

Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee

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

The two most recent meetings of the Committee were held on 29 August and 5 December 1999. In attendance at one or both of these meetings were the other Committee members: Renner Anderson (alternate member), Karl

Bardon, Paul Budde (1999 alternate and regular member starting in 2000 replacing Dick Ruhme), Philip Chu (alternate starting in 2000 replacing Paul Budde), Bruce Fall, Anthony Hertz, Kim Risen (alternate), Dick Ruhme (whose term expired

at the end of 1999), Peder Svingen and Tom Tustison.

Among the items on the agendas of these meetings were discussions of certain records, including: potential first state records; those involving a question of origin; those recirculated after inconclusive first-round votes; those with completed votes which are reconsidered at the request of a member; and those primarily or entirely documented with a photograph or tape recording. The results of these discussions and votes on these records are included below with the other records handled entirely by mail.

The following records were voted on August–December 1999 and found to be Acceptable:

- Ross's Goose, 22–26 September 1998, L. Byllesby, Dakota Co. (record #99-06, vote 7-0)
- Prairie Falcon, 5 May 1999, Sodus Twp., Lyon Co. (record #99-27, vote 5-2).
- Yellow-throated Warbler, 6 May – 24 July 1999, Sibley State Park, Kandiyohi Co. (record #99-28, vote 7-0).
- White-eyed Vireo, 16 May 1999, Forestville State Park, Fillmore Co. (record #99-30, vote 7-0).
- Arctic Tern, 21 May 1999, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99-31, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 71:239).
- White-eyed Vireo, 14–29 May 1999, Hormel Nature Center, Mower Co. (record #99-32, vote 7-0).
- American Tree Sparrow, 1 June 1999, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99-33, vote 6-1).
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 2 June 1999, Duluth Twp., St. Louis Co. (record #99-34, vote 7-0).
- Least Tern, 24–25 June 1999, Agassiz N.W.R., Marshall Co. (record #99-36, vote 6-1).
- Lark Bunting, 28 September 1998, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99-39, vote 6-1).
- Great-tailed Grackle, 26 March – 14 August 1999, Grover's L., Jackson Co. (record #99-40, vote 7-0).
- Great-tailed Grackle, 13 May 1999, Middletown Twp., Jackson Co. (record

#99-41, vote 7-0).

- Great-tailed Grackle, 11 September – 23 October 1999, Minneota Twp., Jackson Co. (record #99-42, vote 7-0).

- Swallow-tailed Kite, 15–27 May 1999, Lower Sakatah L., Rice Co. (record #99-44, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 71:173 and 176-178).

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 29 May – July 1999, Udolpho Twp., Mower Co. (record #99-45, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 71:236-237).

- Eurasian Tree Sparrow, late May – 6 June 1999, Parke Twp., Clay Co. (record #99-46, vote 7-0).

- Ruff, 15 June 1999, Thielke L., Big Stone Co. (record #99-47, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 72:55-56).

- White-eyed Vireo, 21 June – 4 July 1999, near New Ulm, Brown Co. (record #99-48, vote 7-0).

- Rock Wren, 22–23 May 1999, Wilmington Twp., Houston Co. (record #99-53, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 71:205).

- Prairie Warbler, 12–19 August 1999, Richfield, Hennepin Co. (record #99-54, vote 7-0).

- Smew, 17 March 1999, Anderson County Park, Jackson Co. (record #99-55, vote 10-0). All ten members vote on potential first state records. At the 5 December 1999 meeting, the question of origin was discussed and voted on, and by majority vote (8-2) the individual was accepted as being of probable wild origin. At the same meeting, the photograph of the individual was also discussed and voted on, and by majority vote (7-3) the photo was accepted as identifiable on its own. As a result of these votes, this species was accepted to the state list as an unqualified Accidental — i.e., with no qualifying "o" or "s" subscripts.

- Black-headed Gull (1 adult), 26 March 1999, Spirit L., Jackson Co. (record #99-56, vote 7-0).

- Black-headed Gull (2 adults), 9–23 October 1999, Spirit L., Jackson Co. (record #99-57, vote 7-0).

- White-faced Ibis, 5–6 May 1999, Castle Rock, Dakota Co. (record #99-58, vote 7-0).

- Painted Bunting, 10–20 August 1999,

Maple Grove, Hennepin Co. (record #99-60, vote 7-0).

- Pomarine Jaeger, 8-25 September 1999, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99-61, vote 7-0).

- Rufous Hummingbird, 15-22 July 1999, near Cascade River State Park, Cook Co. (record #99-63, vote 7-0).

- California Gull, 6-20 November 1999, Minneapolis, Hennepin Co. (record #99-65, vote 6-1).

- Pomarine Jaeger, 22 November 1999, Vineland, Mille Lacs Co. (record #99-67, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 72:56-58).

- Prairie Warbler, early May 1999, L. Byllesby, Dakota Co. (record #99-68, vote 7-0).

- King Eider, 20 October 1999, Chippewa Co. (record #99-69, vote 7-0).

- Ancient Murrelet, 20 November 1999, Grand Marais, Cook Co. (record #99-71, vote 7-0, **The Loon** 72:43-45).

- Black-legged Kittiwake, 21 November 1999, Grand Marais, Cook Co. (record #99-72, vote 6-1, **The Loon** 72:59).

- King Eider, 22 November - 8 December 1999, Grand Marais and vicinity, Cook Co. (record #99-73, vote 7-0).

The following records were voted on August - December 1999 and found to be Unacceptable:

- Ovenbird, 1 December 1998, Forest Lake, Washington Co. (record #99-11; vote 4-3, with a 5-2 vote or higher required for acceptance).

The majority accepted this record because the bird was seen by two experienced observers, because the species is not easily confused with others, and because other late-lingering birds had been reported about the same time. Those not accepting the record agreed that the bird was probably correctly identified, but the documentation includes no direct description of the bird.

- Plumbeous Vireo, 8 May 1999, Bloomington, Hennepin Co. (record #99-29; vote 0-10, with all ten members voting on potential first state records).

The observer, who had no experience with this species, only observed the bird

for 10-15 seconds, and it was unanimously felt this was not long enough to make a relatively difficult identification of a first state record. Even though the extensive documentation (for which the observer is to be commended) suggests the bird may not have been a Blue-headed Vireo, it still does not preclude the possibility of it being a Cassin's Vireo or perhaps another species.

- Western Sandpiper, 7 June 1999, Thielke L., Big Stone Co. (record #99-35, vote 1-6).

The primary difficulty with this record is that the observers, who provided separate descriptions and did not agree on these birds' identity, also did not agree on some of the key field marks they observed. One says the three birds were like Baird's or White-rumped in their size and shape, while the other observer reports the size and shape were unlike this. One describes the call note as a Baird's-like "kreeup," while the other says it was a "jeet" or "keep." Both describe a primary extension beyond the tail when the wings were folded, but it is unclear whether it was as long as on a Baird's or White-rumped. It is also unclear from the descriptions how extensive or contrasting the rusty coloration was on the scapulars, whether any rust was present on the crown or ear coverts, and what age/plumage the birds were in — the observer who felt the birds were Westerns reports they were in juvenile plumage, but in early June this is not possible.

- Mississippi Kite, 23 September 1986, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99-37; vote 4-3, with a 7-0 vote required for acceptance).

This record had been previously voted on and not accepted (**The Loon** 59:58), but it was reconsidered at the request of a MORC member and again found to be Unacceptable. Although the majority felt the documentation is sufficient, primarily because white secondaries were observed, those not accepting the record felt that "large, dark" does not fit this species, the described size of the bird is unclear and somewhat inconsistent, and nothing about

the tail is described.

- Black-headed Gull, 24 April 1987, Heron L., Jackson Co. (record #99-38, vote 2-5).

This record had been previously voted on, accepted and published (*The Loon* 59:211-212), but it was reconsidered at the request of a MORC member and found to be Unacceptable. The identification primarily relied on the observer's description of this gull's bill color and hood shape and color, but these features are not easy to discern accurately at the distances involved. More importantly, the distinctive and diagnostic under wing pattern of this species was apparently not seen, since the documentation only says "it appeared dark from below."

- Arctic Tern, 11 May 1999, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99-43, vote 1-6).

Although the experienced observer's documentation describes this tern's darker gray underparts, "surprisingly short" legs, and folded wing tips falling short of the tail tips, the distance involved and the light conditions at the time were less than optimal to see clearly these subtle features. While it was agreed the identification may well have been correct, the bill color and shape, the translucent flight feathers, and the width and extent of the black edge on the underside of the primaries were not visible or described. Also, this tern's body is described as "slimmer" in direct comparison with Common Terns, but in flight an Arctic Tern should appear more "neckless" and "pot-bellied" — not slimmer — in comparison with Commons.

- Hooded Warbler, 1-2 July 1999, Detroit Lakes, Becker Co. (record #99-49; vote 4-3, with a 5-2 vote or higher required for acceptance).

Although it was agreed this apparent adult male Hooded Warbler may have been correctly identified, there is nothing in the documentation about the color or pattern of the underparts, wings or tail. The entire description only mentions a "yellow brow and yellow sides of the head with a black hood."

- Lark Bunting, 9 July 1999, Cedar Rock W.M.A., Redwood Co. (record #99-

50, vote 2-5).

The bird was only seen for a few seconds in flight, and the brief description only includes mention of a black bird with white wing patches. There is no mention of the size or position of the white patches, and the possibility of it being a partial albino blackbird is not precluded. In addition, the mostly wooded and shrubby habitat where the bird was seen would be atypical for this species.

- Red-throated Loon, 1 August 1999, L. Benton, Lincoln Co. (record #99-51, vote 0-7).

The field notes written at the time of the observation — for which the observers are to be commended — unfortunately are not detailed enough to include any diagnostic Red-throated Loon field marks and to eliminate a Common or Pacific loon (or even some of the grebes).

- Sage Thrasher, 21 May 1999, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99-52, vote 3-4).

While this bird was probably correctly identified, the majority felt the observers' written descriptions are not complete or clear enough to preclude entirely other species of thrashers. The descriptions include features of the bill which seem inconsistent with Sage Thrasher: "long beak, with a downward curl... bill dark at the tip (about 25% of the length of the bill), basal part yellowish." One observer also describes the eye as "deep orange-yellow," which also is not consistent with this species.

- Black-chinned Sparrow, 22 May 1999, Afton State Park, Washington Co. (record #99-59; vote 0-10, with all ten members voting on potential first state records).

The descriptions of this bird were not written until six months after the observation, apparently only from memory, and this is not acceptable for such an unprecedented sighting (i.e., no other records in the eastern U.S.). The descriptions are also incomplete, with nothing said of the bill color or shape, and only one of the observers mentions the key field marks of chin and wing colors. The bird's behavior (sitting on top of a 20-30 foot tree) and

the habitat ("deciduous forest") would also be atypical for this species.

- Black-chinned Hummingbird, 28 August – 1 September 1999, Miesville Ravine County Park, Dakota Co. (record #99-64; vote 0-10, with all ten members voting on potential first state records).

Field separation of female/immature Black-chinned and Ruby-throated hummingbirds is considered very difficult if not impossible, and there is nothing in the observer's documentation which precludes Ruby-throated. There is no indication that any field notes were taken at the time of the observation, and the description provided appears to be written from memory six weeks after the sighting.

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: Mark Alt, Karl Bardon (four records), Dave Benson, Dedrick Benz (two records), Paul Budde,

Philip Chu (four records), Kim Eckert, Laura Erickson, Terry Frank, John Heid, Anthony Hertzel (nine records), Ken and Molly Hoffman (two records), Bob Janssen, Jeanie Joppru, Greg Juenemann, Jon Kettunen, Fred Leshner, Sue Levy (two records), William Longley, Richard Miller, Mark Ochs, Anne Marie Plunkett, Steve Roman (three records), Rick Schroeder, Robert Schroeder, Roger Schroeder, Blaine Seeliger (two records), Richard Smaby, Drew Smith, Lois Sorenson, Jack Sprenger, Jeff Stephenson, Peder Svingen (16 records), Dave Thurston, Howard Towle, Tom Tustison (two records), James Waldie, Steve Weston (three records), Mary Wyatt.

There were also other observers who documented records which were not submitted for a vote to the Committee; their documentations, though not mentioned here, are also appreciated.

Summary: 46 records voted on: 34 Acceptable (74%), 12 Unacceptable (26%).

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