this small loon clearly shows a bill shape perfectly consistent with Red-throated Loon; however, the description and sketch also suggest the bird had a partial "chinstrap" and a dark line along the side of the neck separating the gray hindneck from the white foreneck, which are features of the Pacific Loon. It was therefore felt this bird is best considered an unidentified small loon. 8255 Congdon Blvd., Duluth, MN 55804.