

ACTIONS OF THE MICHIGAN BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE FOR 1992

by PHILIP C. CHU

This is the third report of the Michigan Bird Records Committee (MBRC). It covers the committee's actions during 1992. In 1992 MBRC reviewed the documentation for 108 records, 81 of which were accepted; rules for the acceptance or rejection of documentation are given by Granlund (1988). Three species (Snowy Plover, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, and Brambling) were added to the Michigan list; one species (Barnacle Goose) was deleted.

Initially, records were reviewed by MBRC members Bill Bouton (Kent Co.), Philip Chu (Washtenaw Co.; Chairperson), Jim Fowler, Jr. (Wayne Co.), Karl Overman (Oakland Co.), Jack Reinoehl (Hillsdale Co.), C. Roy Smith (Berrien Co.) and Terry Walsh (Midland Co.), and alternates Jim Granlund (Kalamazoo Co.; Secretary) and Rod Planck (Alpena Co.). However, in mid-year Walsh moved out of state, vacating his position as a regular voting member. Planck left his own seat as an alternate to fill Walsh's position, and Ron Weeks (Midland Co.) then joined MBRC to fill the alternate position formerly occupied by Planck.

For all records reviewed in 1992 the following information is given: dates, location, an indication of the documentation submitted and a vote tally. Dates and locations are sometimes different from those published previously; in such cases, it is the information given here that is correct. In addition, for accepted records only, each observer who provided documentation is listed, and the name of the person who found the documented bird is given in boldface, whether that individual submitted documentation or not.

The vote tallies provided with each record merit additional explanation. MBRC's bylaws require a 7-0 vote for the acceptance of potential first state records. The requirement helps to insure that species are not admitted to the Michigan list unless they are very convincingly documented. However, once a 7-0 record exists, other records for that species can be accepted on a 6-1 or 5-2 vote. For example, the 1992 Arctic Tern from Berrien Co. received a 6-1 vote and was accepted; it was accepted because several previous Arctic Tern records had passed by a 7-0 margin. In contrast, the 1992 Great-tailed Grackle from Van Buren Co. received a 6-1 vote but was not accepted; because it was a potential first state record it needed a 7-0 vote to pass.

Many of the accounts below include information about sex and age. Unless otherwise noted I used the terminology of Humphrey and Parkes (1959) to describe plumages. A discussion of plumage terminology is beyond the scope of this paper, but in many cases alternate and basic plumages correspond to summer

and winter plumages, respectively. Interested readers are urged to consult Humphrey and Parkes, or, for a less technical discussion, Wilds (1989).

Records Accepted

ARCTIC/PACIFIC LOON (descriptions: B. and J. Stout): one in alternate plumage, 22 May 1992, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

NORTHERN GANNET (description: D. Brooks): one in juvenal plumage, 1 Dec. 1991, Erie Twp., Monroe Co. (7-0).

BROWN PELICAN (photograph: J. McDermott): one in alternate plumage, 26 Sept. 1991, St. Mary's River at Sugar Island, Chippewa Co. (7-0). During the summer of 1991 there were several undocumented reports of Brown Pelican from the Michigan shore of Lake Superior; the earliest one known to this author was from Munising Bay, Alger Co., on 26 July 1991 (K. Doran, *vide* M. Hubinger).

CINNAMON TEAL (R. Pollack; description: D. Leasure): one male in alternate plumage, 26 to 28 Apr. 1982, Mt. Clemens sewage ponds, Chesterfield Twp., Macomb Co. (5-2).

CINNAMON TEAL (descriptions: P. Chu, R. Weeks; photographs: J. Granlund): one male in alternate plumage, 12 to 22 Apr. 1992, Nayanquing Point Wildlife Area, Bay Co. (7-0).

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE (descriptions: K. Lebo, R. Planck): one female, 7 to 10 Nov. 1991, Port Huron, St. Clair Co. (5-2).

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE (D. Jennette; descriptions: J. Granlund, C. R. Smith): one adult male in alternate plumage, 5 Dec. 1991 to 16 Feb. 1992, Elk Rapids, Antrim Co. (7-0). Most Michigan observers were surprised to learn that a male Barrow's Goldeneye had been present at this same site during the two previous winters: 23 to at least 31 Dec. 1989, and 31 Dec. 1990 to at least 8 Jan. 1991 (D. Jennette, pers. comm.).

AMERICAN SWALLOW-TAILED KITE (description: T. Yonkers): one, 8 Aug. 1992, Irving Twp., Barry Co. (7-0).

FERRUGINOUS HAWK (descriptions: J. Schultz, M. Stahl): one light-phase bird in juvenal plumage, 9 Nov. 1991, Trenton, Wayne Co. (6-1).

FERRUGINOUS HAWK (description: M. Essenmacher): one light-phase bird in adult plumage, 1 May 1992, Port Crescent State Park, Huron Co. (7-0).



PURPLE GALLINULE (UMMZ 1161b, collected by A. Sager): one in adult plumage, 1837, locality given as "southeastern Michigan" (7-0).

SNOWY PLOVER (photograph: J. Stoddard): one male in alternate plumage, 17 Apr. 1992, Kalamazoo River mouth, Saugatuck Twp., Allegan Co. (7-0).

CURLEW SANDPIPER (photograph: J. Ponshair): one in alternate plumage, 19 to 22 May 1984, Coopersville sewage ponds, Polkton Twp., Ottawa Co. (7-0).

CURLEW SANDPIPER (description: P. Chu): one in alternate plumage, 10 May 1992, Erie Marsh Preserve, Monroe Co. (7-0).

CURLEW SANDPIPER (description: J. Granlund): one in transition from alternate to basic plumage, 15 to 23 Aug. 1992, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (7-0).

POMARINE JAEGER (description: K. Miller): one in juvenal plumage, 15 Dec. 1991, St. Joseph, Berrien Co. (7-0).

LONG-TAILED JAEGER (photographs: D. Evers): one, 27 June 1985, Drummond Island, Chippewa Co. (6-0). Photographs suggest that the bird was in the second immature breeding plumage of Cramp (1983).

COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL (UMMZ 210572, collected by H. Tordoff): one male in adult alternate plumage, 2 June 1966, Tawas Point State Park, Iosco Co. (7-0).

COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL (description: J. Kleiman): one adult, 24 and 25 Nov. 1976, Monroe, Monroe Co. (7-0).

COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL (E. Carhart; description: J. Greenhouse): one in adult basic plumage, to 29 Nov. 1977, Erie Twp., Monroe Co. (7-0). Greenhouse's documentation states that the bird was first "found and identified...about 15 Nov. [1977]."

COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL (D. Rocheleau, A. Ryff; description: J. Greenhouse): one in adult basic plumage, 6 Nov. to 2 Dec. 1978, Erie Twp., Monroe Co. (7-0).

COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL (description: L. Dombroski): one adult, 12 Dec. 1981, Bay City, Bay Co. (7-0).

COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL (photograph: J. Fowler, Jr.): one adult in basic plumage, 4 and 5 Dec. 1983, Dearborn, Wayne Co. (7-0).

HEERMANN'S GULL (photographs: E. Cox, A. Ryff; description: A. Ryff): one largely in second basic plumage, 26 Aug. to at least 12 Dec. 1979, Metrobeach Metropark, Macomb Co. (7-0). A Heermann's Gull in second basic plumage was at Lorain, OH, from 12 to 18 Feb. 1980 (Kleen 1980); the Lorain individual is widely believed to be the one seen earlier at Metrobeach (e.g., Pogacnik 1980).

HEERMANN'S GULL (D. Leasure; photographs: M. Brown): one in third basic plumage, 24 Oct. to early Dec. 1980, Metrobeach Metropark, Macomb Co. (7-0). Again a Heermann's Gull was present at Lorain, OH, this time from 20 Dec. 1980 to 19 Jan. 1981 (Hannikman 1981).

HEERMANN'S GULL (D. Leasure; photographs: M. Brown): one in adult basic plumage, 12 Oct. to 1 Nov. 1981, Metrobeach Metropark, Macomb Co. (7-0). There were no Heermann's Gull reports from Lorain, OH, during the winter of 1981-1982.

CALIFORNIA GULL (band recovery reported in Behle and Woodbury (1952)): one in juvenal or first basic plumage, 11 Aug. 1948, Tawas City, Iosco Co. (7-0).

CALIFORNIA GULL (description: P. Young): one in adult basic plumage, 13 Dec. 1983, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (5-2).

CALIFORNIA GULL (description: R. Adams, Jr.): one adult, 26 Apr. 1984, Morrow Lake, Comstock Twp., Kalamazoo Co. (6-1).

ARCTIC TERN (descriptions: P. Dziepak, B. Stout): one in transition from juvenal to first basic plumage, 5 Nov. 1991, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (5-2).

ARCTIC TERN (M. Willard; descriptions: T. Walsh, R. Weeks; photographs: K. Lebo, K. Overman): one in transition from juvenal to first basic plumage, 9 to 20 Nov. 1991, Bay City, Bay Co. (7-0).

ARCTIC TERN (descriptions: K. Miller, C. R. Smith): 1 in adult alternate plumage, 10 July 1992, St. Joseph, Berrien Co. (6-1).

LEAST TERN (UMMZ 111957, collected by L. Campbell): one male in adult alternate plumage, 10 July 1943, Erie Twp., Monroe Co. (7-0).

LEAST TERN (description: R. Ziarno): one adult in alternate plumage, 6 June 1992, Tawas Point State Park, Iosco Co. (7-0).

DOVEKIE (UMMZ 44274, collected by W. Collins): one in basic plumage, 30 Nov. 1881, Detroit River, Wayne Co. (7-0).

DOVEKIE (UMMZ 109683, collected by J. Coolidge): one female in basic plumage, 14 Nov. 1939, Stewart Lake, Marshall, Calhoun Co. (7-0).

THICK-BILLED MURRE (UMMZ 41744, collected by J. Bortle): one male in basic plumage, 26 Dec. 1896, Gibraltar, Wayne Co. (7-0). Barrows (1912:43) states that, "probably a score or more were taken in Michigan waters" during the winter of 1896-1897.

THICK-BILLED MURRE (UMMZ 43773, collector unknown): one male in basic plumage, 7 Dec. 1907, Windmill Pointe, Detroit River, Wayne Co. (7-0). According to Barrows (1912:44), "A[n]...invasion occurred in Dec. 1907, and numerous specimens were taken about Lake St. Clair and in the vicinity of Detroit between Dec. 1st and 10th."



THICK-BILLED MURRE (UMMZ 118428, captured by H. Tenhave): one in basic plumage, 29 Nov. 1950, Royal Oak, Oakland Co. (7-0). The bird died in captivity on 18 Dec. 1950.

BAND-TAILED PIGEON (photographs: L. Frizzo): one, 24 Dec. 1967 to at least 22 Jan. 1968, Niles, Berrien Co. (7-0). Payne (1969) addresses the issue of wild origin for this bird.

COMMON GROUND DOVE (UMMZ 210837, collected by K. Petts): one male, 5 Sept. 1966, Long Lake, Presque Isle Co. (7-0).

BURROWING OWL (UMMZ 118163, collected by E. Buordo, Jr., and G. Hesterberg): one female, 2 May 1949, Portage Twp., Houghton Co. (7-0).

BURROWING OWL (captured by D. Schinkel; photograph: H. Smith): one, 5 June 1986, St. Joseph, Berrien Co. (7-0). The bird, caught in the laundry room of a local motel, was released on 7 June 1986 (D. Schinkel, *vide* C. R. Smith).

CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW (H. Wiles; tape recording: R. Adams, Jr.): one, 8 July to 18 Aug. 1976, Richland Twp., Kalamazoo Co. Two individuals were reported by an observer on 14 July (R. Adams, Jr., pers. comm.).

WHITE-THROATED SWIFT (UMMZ 61955, captured by M. Hawkes): one male, Aug. 1926, Hillsdale, Hillsdale Co. (7-0). Hawkes caught the bird inside the Hillsdale College Biology laboratory (Barber 1927!).

GOLDEN-FRONTED WOODPECKER (W. Sheldon; photographs: B. Grigg): one male, 20 Nov. to 22 Dec. 1974, Cheboygan, Cheboygan Co. (7-0). Payne (1983) rejected this record because the photographs available to him showed an indeterminate head pattern. Indeed, Hoffman (1984:310) contended that, "Most...reports [of Golden-fronted Woodpecker]...in the East are of xanthic Red-bellied Woodpeckers (individuals deficient in...carotenoid pigments)." However, B. Grigg recently provided MBRC with a series of high-quality photographs of the Cheboygan bird. These clearly reveal the typical Golden-fronted head pattern (orange-yellow nape, red crown patch, yellow nasal tufts). They also reveal the central tail feathers to be black and unmarked; in Golden-fronted Woodpeckers of the race *aurifrons* (the subspecies occurring in the U. S. and northern Mexico) the central tail feathers are solid black, while in Red-bellied Woodpeckers they are barred with white (Gerber 1986).

THREE-TOED WOODPECKER (UMMZ 208666, collected by C. Brandler): one male, 24 Nov. 1910, Amasa, Iron Co. (7-0).

THREE-TOED WOODPECKER (UMMZ 208667, collected by S. Gregory, Jr.): one female, 18 Oct. 1920, Conway Lake, Marquette Co. (7-0).

THREE-TOED WOODPECKER (UMMZ 53736, collected by B. Twombly): one female, Dec. 1920, Gogebic Co. (7-0).

THREE-TOED WOODPECKER (UMMZ 61576, collected by A. Murie): one female, 4 Oct. 1929, Isle Royale, Keweenaw Co. (7-0).

THREE-TOED WOODPECKER (UMMZ 158256, collected by R. Butsch): one male, 1 Mar. 1963, Sugar Island, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

SAY'S PHOEBE (photograph: J. and K. Bricker): one, 27 April 1978, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER (UMMZ 206495, collected by J. Jones): one male, 6 Oct. 1983, T46N, R22W, Alger Co. (7-0). Jones "collected" the bird when he inadvertently struck it with his car antenna.

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE (UMMZ 199b, collected by A. Sager): one in juvenal plumage, 1837 or 1838, locality given as "southeastern Michigan" (7-0).

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE (UMMZ 150871, collected by K. Zeeb): one male, 6 Dec. 1955, Northfield Twp., Washtenaw Co. (7-0).

ROCK WREN (UMMZ 50838, collected by J. Wood): one male, 31 Oct. 1910, Trenton, Wayne Co. (7-0).

NORTHERN WHEATEAR (photograph: J. McDonnell): one in basic plumage, 12 to 15 Oct. 1981, White Pine, Ontonagon Co. (7-0).

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE (B. Eby; description: C. R. Smith): one, to 14 Mar. 1992, Beulah, Benzie Co. (7-0). Local observer B. Allen (pers. comm.) first learned of a possible solitaire on 17 Feb.

SPRAGUE'S PIPIT (UMMZ 84587, collected by M. Trautman and J. Van Tyne): one male, 26 June 1935, Lovells, Crawford Co. (7-0).

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER (W. Solomon; UMMZ 152892, collected by N. Ford): one male in first alternate plumage, 30 Apr. and 1 May 1958, Ann Arbor, Washtenaw Co. (7-0).

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER (UMMZ 158158, salvaged by Mrs. E. Chapman): one male in basic plumage, 25 Nov. 1962, Northville, Wayne Co. (7-0).

PAINTED REDSTART (description: C. Taylor; photographs: B. Duncanson): one in adult plumage, 12 and 13 Nov. 1983, Gladstone, Delta Co. (7-0).

WESTERN TANAGER (descriptions: D. Friedman, R. Seng): one male in alternate plumage, 31 May 1992, Tawas Point State Park, Iosco Co. (7-0).

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK (UMMZ 158256, collected by M. Miles): one male in transition from first basic to first alternate plumage, 17 to 25 Mar. 1963, Ann Arbor, Washtenaw Co. (7-0).

BLUE GROSBEAK (descriptions: J. Schultz, P. Sykes): one female or first-fall male, 20 to 22 Sept. 1992, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (6-1).



PAINTED BUNTING (Mr. and Mrs. E. Bystrom; photograph: N. Inicky): one male, 5 to 7 May 1968, Marquette, Marquette Co. (7-0).

GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE (photographs: R. Adams, Jr.): one, 22 Dec. 1974 to at least 5 Jan. 1975, Allegan Twp., Allegan Co. (7-0).

GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE (L. Schnell; photograph: C. Francke): one, mid-Jan. to 25 or 26 Feb. 1985, Bangor Twp., Bay Co. (7-0).

GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE (M. Toby; photographs: M. Kiehl): one, mid-Oct. 1985 into Feb. 1986, Sylvan Lake, Oakland Co. (7-0).

BACHMAN'S SPARROW (UMMZ 112892, collected by L. Campbell and H. Mayfield): one male, 29 Apr. 1944, Erie Twp., Monroe Co. (7-0).

BACHMAN'S SPARROW (UMMZ 114180, collected by A. Miller and R. O'Reilly, Jr.): one male, 13 May 1946, Dearborn, Wayne Co. (7-0).

BLACK-THROATED SPARROW (B. Moblo; photographs: T. Howes, G. Wickstrom): one adult, 7 Dec. 1982 to late Feb. 1983, Muskegon, Muskegon Co. (7-0).

LARK BUNTING (photographs: H. and N. Zernichow): one male in alternate plumage, 17 Apr. to 3 May 1975, Henrietta Twp., Jackson Co. (7-0).

LARK BUNTING (D. Groat; photograph: L. Smith): one in basic plumage, 13 to 19 Jan. 1983, Benton Twp., Berrien Co. (7-0).

LARK BUNTING (J. Berkelman; photograph: J. Granlund): one male in alternate plumage, 19 to 21 May 1989, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

LARK BUNTING (description: J. Schultz; photograph: J. Granlund): one female in first basic plumage, 6 to 31 Oct. 1992, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

SHARP-TAILED SPARROW (description: R. Adams, Jr.): one, 23 Apr. 1992, Allegan State Game Area, Valley Twp., Allegan Co. (6-1).

MCCOWN'S LONGSPUR (descriptions: R. B. H. Smith, L. Tucker; photographs: R. B. H. Smith, N. Tucker): one male in alternate plumage, 27 to 29 May 1981, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

SMITH'S LONGSPUR (description: R. Mancke; photographs: E. Kenaga): one male in alternate plumage, 25 Apr. to 2 May 1971, Midland, Midland Co. (7-0).

BRAMBLING (B. Switzer; descriptions: P. Chu, S. Minard; photographs: K. Lebo, R. Putman): one in basic plumage, 25-29 Nov. 1991, Cooper Twp., Kalamazoo Co. (7-0).

ROSY FINCH (photographs: R. Kaiser): one belonging to one of the gray-crowned forms (*tephrocotis* group of A. O. U. 1983), 26 Feb. to late Mar. 1984, Romeo, Macomb Co. (7-0).

Records Not Accepted

GLOSSY IBIS (description): one, 26 July 1982, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (1-6). The description, which clearly indicates either Glossy Ibis or White-faced Ibis, provides limited information about soft-part colors: "legs and bill medium grayish-flesh." However, both ibis species have a grayish to flesh-colored bill all year long. In addition, both have grayish legs when not in breeding condition, and one might not expect a wandering individual at the end of July to be in breeding condition. For these reasons most committee members felt that White-faced Ibis could not be eliminated from consideration.

BARNACLE GOOSE (description): one, 15 to 19 Apr. 1992, Wisner and Gilford Twp., Tuscola Co. (4-3 in round two). One committee member summarized the minority opinion when he stated, "I have no doubt it was a Barnacle Goose. I also have little doubt that it was reared on the wrong side of the Atlantic." MBRC has now reviewed three Barnacle Goose records, and though all of them were satisfactorily documented they were not accepted because of strong, divergent opinions on the issue of wild origin (Chu 1992; see also Ryff 1984 and Szantyr 1985). Because MBRC is stalemated on the issue of origin, it elected to delete Barnacle Goose from the state list even though a documented record for the species remains unreviewed. This action - the deletion of a species before all records have been reviewed - is highly unusual, but it reflects the consensus among MBRC members that there is little use in prolonging the origin debate when that debate cannot be resolved.

COMMON EIDER (two descriptions): one, 3 to 23 Nov. 1991, Muskegon State Park, Muskegon Co. (2-5). The two observers described a female or first-year male eider. One of the two provided additional detail: "Sides were barred [rather than marked with crescents].... Feathering on bill extended down the sides coming to a point about even with the back of the nostril. Feathering down the front top of bill was slight." Some committee members found this description to be sufficient. Most, however, agreed with the reviewer who wrote, "I view Common Eider as an extremely rare bird on the Great Lakes and have seen immature and/or female King Eiders too frequently misidentified as Commons. [Having seen one King Eider between them, the two] observers do not have the experience to dispel my suspicion. The bill shape is only subtly different."

BLACK VULTURE (description): one, 8 Apr. 1972, Benton Twp., Berrien Co. (6-1 in round two). As with all of Michigan's Black Vulture records, this one provided only a brief description: "Large dark bird with large white patches on end of wings. Small dark head, no white on its tail." One committee member summarized the majority opinion when he lamented, "Why is every last one of our Black Vulture records like this one (*i.e.*, a



big black bird with white patches near the wingtips)? ...[T]he account is so short that I feel uncomfortable with it, but...I'm going to vote for acceptance because I can't think of anything else that fits the description provided." The lone dissenting member argued that such a "What else could it be?" rationale is unsatisfactory without consideration of the bird's shape and an explicit attempt to eliminate Golden Eagle as a possible confusion species.

FERRUGINOUS HAWK (description): one, 12 May 1992, Manistee, Manistee Co. (3-4 in round two). A large hawk was observed for about 20 minutes under excellent viewing conditions. Above, it showed chestnut wing coverts, white panels at the base of the primaries, and a whitish tail; below it was entirely white, without dark leggings. The observer scrutinized the underwing for patagial marks and wrist commas, but saw neither. He wrote, "The bird I saw appears to match a Ferruginous adult dorsally but matches the juvenal plumage ventrally!" MBRC was puzzled by this combination of features. As one reviewer said, "it's a close call. The hawk had one feature diagnostic for Ferruginous - the absence of patagial marks; however, it was also missing two Ferruginous features, the dark wrist-commas and dark leggings. Other plumage characters described (rufous upperparts, ...pale primary bases) can be shown not only by Ferruginous Hawk, but also by Krider's Redtail (e.g., UMMZ 65798). Given this somewhat ambiguous situation, I vote against acceptance."

LONG-BILLED CURLEW (description): three, 23 May 1992, Lake Linden sewage ponds, Houghton Co. (0-7). The observer wrote, "The bills of the curlews were easily 4 [inches] long and the body length alone was well over a foot, more like 15 [inches]. The only other observation I made on these birds was the uniformly dull brown crowns." Most members of MBRC were concerned by the brevity of this description. One summarized the committee's opinion when he said, "It is a promising record but...I myself have had difficulties seeing the stripes on the head of Whimbrels and this record is during prime Whimbrel migration."

CURLEW SANDPIPER (description): two (one in full alternate plumage, the other at least partially in basic plumage), 30 May 1992, New Buffalo, Berrien Co. (2-5). According to the compiler of the statewide rare bird alert (pers. comm.), the observer reported two Red Knots on 30 May. On 31 May the observer reported that he had been mistaken, and that the shorebirds seen on the preceding day had been Curlew Sandpipers rather than knots. MBRC is not very sympathetic to such changes in heart, especially when the change is from an expected species at an expected time of year and reasonable location to a rare species at an unexpected time and unusual location.

COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL (description, photograph): one adult in basic plumage, 2 and 3 Jan. 1982,

St. Clair River, St. Clair Co., MI, and Lambton Co., ONT (0-7 in round two). This record was published as a Michigan record in Payne (1983); however, all locations described by the observer are on the Ontario side of the St. Clair River.

COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL (description): one with a partial hood, 4 June 1982, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (2-5). A single gull was observed flying past Whitefish Point. Its plumage was like that of Bonaparte's Gull, but it seemed too large, and its flight did not appear buoyant enough. The observer wrote, "black on underside of wings [was] seen once." In response to this description two major points were raised.

(1) Flight style and impressions of size can be of limited utility, particularly when direct comparison with similar species is not possible. One reviewer wrote, "I've often seen [Bonaparte's Gulls] drift by Whitefish Point, seemingly not in much of a hurry, flying slowly and steadily without much 'bounce.' The lack of buoyancy makes them seem heavier, and thus larger, than usual."

(2) Presence or absence of black in the under-primaries is often difficult to gauge in a single glimpse. Having been fooled before, one committee member said, "The key is whether [the] under-wing was actually dark or whether the light was playing tricks. Based on only one sighting of the underwing I am concerned."

MEW GULL (description): one adult, 30 Nov. 1979, St. Clair River, St. Clair Co., MI, and Lambton Co., ONT (0-7 in round two). This record was published as a Michigan record in Payne (1983), but all locations described by the observer are on the Ontario side of the St. Clair River.

MEW GULL (description): one adult, 18 Jan. 1992, Bay City, Bay Co. (0-7). This bird was identified as a Mew Gull because (1) it appeared too small and delicate for a Ring-billed Gull; (2) it had unusually prominent white mirrors in the wingtips; and (3) its feeding behavior seemed unusual, matching that described for Mew Gull by Terres (1980). However, MBRC was concerned because the observer did not provide details about eye, bill, or mantle color, all of which are critical for separating Mew and Ring-billed Gulls.

CALIFORNIA GULL (description, photographs): one in juvenal or first basic plumage, 11 to 13 Sept. 1975, Marquette, Marquette Co. (0-7). A first-fall California Gull was identified on the basis of two features. First, according to the observer, "It became apparent it was only Ring-billed Gull size"; and second, it had a pinkish bill that was dark on the terminal quarter only. However, no Ring-billed Gulls were available for a direct comparison of sizes, and the photographs that were taken show the bird to be only marginally smaller than the six Herring Gulls photographed with it. In addition, a percentage of first-fall Herring Gulls exhibit a restricted black tip to the bill; Stallcup (in Harrison 1983) estimates this percentage at 15%, and though it seems



less common in the Great Lakes region (probably between 1% and 0.1%) it is still encountered regularly here.

CALIFORNIA GULL (description): one probably in transition from first alternate to second basic plumage, 25 Sept. 1977, Metrobeach Metropark, Macomb Co. (0-7). The observer stated that this gull "had typical Herring Gull plumage:" its mantle was mixed brown and gray, it had brown underparts with whitish streaking, and its tail was dark. It was identified as a California Gull because, in the observer's words, "it was noticeably larger than a Ring-billed Gull and obviously smaller than the 'runtiest' Herring Gull imaginable." However, most committee members were reluctant to endorse an identification based entirely on intermediate size; one said, "I simply do not believe a 'small Herring Gull' is sufficient reason to be a California Gull" [sic].

CALIFORNIA GULL (description): one in second alternate plumage, 24 Mar. 1978, Monroe, Monroe Co. (1-5).

CALIFORNIA GULL (description): one in second alternate plumage, 28 Mar. 1978, Monroe, Monroe Co. (1-5).

CALIFORNIA GULL (description): one in second alternate plumage, 10 Apr. 1978, Metrobeach Metropark, Macomb Co. (1-5). This record and the two preceding it are remarkably similar to one another. Each involved a gray-backed, brown-winged gull with a mostly dark tail and greenish or green-tinged legs. The birds, when perched, were always described as being identical in size to a Ring-billed Gull, but longer-billed; in flight they appeared larger than Ring-bills due to a presumed greater wing span.

It is reasonable to identify a gray-backed, brown-winged, green-legged, and dark-tailed gull as a second-year California. However, a different identification—first-year Ring-billed Gull—is also plausible. As one member of MBRC noted, "A minority of first-summer Ring-bills—the age class with gray back, brown wings and greenish or greenish-tinged legs—can have very dark tails. UMMZ 110645, for example, has a mostly-black tail; there are pale areas at the base of each rectrix, but the pale areas are so restricted that they're covered by the upper tail coverts."

The reviewer continued, "I think there's a good chance that [the observer] saw, and correctly identified, these three birds as second-summer California Gulls. However, I think there's also a chance that the three gulls were dark-tailed first-summer Ring-bills. It's not hard to imagine a scenario in which an observer sees a dark-tailed Ring-bill; thinks, 'Ring-billed Gulls can't have a dark tail, so this must be a California'; and then, searching for the structural differences that he expects to see, notices the small shape and size differences that separate each individual from every other individual."

CALIFORNIA GULL (description): one in third alternate plumage, 23 to 25 May 1979, Whitefish Point,

Chippewa Co. (1-6). The observer identified this gull as a California primarily because, in his words, "a [third-year] bird...is too old for the possession of a dark chocolate eye which is what this bird had." Other supporting evidence included the dark reddish color of the bird's orbital rings and the bird's size, which was at the small end of the Herring Gull size spectrum. Unexpectedly, its legs were pink rather than yellowish or greenish, but the observer cited Behle and Selander (1953), who indicate that some California Gulls can retain pink legs into their fourth spring.

During the review of this record, four points were raised repeatedly: (1) contrary to the observer's assertion, some third-year Herring Gulls do have dark eyes; (2) California Gulls should have a darker gray mantle than Herring Gulls, but a darker mantle was not mentioned; (3) leg color was atypical for a California; and (4) size seemed a little large. In addition, Dwight (1925), Grant (1982), and Harrison (1983) indicate that Herring Gulls can have red orbital rings.

CALIFORNIA GULL (description): one adult in basic plumage, 20 Dec. 1982, St. Clair River, St. Clair Co., MI, and Lambton Co., ONT (2-5). Payne (1983) treated this sighting as a Michigan record, but the documentation includes only locations from the Ontario side of the St. Clair River. As one committee member noted, "This is an exquisite write up of a bird in Ontario."

THAYER'S GULL (description): one in second alternate plumage, 2 June 1992, Reeds Lake, East Grand Rapids, Kent Co. (1-6). This subadult gull was identified as a Thayer's because of its brownish wings and tail and rounded head shape. Most committee members felt that these details did not eliminate Herring Gull, which is variable with respect to head shape and which often shows considerable fading of the primaries and tail by June. Observers should be aware that many subadult Herring Gulls show bleached, heavily worn flight feathers as early as late Feb.; the feather wear becomes increasingly severe during spring and summer.

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE (description): one thought to be in second basic plumage, 5 Jan. 1992, Bay City, Bay Co. (0-7 in round two). The observer described a bird that was considerably smaller than the Herring Gulls it was with. It had a dark area on the ear coverts, a bill that was mottled light and dark, and solid black wingtips; along the leading edge of the wing, the black of the wingtips extended inward towards the wrist. Most committee members felt that this wing pattern was appropriate for a second-basic kittiwake. However, they also felt that it was appropriate for a second-basic Ring-billed Gull, and without a conclusive description of wing pattern they were reluctant to vote for acceptance.

IVORY GULL (description): one in first basic plumage, 21 Dec. 1974, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (2-5). The description was not written by the observer,



but by another individual who provided a short account of what the observer saw: "a small white gull with black legs and black spots in the trailing edge of the wings and tail." These details, while brief, correctly describe an Ivory Gull in its first fall. Unfortunately, MBRC is reluctant to accept second-hand documentation; documentation transmitted in this manner is problematic because the details are so often modified as they are passed from one person to another.

ARCTIC TERN (description): one, 28 May 1984, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (1-6). A group of three terns was seen in flight; one of the three was identified as an Arctic because it appeared shorter-necked, thinner-winged, and longer-tailed than the others. In addition, its flight appeared more buoyant. Most committee members felt that these details were suggestive. However, most also felt that shape and flight style were not, in themselves, sufficient to identify an Arctic Tern. Confident separation of Arctic and Common Terns requires a critical examination of the wing pattern both above and below.

BLACK SKIMMER (description): one or two, 22 Aug. 1981, Nyanquing Point Wildlife Area, Bay Co. (2-5). The observer saw a strongly backlit bird that looked, in his words, like "a Caspian Tern with a floppy wingbeat.... The bill was distinctly longer than a Caspian's." He continued, "Directly in front of me the bird skimmed; i.e., dropped its lower mandible into the water while continuing to fly just above the surface, cutting the water for over 30 feet, rising slightly then cutting the water again for about 10 feet." However, skimming behavior has also been recorded for Caspian Tern (Tomkins 1963; Buckley and Hailman 1970; G. Bergman in Cramp 1985). Indeed, this author saw a Caspian Tern skim several weeks before this manuscript went to press.

SPRAGUE'S PIPIT (description): one, 29 Apr. 1992, Muskegon Wastewater System, Muskegon Co. (0-7). The description provides the following information: "About 6 [inches], streaked head, faint wing bars, darker back, small bill and ochre blush breast which was streaked along its sides and lightly across its chest. Legs were light as well as feet.... It kind of hopped between the hedge rows picking. WHITE OUTER TAIL FEATHERS." Most reviewers felt that additional information - particularly with regards to bill shape, face pattern, and back streaking - was required to confidently eliminate Vesper Sparrow and American Pipit from consideration. In addition, one reviewer wrote, "I thought pipits walked, not hopped."

SWAINSON'S WARBLER (two descriptions): one, 16 May 1992, Lincoln Twp., Berrien Co. (1-6 in round two). A group of four veteran observers obtained brief glimpses of a skulking warbler. One of the four had an unobstructed 10 to 20 second view of the bird; he later wrote, "I had the instantaneous impression this bird was a

Swainson's Warbler." The other three had comparatively poor views, and one of them identified the bird as a Worm-eating Warbler.

Although his initial impressions were strong, the first observer did not voice his convictions, and the bird was entered into the day's list as a Worm-eating Warbler. Indeed, according to one of his companions (pers. comm.), the observer did not mention the possibility of a Swainson's until about an hour had passed. What followed is difficult to reconstruct accurately, but it is clear that, by evening, the observer was voicing his convictions more strongly.

The observer submitted detailed documentation to MBRC, and it was unanimously agreed that the documentation met a high standard. However, there was considerable concern among committee members regarding the delayed nature of the identification. One committee member wrote, "I am a bit bothered by some of what is described. How can one think they see and later so thoroughly describe a bird so rare and not mention his thoughts to his colleagues?" Another asked, "If the observer saw the bird that well, why did he keep the identification to himself until much later that day?" The decision against acceptance reflects MBRC's inability to answer these questions satisfactorily.

SHARP-TAILED SPARROW (description): one, 4 to 6 Oct. 1991, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (1-6 in round two). A small, dark-capped sparrow was seen. Its face was "buffy yellowish orange" with a dusky ear patch, and the buff-yellow color continued onto the breast and flanks. The back was dark with white stripes. Most committee members were concerned because a gray median crown stripe was looked for, but not seen, and because a gray nape was not described.

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (description): one male, 19 Apr. 1992, South Haven, Van Buren Co. (6-1 in round two). The observer described a bird that was the "Size of a small, slender crow, looked like a Common Grackle only larger.... Very striking, long tail." Its voice was, "Unbelievable, almost parrotlike. Several different vocal variations.... [U]nusual, like no other bird we encounter." One committee member voted against acceptance, arguing that the observer's estimate of size is difficult to evaluate (there is no indication that crows were available for direct size comparison, and male Common Grackles can appear much larger and longer-tailed than females). In addition, he argued that "unbelievable" vocalizations do not conclusively indicate the voice of a Great-tailed Grackle. However, the other committee members disagreed; in the words of one reviewer, "This record rings completely true. The vocalizations of this species are truly bizarre."



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