

# 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 electronically on 6 December 2020. In attendance and voting at this meeting were MOURC members Derrick A. Benz, Rebecca R. Engdahl (alternate), Andrew R. Forbes, Anthony X. Hertzel, Ann E. Kessen, Douglas W. Kieser, William C. Marengo, John P. Richardson (alternate), Steven P. Stucker (alternate) and Thomas A. Tustison (chair).

The following records were voted on (most electronically) at, or subsequent to, the meeting and were Accepted:

- Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) [Accidental], 29 June – 17 July 2020, Osborne Township, Pipestone County (record #2020-039, vote 7–0). Pair of adults, photographed. First county record. Mating was observed in mid-June, but no subsequent evidence of nesting was observed. This species was first recorded in the state in 1980; eight of the first nine records were apparent migrants or post-breeding wanderers. The pattern changed in 2016 when most summer records began to appear.

- Eurasian Wigeon (*Mareca penelope*) [Casual], 16–17 April 2020, Pelican Lake, Wright County (record #2020-007, vote 7–0). Adult male, photographed.

- Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) [Casual], 4–5 May 2018, South Landfill Reservoir, Olmsted County (record #2018-067, vote 6–1). Four adults, photographed. First county record. The species' status seems destined for a change as it has occurred in each of the last nine years with a total of 35 records. There is one nesting record from 2014.

- Black-necked Stilt, 27 May 2018, Pelican Lake, Wright County (record #2018-065, vote 6–1). Adult, photographed.

- Black-necked Stilt, 14–17 October 2018, North Ottawa Impoundment, Grant County (record #2018-061, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed.

- Black-necked Stilt, 3 May 2020, Warren

Lake, Windom, Cottonwood County (record #2020-018, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed. New county record.

- Black-necked Stilt, 3 May 2020, Freeborn County (record #2020-019, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed. New county record.

- Black-necked Stilt, 1 June 2020, Steele County (record #2020-028, vote 6–1). Three adults, photographed.

- Black-necked Stilt, 9 June 2020, just south of county road 15 and about one quarter mile west of 425<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Sibley County (record #2020-040, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed.

- Laughing Gull (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) [Casual], 26 May 2018, on a sandbar near Western Lake Superior Sanitary District, St. Louis County (record #2018-066, vote 6–1). Adult. Nineteenth state record.

- California Gull (*Larus californicus*) [Casual], 15 March 2020, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (off reservation trust land), Scott County (record #2020-002, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed. First county record. A surprising four records of this Casual species were recorded in the first one-half of 2020.

- California Gull, 23 March 2020, 140<sup>th</sup> Street Marsh, Dakota County (record #2020-004, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed.

- California Gull, 10 May 2020, near the intersection of County Roads 12 and 23, Clay County (record #2020-021, vote 5–2). Adult.

- California Gull, 5 June 2020, Mud Lake, Traverse County (record #2020-031, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed. First county record.

- Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*) [Casual], 29 June 2020, Mother Lake, Hennepin County (record #2020-037, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed. Fascinatingly, there is a published report of as many as 25–30 birds of this species at the same location in 1951 (*The Loon* 26:83). However, this report was prior to the formation of MOURC in 1974 and has never been officially reviewed.

- Neotropic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) [Accidental], first reported 3 June



**Barn Owl specimen, 16 April 2020, near Corcoran, Hennepin County (record #2020-009). Photo by Anthony X. Hertz.**

2020 at Richfield Lake, Hennepin County (record #2020-029, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed. Seventh state record. This is possibly the same individual that was seen at this location the previous year (*The Loon* 92:3). Remarkably, the state's purported (still under MOURC review) eighth Neotropical Cormorant joined this bird on 19 July 2020 and both were present until 21 August 2020. The latest date that two birds were seen simultaneously was 21 August 2020. One of these two birds lingered until 20 October 2020 although the identity of which one was not undetermined.

- Neotropical Cormorant, 4 June 2020, Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, Wildlife Drive, Nelson Pool, Sherburne County (record #2020-030, vote 6-1). Photographed. First county record.

- Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) [Casual], 25-26 April 2020, Sioux Valley Township, Jackson County (record #2020-011, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed.

- Glossy Ibis, 14 May 2020, 320<sup>th</sup> Street Marsh, near Madelia, Watonwan County (record #2020-022, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed. First county record. Since its initial discovery in the

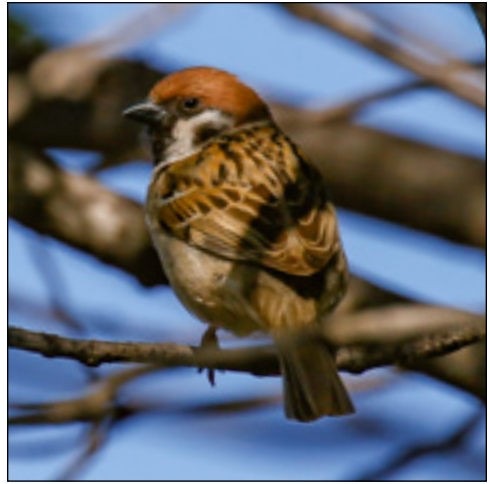
state in 1991 (*The Loon* 64:5-10), the species has been recorded on 13 more occasions through the end of 2020.

- Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) [Casual], 11-12 January 2020 (but see *The Loon* 92:86-87), Sax-Zim Bog, county road 7, near Byrnes Greenhouse, St. Louis County (record #2020-008, vote 7-0). Second-year male, photographed. This owl was hunting during the day on both days; it exhibited increasingly poor physical condition by the afternoon of the 12th. It was retrieved by several birders who took it to the University of Minnesota Raptor Center, but it died en route. A necropsy indicated that this second year male apparently died of hypoglycemia, probably due to a lack of food. It had no internal fat stores and there was obvious atrophy of the bone marrow fat in its tibiotarsus. All other tests came back within normal limits revealing no toxins and no signs of external trauma.

- Barn Owl, 16 April 2020, in a field near Corcoran, Hennepin County (record #2020-009, vote 7-0). Adult specimen was superbly photographed and preserved. Bird was found dead in a field near the town of Corcoran in northwestern Hennepin County. The owl appeared to be



**Glossy Ibis, 14 May 2020, near Madelia, Watonwan County (record #2020-022). Photo by Kimberly A. Emerson.**



**Eurasian Tree Sparrow, 31 May 2020, Lake County (record #2020-027). Photo by Lon Baumgardt.**

in nearly pristine condition. The specimen has been donated to the Bell Museum collection.

- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*) [Casual], 8 June 2020, southwest quadrant of intersection of County Roads 15 and 58, Benton County (record #2020-034, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed. First county record.

- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 30 June 2020, Rock Township, Pipestone County (record #2020-038, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed. First county record.

- Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) [Accidental], 6 June 2020, private residence in Tofte, Cook County (record #2020-041, vote 7-0). Adult male, photographed. Seventh state and first summer record. All other records have occurred in the fall during the months of October or November.

- White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*) [Casual], 4 May 1990, Grass Lake, Shoreview, Ramsey County (record #1990-001, vote 7-0). Adult. White-eyed Vireo has always been somewhat of an enigma in the state, its status vacillating between Casual and Regular since the 1980s. This record fills in a gap in the species' historic presence in Minnesota. This bird was observed at Grass Lake in Ramsey County in 1990, but the documentation was not seen by this Committee until 2019. However, written details were sufficient for the Committee to unanimously accept the 30-year-old report. At the time of the

observation, the Minnesota Checklist included White-eyed Vireo as a Casual species with records in seven years of the ten year period (1989 to 1998) but not for 1990. Even with this addition, the species' status would not have been affected for the time period in which it was seen.

- White-eyed Vireo 1 May 2020, Carver County (record #2020-017, vote 6-1). Adult.

- Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*) [Casual], 21-26 March 2020, where the bike path from Dunton Locks County Park meets Detroit Lake, Village of Riverview, Becker County (record #2020-003, vote 6-1). Female, photographed.

- Mountain Bluebird, 11-13 April 2020, one mile north of Rollag on the east side of State Highway 32, Clay County (record #2020-006, vote 7-0). Adult male, photographed.

- Mountain Bluebird, 28-29 April 2020, at the corner of 220<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 610<sup>th</sup> Street, Yellow Medicine County (record #2020-015, vote 7-0). Adult male, photographed. First county record.

- Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*) [Casual], 11 November 2019 – 5 April 2020 (dates are approximate), private residence, Ravenna Township, Dakota County (record #2019-064, vote 7-0). Adult, photographed. This individual was first observed at a Ravenna Township residence 11 November

and remained through the winter. This feeding station also hosted a Eurasian Tree Sparrow in the winter of 2014–2015 (*The Loon* 87:7). New records of this invasive species are rapidly accruing throughout many regions of the state with a current concentration in Dakota County where it was first discovered in the state (*The Loon* 62:175–177) in 1990.

- Eurasian Tree Sparrow, 8 April 2020, Fillmore County (record #2020-005, vote 7–0). Two adults both photographed. First county record.

- Eurasian Tree Sparrow, 18 April 2020, private residence, Burnsville, Dakota County (record #2020-010, vote 7–0). Two adults, both photographed.

- Eurasian Tree Sparrow, 29 May – 4 June 2020, Lake County (record #2020-027, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed.

- Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*) [Casual], 13 October 2018, the Kenwood neighborhood, Duluth, St. Louis County (record #2018-062, vote 6–1). Female, photographed.

- Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*) [Accidental], 4–8 May 2020, Riverton, Crow Wing County (record #2020-020, vote 7–0). Adult male, photographed. Fifth state and first county record. While this represents the fifth state record including the first in 1968 (*The Loon* 41:41–42), it is the third record in the last two years.

- Kentucky Warbler (*Geothlypis formosa*) [Casual], 23 May 2020, Camden State Park, Lyon County (record #2020-024, vote 6–1). Audio recorded. The bird was tracked and recorded for two and one-half hours as it sang and moved through the heavily wooded area, but was never seen. Multiple audio recordings were made by several different individuals.

- Kentucky Warbler, 20–22 June 2020, Anoka County (record #2020-036, vote 7–0). Audio recorded.

- Yellow-throated Warbler (*Setophaga dominica*) [Casual], 12–15 April 2020, Olmsted County (record #2020-013, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed. Five different Yellow-throated Warbler reports documented in 2020 is a record for a single year. This may well be an indication of an upcoming change in the species' status.

- Yellow-throated Warbler, 26–27 April 2020, Benton County (record #2020-014, vote 6–1). Adult photographed. First county record.

- Yellow-throated Warbler, 30 April – 16 May 2020, Hillside Road, Reno, Houston County

(record #2020-016, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed. There may have been two individuals, but the documentation was unclear.

- Yellow-throated Warbler, 18 May 2020, Isanti County (record #2020-023, vote 6–1). Adult. First county record.

- Yellow-throated Warbler, 19 May – 2 August 2020, north side parking lot, Vadnais Lake, Ramsey County (record #2020-035, vote 7–0). Adult, photographed.

- Prairie Warbler (*Setophaga discolor*) [Casual], 6–7 June 2020, Hillside Road several miles north of the junction with State Highway 26, Houston County (record #2020-032, vote 7–0). Two singing males; one photographed. Both were described as singing their “diagnostic slightly buzzy ascending series of notes.” The species may have persisted until 17 June 2020 as evidenced by a couple of other reports in proximity to this location.

- Prairie Warbler, 6–28 June 2020, Richard J. Dorer State Forest, Gordon Anderson Recreation Area, Houston County (record #2020-033, vote 7–0). Adult male, photographed. A second bird may also have been present here; but the documentation was insufficient for MOURC to accept more than one bird. Interestingly, a Prairie Warbler was documented very near this location in May and June 2019.

- Townsend's Warbler (*Setophaga townsendi*) [Accidental], 27 April 2020, Washington County (record #2020-012, vote 7–0). Adult male, photographed. First county and seventh state record.

- Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*) [Casual], 25 May 2019, Rochester, Olmsted County (record #2019-065, vote 6–1). Photographed. Of the nearly 60 records since 1930, only four have involved a female. This would suggest that females of this species are overlooked.

- Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) [Casual], 17–19 May 2019, Freeport, Stearns County (record #2019-066, vote 7–0). Adult male, photographed. First county record.

- Painted Bunting, 23 May 2020, six miles east of Ortonville, Big Stone County (record #2020-025, vote 6–1). Adult male, photographed. First county record.

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. Comments, if any, 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.)

- Brant (*Branta bernicla*) [Casual], 10 March 2020, Zumbro River near Foster-Arend Park, Olmsted County (record #2020-001, vote 0–7). Three birds seen as fly-overs in early March would have been a record early date by more than two weeks, suggesting thorough documentation was needed. The description of a small goose was simply too brief and MOURC concluded it was insufficient to rule out several more expected species. Alternative identification consideration was only given to Sandhill Crane and Canada Goose, but not more likely species such as Cackling Goose or other similar-sized waterfowl. The observer had no prior experience with Brant and made the identification after perusing a field guide later in the day.

- Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*) [Accidental], 23 October 2017, Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, St. Louis County (record #2017-052, vote 2–5). The Committee was somewhat split on this report. Some of the members who ultimately voted not to accept the observation commented on the overall difficulty of this vote. However, the documentation which was submitted two and a half years after the observation was eventually deemed inconclusive. Very distant raptors can be difficult to distinguish with certainty. Enough of the critical field marks needed to confirm the identification either were not seen due to the distance involved or were not mentioned. The bird was apparently so distant that neither an estimate of the distance or height was provided. For example, the upperparts were described as “Sandy-gray wash uniformly across [the] upperparts and tail.” However, there was no description of the shape or extent of the upper wing panel or tail. In addition, there was no discussion of the presence or absence of a patagial bar. Wing tip coloration and markings, if any, were not documented. It was eventually concluded by the Committee that while the documentation suggested Ferruginous Hawk, it

was not persuasive enough to eliminate similar subspecies such as Krider's Red-tailed Hawk.

- Kentucky Warbler [Casual], 26 May 2020, Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Carver County (record #2020-026, vote 0–7). This record involved a heard-only bird whose song, unfortunately, was very briefly described. While the observer was well-experienced with this species, there was simply not enough description to justify 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: Brad Abendroth, Lon Baumgardt, Patrick B. Beauzay, Deb Berekvam, Alan Branhagen, Conny M. Brunell, Linnae Halvorsen (filed by Paul E. Budde), Mark Chichester, Neil Christianson, Philip C. Chu, John Cyrus, Clinton Dexter-Nienhaus, Herb H. Dingmann, Kim R. Eckert, Kimberly A. Emerson, Deanne Endrizzi, Bruce A. Fall, Greg Fangel, Liz Harper, Ellie Helgeson, Anthony X. Hertzfel, John W. Hockema, Pete Hoeger, Ezra Hosch, Isaac Hosch, Jim Hughes, Paul E. Jantscher, Ruth E. Johnson, Douglas W. Kieser, Alex Lamoreaux, Tony Lau, Craig R. Mandel, Kevin Manley, William C. Marengo, Nolan Meyer, Todd Mitchell, John Richardson, Clinton Nienhaus, A. J. Olson, Dan Orr, Mark Otnes, Wayne Perala, Jeff Reed, Andrew D. Smith, Linda Sparling, Dana Sterner, Steve Stucker, Alex Sundvall, Matthew Thompson, Thomas A. Tustison, Butch Ukura, Joshua G. Watson, 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: 51 records voted on — 48 Accepted, 3 Not Accepted.

— Edina, Minnesota