

Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

Peder H. Svingen, Chairman

The most recent meeting of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (MOURC) was conducted at the James Ford Bell Museum of Natural History in Minneapolis on 7 December 2008. In attendance and voting at this meeting were MOURC members Kim Eckert (alternate), Bruce Fall (alternate), Anthony Hertzell (alternate), Ann Kessen, Jim Lind, Bill Marengo, Drew Smith, Steve Stucker, and Peder Svingen (Chair). In accordance with its policy on term limits, the Committee reviewed nominations for membership and elected Anthony Hertzell as a regular member, replacing Drew Smith. Bob Dunlap was elected as an alternate member.

Among the items on the agenda was discussion of policies and procedures related to the 2009 revision of the Minnesota checklist. The Committee voted to adopt a threshold of 9–1 for acceptance of first state records, replacing the previous requirement of 10–0, and to treat records of Accidental species lacking physical evidence of occurrence in the state (A_s) the same way, i.e., A_s records will be held for discussion at a meeting and a vote of either 9–1 or 10–0 will be needed for acceptance.

The status of all species on the checklist was reviewed by the Committee this past year and 16 species were identified for further discussion at the December meeting. All ten members discussed and voted on the status of these species, and the following changes were endorsed:

From Regular to Casual (1 species)

- Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*)

From Casual to Regular (3 species)

- Cinnamon Teal (*Anas cyanoptera*)
- White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chibi*)

- White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*)

From Casual to Accidental (1 species)

- Band-tailed Pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*)

From Accidental to Casual (11 species)

- Brant (*Branta bernicla*)
- Neotropic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*)
- Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)
- Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*)
- Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)
- Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*)
- Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*)
- Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*)
- White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*)
- Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch (*Leucosticte tephrocotis*)
- Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*)

Also discussed were a potential first state record of Long-billed Murrelet and the origin of two previously accepted records of Black-bellied Whistling-Duck. Results of votes on these three records, and other records voted on by mail, are listed below.

The following records were voted on October – December 2008 and were Accepted (also see record #2008-039, which was Accepted at the genus level).

- Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*), 1 August 2004, Otrey Township, Big Stone County (recirculated record #2004-108, identification previously Accepted 5–2, origin Accepted with o subscript, vote 10–0).

This record was recirculated for discus-



Record 2008-037, Black-necked Stilt, 2 June 2004, Lake Osakis, Todd County. Photo by Gary Nuechterlein.



Record 2008-054, Red Phalarope, 22 October 2008, Two Harbors, Lake County. Photo by Shawn Zierman.

sion and vote on origin. The o subscript indicates that the chances of natural origin are about the same as the chances of being an escape or release from captivity.

- Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, 17 October 2005, Rendsville Township, Stevens County (recirculated record #2005-073, identification previously Accepted 7-0, origin Accepted 10-0).

This record was recirculated for discussion and vote on origin. Acceptance without a subscript indicates assumption of natural origin.

- Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*), 2-8 November 2008, North Anderson Lake, Eden Prairie, Hennepin County (record #2008-058, vote 7-0).

Adult male, photographed.

- Barrow's Goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*), 1 November 2008 – 8 March 2009, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2008-057, vote 7-0).

- Barrow's Goldeneye, 17-19 November 2008, Lake Ripley, Meeker County (record #2008-062, vote 7-0).

Both goldeneye records were of adult males, and both were photographed.

- Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*), 22-28 August 2008, near Madelia, Watonwan County (record #2008-041, vote 7-0).

Subadult, photographed.

- Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), 9 September 2008, immature at Hawk Ridge, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2008-044, vote 7-0).

Another record of this species at Hawk Ridge observed the previous day is being recirculated.

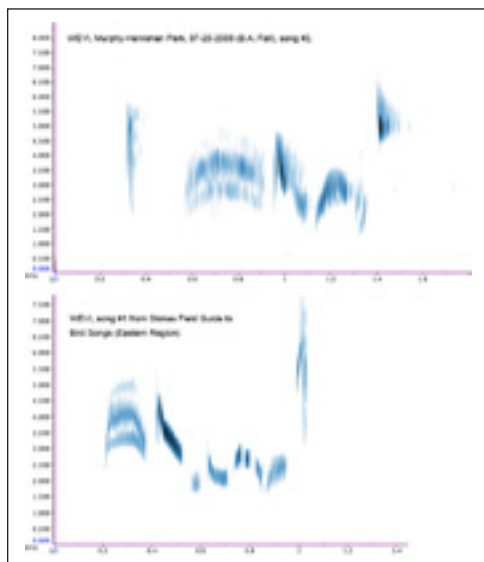
- Mississippi Kite, 17 September 2008, immature at Mounds View, Ramsey County (record #2008-047, vote 7-0).

- Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*), 2 June 2004, Lake Osakis, Todd County (record #2008-037, vote 7-0).

Diagnostic images confirming this four-year-old record surfaced when this site was nominated as an Important Bird Area.

- Black-necked Stilt, 11 May 2008, near Willmar, Kandiyohi County (record #2008-056, vote 6-1).

- Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*), 22 October 2008, immature at Two Harbors, Lake County (record #2008-054,



Record #2008-036, sonogram of White-eyed Vireo (top), 20 July 2008, Murphy-Hanrehan Park, Scott County. Produced by Bruce Fall.



Record 2008-049, Rock Wren, 19 September 2008, Inspiration Peak, Otter Tail County. Photo by Dan and Sandy Thimgan.

vote 7-0).

Serendipitously photographed along the breakwater at the entrance to Agate Bay.

- Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*), 7 September 2008, two juveniles at Walker wastewater treatment ponds, Cass County (record #2008-048, vote 7-0 for photographed bird, vote 6-1 for the second individual).

- Sabine's Gull, 12 September 2008, juvenile photographed at Sleepy Eye wastewater treatment ponds, Brown County (record #2008-046, vote 7-0).

- Long-billed Murrelet (*Brachyramphus perdix*), 4 November 2008, Lake Superior, Park Point, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2008-059, vote 10-0 for identification; physical evidence also accepted, vote 9-1).

First state record. All ten members vote on potential first state records and physical evidence; the latter vote requires a simple majority for acceptance and refers to whether or not the species can be identified from the physical evidence alone — in this case, photographs taken by Anthony Hertz and Sparky Stensaas.

- White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*), 19 July – 7 September 2008, Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve, Scott County (record #2008-036, vote 7-0).

In addition to diagnostic photographs and written descriptions from multiple observers, Bruce Fall submitted sonograms of the bird's vocalizations — perhaps the most thoroughly documented record of this species in the state.

- White-eyed Vireo, 14-17 November 2008, Linnaeus Arboretum, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Nicollet County (record #2008-061, vote 7-0).

Remarkably late and one of the few Minnesota records of a juvenile. Photographed.

- Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*), 19 September 2008, Inspiration Peak, Otter Tail County (record #2008-049, vote 7-0).

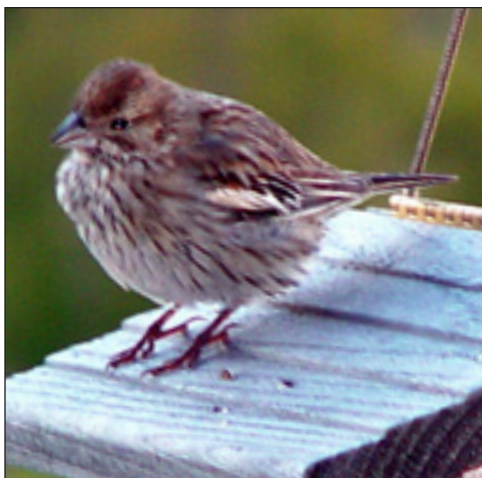
Photographed.

- Rock Wren, 25 September – 2 October 2008, Grand Marais Tourist Campground, Cook County (record #2008-050, vote 7-0).

- Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*), 9 September 2008, Duluth,



Record 2008-053, Golden-crowned Sparrow, 17 October 2008, Leech Lake, Cass County. Photo by David A. Cahlander.



Record 2008-051, Lark Bunting, 14 September 2007, Gunflint Trail, Cook County. Photo by Jay Hamernick.

St. Louis County (record #2008-045, vote 7-0).

- Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*), 14 September 2007, Gunflint Trail about 15 miles north of Grand Marais, Cook County (record #2008-051, vote 7-0).

A diagnostic image was submitted one year later.

- Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*), 16-18 October 2008, immature at Pelican Island, Leech Lake, Cass County (record #2008-053, vote 7-0).

A remarkable record of this species in that the bird was refound even though it was not coming to a feeder; observers were granted permission to travel by boat to this privately owned island location. Photographed.

- Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch (*Leucosticte tephrocotis*), 5 December 2008, near Maple Lake, Corrina Township, Wright County (record #2008-063, vote 7-0).

Interior form, photographed.

The following records were voted on October – December 2008 and were Not Accepted. (Please note that a record which is Not Accepted only means that the documentation was not complete or convinc-

ing 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 did not see it. Summaries of the reasons why a record was Not Accepted are included here. These are in no way intended to be critical of the observer. The only purpose is to highlight the difficulties an observer may encounter while identifying or documenting these and similar species.)

- Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*), 25 October 2008, Minnesota Point, St. Louis County (record #2008-055, vote 1-6).

- Yellow-billed Loon, 29 October 2008, Father Hennepin State Park, Mille Lacs County (record #2008-060, vote 0-7).

Neither of these records was supported by field notes or sketches, and the diagnostic field marks of Yellow-billed Loon were not described in either case. Distant photographs of the bird in St. Louis County, obtained through a spotting scope suggested Pacific Loon (*G. pacifica*).

- White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chibi*), 17 May 2008, Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge, Lac Qui Parle County (record #2008-039, vote 2-5 for first individual, vote 1-6



Record 2008-063, Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, 5 December 2008, Corrina Township, Wright County. Photo by Stan Tekiela.

for second individual).

The description did not eliminate the possibility of a hybrid between this species and Glossy Ibis (*P. falcinellus*). In accordance with procedure adopted in December 2006 (**The Loon** 79:51), this documented record was automatically Accepted as *Plegadis ibis* sp.

- White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*), 29 August 2008, Ortonville, Big Stone County (record #2008-052, vote 2–5).

Documentation was submitted more than a month after the sighting and was not supported by field notes or sketches. This species' diagnostic black wrist spots were not noted, even though the bird was observed in flight for three to four minutes from distances as close as 100 yards.

- Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melano-corys*), 3 August 2008, Florida Township, Yellow Medicine County (record #2008-038, vote 2–5).

Though possibly correctly identified, the bird was only briefly seen (two to five seconds) from an estimated distance of 100 yards and optics were not used. The description did not eliminate Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) or blackbirds with white wing patches.

- Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*), 25–27 May 2008, Sand Lake, Lake County (record #2008-040, vote 2–5).

Field notes or sketches were not taken at the time of observation, and documentation was submitted three months after the observation. The possibility of a hybrid between this species and Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*P. ludovicianus*) was not considered.

- Cassin's Finch (*Carpodacus cassinii*), 5 September 2008, near Kettle River Scientific and Natural Area, Pine County (record #2008-042, vote 3–4).

This may well have been correctly identified by an experienced observer, but the majority felt that female or immature Purple Finch (*C. purpureus*) was not conclusively eliminated. The identification of adult male Cassin's Finch is relatively straightforward, but unlike the first state record of this species, a female or imma-

ture which was photographed and studied at close range for extended amounts of time over a period of three days at a feeder (**The Loon** 60:3–9), this apparent female was observed through binoculars for only four minutes from up to 50 meters away. Subtle characteristics used to separate these species, including bill length and shape, would be difficult to ascertain at this distance, and no other species were nearby for comparison. The bird did not vocalize and a white eye-ring was not noted.

The efforts of all those observers who document unusual species are greatly appreciated, whether or not the records are Accepted. Though photographs are always welcome, observers are strongly encouraged to submit written documentation based on contemporaneous field notes for all records. The Committee acknowledges with thanks those who provided written descriptions for the records listed in this article: Dave Bartkey, Joshua Christian, Philip Chu, Shawn Conrad, Dan Donnelly, Diana Doyle, Bob Dunlap, Kim Eckert, Bruce Fall, Dan Floren, Ben Fritchman, Mike Hendrickson, Anthony Hertz, Robert Janssen, Paul Jantscher, Don Kienholz, Jan and Larry Kramer, Andrew Longtin, Jim Mattsson, Jim Otto, Nathan Schirmacher, Brian Smith, Drew Smith, Linda Sparling, Peder Svingen, Dan and Sandy Thimgan, Molly Tranel, Steve Weston, Linda Whyte, Ben Wieland, Dale Yerger, and Shawn Zierman. Many observers documented records of rare Regular species which were not voted on by the Committee; though not cited here, their efforts are greatly appreciated.

The Committee welcomes questions or comments from MOU members regarding any record in particular or our procedures in general. More information including our bylaws and current checklist can be found at <<http://moumn.org/mourc/index.html>>. Summary: 29 records voted on — 22 Accepted including 2 votes on origin, 7 Not Accepted.

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