

# Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

Kim R. Eckert, MOURC Chairman

The following records were voted on January-July 2003 and found to be Acceptable (also see Not Acceptable record 2003-16, which partially involved an Acceptable vote).

- Red-throated Loon, 7 June 2003, Moulton Township, Pipestone County (record #2003-32, vote 6-1).

This rare-Regular species was seen only in flight in quite an atypical part of the state, but it was carefully observed and documented by an experienced observer.

- White-faced Ibis, 5 May 2002, Kandiyohi County (record #2003-01, vote 6-1).

- White-faced Ibis, 11 September 2002, Mud Lake, Traverse County (record #2003-03, vote 6-1).

- White-faced Ibis (five individuals), 1 June 2003, Luverne, Rock County (record #2003-31, vote 6-1).

These three records of this now near-Regular species all include descriptions of red eye color, reddish facial skin, and/or white feathering around the bill and eyes. Note that hybrid Glossy x White-faced Ibis have been recently documented in Oklahoma (*North American Birds* 57:136-139), which may complicate the identification and documentation of ibis seen in Minnesota (see the Not Acceptable record below). However, it is not presently known how likely or unlikely it is for presumed hybrids to occur anywhere, nor is it yet known what range of variation such ibis can exhibit with regard to eye color, facial skin color, and white facial feathering.

- Plegadis ibis, sp. (two individuals), 7 September 2002, Island Lake, Lyon County (record #2003-17, vote 6-1).

- Plegadis ibis, sp. (11 individuals), 17 April 2003, Winkler Wildlife Management Area, Jackson County (record #2003-18, vote 5-2).

- Plegadis ibis, sp. (two individuals), 3 May 2003, Bloomington, Hennepin County (record #2003-20, vote 7-0).

These three records involved birds which were either seen in fall, when most Plegadis ibis are difficult or impossible to identify in the field, or birds which were seen only in flight at a distance.

- Black-necked Stilt (two individuals), 25 May 2003, near Montrose, Wright County (record #2003-28, vote 6-1).

The observer apparently was inexperienced with this species and his description is brief, but the documentation adequately describes a species which is very distinctive and difficult to confuse with any other.

- Ruff, 17 May 2003, Bunker Hills Regional Park, Anoka County (record #2003-26, vote 7-0).

The bird was seen by two experienced observers and the documentation includes identifiable photographs.

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 11 April 2003, near Claremont, Dodge County (record #2003-12, vote 6-1).

Vocalizations of this dove were heard and described, and the bird was photographed well enough to see the diagnostic under tail pattern. Note that several presumably correct identifications of this now essentially Regular species could unfortunately not be accepted (see the Not Acceptable record below) because the possibility of an escaped/released or hybrid Ringed Turtle-Dove was not eliminated. If possible, when observing a collared-dove, it is best to concentrate on seeing and describing the exact pattern of the underside of the outer rectrices, and to listen to and describe any calls given.

- Band-tailed Pigeon, 20 November 2002 - 4 April 2003, near Hastings, Da-

kota County (record #2003-06, vote 7-0).

This bird was seen by numerous observers and photographed during its presence at a feeder for over four months.

- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 24-25 May 2003, Two Harbors, Lake County (record #2003-27, vote 7-0).

This individual was seen by numerous observers, and the descriptions provided preclude the possibility of Fork-tailed Flycatcher, the only similar species.

- White-eyed Vireo, 16 May 2003, Frontenac, Goodhue County (record #2003-24, vote 6-1).

The diagnostic song of this species was heard and described well by the experienced observer. Although the bird was not clearly seen, it was observed well enough to tell it was vireo-like in its size, shape, coloration, and behavior, and that it was not a starling, mockingbird, or other mimic.

- Rock Wren, 28-30 April 2003, Mendota Heights, Dakota County (record #2003-22, vote 7-0).

This bird was seen by many observers and photographed.

- Lark Bunting, 23 May 2002, near Dawson, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2003-15, vote 6-1).

This adult male was observed by a very experienced observer who has done field research on the species in Colorado.

- Lazuli Bunting, 26 May 2002, Willmar, Kandiyohi County (record #2003-10, vote 7-0).

- Lazuli Bunting, 31 May 2002, Nisswa, Crow Wing County (record #2003-09, vote 5-2).

- Lazuli Bunting, 31 May 2003, Blue Mounds State Park, Rock County (record #2003-29, vote 7-0).

The two unanimously accepted records were of easily identified and well-documented adult males. The other record, also of an adult male, was documented only by a single photograph without written details, and those dissenting felt the photo was not clear enough to confirm an identification.

- Baltimore Oriole, 27 March 2003, Minneapolis, Hennepin County (record #2003-11, vote 5-2).

This extremely early record involves an adult male which was seen and heard singing. Although the bird was only briefly described, the majority felt the documentation was adequate enough to preclude any other possibilities.

- Great-tailed Grackle, 17-19 April 2003, near Austin, Mower County (record #2003-13, vote 7-0).

- Great-tailed Grackle, 26 April 2003, near Vermilion, Dakota County (record #2003-21, vote 6-1).

- Great-tailed Grackle (six individuals), 31 May - 17 June 2003, Hills, Rock County (record #2003-30, vote 7-0).

All three records include birds which were heard singing, thus eliminating the remote possibility of Boat-tailed Grackle.

The following records were voted on January - July 2003 and were found to be Not Acceptable.

(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 confirmed 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 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.)

- White-faced Ibis, 4 September 2002, Tyler WMA, Lincoln County (record #2003-16, vote 3-4 as White-faced / vote 7-0 as Plegadis ibis, sp.).

The identification as a White-faced was probably correct, and this was unanimously accepted as a Plegadis ibis, but there was an eight-month delay before

a description was provided. With apparently no field notes written at the time of the observation, the concern is how accurate a description can be when based only on memory after a long period. Additionally, this identification as a White-faced rests primarily on eye color alone, and, as mentioned under the accepted ibis records above, a narrow majority felt that the possibility of a hybrid ibis is not precluded in the description.

- Plegadis ibis, sp. (four individuals), 4 September 2002, Kandiyohi County (record #2003-02, vote 3-4).

This was another narrow decision involving an identification that was probably correct, but again with a brief description coming only from memory after a delay of some months. In this case, the birds were seen only after sunset as distant flying silhouettes, with no plumage features or overall color visible, the birds' sizes as described were unclear, and the observer had difficulty determining if the bills were decurved.

- Black Rail, 22 April 2003, Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2003-19, vote 2-5).

The documentation is well-written and includes a suggestive sketch, but unfortunately this is a very unusual bird that was seen only briefly as it flew away from the observer. "Grayish streaks across back" was the only plumage feature visible, but this is not consistent with Black Rail. The majority felt a better look or vocalizations would be necessary before any reports of this Accidental species could be accepted.

- Ruff, 24 August 2002, near Herman, Grant County (record #2003-04, vote 1-6).

This was yet another sighting with written documentation provided from memory after a delay of a few months. Although a field sketch was made at the time of the observation, it is lacking in detail and could just as easily fit a Pectoral or Stilt sandpiper. The written description is much more detailed than the sketch, but, again, it is based only on memory and still does not clearly show why the bird had to be a Ruff and how other possibilities were eliminated.

- Eurasian Collared-Dove (two individuals), 22 December 2002, Milan, Chipewewa County (record #2003-05, vote 0-7).

These were almost certainly correctly identified as collared-doves, but, as the observer states, he was unable to see them well enough to preclude the small possibility of Ringed Turtle-Doves.

- Sprague's Pipit, 20 September 2002, Dayton, Hennepin County (record #2003-07, vote 0-7).

The documentation does not include nearly enough detail to support the identification. The entire description only includes mention that the bird "appeared somewhat lighter" than some adjacent American Pipits and had "light legs/pink." However, no plumage details are included, and American Pipit remains a possibility since this species is variable in plumage and can sometimes have pale-colored legs.

- Great-tailed Grackle, 8 May 2003, Pierce Lake, Martin County (record #2003-23, vote 3-4).

Unfortunately, this was yet another narrow 3-4 decision involving a bird that was probably correctly identified. The identification was based primarily on vocalizations which were heard coming from a grackle-like bird which was not clearly seen or described. Also, the description of this bird's calls only says it "had a buzzy quality similar to a Pine Siskin," which alone doesn't necessarily indicate this species.

- Pine Grosbeak, 29 August 2002, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2003-08, vote 3-4).

Although brief field notes were taken during the observation, they include only a sketchy description, mention of a "black and white" back pattern, and nothing about the bill shape. However, such a back pattern is inconsistent with Pine Grosbeak, and this back description was changed in the later documentation, which was mostly written from memory more than three months later. The observer also mentions he was unaware how unusually early this would be for this species to appear, and consequently he

adds that he did not examine the bird as closely as he could have.

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: Karl Bardon (three records), Jim Barrett, Elizabeth & Tom Bell, Steve Blanich, Brad Bolduan (two records), Paul Budde, Dave Cahlander, Phil Chu, Beth Dillon, Bob Dunlap (two records), Kim Eckert (four records), John Ellis, Chris Fagyal, Steve Falkowski, Bruce Fall, Randy Frederickson (three records), Rick Hoyme, Oscar Johnson, Dennis Martin, Jim Mattsson, John Morrison, Jim Ryan, John Schladweiler, Roger Schroeder (two records), Drew Smith, Jeff Stephen-

son, Sharon Stiteler, Peder Svingen (two records), Tom Tustison, Bill Unzen, Boak Wiesner.

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 (note that it has changed) or by e-mail at <kreckert@cpinternet.com>.

Summary: 30 records voted on — 22 Acceptable, 8 Not Acceptable.

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