

# Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

Tom Tustison, Chairman

The two most recent meetings of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (MOURC) were conducted at Drew and Becky Smith's home in Eagan on 4 March 2012, and at the Bell Museum of Natural History on 2 December 2012. In attendance and voting at the first meeting were MOURC members, Robert M. Dunlap, Bruce A. Fall, Anthony X. Hertz, Robert P. Russell (alternate), Andrew D. Smith (alternate) and Tom A. Tustison (Chair). The chair appointed Robert B. Janssen to serve as a temporary, alternate member and allow the Committee to reach a quorum. These members were also in attendance at the December meeting, along with MOURC members Terrence B. Brashear (alternate), Kim R. Eckert, James W. Lind, and William C. Marengo.

Prior to these meetings, the following records were voted on by e-mail and were Accepted:

- **Barrow's Goldeneye** (*Bucephala islandica*), 26 December 2011, Lake Pepin outlet near Camp Lacupolis, Wabasha County (record #2011-053, vote 7–0). The descriptions of this adult male are convincing.

- **Barrow's Goldeneye** (*Bucephala islandica*), 31 December 2011 – 6 January 2012, Mississippi River one mile south of the Wabasha County border, Winona County (record #2011-055, vote 7–0). The description by an experienced waterfowl observer is diagnostic. First county record. This adult drake may have been the same individual documented five days earlier (see record #2011-053 above) at the Camp Lacupolis overlook 22 miles to the north in Wabasha County. Undocumented reports from the U.S. Highway 61 rest area on Lake Pepin on 5 and 8 December 2011 may also pertain to this individual.

- **Barrow's Goldeneye** (*Bucephala islandica*), 2 January 2012, Lake City, Goodhue County (record #2012-001, vote 7–0). The



**Record #2012-004, Neotropic Cormorant, 30 March 2012, Ellsborough Township, Murray County. Photo by Craig R. Mandel.**

photo clearly shows an adult, drake Barrow's Goldeneye. This may be the same male referenced above.

- **Barrow's Goldeneye** (*Bucephala islandica*), 26 December 2011, Lake Pepin outlet near Camp Lacupolis, viewed from U.S. Highway 61, Wabasha County (record #2011-052, vote 7–0). The documentation from two experienced observers was conclusive. Adult female. While its status is currently Casual in Minnesota, Barrow's Goldeneye likely will become a Regular species when the next Checklist is updated in 2014.

- **Barrow's Goldeneye** (*Bucephala islandica*), 16 March 2012, Lac qui Parle County (record #2012-002, vote 5–2). Although the field notes were not included with the Request for Documentation, the description is adequate. The record would have been appreciably better had a copy of the field notes



**Record #2012-005, Brown Pelican, 8 April 2012, Red Wing, Goodhue County. Photo by John Hockema.**



**Record #2012-006, Black-necked Stilt, 15 April 2012, Long Meadow Lake, Hennepin County. Photo by Connie Brunnell.**



**Record #2012-006, Purple Sandpiper, 17 March 2012, Split Rock Lighthouse State Park, Lake County. Photo by Heidi Pinkerton.**

and a sketch been included in the Request for Documentation. Adult male.

- **Neotropic Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*), 30–31 March 2012, Ellsborough Township, Current Lake, Swensen County Park, Murray County (record #2012-004, vote 7–0). The photos and description are diagnostic. Fifth state record and new county record for this photographed adult bird.

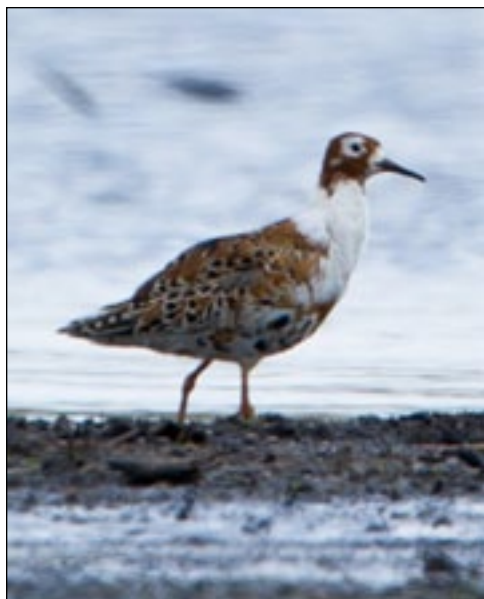
- **Brown Pelican** (*Pelecanus occidentalis*), 4–9 April 2012, at the marina in Red Wing, Goodhue County (record #2012-005, vote 7–0). This adult was photographed by numerous observers, but no one submitted a complete description supported by field notes. The Committee welcomes images and other physical evidence, but always values written descriptions based on field notes taken while the bird was being observed or shortly thereafter. What is believed by the Committee to be the same bird was also seen and photographed in Dakota County on 9 April 2012 at the intersection of U.S. Highway 52 and County Road 46. The Goodhue and Dakota county records are both first county records. Other contemporaneous sightings of a purported Brown Pelican in Hennepin and Chisago Counties (thought to be the same

bird though not photographically documented) were Not Accepted by consensus of the Committee at its 2 December 2012 meeting.

- **Tricolored Heron** (*Egretta tricolor*), 19 May 2012, Succonix WMA (north unit), Clearwater Township, Wright County (record #2012-015, vote 5–2). Although seen only in flight, the observer's documentation is adequate to support the identification. Considerable weight was given to the observer's previous experience with this species in southern states. First county record; sixteenth state record; and ninth spring record. The most recent previous record was in 2007.

- **Mississippi Kite** (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), 15 September 2011, Hawk Ridge, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2011-054, vote 6–1). The observer's experience with the species weighed heavily in the decision to accept this record. Prior to 2012, there have been ten records from Hawk Ridge all seen within the narrow time interval of 30 August to 15 September. In fall 2012, there have been five different sightings in Duluth (all pending MOURC review) with three at Hawk Ridge (beginning on 27 August with the latest on 16 September). Adult.

- **Black-necked Stilt** (*Himantopus mexi-*



**Record #2012-008, Ruff, 18 April 2012, Silver Creek Reservoir, Olmsted County. Photo by Andrew Nyhus.**

*canus*), 15 April 2012, Long Meadow Lake, Hennepin County (record #2012-006, vote 7-0). This record is exceedingly well-documented with photos and descriptions from numerous observers. First spring record for Hennepin County. Adult, photographed.

- **Black-necked Stilt** (*Himantopus mexicanus*), 20-23 April 2012, Lily Lake, Blue Earth County (record #2012-009, vote 7-0). The photos of this adult are adequate for positive identification. First county record.

- **Black-necked Stilt** (*Himantopus mexicanus*), 19 May 2012, Sleepy Eye wastewater treatment plant, Brown County (record #2012-014, vote 7-0). The photos and descriptions by the two observers of this adult are diagnostic.

- **Purple Sandpiper** (*Calidris maritima*), 17 March 2012, Split Rock Lighthouse State Park, Lake County (record #2012-003, vote 7-0). The photo is diagnostic. Interestingly, this is the seventh state record, first county record, and first documented spring record. The bird appears to be in first winter plumage. The conspicuous orange-yellow bill base and legs are consistent with Purple and not Rock Sandpiper. For a recent discussion of

the rationale for excluding Rock Sandpiper as a possibility, see **The Loon** 84:3-4.

- **Ruff** (*Philomachus pugnax*), 18 April 2012, Silver Creek Reservoir, Olmsted County (record #2012-008, vote 7-0). This colorfully-plumaged adult was documented by several observers and supported by multiple photos. First county record and earliest spring date on record.

- **White-winged Dove** (*Zenaida asiatica*), 21-29 April 2012, Lewiston, Winona County (record #2012-011, vote 7-0). The record was conclusively documented by written description and excellent photos. First county record.

- **White-winged Dove** (*Zenaida asiatica*), 17-22 June 2012, Itasca County (record #2012-018, vote 7-0). The high-quality photo was diagnostic. First county record. This species has now been recorded every year since 2003.

- **Say's Phoebe** (*Sayornis saya*), 21-22 April 2012, farm pond just east of county road 17 on county road 16, Fillmore County (record #2012-010, vote 7-0). The record was unanimously Accepted based largely on excellent photos. First county record. Coincidentally, the bird was seen on the same farm pond where a Glossy Ibis and a White-winged Scoter were seen in previous years.

- **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** (*Tyrannus forficatus*), 24 May 2012, Kelliher, Beltrami County (record #2012-016, vote 7-0). The photo is diagnostic. First county record.

- **Sprague's Pipit** (*Anthus spragueii*), 8-29 June 2012, Felton Prairie area, Clay County (record #2012-017, vote 7-0). The photos and descriptions of behavior and song leave no doubt about the identification. Many people saw and heard this bird and provided adequate documentation. The bird was displaying and apparently in full song. When a rare species is present for an extended time period such as this one, it would be desirable to attempt to obtain a sound recording. Incidentally, this species has been recorded at Felton Prairie in twenty-one distinct years commencing in 1961.

- **Lark Bunting** (*Calamospiza melanocorys*), 14 June 2012, Round Lake Township (T101N, R38W), Jackson County (record #2012-024, vote 7-0). This observation, submitted by a competent observer, was also





**Record #2012-017, Sprague's Pipit, 13 June 2012, Felton Prairie, Clay County. Photo by Butch Ukura.**

substantiated by photographic evidence. Only the second post-nineteenth century record for the county; the first was in 1971.

- **Golden-crowned Sparrow** (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*), 19–20 April 2012, Fredenberg Township, St. Louis County (record #2012-007, vote 7–0). This adult Golden-crowned Sparrow is documented by superb photographic evidence. This represents the eighth state record and the third for St. Louis County following one that overwintered at Dave Gilbertson's feeder in 1989–1990 (*The Loon* 62:55–56 with a photo published on the cover of that issue) and one seen sporadically at a feeder near UMD in Duluth 20 December 2008 – 2 April 2009.

- **Lazuli Bunting** (*Passerina amoena*), 6 May 2012, Lakefield, Jackson County (record #2012-012, vote 5–2). This difficult identification was determined to be that of a Lazuli Bunting. Some members commented that the bird may have been a hybrid because the bird lacked the clean separation between the blue of the head and the rust of the breast, had a reduced and pale rusty breast, and had thin, dull wing bars, particularly the upper bar. These features might indicate hybridiza-

tion. However, a subadult, or even a second year bird, molting into alternate plumage may also exhibit these same characteristics, particularly in late winter or early spring.

- **Brambling** (*Fringilla montifringilla*), 4 April 1984, Fish Lake, Eagan, Dakota County (record #2012-023, vote 7–0). This second (based on date of discovery) state record may be the oldest historic record that the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee has ever evaluated. The reason for its extremely delayed submission is that the observer was just recently entering his historic records into eBird. That is how this record came to light 28 years later. This record was reviewed many years after the fact based on supporting documentation obtained from the observer by Committee member and Minnesota's eBird reviewer Bruce Fall. Mr. Fall corresponded by email with the observer several times about this record and ultimately received four photos on 12 July 2012. Debatable, this could be the same bird as the Owatonna individual seen and documented by many observers (last seen just eleven days earlier than the present record). It should be noted that Minnesota's first Brambling record was reported from Owatonna (Steele County) from 4 February through 24 March 1984 (*The Loon* 56:79–80). It's unfortunate that with all the photos that were allegedly taken of the Owatonna bird none seems to have been published in *The Loon* — only Dr. Walter J. Breckenridge's cover painting in the same issue depicts the earlier record. Dr. Breckenridge was not listed in this article, *The Loon* (56:79–80), as among the observers that day, so it's unclear if his painting was first-hand. Note the reference in this article, final paragraph (Editor's note), to other numerous Brambling records that same year elsewhere in the U.S. and Canada ("during the fall and winter of 1983–84 Bramblings were recorded in California (one at Crescent City), Utah (one at Logan), Colorado (one at Colorado Springs, another at Boulder) and in Ontario (one at Atikoken). There were other reports in Canada from Nova Scotia, Manitoba and British Columbia."). Second state record and first county record. There are now a total of six state records of this Asiatic vagrant.

The following records were voted on by e-

mail 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 Minnesota Ornithologists' Union, or in its 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.

- Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*), 23 June 2012, along U.S. Highway 75, Traverse County (record #2012-019, vote 0–7). The photos clearly show a pale Red-tailed Hawk, possibly a similar-looking juvenile “Kriders.” Both observers mentioned that the legs were feathered (“lower on the legs” and “black spots on the tibia and tarsal feathers”). However, the photos are equivocal and seem to show unfeathered lower tarsi (a Ferruginous Hawk should be feathered to the toes). There are characters that seem at odds with a Ferruginous Hawk, including the white speckling on the upperparts (photo), the seeming lack of a dark eye line (photos), the description of rufous back and shoulders (juvenile Ferruginous Hawks lack rufous on the upperparts). There is no description of the tail or the wing pattern in flight (these are important identification features), even though the bird was seen flying initially. There are too many uncertainties in the description and the photos are too distant for confirmation of this record.

- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*), 23 June 2012, Tanberg Township Road 271, Wilkin County (record #2012-020, vote 2–5). While the identification of this distinctive species is probably correct, the documentation is inadequate to support it. Very little is presented except a statement about “dark colored wings, the long dark tail with a little bit of white patch and the tail did slightly spread as it flew away from us”. The written description lacked sufficient details to support the record.

- Prairie Warbler (*Setophaga discolor*), 16 May 2012, Nicollet County (record #2012-013,

vote 0–7). Voice-only records require careful scrutiny. The observer does not state that he has any actual voice-identification field experience with Prairie Warblers. While it is possible to learn the song from tapes alone (especially for species with distinctive calls or songs), the Committee prefers to err on the side of caution with such records. This is especially true when the observer's actual voice-identification field experience is either limited or otherwise unknown. The brief written description might pertain to other species as well.

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: Don Vrchota (*vide* Carl W. Greiner), Karl J. Bardon, David A. Bartkey, Milton J. Blomberg, Conny M. Brunell, Philip C. Chu, Shawn Conrad, Kim R. Eckert, Bruce A. Fall, Jason Frank, Carl W. Greiner, Ben Harste, Chad Heins, John W. Hockema, Paul E. Jantscher, Andrew Krenz, Mike Majeski, Craig R. Mandel, Dennis and Barbara Martin, Stephen Monson-Geerts, David F. Neitzel, Andrew Nyhus, Richard Ouren, Aaron Pietsch, Heidi Pinkerton, Susan Plankis, Karl Roe, John Schladweiler, Joel Schmidt, Brian T. Smith, Kevin D. Smith, Pedder H. Svingen, Raymond Tervo, Butch Ukura, Skyler Vold, Garrett Wee, and Roy Zimmerman. 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>>. Summary: 27 records voted on — 23 Accepted, 4 Not Accepted.

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