

# Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee

Thomas A. Tustison, Chairman

The most recent meeting of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (MOURC) was conducted at the Trailhouse Lodge at the Carpenter Nature Center on 19 August 2018. In attendance and voting at this meeting were MOURC members Dedrick A. Benz, Andrew R. Forbes, Anthony X. Hertz, Douglas W. Kieser, William C. Marengo (alternate), John P. Richardson (alternate), Robert P. Russell, Andrew D. Smith, Steven P. Stucker (alternate) and Thomas A. Tustison (chair).

The following records were voted on and Accepted:

- Eurasian Wigeon (*Mareca penelope*) [Casual], 15 April 2018, Otter Tail River, Fergus Falls, Otter Tail County (record #2018-004, vote 7-0). Adult male, photographed. First county record.

- Eurasian Wigeon 27-28 April 2018, Kolkin's Pond, Beltrami County (record #2018-006, vote 7-0). Adult male, photographed.

- Eurasian Wigeon 28 April 2018, just east of the intersection of County Roads 9 and 4, Waseca County (record #2018-007, vote 7-0). Adult male, photographed. First county record.

- Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) [Accidental], 7-18 January 2018, Colvill Park, Red Wing, Goodhue County (record #2018-001, vote 10-0; origin vote 3-7; physical evidence vote 10-0). Adult male, photographed. First state and county record. Moved between Colvill Park where first located to other points along the Mississippi River as far south as Greene Point. A seven-member majority thought origin was uncertain meaning there is reasonable uncertainty as to the bird's origin and wildness, or uncertainty as to its natural occurrence or arrival in the state. A three-member minority thought the bird was wild. Consequently, the status of the species will be A<sub>0</sub> in the 2019 Checklist. As an aside, the Wisconsin Ornithological Society (WSO) Records Committee reviewed the same bird which also had been

seen in Wisconsin waters. Three documented reports were evaluated by that Committee and the record was Accepted. The issue of provenance was not regarded as a concern and all members were satisfied that the bird was wild. WSO Chairman Quentin Yoerger (pers. comm.) stated that the Committee concluded the record fit within the expected timeframe for European waterfowl to most likely show up in eastern North America (see *The Loon* 90:126-128).

- White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) [Casual], 4 July 2018, Ramsey, Anoka County (record #2018-030, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed.

- *Selasphorus* hummingbird [Accidental], 23-24 September 2017, Crane Lake, St. Louis County (record #2017-050, vote 7-0). Photographed. The Committee considered Rufous Hummingbird, but unanimously agreed to accept it at the genus level only.

- Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*) [Accidental], 6-30 June 1979, Mound, Hennepin County (record #1979-001, vote 9-1). First state record (*The Loon* 51:142). The Committee voted to review all previously published Black Rail observations in the state that had never been formally voted on. Many of these records preceded the formation of MOURC in 1974. There are still a few, pre-MOURC Black Rail observations undergoing further research and those will be reviewed after the work is completed. There are no Accepted records supported by physical evidence. Therefore, the species will be considered as an A<sub>s</sub> regarding its status in the 2019 Checklist. Also see Unaccepted Records elsewhere in this article.

- Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) [Casual], 21 May 2018, CHS Wetlands, Lyon County (record #2018-021, vote 7-0).

- Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*) [Casual], 25 April 2018, Big Stone County (record #2018-025, vote 7-0). Adult male, photographed.

- Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*)



**Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*), 14 January 2018, Red Wing, Goodhue County. Photo by Becca Engdahl.**



**Selasphorus hummingbird 23 September 2017, Crane Lake, St. Louis County. Photo by Dee Kuder.**

[Accidental], 8–9 May 2018, Lone Tree Lake, Lyon County (record #2018-013, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed. First county record and fourth state record.

- Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*) [Casual], 14 May 2017, Murray/Lyon County Line Road, Murray County (record #2017-008, vote 7–0). Photographed. After two lengthy debates, photographic analysis, and consultation with outside experts the record was accepted. Third spring record since 2010.

- Western Sandpiper, 1 May 2018, Lake Byllesby, northwest corner of the reservoir, Dakota County (record #2018-011, vote 6–1).

- Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*) [Accidental], 1 October 1988, Acacia Park Cemetery, Dakota County (as record #1988-001, vote 6–1). Adult, male. This is the first of a series of *Fregata* sp. records to be reviewed. Originally, this record was unanimously accepted as a *Fregata* sp., then with a majority vote as a Magnificent Frigatebird (*The Loon* 61:11, 62:12). Subsequently, the record was reconsidered and reclassified as *Fregata* sp. (it was then cited as record #2006-099; vote: Not Accepted as Magnificent Frigatebird 3–7, Accepted as *Fregata* sp. 10–0). (*The Loon* 79:55). The arguments for this reclassification were based upon the occurrence of a single sighting of a seriously injured parasitized Great Frigatebird (*F. minor*) in Oklahoma on 11 November 1975 (*Bulletin of the*

*Oklahoma Ornithological Society* June 1977) and upon two inland sightings of Lesser Frigatebirds (*F. ariel*) in Wyoming (11 July 2003) and Michigan (11 September 2005). After discussion at two MOURC meetings on 3 December 2017 and 19 August 2018, the Committee decided to again reconsider the record due to new information in the literature not previously available when the record was re-examined in 2006. Finally, after its second reconsideration, the record was Accepted. Reasons for acceptance were focused on the original, contemporaneous field notes; the study of the path of Hurricane Gilbert and its unprecedented plethora of fallout of frigatebirds (none was identified as Great Frigatebirds) records in the Midwest; and the new illustrations of frigatebirds in the literature. All ages and sexes of Lesser Frigatebird should have shown white in the plumage which the field notes of this record specifically state was absent.

- Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) [Accidental], 11–16 April 2018, undisclosed private property, Faribault County (record #2018-003, vote 7–0).

- Barn Owl, 18 March – 1 August 2018, five miles northwest of Houston in Perkins Valley, Houston County (record #2018-022, vote 7–0). Audio recorded on 18 March, 21 May, and 1 August, 2018. All 2018 recordings are presumed to be the same bird(s). Wild Barn Owls have been previously audio-recorded at this location several times before in



**Sage Thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*), 29 May 2018, Duluth, St. Louis County. Photo by Peder H. Svingen.**



**Yellow-throated Warbler (*Setophaga dominica*), 17 May 2018, Whitewater State Park, Winona County. Photo by Michael Henry.**

2014, and spring through fall in 2017. It is possible that the 2017 recordings were the same bird(s). However, despite continuous audio monitoring in 2015 and 2016, no Barn Owls were recorded. Based on an average life expectancy of one to two years for this species, it is highly unlikely that the 2014 bird was the same recorded in 2018.

- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*) [Casual], 31 May 2018, 570th Avenue, Blue Earth County (record #2018-026, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed. First county record.

- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher 5 June 2018, Douglas Road, Carlton County (record #2018-027, vote 7–0).

- White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*) [Casual], 7 May 2018, Carleton College Cowling Arboretum, Rice County (record #2018-014, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed.

- White-eyed Vireo 23–24 May 2018, Carver Park Reserve / Grimm Road Picnic and Recreation Area, Carver County (record #2018-019, vote 7–0). Audio recorded.

- Sage Thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*) [Accidental], 29 May 2018, Minnesota Point, Nature Trail southeast of Sky Harbor Airport, St. Louis County (record #2018-023, vote 7–0). Photographed. First county record. Thirteenth state and sixth spring record.

- Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*) [Casual], 3–4 May 2018, Minnesota Avenue and 37th Street, Park Point Duluth, St.

Louis County (record #2018-009, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed.

- Eurasian Tree Sparrow 8 May – 21 August 2018, First Street and Fourth Avenue East and the 300 block of East First Street, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2018-010, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed.

- Eurasian Tree Sparrow, 9 May 2018, private residence, Maple Grove, Hennepin County (record #2018-015, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed.

- Cassin's Finch (*Haemorhous cassinii*) [Accidental], 8–9 April 2018, private residence, Edina, Hennepin County (record #2018-002, vote 7–0). Second state and first spring record. Female/immature, photographed. Last previous record was in fall 1987.

- Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*) [Casual], 13 May 2018, White Oak Lake Access, Itasca County (record #2018-017, vote 6–1). Presumed adult. First county record.

- Yellow-throated Warbler (*Setophaga dominica*) [Casual], 1–2 May 2018, Riverfront Regional Park, Anoka County (record #2018-008, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed.

- Yellow-throated Warbler, 8–17 May 2018, Whitewater State Park office feeders, Winona County (record #2018-018, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed.

- Yellow-throated Warbler, 5–8 June 2018, Crystal Springs Scientific and Natural Area, Washington County (record #2018-028, vote



**Cassin's Finch (*Haemorhous cassinii*), 8 April 2018, Edina, Hennepin County. Photo by Mathew Zappa.**

7–0). Adult, photographed.

- Yellow-throated Warbler, 26–27 June 2018, Hillside Road, Houston County (record #2018-029, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed and audio recorded.

- Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*) [Casual], 6 May 2018, private residence, Hennepin County (record #2018-012, vote 7–0). Adult male, photographed.

- Lazuli Bunting, 14–20 May 2018, private residence, Embarrass, St. Louis County (record #2018-024, vote 7–0). Adult male, photographed.

- Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) [Casual], 26 April – 2 May 2018, Somerset Township, Steele County (record #2018-005, vote 7–0). Presumed first-spring male, photographed and audio-recorded singing. First county record.

- Painted Bunting 9–10 May 2018, Olmsted County (record #2018-016, vote 7–0). Adult male, photographed.

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 (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 Ac-

cepted 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.)

- Black Rail [Accidental], 25 May 1934 (*The Loon* 37:52), Little Rock Lake, Benton County (record #1934-001, vote 1–9). The observer seemingly mentioned this observation in his notes as a mere curiosity. It's also unfortunate that the two printed transcriptions of his notes are different enough to cast doubt on which, if either, of the versions is accurate. The observer, admittedly uncertain of the sighting at the time, maintained personal county checklists but didn't include this sighting.

- Black Rail [Accidental], 1 May 1951, Fox Lake, Rice County (record #1951-001, vote 2–8). The date originally reported as 1 March 1951 appears to be a typo (this would be astoundingly early for this species to be present in the state) and presumably the date was meant to be 1 May 1951. A feather, allegedly retrieved from a shot bird, is missing and not verifiable as a Black Rail. There is no actual specimen and there is no information about the bird from the person who shot it. The feather in question cannot be located for further inspection or DNA analysis. All we have are statements from others, and not Dr. Warner who examined the feather, that the feather was determined to be consistent in appearance with Black Rail. Janssen (*Birds in Minnesota*, 1987, pp 114) summarizes this with the statement that the feather “compared favorably with existing specimens.” There is no actual description of the feather itself that might have aided the discussion of this record. To the best of our knowledge, there is nothing written by Dr. Warner whereby he categorically states that the feather was from a Black Rail.

- Black Rail [Accidental], 14 August 1968, Martin Lake, Anoka County (record #1968-001, vote 4–6). Given the closeness to the bird (10 to 13 feet) and the canoe moving closer one would think this would have been a very brief encounter. Despite the experience with Sora and Virginia rails, there is no evidence that either observer had ever seen a Black Rail. No optics were mentioned. There is little description at all other than (*The Loon* 41:101) “We were certain that this was a Black Rail in adult plumage, as we were able to see the

white spots on its back". Other than the conclusory remark that this was a Black Rail and reference to the spots, there are virtually no other details regarding size, plumage, or soft parts. Details should have been obvious at this range as the bird was in clear view for a «sufficiently long» observation. This hardly meets minimal standards for a description of such a rare sighting.

- Black Rail [Accidental], 12 May 1971, Frontenac, Goodhue County (record #1971-001, vote 3–7). (**The Loon** 43:52) "I saw a tiny bird dart between the green tufts of grass no more than 3 feet in front of me. I told Karen that what I saw was not black but black-and-brown with white spots." There is no indication of where these colors were located on the bird. Neither observer had experience with the bird. What was seen was conceivably not even a rail. The details are lacking in specificity. It is not even clear whether optics were used to see the bird as it darted. The power of suggestion may be at play when the field guides were used for verification.

- Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (*Calidris acuminata*) [Accidental], 12 May 2018, Wheeler Lake, Kandiyohi County (record #2018-031, vote 3–4). The report was submitted more than two months after the date of observation. While the observer indicated that the notes were taken within ten minutes of the observation, these were not included in the documentation. Not knowing what details were taken from the notes and what was taken from the numerous sources listed clouded a thorough evaluation of the documentation. There are two observers credited on the report without any specific indication as to what was seen and by whom. A separate report from each observer, done without collaboration, would have eliminated this issue. Second and (even more so) third photos in the PDF seem to show dark spotting on the rear flanks, which would effectively eliminate Pectoral Sandpiper, but because the photos are so badly degraded, it cannot be confidently determined that this is not noise in the digital data. The rest of the plumage in the photos is inconclusive and there is not enough distinction written about this bird's plumage compared to the range of plumages in Pectoral Sandpiper. Better photos unfortunately were not obtainable.

- Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*) [Accidental], 11 May 2018, Arden Hills, Ramsey County (record #2018-020, vote 2–5).

Possibly a correct identification, but the observers simply did not use the right terminology when describing it. They write "black primaries and white secondaries" which is incorrect for this species. The secondaries are also black. It is the under wing coverts and axillaries that are white (plus the head and belly, which are not mentioned).

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: Ben E. Anderson, Dave Barkley, Karla A. Bloem, Jim Brown, Paul E. Budde, Philip C. Chu, John Cyrus, Carl DeSpiegelaere, Robert M. Dunlap, Kim R. Eckert, Kimberly Emerson, Becca Engdahl, Wayne Feder, Laurence N. Gillette, Karol Gresser, Liz Harper, Michael Henry, Anthony X. Hertz, Nestor M. Hiemenz, Pete Hoeger, Ezra Horsch, Isaac Horsch, Paul E. Jantscher, Jerry Kaufman, Jan and Larry Kraemer, Dee Kuder, Tim Lamey, Val R. Landwehr, Karen E. McGee, Nolan Meyer, Fran Nobel, Wayne Perala, Jim Peterson, Douglas L. Pierzina, Nick Rosen, Boone Sherman, Jeff J. Stephenson, Paul Suchanek, Alex Sundvall, Peder H. Svingen, Thomas A. Tustison, Nancy Verba, Josh Wallesstad, Randy S. Frederickson and Josh Wallesstad, Garrett Wee, John Zakelj, Mathew Zappa, Roy Zimmerman and Dr. Dwain W. Warner (feather examiner). 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:* 39 records voted on — 33 Accepted, 6 Not Accepted.

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