

# 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 6 December 2009. In attendance and voting at this meeting were MOURC members Kim Eckert (alternate), Bruce Fall (alternate), Anthony Hertz, Ann Kessen, Jim Lind, Bill Marengo, Jim Mattsson, Steve Stucker, and Peder Svingen (Chair). In accordance with its policy on term limits, the Committee reviewed nominations for membership and elected Kim Eckert as a regular member, replacing Jim Mattsson. Drew Smith was elected as an alternate member. Bob Dunlap (alternate) was unable to attend the December meeting.

Among the items on the agenda was discussion of a 16 May 2009 record of a possible female Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*) photographed at a feeder in Dakota County. Documentation had been submitted as a hybrid between Bullock's and Baltimore Oriole (*I. galbula*). Expert opinion from Marshall Iliff, Alvaro Jaramillo, and Chris Wood was mixed as to its identity, and the Committee decided to table this record pending more information. Bruce Fall volunteered to gather information about hybrid orioles at the Bell Museum and to contact other museums.

Also discussed were the potential first state records of Black Guillemot and Acorn Woodpecker. Results of votes on these records, and other records voted on electronically, are listed below.

The following records were voted on August – December 2009 and were Accepted.

- Barrow's Goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*), 17–27 November 2009, Park Point and 21st Avenue East, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2009-055, vote 7–0).

Adult male, photographed. During the Duluth Christmas Bird Count, what was probably the same bird was found at Leif Erikson Park; it subsequently overwintered and will be vot-



**Record 2009-031, Brown Pelican, 27 June 2009, German Lake, Le Sueur County. Photo by Bob Dunlap.**

ed on as a separate record.

- Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*), 27 June – 2 July 2009, German Lake, Le Sueur County (record #2009-031, vote 7–0).

Second state record. Subadult, photographed.

- Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*), 9 October 2009, Lakewood Township, St. Louis County (record #2009-044, vote 7–0).

Hatch-year female captured at a raptor banding station east of Duluth.

- Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*), 17 October 2009, Gaylord Wastewater Treatment Ponds, Sibley County (record #2009-047, vote 7–0).

Seventeenth state record and the first for Sibley. Juvenile, photographed.

- Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*), 31 October 2009, Superior Entry, St. Louis County (record #2009-049, vote 7–0).

Ninth county record. None of the state's 35 records refers to adults.

- Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*), 13–14 September 2008, Lake Bemidji, Beltrami County (record #2009-057, vote 7–0).

First county record. Though not submitted until more than a year later, the documenta-

tion was supported by a contemporaneous description of this juvenile.

- Sabine's Gull, 19 September 2009, Iron-ton Wastewater Treatment Ponds, Crow Wing County (record #2009-046, vote 7-0).

Second county record. Juvenile, photographed.

- Sabine's Gull, 27 September 2009, Cannon Lake, Rice County (record #2009-042, vote 7-0).

First county record. Though not supported by field notes, a written description of this juvenile was submitted the same day.

- Laughing Gull (*Leucophaeus atricilla*), 27 July 2009, Pool 8, Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, Houston County (record #2009-038, vote 7-0).

Thirteenth state record and first occurrence since November 1997 (**The Loon** 70:91). Second county record. Adult wearing alternate plumage.

- California Gull (*Larus californicus*), 21 November – 2 December 2009, Superior Entry, St. Louis County (record #2009-056, vote 7-0).

Fourth county record. First-cycle bird, photographed.

- Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*), 28 October – 13 December 2009, Superior Entry and Canal Park, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2009-051, vote 7-0).

Sixth state record. Third-cycle bird, photographed. Discovered and seen sporadically at the Superior Entry through 6 December, and by many observers at Canal Park 30 November – 13 December.

- Pomarine Jaeger (*Stercorarius pomarinus*), 3 June 2009, Lake Superior, St. Louis County (record #2009-030, vote 7-0 for first individual, vote 6-1 for second individual).

Eighteenth state record. Two adult or sub-adult jaegers observed from a boat about one mile off Park Point, Duluth. First June record and first occurrence of more than one individual.

- Black Guillemot (*Cepphus grylle*), 7-8 November 2009, Taconite Harbor, Cook County (record #2009-052, vote 10-0 for identification; physical evidence also accepted, vote 10-0).

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, a photograph taken by Scott Meyer showed whitish underwings, thereby eliminating the otherwise similar Pigeon Guillemot (*C. columba*). The bird died sometime during the morning of the 8th. The specimen of this juvenile female was donated to the Bell Museum of Natural History.

- Band-tailed Pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*), 27-29 October 2009, Kabekona Lake, Laporte, Hubbard County (record #2009-054, vote 7-0).

Tenth state record. Photographed at feeder.

- White-winged Dove (*Zenaidura asiatica*), 24 August 2009, 54th Avenue East, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2009-050, vote 7-0).

- White-winged Dove, 4-10 October 2009, 40th Avenue West / Erie Pier area, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2009-043, vote 7-0).

All but two of the state's seventeen White-winged Doves have been found since 2003. The October bird was photographed.

- Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*), 2-28 August 2009, near Camden State Park, Lyon County (record #2009-041, vote 6-1).

Thirteenth state record. Adult male, photographed at feeder.

- Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*), 9 November 2009, Crow Wing State Park, Crow Wing County (record #2009-053, vote 10-0 for identification; physical evidence also accepted, vote 10-0).

First state record. Serendipitously photographed at his campsite by an observer from South Dakota. Though not prone to frequent wandering, there are records of this species from North Dakota and Iowa.

- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*), 26 June 2009, south of Henderson, Sibley County (record #2009-040, vote 6-1).

Second county record. Photographed.

- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 25 July – 3 August 2009, ~5.5 miles west of West Concord, Dodge County (record #2009-035, vote 7-0).

First county record. Photographed.

- Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*), 18-25 November 2009, Finlayson, Pine County (record #2009-060, vote 7-0).

Third state record. Photographed.

- Worm-eating Warbler (*Helminthos ver-*



**Record 2009-052, Black Guillemot, 7 November 2009, Taconite Harbor, Cook County. Photo by Kim Eckert.**

*mivorum*), 26 April 2009, Eloise Butler Wildflower Sanctuary, Minneapolis, Hennepin County (record #2009-045, vote 7-0).

Hennepin County now has 23 records of this Casual species.

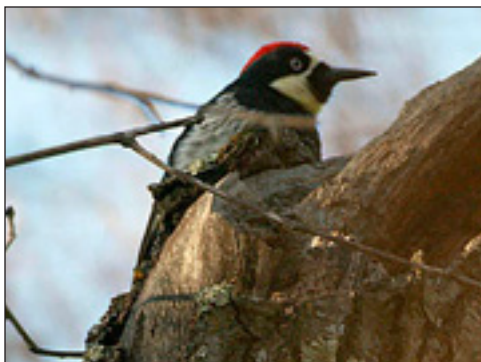
- Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*), 18 July 2009, Vale Wildlife Management Area, Sibley County (record #2009-033, vote 7-0).

First county record. This adult male could not be refund.

The following records were voted on August – December 2009 and were Not Accepted. (Please note that a record which is Not Accepted only means that the 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 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*), 21 November 2009, near Eddy's Resort, Mille Lacs Lake, Mille Lacs County (record #2009-058, vote 1-6).

Field notes were not taken, and the diagnostic field marks of Yellow-billed Loon were neither discussed nor described. The description failed to eliminate a pale-billed, first-fall Common Loon (*G. immer*).



**Record #2009-053, Acorn Woodpecker, 9 November 2009, Crow Wing State Park, Crow Wing County. Photo by Doug Backlund.**

- King Rail (*Rallus elegans*), 9 May 2009, Rice Lake, Steele County (record #2009-036, vote 0-7).

A written description of non-diagnostic vocalizations by an unseen rail was submitted in early August. Similarities between King Rail and Virginia Rail (*R. limicola*) calls are well known. The observer noted that it gave only single “dik dik dik” calls and “did not make the ‘burr’ sound.”

- Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*), 18 May 2009, Lake Byllesby, Dakota County (record #2009-062, vote 2-5).

Field notes were not submitted and the bird was neither sketched nor photographed. The written description was incomplete; for example, there was no mention of Ruff's distinctive pot-bellied shape and the observer did not key in on the rump/tail pattern when the bird flew. At the December meeting, the Committee voted to consider this record separately from an Accepted record of this species at the same location four days earlier (record #2009-023).

- Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*), 11 October 2009, near Moorhead, Clay County (record #2009-048, vote 1-6).

Though identified by an experienced observer, the bird was seen for only four seconds “in the dawning light” without the use of optics, while the observer was driving a beet truck.

- California Gull (*Larus californicus*), 14 November 2009, Fremont Lake, near Zimmerman, Sherburne County (record #2009-059, vote 0-7).

Field notes were not taken. The description did not eliminate Ring-billed Gull (*L. argentatus*) or Herring Gull (*L. argentatus*). The bird was seen from a distance of 800+ yards, precluding determination of bill markings, bill size and shape, eye color, and leg color. Important plumage details including the exact pattern and color of the upper wing-coverts, secondaries, and inner primaries, might have been detectable in flight at this distance, but were not described. Though not affecting vote outcome, the observers erroneously attributed the location to Mille Lacs County.

- Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), 15 May 1996, St. Augusta, Stearns County (record #2009-037, vote 1-6).

Members felt that the bird's behavior and location were consistent with this species, but the description was based entirely on 13-year-old memories.

- Western Wood-Pewee (*Contopus sordidulus*), 19-22 June 2009, Gary Pines Wayside, Norman County (record #2009-034, vote 2-5).

Multiple experienced observers submitted written descriptions of at least five wood-peewees in a mature stand of mixed conifers dominated by jack pine. One bird was apparently silent, others sounded like typical Eastern Wood-Pewees (*C. virens*), and one gave a raspy "western-type call." Another delivered calls consistent with either species, suggesting the possibility of at least one hybrid individual. The most compelling vocalization was heard 22 June, but that bird only called twice in one minute and the bird was never actually seen vocalizing. Since at least one of the pewees gave both Eastern and Western-like calls and one or more of the birds may have been hybrids, a hybrid could have given its Western-like call twice before going on to deliver an intermediate or Eastern-like call. The majority felt that without taped voice recordings, the evidence remained equivocal.

- White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*), 18 August 2008, Forestville State Park, Fillmore County (record #2009-061, vote 0-7).

Recently designated rare Regular, this species was Casual in Minnesota at the time of the observation. Unfortunately, the lack of contemporaneous field notes, sketches, journal entries, photos, or sound recordings led to a description based entirely on 13-month-old memories. Bell's Vireo (*V. bellii*) was not ad-

equately eliminated.

- Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*), 20 June 2009, Duluth Township, St. Louis County (record #2009-032, vote 1-6).

The described vocalization was atypical for this species. Visually, the bird was only glimpsed as it remained mostly obscured by foliage.

- Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*), 21 May 2008, Breckenridge, Wilkin County (record #2009-039, vote 0-7).

Field notes or sketches were not taken at the time of observation. A brief description based on memories was submitted 15 months later. The possibility of a hybrid between this species and Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*P. ludovicianus*) was not considered.

The efforts of all those observers who document unusual species are greatly appreciated, whether or not the records are Accepted. 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 documentation for the records listed in this article: Derek Bakken, Karl Bardon, Dave Bartkey, Jo and Steve Blanich, Milt Blomberg, Conny Brunell, Paul Budde, Joel Claus, Keith Corliss, Diana Doyle, Bob Dunlap, Kim Eckert, Chris Eichert, Ben Fritchman, Janet Green, Mike Hendrickson, Anthony Hertz, John Hockema, Doug Johnson, Don Kienholz, Doug Kieser, Jan and Larry Kramer, Jim Mattsson, Karl Roe, Cameron Rutt, Al Schirmacher, Linda Sparling, Forest Strnad, Peder Svingen, Nels Thompson, Bob Williams, and Chris Wood. Many observers submitted photographs and/or written documentation for 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: 33 records voted on — 23 Accepted, 10 Not Accepted.

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