

Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

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As has been the practice of this Committee every five years, a new *Checklist of the Birds of Minnesota* was compiled and published in January 2004. There are now 427 Accepted species, with a net increase of four species since the previous Checklist in 1999: the additions are Smew, Black Vulture, White-tailed Kite, White-throated Swift, and Costa's Hummingbird (see record #2003-80 below); deleted is Black Phoebe (see record #2003-42 below). In addition, the status of several species has changed in the past five years:

Additions to the Regular list

- Eurasian Collared-Dove (formerly Accidental)
- Great-tailed Grackle (formerly Accidental)

Deletions from the Regular list

- Cinnamon Teal (now Casual)

Northern Bobwhite (now considered Extirpated: i.e., all current records are presumed to be of escaped or released individuals, unless there is documentation with a record to suggest wild origin)

Gyr Falcon (now Casual)

Worm-eating Warbler (now Casual)

Additions to the Casual list

- Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (formerly Accidental)
- Cinnamon Teal (formerly Regular)
- Gyr Falcon (formerly Regular)
- Pomarine Jaeger (formerly Accidental)
- Black-headed Gull (formerly Accidental)
- Arctic Tern (formerly Accidental)
- Band-tailed Pigeon (formerly Accidental)
- Sage Thrasher (formerly Accidental)
- Worm-eating Warbler (formerly Regular)

Black-throated Sparrow (formerly Accidental)

Painted Bunting (formerly Accidental)

Deletions from the Casual list

King Rail (now Accidental)

Baird's Sparrow (now Accidental)

Additions to the Accidental list

Smew (added in 1999)

Black Vulture (added in 2001)

White-tailed Kite (added in 2000)

King Rail (formerly Casual)

White-throated Swift (added in 2000)

Costa's Hummingbird (added in 2003)

Baird's Sparrow (formerly Casual)

Deletions from the Accidental list

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (now Casual)

Pomarine Jaeger (now Casual)

Black-headed Gull (now Casual)

Arctic Tern (now Casual)

Eurasian Collared-Dove (now Regular)

Band-tailed Pigeon (now Casual)

Black Phoebe (removed from state list)

Sage Thrasher (now Casual)

Black-throated Sparrow (now Casual)

Painted Bunting (now Casual)

Great-tailed Grackle (now Regular)

Additions to the Extirpated list

Northern Bobwhite (formerly Regular)

At the beginning of 2004, as there is every year, there was a change in the membership of this Committee. Currently, the seven full-time members are Peder Svingen (new chairperson approved by the MOU Board, replacing retiring chair Kim Eckert), Paul Budde, Philip Chu, Anthony Hertz, Jim Mattsson (replacing Karl Bardon, whose term expired), Drew Smith, and Tom Tustison; the three alternate members are Renner Anderson, Ann Kessen, and Steve Stucker (replacing Jim Mattsson).

Accepted Records

The following records were voted on August – December 2003 and were Accepted (also see Not Accepted records

2003-39, 2003-63, and 2003-81, all of which involved qualified Accepted votes).

- Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, 19 May 1980, Wall Lake, Otter Tail County (record #2003-38, identification Accepted 10-0 / A(o) origin Accepted 9-1).

All ten MOURC members vote on potential first state records and on questions of origin. This potentially first state record was originally voted on and Not Accepted. However, at the time there were not separate votes on identification and origin, as there are today, and those not accepting the record apparently did so because of its possible captive origin. Additionally, at the time there was no Accidental (o) designation: i.e., a record accepted on a qualified basis because of uncertain origin. Accordingly, to clear up any uncertainties, new votes were taken, and the record was Accepted with the (o) qualifier (as are most previous records of this species).

- Barrow's Goldeneye, 30 January – 11 March 2003, Fergus Falls, Otter Tail County (record #2003-49, vote 7-0).

As a female-plumaged bird, this was a potentially difficult ID; however, it was seen by many observers over several weeks.

- Barrow's Goldeneye, 2 April 2003, Bloomington, Hennepin County (record #2003-75, vote 5-2).

Those not accepting the record were concerned that the description makes no mention of a black bar extending to the water line behind the chest, an important distinction between male goldeneyes.

- Barrow's Goldeneye, 11-15 November 2003, near Reno, Houston County (record #2003-83, vote 7-0).

The documentation includes a careful description of the bird's location on the Minnesota side of the Mississippi River; the state line is often misunderstood and misconstrued along this part of the river.

- Red-throated Loon (2 individuals), 22 April 2003, Little Rock Lake, Benton County (record #2003-46, vote 7-0).

Although this species is Regular in Minnesota on Lake Superior, there are very few documented records elsewhere

in the state, where it is very rare.

- Neotropic Cormorant (2 individuals), 12 August – 6 October 2003, Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2003-64, vote 7-0).

These birds were seen and documented by several observers and photographed, representing only the second state record.

- White-faced Ibis (6 individuals), 17-19 May 2003, Cottonwood, Lyon County (record #2003-25, vote 5-2).

Those not accepting this record were concerned that the possibility of hybrid White-faced X Glossy Ibis is not precluded in the documentation (see *North American Birds* 57:136-139).

- White-faced Ibis (2 individuals), 15 June 2003, Toqua Township, Big Stone County (record #2003-47, vote 7-0).

The thorough description here was complete enough to preclude the possibility of hybrids.

- *Plegadis* ibis, sp., 26 June 2003, near Magnolia, Rock County (record #2003-48, vote 7-0).

The observer only saw this bird in flight and was unable to determine its eye and facial skin colors or if any white feathering was present on the face.

- Black Vulture, 29 April 2003, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2003-82, vote 6-1).

Although this bird, which represents a second state record, was not photographed or documented as thoroughly as the first record from Duluth, also seen by the same observer, it was sufficiently described by the observer who has thorough experience with this and similar species.

- Ruff, 7 August 2003, southeastern Kandiyohi County (record #2003-85, vote 5-2).

Those with reservations about this record were concerned that the documentation is unclear about whether this was an adult or juvenile.

- Great Black-backed Gull, 15 December 2002, Bloomington and Excelsior Christmas Bird Counts, Dakota/Hennepin Counties (record #2003-14, vote 6-1).

This record was originally not pub-

lished in the CBC or seasonal reports in *The Loon* because initially the documentation was incomplete. However, additional documentation, including photographs, was later submitted.

- Sabine's Gull, 30 August 2003, Red Lake Falls, Red Lake County (record #2003-52, vote 7-0).

- Sabine's Gull, 20 September 2003, Lake Winnibigoshish, Itasca/Cass Counties (record #2003-68, vote 7-0).

Despite the increase in sightings the last few years, this species is still Casual, with records only in six of the past ten years.

- Sabine's Gull, 1 October 2003, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2003-76, vote 7-0).

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 12 March 2003, near New Germany, Carver County (record #2003-54, vote 6-1).

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 21-29 March 2003, Herman, Grant County (record #2003-35, vote 7-0).

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 1 June 2002, Milan, Chippewa County (record #2003-33, vote 6-1).

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, mid-late June 2003, Olivia, Renville County (record #2003-57, vote 6-1).

- Eurasian Collared-Dove (2 individuals), 30 June – August 2003, Thief River Falls, Pennington County (record #2003-58, vote 7-0).

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 31 July – August 2003, Farmington, Dakota County (record #2003-69, vote 6-1).

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 11-17 August 2003, Milan, Chippewa County (record #2003-70, vote 6-1).

This species is now considered Regular in the state. The lone dissenting voter on some of these records expressed concern about the possibility of hybridization with Ringed Turtle-Dove.

- White-winged Dove, 5 July 2003, near Grand Marais, Cook County (record #2003-53, vote 7-0).

All ten MOURC members vote on questions of whether or not photographs are identifiable. The identification of this third state record was unanimously Accepted,

but by a vote of 3–7 the photos included with the documentation were judged not clear enough on their own to identify the bird. Accordingly, this species remains on the state list with the (s) qualifier (i.e., all the records are sight-only records, with none accompanied by an identifiable specimen, photo, or other physical evidence).

- Costa's Hummingbird, mid-September (?) – 6 November 2003, Delano, Wright County (record #2003-80, vote 10–0).

All ten MOURC members vote on potential first state records. The presence of this individual at a feeder was first made known by a television news broadcast. In order to rescue it, the homeowners eventually attracted the bird indoors on 6 November, after it apparently had been present since September. However, the bird later died in a rehabilitation facility in early December, and the specimen has been preserved. Additional details on this unprecedented record will be published in *The Loon*.

- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 18–19 October 2003, Spring Lake Regional Park, Dakota County (record #2003-71, vote 7–0).

This bird was seen by several observers and photographed.

- Rock Wren, 8 June 2003, Fredenberg Township, St. Louis County (record #2003-37, vote 5–2).

Those not accepting this record were concerned that the detailed documentation does not describe the tail pattern, and that the description was apparently only written from memory after more than a month.

- Sage Thrasher, 17 October – 11 November 2003, Grand Marais, Cook County (record #2003-72, vote 7–0).

This bird was seen by numerous observers and photographed.

- Sprague's Pipit, 1 May 2003, Morris, Stevens County (record #2003-59, vote 5–2).

Those not accepting this record were concerned that it was primarily documented by an excellent color sketch “taken from journal...done two hours after seeing

bird.” However, the original field sketch, which would have been more useful in documenting the bird, was not submitted.

- Yellow-throated Warbler, 25–30 October 2003, Fergus Falls, Otter Tail County (record #2003-78, vote 7–0).

This bird was seen by many observers and photographed.

- Prairie Warbler, 15 October 1994, Grand Marais, Cook County (record #2003-45, vote 7–0).

The documentation for this ten-year-old record, which had never been voted on, had only recently been found. Since it includes original field notes and a sketch made at the time of the observation, the record was able to be Accepted.

- Prairie Warbler, 2–3 June 2003, Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve, Scott County (record #2003-60, vote 7–0).

This bird was seen by many observers and photographed.

- Black-headed Grosbeak, mid-May 2002, Vesta, Redwood County (record #2003-74, vote 6–1).

This male was photographed by the homeowners at their feeders.

- Lazuli Bunting, 26 October 2003, near Grand Marais, Cook County (record #2003-79, vote 7–0).

This female-plumaged bird was only present for a few minutes, but it was observed by several observers, and the documentation includes photographs.

- Painted Bunting, 29 May 2003, Bruno, Pine County (record #2003-61, vote 6–1).

This male was photographed by the homeowners at their feeders.

- Great-tailed Grackle, 18–23 April 2003, Sleepy Eye, Brown County (record #2003-36, vote 7–0).

This species is now considered Regular in the state.

Not Accepted Records

The following records were voted on August – December 2003 and were Not Accepted.

(It is important to be aware that a record which is Not Accepted only means the provided documentation was not com-

plete 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.)

- Common Eider, 27 December 1978, Stoney Point, St. Louis County (record #2003-39, Not Accepted 0-7 as Common Eider / Accepted 5-2 as eider, sp.).

This record previously had been voted on and narrowly Accepted as a Common Eider, but the current Committee voted to reconsider the record and revise that decision. Although the majority was of the opinion that this was an eider, it was unanimously felt the description is not thorough enough to preclude King Eider. In fact, the description states "the back was dark," and this is more indicative of King Eider rather than a Common.

- Barrow's Goldeneye, 15 November 2003, Grand Marais, Cook County (record #2003-65, vote 1-6).

The observers' identification of this male was essentially based only on "a white crescent-shaped area" on the face, since no other diagnostic field marks are included in the brief description. However, male Common Goldeneyes typically have white facial spots that are vaguely triangular in shape, not circular or oval, and could be described as a crescent. On this particular day, there were several other experienced observers at this location at the same time, but no one else saw this species.

- White-faced Ibis, 15 September 2003, Pilot Grove Waterfowl Production Area,

Faribault County (record #2003-81, Not Accepted 3-4 as White-faced Ibis / Accepted 7-0 as *Plegadis* ibis, sp.).

Although this was unanimously Accepted as a *Plegadis* ibis, the majority felt the description is not detailed enough to preclude the small possibility of a hybrid White-faced X Glossy Ibis (see *North American Birds* 57:136-139).

- Ferruginous Hawk, 5 September 1976, Tracy, Lyon County (record #2003-41, vote 3-4).

This record previously had been voted on and Not Accepted, and the current Committee voted to reconsider the record and reaffirm that decision. The description could fit Red-tailed Hawk in all respects, since the only feature in the description suggesting Ferruginous was "windows present at the bases of the primaries." However, immature Red-tails also have wing windows or panels in this same area, and there is no mention of whether the windows extended on to the coverts, an important distinction between these two hawks. The record is also weakened by the fact that the bird was said to be 100 yards away and only seen with the naked eye.

- Western Sandpiper (2 individuals), 15 May 2002, Perry Township, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2003-50, vote 1-6).

The formal, typed description seems to be written mostly from memory after a lapse of 16 months, which is when the documentation was received. There were original field notes, which appear to be written the same day as the observation, and therefore these are the more important part of the documentation. Unfortunately, the description included in these notes is too brief to eliminate the possibility of these sandpipers being White-rumpeds or Semipalmateds.

- California Gull, 12-19 November 1977, Malmo, Aitkin County (record #2003-43, vote 0-7).

- California Gull, 20 October 1993, Forest Lake, Washington County (record #2003-44, vote 2-5).

These two records had previously been voted on and Accepted, but the current

Committee voted to reconsider the records and reverse these decisions. The identifications of these immature gulls in both cases rested primarily on their “all dark” tails, with no other marks clearly described to indicate these were Californias. However, as illustrated in the *Geographic* field guide, first-winter Ring-billed Gulls can also have tails which appear almost entirely black like a California Gull.

- California Gull, 10 June 2002, Manfred Township, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2003-51, vote 2-5).

Like the Western Sandpiper record above (#2003-50), the formal documentation, primarily written from memory, was not received until over a year after the observation. Again, therefore, the original field notes written at the time of the sighting carry more importance, and these notes are too brief and incomplete to be convincing.

- California Gull, 26 April 2003, Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2003-66, vote 2-5).

Although this may well have been an adult California Gull, neither eye color nor leg color was seen, and the described larger-than-Ring-billed size could fit other species of gulls. The identification essentially relies on only one field mark in ruling out Ring-billed Gull, its “noticeably much darker” mantle color, but this could also be consistent with Lesser Black-backed Gull.

- California Gull, 16 October 2003, Big Detroit Lake, Becker County (record #2003-67, vote 0-7).

This apparent third-winter gull was identified by a visiting birder from California who is very familiar with this species. Unfortunately, however, the only useful feature included in the very brief documentation is the “blue-gray” leg color, and this alone is not enough to be convincing.

- Great Black-backed Gull, 5 June 2000, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2003-40, vote 2-5).

This out-of-season record had previously been voted on and Accepted, but

the current Committee voted to reconsider the record and reverse that decision. This immature gull was seen and documented by a very experienced observer, and may well have been correctly identified. However, the tail pattern was unclear, being described as “solid dark brown” at one point, which does not fit Great Black-backed Gull of any age.

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 27 March 2003, Amboy, Blue Earth County (record #2003-55, vote 1-6).

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 25 April 2003, Appleton, Swift County (record #2003-56, vote 0-7).

The identifications in both these records was most likely correct, but the documentations in both cases is not detailed enough to preclude the small possibility of Ringed Turtle-Doves.

- Black Phoebe, 13 September 1952, Madison, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2003-42, vote 3-7).

All ten MOURC members vote on potential first state records. This record had been published in *The Flicker* (25:47-48), and the species had been included on earlier checklists of Minnesota birds. However, it had never been voted on or Accepted by any previous Records Committee, unlike all other species on the Minnesota list, and the record is virtually unprecedented outside of the species’ southwestern U.S. breeding range. Although the description would seem to fit no other species, it also includes mention of “black dots scattered rather regularly over the white surface” of the sides, and this is inconsistent with Black Phoebe. Although this troublesome detail is a relatively minor point, the documentation for such an extremely unusual and unlikely species should not include any anomalies.

- Bewick’s Wren, 20 July 2003, Millville, Wabasha County (record #2003-77, vote 3-4).

This identification may well have been correct, since the observer is experienced with this species from living in Arizona. However, the documentation is incomplete and apparently written only from memory after a five-month delay. It is curious that

barring was seen and noted on the under tail, but at the same time white on the outer tail (a distinctive feature of Bewick's Wren) is not mentioned in the description.

- MacGillivray's Warbler, 27 August 2003, Big Stone Lake State Park, Big Stone County (record #2003-73, vote 0-7).

The identification of this warbler rested almost entirely on the "large, broken eye-ring arcing over eyes," as described in the original field notes. While this is certainly suggestive of MacGillivray's Warbler, some Mourning Warblers can also exhibit this same feature in fall (see *The Auk* 107:161-171). In addition, the field notes state the throat was yellow, which is much more indicative of a Mourning Warbler. Given how extremely unusual this species is in Minnesota — with only one previous record — and how difficult it is to separate these two species in fall, only the most thorough and unambiguous documentation could be accepted for any fall MacGillivray's sight record.

- Smith's Longspur, 26 February 2003, near Hinckley, Pine County (record #2003-34, vote 0-7).

Although the documentation is lengthy, it includes relatively little in actual description to support the identification. The bird was said to be singing, but it seems very unlikely this species would be singing in February so far south of its breeding range. At one point the bird is described as the size of a robin, which certainly does not fit any longspur, and its bill is described as "thin," another feature inconsistent with a longspur.

- Great-tailed Grackle, 29 April 2000, Walter Township, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2003-62, vote 1-6).

The documentation for this record apparently was written only from memory more than three years after the observation. After such a long delay, the majority had too much doubt about the accuracy of the observer's memory and description for the record to be accepted.

- Great-tailed Grackle, 26 June 2003, Sioux Valley Township, Jackson County

(record #2003-63, Not Accepted 5-2 as Great-tailed Grackle / Accepted 6-1 as large grackle, sp.).

As an Accidental species in 2003, a 6-1 vote was required to accept this record. The two dissenting voters felt that the remote possibility of Boat-tailed Grackle was not precluded.

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: Jerry Bonkoski, Conny Brunell, Paul Budde (four records), Philip Chu (four records), Patrick Clements, Herb Dingmann, Bob Dunlap, Kim Eckert (two records), Chris Fagyal, Carolyn Fischer, Randy Frederickson, Bill George (two records), John Hockema, Bernelda Holmberg, Bob Janssen (three records), Paul Jantscher, Steve Kittleson, Jim Lind, Andrew Longtin, Dennis Martin, Steve Millard, Donald Mitchell, Steve Monson-Geerts, David Neitzel (two records), Frank Nicoletti, Pete Olson, Douglas Pierzina, Jackie Potts (two records), Julian Sellers, Brian Smith, Drew Smith, Rich Sonnenberg, Bill Stauffer, Doris and Tom Straw, Peder Svingen (seven records), Dan and Sandy Thimgan (two records), Helen Tucker, Tom Tustison, Bill Unzen (five records), Josh Watson.

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, Peder Svingen, welcomes questions or comments from MOU members regarding any record in particular or our procedures in general. He can be contacted by e-mail at <psvingen@d.umn.edu>.

Summary: 54 records voted on / 35 Accepted, 19 Not Accepted.

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