

Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

Tom Tustison, Chairman

The most recent meeting of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (MOURC) was conducted at the Minnesota Valley NWR Headquarters Building in Bloomington on 5 December 2010. In attendance and voting at this meeting were members Robert M. Dunlap (alternate), Kim R. Eckert, Bruce A. Fall (alternate), Anthony X. Hertzler, Ann E. Kessen, James W. Lind, William C. Marengo, Andrew D. Smith (alternate), Steve Stucker, and Tom A. Tustison (chair).

Among the topics on the agenda and discussed at the meeting were the following:

The issue of whether or not to amend the bylaws to include a formal policy requiring all heard-only records to be supported by additional documentation was discussed and tabled indefinitely.

A potential first state record Bean-Goose was discussed. The Committee decided to table the record for further research and evaluation prior to submitting it for a vote.

Ann Kessen's term expired at the end of 2010. This vacancy was filled by Bruce Fall who will now be a Regular Member. Because Bruce had been an Alternate Member, that vacancy is now filled by Bob Russell. The Chair wishes to express its thanks, on behalf of the Committee, to Ann for her service and to welcome Bruce and Bob to their new roles.

The Committee will develop criteria to evaluate migration dates for Regular species. The Chair will circulate a draft to members who will be asked to provide comments and suggestions. This draft will be considered at the next regular Committee meeting. The concept is to provide written date ranges for certain Regular species that can be relied upon by the Seasonal Reports editor and compilers for inclusion — or exclusion — of such observations in the Seasonal Report. Observations outside of these date ranges will be automatically excluded from

future Seasonal Reports unless supported by documentation. The final results of this effort will be made public upon completion. Discussions included a desire to make a list of the date ranges readily accessible on the MOU website. There was also discussion about the desirability of creating a method to automatically 'flag' records entered into the MOU website. The purpose would be to alert birders, at the time of data entry, to provide documentation, if required. Casuals and Accidentals will continue to require documentation for acceptance in the Seasonal Reports.

Two species that occur in Minnesota have been split. Whip-poor-wills have been split into Eastern Whip-poor-will and Mexican Whip-poor-will. Whip-poor-wills in eastern North America, including Minnesota, are now the Eastern Whip-poor-will (*Caprimulgus vociferus*); Winter Wren has been split into Pacific Wren and Winter Wren. The Winter Wren population of central and eastern North America will retain its common name, with scientific name change to *Troglodytes hiemalis*. The Committee will assume that all past records of Whip-poor-wills were of Eastern Whip-poor-wills, and that all past Winter Wren records were of *T. hiemalis*. However, the Committee will consider all documented records that may be submitted regarding any purported Mexican Whip-poor-wills or Pacific Wrens.

The following records were voted on and Accepted.

- Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*), 21 through 23 May 2010, Agassiz NWR, Agassiz Pool, Marshall County (record #2010-015, vote 7–0). Photographed. Its origin was unanimously accepted as wild (origin vote 10–0). The lack of observable bands was cited as the reason for accepting the bird as wild. A Whooping Crane biologist, after seeing the bird on an aerial survey and also from the



Record #2010-021, Whooping Crane, 30 May 2010, Newfolden, Marshall County. Photo by Jason King.



Record #2010-032, Common Ground-Dove, 19 October 2010, Bloomington, Hennepin County. Photo by Anthony X. Hertz.

ground, noted the absence of bands. Bob Russell, in attendance at the 5 December meeting, commented that all Wisconsin (eastern flock) birds are banded with conspicuous leg bands, but virtually no Aransas/Wood Buffalo birds are anymore, except for a handful for a radio telemetry project. This is only the third accepted record since the formation of MOURC in 1974.

- Whooping Crane, 30 May 2010, about five miles west of Newfolden, Marshall County (record #2010-021A, vote 7–0). The identification of the sighting (photographed) was unanimously accepted (second round vote 7–0), but see Not Accepted records. The question of origin will be voted after discussion at the next regular MOURC meeting.

- Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*), 20 September 2010, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2010-030, vote 7–0). This juvenile bird was carefully identified and photographed.

- Sabine's Gull, 25 September 2010, Duluth, Superior entry of Park Point, St. Louis County (record #2010-031, vote 7–0). The observation was of a single flock of ten juvenile birds.

- Common Ground-Dove (*Columbina passerina*), 18 through 20 October 2010, Highland Regional Park, Hennepin County (record #2010-032, vote 7–0). Fourth state record and first county record. This bird was seen and photographed by many observers.

- Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*),

15 May 2010, Clay County (record #2010-026, vote 5–2). The original documentation lacked a description of the sighting. Subsequently, additional information was obtained via e-mail providing a description. Some members felt that allowing additional information to be considered subsequent to the original documentation was a break from tradition and therefore inappropriate. At the 5 December meeting, it was decided to re-vote on the record and permit consideration of the additional information. The record was accepted on the second round (record #2010-026, second round vote 5–2). Establishment of a written procedure addressing situations where additional information is submitted subsequent to the original documentation will be a priority of the Committee at its next meeting.

- Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*), 4 September 2010, Anoka County, (record # 2010-033, vote 7–0). This fourth state and first county record was seen and documented by a single observer. Photographed. Due to privacy considerations, the exact location will remain undisclosed. There are now three fall records and one spring record of this accidental species. Previous records are from 1982 in Ramsey, 1995 in St. Louis, and 2005 in Cook (only spring record).

- Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*), 17 August 2010, Sherburne NWR, Mahanomen Trail, Sherburne County (record #2010-028, vote 7–0).



Record #2010-033, Northern Wheatear, 4 September 2010, Anoka County. Photo by Joe Conley.

The following records were voted on 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.)

- Whooping Crane, 1–2 June 2010, near Newfolden, Marshall County (record #2010-021B, vote 0–7). This sighting was unanimously not accepted in a second round vote 0–7 due to lack of a description.

- Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*), 16 September 2010, Wabasha County (record #2010-029, vote 0–7). The observers may have seen this distinctive species, but the members uniformly agree that the observers unfortunately provided too few details.

- Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*), 6 December 2009, Black Dog Lake, Dakota County (record #2010-004, second round vote 0–7). This record (original vote 5–2) was discussed at the 5 December meeting and re-circulated for a second vote. This record was

submitted by a highly competent observer, but was rejected primarily due to insufficient details. This difficult-to-identify species was also viewed under rather poor lighting conditions and at a considerable distance. Some members thought the description under these poor viewing conditions did not eliminate possible hybrids or other large larids such as Glaucous-winged Gull or “Vega” Herring Gull.

- Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*), 2 August 2010, Becker County (record #2010-027, vote 0–7). This was a heard-only observation. While several members initially expressed a desire to accept the record, it was overridden by the observer's lack of actual field experience regarding vocalizations. Similarly, the brevity of the auditory encounter weighed heavily against acceptance.

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: Barbara McGregor, Sue Bergman, Brad R. Bolduan, Paul E. Budde, David A. Cahlander, Joe Conley, Herb Dingmann, Robert M. Dunlap, Kim R. Eckert, Ben W. Fritchman, Peter Harrison, Anthony X. Hertz, Jeanie M. Joppru, Jason King, Gregory A. Knutsen, Larry Kopischke, William C. Marengo, James P. Mattsson, Douglas Mayo, Robert H. O'Connor, Judith O'Neale, Jeff J. Stephenson, Steve Stucker, Peder H. Svingen and Steve Weston. Many observers documented records of rare Regular species which were not voted on by the Committee; though not cited here, their efforts are also 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>>.

Summary: 11 records voted on, 7 Accepted, 3 Not Accepted, and 1 Origin.

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