

# Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

Tom A. Tustison, Chairman

The most recent meeting of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (hereafter "MOURC") was conducted at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center in Bloomington, Minnesota, on 2 December 2012. In attendance and voting at this meeting were MOURC members Terry P. Brashear (alternate), Robert M. Dunlap, Kim R. Eckert, Bruce A. Fall, Anthony X. Hertz, James W. Lind, William C. Marengo, Robert P. Russell (alternate), Andrew D. Smith (alternate), and Tom A. Tustison (chair).

The following records were subsequently voted on electronically and were Accepted:

- Brant (*Branta bernicla*), 20 November 2012, Duluth, Park Point Recreation Area, St. Louis County (record #2012-041, vote 7-0). Juvenile, photographed. First fall record for St. Louis County. While the MOURC does not review records with regard to specific subspecies, it is clear from the documentation this record was that of the "Atlantic" or "Pale-bellied" subspecies (*B. b. brota*). The "Atlantic" Brant breeds in eastern Arctic Canada, Greenland, and Spitzbergen, and winters along the Atlantic Coast of North America and Ireland. The "Black" Brant (*B. b. nigricans*) ranges geographically from extreme northeast Siberia to northern Canada, and winters to northern Mexico and China (Clements Checklist 2012). Both of these subspecies have occurred in Minnesota and may be split into distinct species in the future. A search of MOU archives reveals only two "Black" Brant records out of a total eighteen Brant records for the state. The first was an adult 17-31 May 1966 at Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Aitkin County (see cover page of *The Loon*, volume 38, September 1966) and the second was a purported juvenile at Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge, Marshall County on 31 October 1972. Neither "Black" Brant record has



**Brant, record #2012-041, 20 November 2012, Duluth, St. Louis County. Photo by Shawn Zierman.**

been formally reviewed by MOURC because both records precede its formation in 1974.

- Barrow's Goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*), 25 December 2012 – 16 April 2013, Minnesota side of Superior Entry and at least four Duluth locations including Park Point and Kitchi Gammi Park, St. Louis County (record #2012-046, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed. This is most likely the same adult returning to the Duluth area for the fifth consecutive winter. Its plumage appears to be identical when compared to images from previous years with its distinctive shoulder spur which appears truncated and blunt-tipped.

- Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), 6 September 2012, Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve, St. Louis County (record #2012-029, vote 7-0). Juvenile, photographed. There are several good images of this individual on file.

- Mississippi Kite, 16 September 2012, Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve, St. Louis County (record #2012-030, vote 7-0). This juvenile bird was seen for over an hour and well-photographed by several observers.

- Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*)



**Mississippi Kite, record #2012-029, 6 September 2012, Duluth, St. Louis County. Photo by Cory A. Ritter.**



**Black-legged Kittiwake, record #2012-042, 28 November 2012, Duluth, St. Louis County. Photo by Jan and Larry Kraemer.**

*tyla*), 10 November 2012, Canal Park in Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2012-040, vote 7–0). Juvenile. While not photographed, the record is supported by written details from a highly-knowledgeable gull observer.

- Black-legged Kittiwake, 28 November 2012, Canal Park in Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2012-042, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed. This appears to be the first documented adult on record in the state.

- Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*), 21 September 2012, Purgatory Wetlands in Eden Prairie, Hennepin County (record #2012-031, vote 7–0). Juvenile, photographed. First county record. The bird was documented by several practiced observers.

- Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*), 30 December 2012 – 5 January 2013, Superior Entry Minnesota side and Canal Park, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2012-047, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed. The record was well-documented by two veteran gull observers. It is interesting to note that a Slaty-backed Gull has been seen in Duluth every year since 2008. At a minimum, there have been two different birds because the 2008 record was an adult, whereas the 2009 record was a third-cycle individual.

- White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*), 9 November 2012, Taconite Harbor, Cook County (record #2012-039, vote 7–0). First

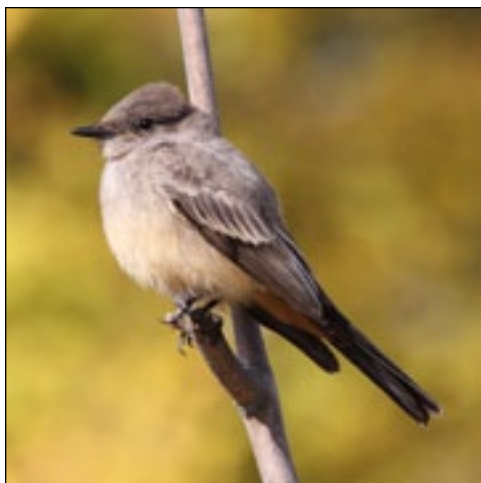
fall record for Cook County. Predictably, this Casual species will be relegated to Regular status when the next Checklist of The Birds of Minnesota is updated in 2014. Contemporaneous field notes would have been helpful, but MOURC members thought the description was adequate. The experience of the observer with this particular species weighed significantly in favor of acceptance.

- Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*), 7 October – 11 October 2012, McQuade Road Safe Harbor, northeast of Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2012-033, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed. The bird was seen and documented by numerous observers over the course of its five-day stay at the same location (*The Loon* 84:46).

- Cassin's Kingbird (*Tyrannus vociferans*), 27 October – 12 November 2012, Grand Marais, near East Bay Hotel and Suites, Cook County (record #2012-025, vote 10–0, physical evidence vote 10–0). First state record. All ten members vote on potential first state records and, if Accepted, on the physical evidence. The latter vote only requires a majority for acceptance and decides whether or not the species can be identified from the physical evidence alone. The physical evidence vote obviates the "s" subscript on the state checklist. This species had been anticipated in the state for many years. It was seen and



**Slaty-backed Gull, record #2012-047, 30 December 2012, Duluth, St. Louis County. Photo by Peder H. Svingen.**



**Say's Phoebe, record #2012-033, 7 October 2012, McQuade Road Safe Harbor, St. Louis County. Photo by Peder H. Svingen.**

photographed at various locations within the city of Grand Marais by at least 67 observers over the course of its 17-day stay. In addition to the sightings near the East Bay Hotel and Suites, it was frequently observed in the vicinity of the Cook County Courthouse as well as the intersection of Third Street and Second Avenue West.

- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*), 2 August 2012, U.S. Highway 71 one mile south of the Redwood County line, Cottonwood County (record #2012-028, vote 7-0). Photographed. First county record. Though the image of the bird in the photograph was poor, the observer has had extensive experience with the species in another state, having seen approximately one hundred Scissor-tailed Flycatchers there.

- Clark's Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*), 12 October 2012, Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve, St. Louis County (record #2012-034, vote 7-0). Photographed. There were six ostensible records of this species during the 2012 fall season — all from different counties. Only five of these reports were documented, and only three of these were Accepted. This represents a significant movement into the state comparable to 1972 when the species was reported from four Minnesota counties. These 1972 records were never formally reviewed because they preceded the

formation of MOURC. Interestingly, an examination of eBird data for the 2012 fall season showed no reports of this species in any contiguous state other than in the Black Hills of South Dakota where it might be expected. It is also noteworthy that there were no subsequent winter reports of this species in Minnesota despite the significant number of fall records.

- Clark's Nutcracker, 10-12 October 2012, Cloquet, Carlton County (record #2012-035, vote 7-0). Photographed. First county record. The record is supported by several high-quality images.

- Clark's Nutcracker, 30 October – 2 November 2012, near the intersection of County Road I and Hodgson Road, Shoreview, Ramsey County (record #2012-037, vote 7-0). First county record. This bird was seen by roughly 50 observers and documented photographically by several individuals.

- Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*), 11 October 2012, Mankato, Blue Earth County (record #2012-036, vote 7-0). Photographed. First county record. The record was Accepted primarily on the strength of a single image.

- Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*), 20 April 2012, restricted area in Zimmerman, Sherburne County (record #2012-048, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed. First county record and ninth state record.



**Cassin's Kingbird, record #2012-025, 27 October 2012, Grand Marais, Cook County. Photo by Anthony X. Hertzell.**



**Clark's Nutcracker, record #2012-037, 31 October 2012, Shoreview, Ramsey County. Photo by Anthony X. Hertzell.**

This bird occurred simultaneously, in part, with the state's eighth record #2012-007 in Fredenberg Township, St. Louis County (see *The Loon* 84:111).

- Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*), 14 July 2012, Shoreview, Ramsey County (record #2012-026, vote 7–0). Adult male, photographed. First summer record for Ramsey County. Fifth summer record for the state; the first summer record was 4 June 1935 in Madison, Lac qui Parle County.

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 Minnesota Ornithologists' Union (hereafter "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.)

- Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*), 21 July 2012, County Road 24, Pope County (record #2012-027, vote 0–7). Photographed. The observers themselves indicated that they were not comfortable with the identification. MOURC members overwhelmingly thought this was a juvenile Red-tailed Hawk.

- Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*), 21 September 2012, middle of Mille Lacs Lake, Mille Lacs County (record #2012-032, vote 0–7). The record is undermined because no optics were used, no field notes were taken, and the identification was made solely from memory two days later after consulting a field guide. Most MOURC members were of the opinion that Red-necked Phalarope was not adequately eliminated from consideration.

- Laughing Gull (*Leucophaeus atricilla*), 2 December 2012, Red Wing, Goodhue County (record #2012-044, vote 0–7). The observation, made without optics, lacked sufficient detail in the description to completely eliminate Franklin's Gull from consideration. This possibly correct identification did not adequately rule out a second-year Franklin's Gull, which can be difficult to differentiate and is often mistaken for this species.



**Rock Wren, record #2012-036, 11 October 2012, Mankato, Blue Earth County. Photo by Franklin Selvey.**

- White-throated Swift (*Aeronautes saxatalis*), 27 June 2012, Cottonwood, Lyon County (record #2012-022, first vote 4–3; re-circulated vote 0–7). The drawing illustrates a dark eye within a white face which is not consistent with this species. Several MOURC members who originally accepted this record had other reservations with statements such as “Chimney Swifts that were near were considerably smaller.” After a thorough discussion at its 2 December 2012 meeting, those uncertainties were augmented with no one speaking in favor of accepting the record.

- Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*), 20 December 2012, 155th Avenue, just south of Lac qui Parle County Road 12, Lac qui Parle County (record #2012-045, vote 0–7). There were not enough details to satisfactorily eliminate other possible raptor species.

- Clark’s Nutcracker, 6 November 2012, Golden Valley, Hennepin County (record #2012-038, vote 0–7). The principal supporting documentation was a sketch made from memory seven days after the observation. White wing patches should have been partially visible when the bird was at rest and certainly when in flight. However, no mention was ever made of this distinctive char-

acteristic even though the bird was seen in flight. The observer had no previous experience with the species.

- Clark’s Nutcracker, 29 November 2012, County Road 11 roughly half a mile north of the intersection with County Road 2, Lac qui Parle County (record #2012-043, vote 2–5). Although the description seems consistent with Clark’s Nutcracker, it is difficult to accept a record of an Accidental species based exclusively on a five-second view of the bird in flight, made while driving at forty miles per hour, apparently without any attempt to stop to relocate it for purposes of obtaining detailed information.

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: Karl J. Bardon, Brad R. Bolduan, Conny M. Brunell, Paul E. Budde, David A. Cahlander, Kim R. Eckert, Jason Frank, Kent Goble, Gregory, Dan and Pam Guynn, Mike L. Hendrickson, Anthony X. Hertz, Rich and Barb Houston, Marcia Johnson, Paul L. Johnson, Tom Jones, Jan and Larry Kraemer, James W. Lind, Andrew B. Longtin, Mike Majeski, Gabriel Miller, Carolyn Papke, Cory A. Ritter, Karl Roe, Franklin Selvey, Peder H. Svingen, Tom A. Tustison, Garrett Wee, Dan and Barbara Williams, Shawn Zierman, 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: 25 records voted on — 18 Accepted, 7 Not Accepted.

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