

# Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee

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There was a meeting of the Committee on 6 December 1992, and the primary item on the agenda was the official Checklist of Minnesota Birds, which is updated every five years. This list is scheduled for publication this year and will be distributed with the Summer 1993 issue of *The Loon*. (This list is normally included with the Spring issue, but the American Ornithologists' Union met in February to consider several changes in nomenclature and sequence, and it was decided to delay our Checklist until these changes could be included.)

The status of several species was changed from the 1988 Checklist:

- Gyrfalcon and Western Sandpiper, both formerly Regular, are now considered Casual.

- Red-throated Loon, Ross' Goose, Ruff, Carolina Wren, Worm-eating Warbler and House Finch, all formerly Casual, are now considered Regular.

- Snowy Plover, Pomarine Jaeger and Bewick's Wren, all formerly Casual, are now considered Accidental.

- Clark's Grebe, Eurasian Wigeon, Long-billed Curlew, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Least Tern, Western Wood-Pewee, Rock Wren and Sage Thrasher, all formerly considered Accidental, are now considered Casual.

- Trumpeter Swan, formerly on the Extirpated list, is now considered Accidental on the basis of the January 1991 record from Wabasha Co. (*The Loon* 63:147-150.) (Note, however, that all other Trumpeter Swans seen in recent years in Minnesota are still considered individuals from recently introduced populations; since these populations are not yet established in the wild, such individuals are not yet "countable".)

There were also votes on three records at the meeting:

- The frigatebird record from September

1988 in Clearwater Co. (see below) was discussed, and by a 9-1 vote it was decided to consider this individual a Magnificent Frigatebird, rather than frigatebird, sp. (When considering records of this type, all ten members vote.)

- A photo record of a Western Tanager on 30 May 1992 in Minneapolis, Hennepin Co. was found Acceptable (vote 7-0).

- The Barn Owls nesting during 1991 in Vermillion Twp., Dakota Co. were found Acceptable (vote 7-0).

The following records were voted on July - December 1992 and found Acceptable:

- Clark's Grebe, 3 May 1992, South Heron Lake, Jackson Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:174).

- Clark's Grebe, 25-29 June 1992, Diamond Lake, Kandiyohi Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:163).

- Worm-eating Warbler, 12 May 1992, Warner Nature Center, Washington Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:166).

- Black-necked Stilt, 4 June 1992, Bloomington, Hennepin Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:166-167).

- Lewis' Woodpecker, 10 May 1992, near Grand Marais, Cook Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:160-161).

- Black-headed Grosbeak, 16 April 1992, Bemidji, Beltrami Co. (vote 5-2; *The Loon* 64:231-232).

- White-eyed Vireo, 10-23 May 1992, near Reno, Houston Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 65:48-49).

- frigatebird, sp. (later accepted as Magnificent Frigatebird; see above), 22 September 1988, Lake Itasca, Clearwater Co. (vote 10-0). (All ten members vote on potential first state records; this record had previously been voted on and found Unacceptable — see *The Loon* 62:13).

- Laughing Gull, 28-30 June 1992, Ruthon, Pipestone Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:178-179).

• Sprague's Pipit, 22 August 1992, Felton Prairie, Clay Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:231).

• Neotropic Cormorant, 16 July - 4 August 1992, Lake Vadnais, Ramsey Co. (vote 10-0; *The Loon* 64:176-178). (All ten members vote on potential first state records.)

• Western Wood-Pewee, 21-28 June 1992, Hayes Lake S.P., Roseau Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:179).

• Rufous Hummingbird, 21-23 August 1992, West Twin Lake, Crow Wing Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 65:47-48).

• Clark's Grebe, 21-22 August 1992, Lone Tree Lake, Yellow Medicine Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:233).

• Carolina Wren, late May - late August 1992, near Miesville, Dakota Co. (vote 7-0).

• Kentucky Warbler, 23 June - 6 July 1992, Seven Mile Creek County Park, Nicollet Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 65:45-46).

• Rufous Hummingbird, 23-24 August 1992, Lake Mazaska, Rice Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:235).

• Mississippi Kite, 11 September 1992, Pepin Twp., Wabasha Co. (vote 6-1; *The Loon* 64:234).

• Least Tern, 29 August 1992, Spring Lake, Dakota Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:222-223).

• Sabine's Gull, 19 September 1992, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 65:46-47).

• Great Black-backed Gull, 9 November 1992, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 65:50-51).

• Great Black-backed Gull, 7 November 1992, Grand Marais, Cook Co. (vote 7-0).

• Painted Redstart, 30 September 1992, Wealthwood, Aitkin Co. (vote 10-0; *The Loon* 65:49). (All ten members vote on potential first state records.)

• Worm-eating Warbler, 1 October 1992, Olson Lake, Washington Co. (vote 5-2).

• Lesser Black-backed Gull, 21-22 November 1992, Lake Minnetonka, Hennepin Co. (vote 7-0; *The Loon* 64:232).

• Sedge Wren, 23 November 1992, near Luverne, Rock Co. (vote 7-0).

• Carolina Wren, 19 September - 31 October 1992, near Reno, Houston Co. (vote 5-2).

• Great Black-backed Gull, 16 December 1992, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (vote 7-0; *The*

*Loon* 65:50-51).

• Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 7 March 1992, Cologne, Carver Co. (vote 7-0).

The following records were voted on July - December 1992 and found to be Unacceptable:

• Carolina Wren, 8-15 April 1992, near Eitzen, Houston Co. (vote 3-4). While this probably was a Carolina Wren, the majority voted not to accept this since the plumage description only mentioned a "conspicuous white eye stripe ... and white underparts," and since the song, on which the identification was partly based, was not fully described.

• Yellow-throated Warbler, 2 May 1992, Winona, Winona Co. (vote 2-5). The majority also felt this individual was probably correctly identified, but the description provided was incomplete: e.g., no mention was made of the presence/absence of side streaking or wing bars, nor was there any description of the upperparts, belly or tail.

• Hooded Oriole, 24-25 May 1992, near Grand Marais, Cook Co. (vote 1-9; all ten members vote on potential first state records.) To accept such an unusual record, it was felt the documentation should be flawless, which it was not in this case. The possibility of immature male Orchard Oriole, which the observers were apparently unfamiliar with, was not completely ruled out, and it was stated that the bird was "larger than Northern Orioles" - while this would seem to rule out the smaller Orchard Oriole, it also precludes Hooded Oriole which is smaller than the Northern Oriole.

• Common Nighthawk, 5 April 1992, near Detroit Lakes, Becker Co. (vote 3-4). The entire description only mentioned "a dark bird with fairly long, pointed wings ... white bars on each wing," and a tail that "was squarish with a slight V-shape." No mention was made of its manner of flight or size, nor was the size, shape and position of the wing bars described.

• Yellow-throated Warbler, 18 July 1992, Scandia Twp., Washington Co. (vote 0-7). The bird was only seen in silhouette and was identified only on the basis of its song, and the description of this song was not complete enough to indicate Yellow-throated Warbler and preclude other possibilities.

• Northern Wheatear, 15 May 1982, near

John A. Latsch S.P., Winona Co. (vote 2-8; all ten members vote on potential first state records; this record had previously been voted on, found Acceptable and published — see *The Loon* 55:151-153). This record was originally accepted on the basis of the painting of the bird, which was published in *The Loon*, and the unique tail pattern, and because no one could think of what else it might have been. However, doubts were raised about the accuracy of the painting, which apparently was made from memory long after the sighting (the field sketch included with the documentation is far less convincing); it was also unclear how the tail pattern could have been seen since the bird was apparently perched with wings folded over the tail the entire time. The record was also reconsidered because the wooded habitat in which the bird was seen is atypical for a wheatear, because the song heard does not seem to fit this species, and especially because the “serene” behavior of the bird is inconsistent with the active, tail-bobbing behavior which is distinctive in Northern Wheatear.

- Western Tanager, 19 August 1992, near Cambridge, Isanti Co. (vote 2-5). The entire description only mentioned a red head, wing bars, and that it had a “strong demarcation between the red and yellow colors.” Such a description is not complete enough to indicate the bird was even a tanager.

- Northern Saw-whet Owl, 15-28 May 1992, Leota Twp., Nobles Co. (vote 1-6). The identification of these nesting owls was based on their small size and apparent lack of ear tufts. However, any “eared” owl can depress these feathers and appear “ear-less”, and it was felt these were probably Eastern Screech-Owls.

- Ruff, 27 September 1992, Waterville, Le Sueur Co. (vote 0-7). The observers seemed to base their entire identification of the two birds on their orange legs, since they could find nothing else in their field guide to match the birds they saw. However, nothing else in the documentation favors Ruff over any other species, and it was felt these may have been Pectoral Sandpipers which were seen by others that day at this location but which the observers did not list among the species they saw.

- McCown's Longspur, 18 October 1992, Rothsay W.M.A., Wilkin Co. (vote 0-7). The

six individuals seen among a longspur flock were primarily identified on the basis of their “chestnut colored wing shoulder.” However, Vesper Sparrows and Horned Larks also have chestnut on their median wing coverts (i.e., “shoulders”); it is also possible the observer was actually seeing the chestnut greater coverts of Lapland Longspurs, a field mark he was apparently unaware of.

- White-headed Woodpecker, 26 October 1992, Minnetonka, Hennepin Co. (vote 0-10; all ten members vote on potential first state records.) The entire description only mentioned that “the bird was mostly black except for a white head.” However, such a description does not preclude a partial albino bird of some kind, and it was later learned that a partial albino Common Grackle with a white head was seen about the same time in this area.

- Lesser Black-backed Gull, 10-11 June 1992, Howard Lake, Wright Co. (vote 3-4). While it was originally agreed that this immature gull was possibly a Lesser Black-backed, it was decided to send the documentation to three out-of-state authorities since none of us in Minnesota has much experience with immatures of this species. On the basis of their review, the majority felt this was best left as unidentified, since the three authorities did not agree on the age of the gull: the mantle color, bill pattern, tail pattern and leg color did not clearly indicate if this was a one- or two-year-old bird. Two of the reviewers, therefore, had reservations about the record; one felt “80-90% confident of the identification,” citing the incomplete description of the back color and wing pattern, and the other was “uneasy about endorsing this record” because of uncertainties about the back color, tail pattern and leg color.

- Gyrfalcon, 15 October 1992, Martin Co. (vote 0-7). The documentation provided was lengthy but only included a brief and vague description of the bird seen, which was identified as an immature white morph Gyr. The possibility of the bird actually being a gull, Snowy Owl or other species of hawk is not clearly ruled out.

- Least Flycatcher, 18 October 1992, near Moorhead, Clay Co. (vote 1-6). The majority agreed this was acceptable as an *Empidonax*, sp., and was most likely a Least. However, though the “wit” call note de-

scribed would seem to rule out Alder, Acadian and Yellow-bellied flycatchers, the possibility of Willow Flycatcher or a stray western *Empidonax* are not precluded.

• Iceland Gull, 12 December 1992, Lake Harriet, Hennepin Co. (vote 1-6). This adult gull was identified only on the basis of its

overall size, described as "the size of a Herring Gull." However, this does not preclude the more likely Glaucous Gull, which can often look about the same size overall as a Herring Gull.

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**DISTRIBUTION AND TAXONOMY OF BIRDS OF THE WORLD** by Charles G. Sibley and Burt L. Monroe, Jr. Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut. 1990. xxiv + 1111 pp. \$125.

**PHYLOGENY AND CLASSIFICATION OF BIRDS** by Charles G. Sibley and Jon E. Ahlquist. Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut. 1990. xxiii + 976 pp. \$100.

**THE KNOWN BIRDS OF NORTH AND MIDDLE AMERICA: DISTRIBUTIONS AND VARIATION, MIGRATIONS, CHANGES, HYBRIDS, ETC., PART I, HIRUNDINIDAE TO MIMIDAE; CERCITIIDAE** by Allan R. Phillips. Denver, Colorado, published by the author. Available from Known Birds, 3540 S Hillcrest Dr. No. 5, Denver, CO 80237 (Checks payable to author). 1986. lxi + 259 pp. \$60.

**THE KNOWN BIRDS OF NORTH AND MIDDLE AMERICA, PART II, BOMBYCILLIDAE; SYLVIIDAE TO STURNIDAE; VIREONIDAE** by Allan R. Phillips. Denver, Colorado, published by the author. Available from Known Birds, 3540 S Hillcrest Dr. No. 5, Denver, CO 80237 (Checks payable to author). 1991. liii + 249 pp. \$64.

#### Current trends in avian systematics.

Allan Phillips once wrote (1959:23) that "Confusion is a mental affliction that affects many on the slightest provocation." As one of the many whom confusion has afflicted at one time or another (I refrain from noting the degree of provocation), it was with some trepidation that I began this rather broad review. It is one thing to play a small role as participant and observer; it is quite

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