

Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee

Kim R. Eckert, MORC Chairman

There was a meeting of the Committee on 6 December 1998, and the agenda consisted of items related to the new edition of the Checklist of the Birds of Minnesota, published in January 1999.

Species for which there have been Acceptable records in eight of the past ten years were discussed and classified as either Regular or Casual. By majority vote, these were classified as follows:

Cinnamon Teal — Regular (no change). Gyrfalcon — Regular (changed from Casual). Iceland Gull — Regular (changed from Casual). Great Black-backed Gull — Regular (changed from Casual). Worm-eating Warbler — Regular (no change). Summer Tanager — Regular (no change). Smith's Longspur — Regular (no change).

Species for which there have been Acceptable records in three of the past ten years were discussed and classified as either Casual or Accidental. By majority vote, these were classified as follows:

White-faced Ibis — Casual (no change). King Rail — Casual (no change). Long-billed Curlew — Accidental (changed from Casual). Least Tern — Casual (no change). Rock Wren — Casual (no change). Green-tailed Towhee — Accidental (no change). Baird's Sparrow — Casual (no change). Lazuli Bunting — Casual (no change). Painted Bunting — Accidental

(no change).

Including those species whose status changed automatically without a vote (i.e., seen in nine or ten of the past ten years), the following changed from Casual to Regular status:

Pacific Loon. Clark's Grebe. Gyrfalcon. Iceland Gull. Lesser Black-backed Gull. Great Black-backed Gull. Western Tanager.

There was also one Accidental species (Trumpeter Swan; see below) whose status changed to Regular.

Including those species whose status changed automatically without a vote (i.e., seen in seven, six, five or four of the past ten years):

Lark Bunting changed from Regular to Casual status; King Eider, Red Phalarope, and Prairie Warbler changed from Accidental to Casual status.

Including those species whose status changed automatically without a vote (i.e., seen in two or fewer of the past ten years), the following changed from Casual to Accidental status:

Brant, Long-billed Curlew, Western Sandpiper, Barn Owl, Rufous Hummingbird, Western Wood-Pewee, and Sage Thrasher.

The following species are new to the Checklist since the previous edition (December 1993); all but one (Spotted Tow-

hee) are Accidental in status:

White Ibis, Crested Caracara, Rock Ptarmigan, Curlew Sandpiper, Glaucous-winged Gull, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Calliope Hummingbird, Pygmy Nuthatch, Spotted Towhee (Regular; split from Eastern Towhee), and Bullock's Oriole (split from Baltimore Oriole; see below).

By majority vote (8–2), it was decided to list the Trumpeter Swan as a Regular species. In effect, this means the population of this species in Minnesota is now considered established and stable as a result of reintroductions in recent years.

By consensus, it was decided to include Clark's Grebe on the state's list of species with a confirmed breeding record; there had been reservations that hybridization with Western Grebe was involved. (Other species added to the list with confirmed breeding records since the previous Checklist are Tundra Swan and White-winged Crossbill.)

By unanimous votes, it was decided to list Eurasian Collared-Dove and Great-tailed Grackle as Accidental species with no "s" subscripts. The Collared-Dove decision was the result of considering recent photos of Eurasian Collared-Doves (see record #99–07 below) to be identifiable on their own. The decision on the grackle resulted from considering a 1993 audio tape of a Great-tailed Grackle (see *The Loon* 65:148–150) to be identifiable on its own. (Other Accidental species whose "s" subscripts were removed since the previous Checklist are Northern Wheatear, Townsend's Warbler, and Eurasian Tree-Sparrow.)

By majority vote (6–4), it was decided to list Black-bellied Whistling-Duck as an Accidental species with no "o" subscript. This decision resulted from the majority of the Committee considering a recent Whistling-Duck individual (see *The Loon* 70:244) to be more likely a naturally occurring vagrant than an escape from captivity.

By consensus, it was decided to maintain Extirpated status for Eskimo Curlew. There had been reservations about

continuing to include this species on the Checklist given the ambiguity of the records, but recent research uncovered some previously unpublished records which were more definite. (An article detailing what is known of the Eskimo Curlew's occurrence in Minnesota will appear in a future issue of *The Loon*.)

By consensus, it was decided to reinstate Bullock's Oriole on the Checklist as an Accidental species (as it had been before it had been lumped with Baltimore Oriole). There had been reservations that the only record (see *The Loon* 41:41–42) may have involved a hybrid, but examination of the photos of the individual revealed nothing anomalous about its plumage.

The following records were voted on by mail August–December 1998 and found to be Acceptable:

- Chipping Sparrow, December 1997, Detroit Lakes, Becker Co. (record #98–66, vote 5–2).
- Marsh Wren, 20 December 1997, Excelsior C.B.C., Hennepin Co. (location?) (record #98–67, vote 7–0).
- Forster's Tern, 28 March 1998, La Crescent, Houston Co. (record #98–68, vote 6–1).
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 24 May 1998, near Cromwell, Carlton Co. (record #98–69, vote 6–1).
- Pacific Loon, 30 May 1998, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #98–70, vote 7–0).
- Painted Bunting, 2 June 1998, Shakopee, Scott Co. (record #98–71, vote 7–0).
- Clark's Grebe, 16 August 1998, Thielke L., Big Stone Co. (record #98–76, vote 7–0).
- Black-legged Kittiwake, 24–26 September 1998, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #98–82, vote 7–0).
- Sabine's Gull, 24 September 1998, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #98–83, vote 7–0).
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 29 September 1998, Tofte, Cook Co. (record #98–84,

vote 7-0).

- Pacific Loon, 5-20 October 1998, Mille Lacs L., Mille Lacs Co. (record #98-85, vote 7-0).

- Pacific Loon, 11 October 1998, Gar- rison, Crow Wing Co. (record #98-86, vote 6-1).

- Red Phalarope, 23-24 October 1998, Crookston, Polk Co. (record #98-87, vote 7-0).

- Sprague's Pipit, 24-25 October 1998, Rothsay W.M.A., Wilkin Co. (record #98-88, vote 7-0, *The Loon* 71:53-54).

- Pacific Loon (3), 18 October 1998, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #98-89, vote 7-0).

- Black-headed Gull, 29 October 1998, Spirit L., Jackson Co. (record #98-91, vote 7-0).

- Pacific Loon, 31 October - Novem- ber 1998, Two Harbors, Lake Co. (record #98-92, vote 7-0).

- Say's Phoebe, 3 September 1998, Mendota Heights, Dakota Co. (record #98-94, vote 7-0).

- Pacific Loon, 8 November 1998, L. Winnibigoshish, Itasca Co. (record #98-95, vote 7-0).

- Great Black-backed Gull, 9 Novem- ber 1998, Minneapolis, Hennepin Co. (re- cord #98-96, vote 7-0).

- *Plegadis*, sp., 18-25 October 1998, Lac Qui Parle W.M.A., Swift/Chippewa/ Lac Qui Parle counties (record #98-97, vote 7-0).

- Iceland Gull, 14 November 1998, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #98-98, vote 7-0).

- Iceland Gull, 16 November 1998, Grand Marais, Cook Co. (record #98-99, vote 7-0).

The following records were voted on by mail August-December 1998 and found to be Unacceptable:

- Broad-tailed Hummingbird, 30 May 1998, Winona, Winona Co. (record #98-60, vote 0-10). Although this bird was photographed, most felt the quality of the

photos is not sufficient to permit positive identification; one authority on humming- birds (Nancy Newfield) also viewed the photos and felt they are identifiable as a Ruby-throated. The written description is also inconclusive since it only mentions a "bright rosy throat when it turned certain ways" and a "loud noise with its wings"; however, hummingbird throat colors vary depending on lighting angles, and all hummingbirds can make noise with their wings.

Clay-colored Sparrow, 18 November 1997, near Detroit Lakes, Becker Co. (re- cord #98-65, vote 2-5). The description, apparently written from memory eight months after the sighting, does not con- sider or preclude the more likely possibil- ity of Chipping Sparrow. No mention is made of the presence/absence of a malar stripe, the color of the lores, or the rump color, which are the primary features to separate these two species in fall/winter.

Say's Phoebe, 26 June 1998, Rice Lake N.W.R., Aitkin Co. (record #98-72, vote 2-5). The overall description is suggestive of this species, since it includes mention of a phoebe-like bird with orangish color on the underparts. However, the possibili- ties of juvenile Eastern Phoebe or Eastern Bluebird were apparently not considered, and the light conditions at the time of the identification are unclear. Also, the bird is described as having "one white wing bar and several bold white vertical stripes on upper tail coverts," and neither of these features is found on the Say's Phoebe.

Bullock's Oriole, 8-17 July 1998, Farib- ault, Rice Co. (record #98-73, vote 0-7). For a potential second state record of a relatively difficult species to identify (this was a female/immature oriole), it was unanimously felt a much more complete description was needed. The original de- scription only mentions a greenish yellow head and chest, white underparts below the chest, a dark bill and two white wing bars. Parts of the documentation are also contradictory, since two versions were submitted, and it is unclear how soon

after the observation the bird was identified and when the description was written.

Mississippi Kite, 11 July 1998, Vadnais Heights, Ramsey Co. (record #98-74, vote 2-5). The identification of this flying bird was made by an observer who was driving 70 m.p.h. at the time, who had only a five-second view of the bird, and who was not using any optics. Accordingly, the description is very sketchy, and the majority felt that under these conditions a positive identification would be very difficult, if not impossible.

Mississippi Kite, 21 July 1998, Bloomington, Hennepin Co. (record #98-75, vote 2-5). The entire description only includes mention of a falcon-shaped bird slightly smaller than a Peregrine with a forked black tail. While these features are consistent with this species, the majority felt a more complete description was needed for such an unusual species.

Mississippi Kite, 17 August 1998, near Wyoming, Chisago Co. (location?) (record #98-77, vote 3-4). The incomplete description may be consistent with this species, but it includes no mention of the perched bird's wings, tail or back. Light conditions at the time were also unfavorable, since the observer was looking directly into the sun at the time.

Mississippi Kite (2), 12 June 1998, Winnebago Twp., Houston Co. (record #98-78, vote 0-7). The identification of these flying birds seems to be primarily based on wing shape and flight style, since the plumage description only includes mention of dark gray forewings, lighter hindwings, and an absence of "spots, highlights, windows, etc." on the wings. It was unanimously felt more complete documentation was needed for such an unusual sighting, especially considering two individuals were reported. It was also suggested the birds may have actually been Cooper's Hawks doing a courtship flight, during which this species' wing shape and flight style can look quite atypical.

Willow Flycatcher, 25-26 June 1998, near Tofte, Cook Co. (record #98-79, vote

1-6). The described vocalization heard is apparently consistent with this species, but the observer never actually saw the bird he heard singing, and he was unaware the species is unusual in this part of the state. A tape recording would have been helpful, since some verbal descriptions in field guides of Alder and Willow flycatchers calls are misleading, and since these species give atypical vocalizations which are unfamiliar to many observers.

Prairie Falcon, 18 July 1998, Waubun W.M.A., Mahnomen Co. (record #98-80, vote 3-4). The majority felt the description is too vague to preclude other species of raptors: there is no indication of why the bird was a falcon; the size is unclear, since nothing was present for comparison; mention of the "dark markings under the wings" is not specific enough to indicate whether this refers to the Prairie Falcon's dark axillaries and under wing coverts; and the rest of the description of the head, breast, back and tail could also fit a female kestrel, Merlin (*richardsoni* race) or immature Peregrine Falcon (*tundrius* race).

The efforts of all those observers who document their reports of unusual species are appreciated, whether or not those records are accepted. Accordingly, the Committee acknowledges with thanks those who provided documentation for the records listed in this article: Karl Bardon, Betsy Beneke (two records), Al Bolduc, Paul Budde, Mark Citsay, Kim Eckert (four records), Jesse Ellis, Barb Galambos, Anthony Hertzell (four records), Paul Jantscher, Jonathan Johnson, Jeanie Joppru, Fred Leshner, Sue Levy (two records), Jim Lind, Steve Morrison, Kay Shaw, Dory Spence, Karen Steinert, Forest Strnad, Peder Svingen (nine records), Tom Tustison.

Summary: 33 records voted on; 23 Acceptable (70%), 10 Unacceptable (30%).

8255 Congdon Blvd., Duluth, MN 55804.