

# Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

Kim R. Eckert, MOURC Chairman

The following records were voted on August – December 2002 and found to be Acceptable.

- White-faced Ibis (two individuals), 12–15 July 2002, Cedar Mills Township, Meeker County (record #2002-72, vote 7–0).

Only one of the two individuals reported had visible white feathering around the face, but both showed red eyes and facial skin.

- *Plegadis* ibis, 24 August 2002, near Dovray, Murray County (record #2002-82, vote 7–0).

As a juvenile bird, this ibis was not possible to identify in the field.

- *Plegadis* ibis, 10–12 October 2002, Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge, Becker County (record #2002-73, vote 7–0).

This ibis was initially reported as a



***Plegadis* ibis, 12 October 2002, Hamden Slough N.W.R., Becker County. Photo by Peder Svingen.**

Glossy, but further observations determined that it was an unidentified juvenile ibis.

- Swallow-tailed Kite, late August 2002, near Vermillion, Dakota County and near Elko, Scott County (record #2002-83, vote 7-0).

Although the locations of the two documented observations are about 15 miles apart, indications are this was probably the same individual at both locations. The written descriptions from two independent observers are both somewhat incomplete, but each observer provided good sketches of this kite, a species which would be difficult to confuse with any other bird.

- Long-billed Curlew, 19-28 July 2002, Lino Lakes, Anoka County (record #2002-84, vote 7-0).

There was some initial confusion about whether this was a Whimbrel or a Long-billed Curlew due to the long distances between the bird and most of the observers. However, the identification was confirmed by some later observers who were able to get closer views.

- Ruff, 7 August 2002, Waterford Township, Dakota County (record #2002-62, vote 6-1).

This individual was apparently an adult male with a mostly whitish head.

- Black-headed Gull, 20 September - 17 October 2002, Spirit Lake, Jackson County (record #2002-85, vote 7-0).

This adult bird represents the fifth consecutive year that one or two adult Black-headed Gulls have been documented at this location. Note that the only accepted records of this species come from Jackson County; besides this Spirit Lake location, the other records come from Grover's Lake in 1998 and Heron Lake in 1986.

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, June - July 2002, Amboy, Blue Earth County (record #2002-76, vote 6-1).

This bird was seen by many observers, with documentation including both the diagnostic vocalization and the pattern of the underside of the outer rectrices.

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 13 April - 23 June 2002, Herman, Grant County

(record #2002-41, vote 7-0).

Though the documentation from the original observer does not entirely preclude the possibility of Ringed Turtle-Dove, a subsequent description and photos from another observer confirmed the identification.

- White-eyed Vireo, 14 May 2002, Chester Woods County Park, Olmsted County (record #2002-86, vote 6-1).

Although the distinctive song of this species was apparently never heard, the vireo was seen clearly enough by several observers.

- White-eyed Vireo, 13 July - August 2002, Great River Bluffs State Park, Winona County (record #2002-87, vote 7-0).

Curiously, this vireo also was never heard to vocalize, but it was seen by several observers over a period of a few weeks.

- Rock Wren, 4-9 October 2002, Bloomington, Hennepin County (record #2002-77, vote 7-0).

This wren was only seen by a lone observer with no previous experience with this species, but her documentation is complete and entirely convincing.

- Prairie Warbler (two individuals), 20 April 2002, Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park, Hennepin County (record #2002-49; vote 5-2 on first individual; vote 0-7, Not Acceptable on second individual).

The observer who originally found the bird(s) provided an adequate description of a singing male. A second individual present at the time was thought to have been a female Prairie Warbler, but both the observation and the description were too brief, and this second bird was not accepted. Other observers also reported seeing a Prairie Warbler at this same location through at least 25 April, but none of these reports could be accepted since none was accompanied by adequate documentation.

- Black-throated Sparrow, 16-17 April 2002, Moorhead, Clay County (record #2002-55, vote 7-0, *The Loon* 74:238-239).

This distinctive adult was seen by many observers and photographed. Also note it was in the same yard where the Black-headed Grosbeak appeared a month later



**Long-billed Curlew, 20 July 2002, Lino Lakes, Anoka County. Photo by Chris Fagyl.**

(record 2002-52).

- Baird's Sparrow, 18 June – July 2002, Tilden Township, Polk County (record #2002-51, vote 7-0, *The Loon* 75:52-53).

This individual was not only seen by many observers and photographed, its distinctive song was recorded.

- Baird's Sparrow, 14 July 2002, Polk County (record #2002-78, vote 5-2).

This bird was found at a different location by the same observer who had discovered the first Polk County Baird's Sparrow. The documentation of this second bird was not as complete, but its diagnostic song was heard.

- Golden-crowned Sparrow, 27 December 2001 – 1 May 2002, Grand Marais, Cook County (record #2002-67, vote 6-1).

This well-documented immature was present at a feeder for at least four months, but its occurrence was not revealed (apparently at the request of the homeowners) until after the bird was gone.

- Black-headed Grosbeak, 24-26 May 2002, Moorhead, Clay County (record #2002-52, vote 7-0, *The Loon* 74:240-241).

As with the Black-throated Sparrow (record 2002-55), this male was seen by

many observers and photographed in the same yard where the sparrow appeared.

- Lazuli Bunting, 18 May 2001, Climax, Polk County (record #2002-80, vote 7-0).

This male is satisfactorily documented by a lone photograph, although no written description was provided.

- Lazuli Bunting, 16 May 2002, Louisville Swamp, Scott County (record #2002-56, vote 7-0).

This sight record of a male was the first of four records of this Casual species in May 2002.

- Lazuli Bunting, 26 May 2002, near Battle Lake, Otter Tail County (record #2002-57, vote 7-0).

This male is documented by both photographs and extensive written descriptions.

- Lazuli Bunting, 29 May 2002, Star Lake, Otter Tail County (record #2002-68, vote 7-0).

There is no indication or reason to assume that this male was the same individual as the one seen in the same county three days earlier.

- Lazuli Bunting, 29 May – 15 June 2002, near Willmar, Kandiyohi County (record #2002-69, vote 6-1).

The documentation of this male includes a photograph.

- Painted Bunting, 24-28 April 2002, near Aitkin, Aitkin County (record #2002-54, vote 7-0, *The Loon* 74:237-238).

This male was seen by many observers and photographed.

- Painted Bunting, 5 June 2002, Wuori Township, St. Louis County (record #2002-53, vote 7-0).

There was no written description provided for this male, but a single photograph provides adequate documentation.

- Great-tailed Grackle (two individuals), 10-12 May 2002, Slayton Township, Murray County (record #2002-59, vote 7-0).

Both individuals were males, and both were accepted. One of these was singing (which some consider significant, so that the remote possibility of Boat-tailed Grackle from the Atlantic coast is precluded).

- Great-tailed Grackle, 20 May 2002, Swan Lake, Nicollet County (record

#2002-58; vote 6–1 as unidentified Great-tailed/Boat-tailed; vote 4–3, Not Acceptable as Great-tailed).

The description of this lone silent male was accepted as an unidentified Great-tailed/Boat-tailed grackle. Since this species is still currently considered Accidental, a 6–1 vote is needed for acceptance.

- Great-tailed Grackle, 27 May 2002, near Lynd, Lyon County (record #2002-70, vote 7–0).

This report was of a lone singing male.

- Great-tailed Grackle (11 individuals), 20 September – 13 October 2002, Minneota Township, Jackson County (record #2002-88, vote 6–1).

None of the 11 individuals was heard singing, with the lone dissenting voter only willing to accept them as an unidentified Great-tailed/Boat-tailed grackles.

- Scott's Oriole, 20 March – 23 April 2002, near Monticello, Wright County (record #2002-60, vote 7–0).

The photographs documenting this male at a feeder were not received until after the bird was gone. Note the overlap in dates with the Olmsted County oriole, confirming that these were different individuals.

- Scott's Oriole, 17–21 April 2002, near Oronoco, Olmsted County (record #2002-61, vote 7–0, *The Loon* 74:189–191).

This male, also at a feeder, was seen by many observers and photographed.

II. The following records were voted on August – December 2002 and were found to be Not Acceptable. Also see the two Acceptable records above which in part involved a Not Acceptable vote: Prairie Warbler (2002-49) and Great-tailed Grackle (2002-58).

(It is important to be aware that a record which is not accepted only means the provided documentation was not complete or convincing enough to include the sighting in *The Loon*, the journal of the MOU, or in the MOU's archives of bird records. Such a vote does not necessarily mean the observer misidentified the bird or that it cannot be included on one's personal list. In this sense, therefore, MOURC



**Eurasian Collared-Dove, 23 June 2002, Herman, Grant County. Photo by Peder Svingen.**

is only acting as an editor of the records submitted to the MOU.

Also note a summary of the reasons why a record was not accepted are included. These are, of course, in no way intended to be critical of the observer. The only purpose is instructional: that is, to show the difficulties an observer had in identifying or documenting a bird, so that these can be avoided by other observers when documenting future reports of this and similar species.)

- Smew, 6 November 2002, Island Lake, St. Louis County (record #2002-81, vote 7–0 on identification, vote 0–10 on wild origin).

The identification of this adult female shot by a duck hunter, confirmed by the photos taken of the bird, was straightforward and unanimously accepted. However, the record was not accepted on the basis of origin, with the unanimous vote determining that the duck had most likely escaped or been released from captivity. (Note that all ten MOURC members, the seven regular members plus the three alternates, vote on questions of origin.) Prior captivity is indicated by one of the duck's hind toes having been cut off (a practice of many waterfowl collectors) and

by the seriously frayed condition of the outer primaries and many of the rectrices.

- Ruff, 18 August 2002, Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge, Marshall County (record #2002-74, vote 4-3).

Although a majority voted to accept this record, a 5-2 vote is needed for acceptance. This was a difficult record to evaluate, with an inconclusive first-round vote and a discussion at a committee meeting before the final vote was taken. One of the primary reservations expressed about the record is that the bird was asleep almost the entire time of the observation, so that the bill and head pattern were only seen very briefly, and the tail and wing patterns were not seen at all. The overall size and shape of the bird is unclear, and the "yellow-orange" legs does not preclude the possibility of a yellowlegs.

- Ruff, 30 August 2002, Empire Township, Dakota County (record #2002-75, vote 0-7).

The identification by an observer experienced with this species may well have been correct, but the written description is very brief and incomplete. About the only feature described which suggests a Ruff and tends to eliminate other possibilities is the orange leg color, but the identification of an unusual species needs to be based on more than a single feature. Field notes were apparently written soon after the observation and would have strengthened the record, but they unfortunately were not provided.

- California Gull, 17 October 2001, near Lynd, Lyon County (record #2002-64, vote 0-7).

There is nothing in the written description of this juvenile gull to preclude the more likely possibility of a Herring Gull. The bicolored bill pattern as described could fit either a Herring or California gull, and the gull's overall size as described could also fit either species. Nothing else in the description indicates it was a California Gull more than any other species. Finally, this observer mentions in the documentation that field notes and a sketch were made during the observation,

but neither was provided and both would have been helpful.

- Thayer's Gull, 8 April 2002, near Lynd, Lyon County (record #2002-63, vote 2-5).

There is nothing in the description indicating the condition of the plumage: that is, whether or not it was faded, worn, or bleached. And in the spring and summer it is common to see such abnormally pale Herring Gulls which bear an overall and close resemblance to paler gulls such as Thayer's (or even Glaucous or Iceland). Accordingly, those not accepting this record felt that the description may indeed fit a Thayer's Gull, but it also does not preclude a bleached or worn Herring Gull.

- Sprague's Pipit, 28 July 2002, Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge, Polk County (record #2002-65, vote 2-5).

Although the written descriptions by the two observers generally tend to fit this species, they could also just as easily fit the more likely possibilities of a Vesper Sparrow or juvenile Horned Lark. There is no mention of the bill shape and color, and the Sprague's Pipit's distinctive body shape and behavior is not described.

- Yellow-throated Warbler, 25 May 2002, Lake Carlos State Park, Douglas County (record #2002-48, vote 1-6).

Those not accepting this record found the provided description to be incomplete and somewhat contradictory in places. The breast is described as white (not yellow), and the upperparts are described as having white stripes (such stripes are inconsistent with Yellow-throated Warbler). Also, the distinctive face pattern is never clearly described, and it was felt the description could also fit a Blackburnian Warbler.

- Lark Bunting, 13 May 2002, Crow Wing County (record #2002-50, vote 3-4).

This was a difficult record to evaluate, with an inconclusive first-round vote and a discussion taking place at a committee meeting before the final vote was taken. It was agreed the identification by the two experienced observers may have been correct, but only one of them provided documentation, and it is brief and incomplete. The size and shape of the bird is not given, and some not accepting the

record felt the description could also indicate a partial albino blackbird, which was apparently not considered as a possibility by the observers. Finally, the bird was observed as it perched "on the top of a small tree above a small pond in Crow Wing State Park," and such behavior and habitat would be quite atypical for a Lark Bunting.

- Baird's Sparrow (three individuals), June 2002, Felton Prairie, Clay County (record #2002-66, vote 0-7).

Three individuals were reported, but the plumage and song of only one of them is described, and this documentation is inconclusive. The song is described only as "three short notes and a high musical trill," but this is not clear enough to indicate Baird's Sparrow and eliminate other possibilities. And while most of the plumage description would be consistent with Baird's, it is stated there was no malar or mustachial markings, which does not fit this species (and would better describe a Grasshopper Sparrow).

- Harris's Sparrow, 27 July 2002, Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, Sherburne County (record #2002-79, vote 4-3).

Although a majority voted to accept this record, a 5-2 vote is needed for acceptance. This was another difficult record, with an inconclusive first-round vote and a discussion at a committee meeting before the final vote was taken. The identification of this out-of-season sparrow may well have been correct, since the combination of pink bill and "necklace of black around its throat" does not seem consistent with any other species. However, there were reservations about this record, since the three observers were apparently unaware that a summer Harris's Sparrow is unusual and only casually reported it in passing, and since they had difficulty identifying it (even though they are relatively experienced and this is a relatively distinctive species).

- Great-tailed Grackle, 14 July 2002, near Hutchinson, McLeod County (record #2002-71, vote 2-5).

This female grackle perched on a utility wire may have been correctly identified, but it was seen without the use of any

optics, and was only briefly viewed for a few seconds from a car traveling at highway speeds. Under such circumstances, it is very difficult to clearly and accurately discern field marks, especially on subtly plumaged birds such as female grackles or blackbirds. And when unusual species are involved, it is necessary to see them for more than just a few seconds from a moving car with a naked eye.

The efforts of all those observers who document 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: Bruce Baer, Dave Bartkey, Chris Benson, Andrew Bicek, Conny Brunell, Paul Budde, Dave Cahlander (3 records), Janet Chandler, Louis Claeson, Philip Chu (4 records), Bob Dunlap (2 records), Kim Eckert (3 records), Eddy & Judy Edwards, John Ellis (3 records), Chris Fagyal, Bruce Fall, Dan Floren, Colin Gjer-vold, Mike Hendrickson, Anthony Hertzell, Ken Hoffman, Dorothy Jalonen, Bob Jansen (2 records), Jeanie Joppru (2 records), Chuck Krulas, Jim Lind, Betty Loreda, Steve Millard, Mark Ochs, Bob O'Connor, Jerry Pruett, Ron Refsnider, John Richardson, Alma Ronningen, Roger Schroeder (2 records), Drew Smith, Jerry Smith, Jeff Stephenson (2 records), Shelley Steva, Peder Svingen (12 records), Dan & Sandy Thingan, Leon Thoreson.

There were also other observers who documented records of Regular species which were not submitted for a vote to the Committee; although these records are not cited here, their documentations are also appreciated.

The Committee Chairman welcomes questions or comments from MOU members regarding any record in particular or our procedures in general. He can be contacted at the address below or by e-mail at <kreckert@cpinternet.com>.

Summary: 42 records voted on, 31 Acceptable, 11 Not Acceptable.

**8255 Congdon Blvd., Duluth, MN 55804.**