

## Actions of the Michigan Bird Records Committee for 1993 by Philip C. Chu

This is the fourth report of the Michigan Bird Records Committee (MBRC). It covers the committee's actions during 1993. Highlights include the addition of four species to the state list - the Reddish Egret, the Common Eider, the Wilson's Plover, and the Virginia's Warbler. One species, the Black Vulture, was deleted.

During 1993, MBRC reviewed the documentation for 75 records, 54 of which were accepted. Rules for the acceptance or non-acceptance of documentation are given by Granlund (1988).

For each record reviewed, 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 first found the bird is given in boldface, whether that person submitted documentation or not.

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.), Rod Planck (Alpena Co.), Jack Reinoehl (Hillsdale Co.), and Ron Weeks (Midland Co.), and alternates Jim Granlund (Kalamazoo Co.; Secretary) and Tom Heatley (Macomb Co.). However, in mid-year Heatley resigned. Kip Miller (Berrien Co.) then joined MBRC to fill Heatley's position as an alternate.

### Records accepted

**ARCTIC/PACIFIC LOON** (description: **B. Stout**): one in alternate plumage, 15 Sep. 1993, Pt. Iroquois, Chippewa Co. (6-1).

**WESTERN GREBE** (descriptions: P. Chu, J. Granlund, **B. Thornbury**; photographs: J. Granlund): one, 6-12 Nov. 1992, New Buffalo, Berrien Co. (7-0). It is interesting to note that a Western Grebe was observed at several locations along Illinois' Lake Michigan waterfront between 17 Nov. and 19 Dec. 1992 (Walters 1993).

**BROWN PELICAN** (description: **R. Seng**): one without white in the head or neck, 30 Apr. 1993, Buena Vista Twp., Saginaw Co. (5-2); according to Traylor (1962), a spring bird without white in the head and

neck is probably less than one year old. Coincidentally or not, an immature Brown Pelican was reported from the Lake Erie shore of Essex Co., Ontario, on 14 Mar. 1993 (Henshaw and Kerr 1993).

**TRICOLORED HERON** (M. Harhold; description: P. Chu): one adult, 11-12 Jul. 1993, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (6-0).

**REDDISH EGRET** (description: T. Wells): one in its first fall, 3 Aug. 1993, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (7-0 in round two). The upper Midwest experienced an unprecedented number of Reddish Egret sightings in the late summer-early fall of 1993. In addition to the Michigan sighting, single immature Reddish Egrets were recorded in Cook Co., Illinois, from 14 Aug. to 2 Oct. 1993 (Frischia 1994); in Laporte Co., Indiana, from 21 to 28 Aug. 1993 (Brock 1994); and in Jasper Co., Iowa, from 5 to 11 Sep. 1993 (T. Schantz, pers. comm.).

Did a single Reddish Egret account for both the Illinois and Indiana records? The Illinois and Indiana sites are only 50 miles apart, and the Illinois bird was not seen between about 19 and 28 August, when the Indiana bird was present (D. Johnson, pers. comm.). However, the Illinois bird disappeared during other periods as well, and some observers familiar with the Illinois site suspected that the bird never left, but simply retreated into inaccessible areas nearby (D. Johnson, pers. comm.).

The relationship between the Illinois and Iowa birds is less confusing. The Illinois bird was seen on at least one day when the Iowa bird was also seen (D. Johnson, pers. comm.). As the two observations were separated by over 250 miles, they probably refer to different individuals.

**GLOSSY IBIS** (description: C. R. Smith): one, 10 May 1993, Royalton Twp., Berrien Co. (6-1).

**GLOSSY IBIS** (K. Thomas; description: C. Powell): one in adult alternate plumage, 23-26 Jun. 1993, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (7-0).

**GLOSSY IBIS** (description: C. Powell): five in juvenal plumage, basic plumage, or some combination of the two, 2 Oct. 1993, Erie Marsh Preserve, Monroe Co. (5-2).

**TRUMPETER SWAN** (photographs: K. Leinaar): one adult, 20 Apr.-12 Oct. 1991, Tee Lake, Schoolcraft Co. (7-0). This individual, recognizable because of its yellow neck-band marked "36FA," was traced to Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge in South Dakota.

Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge is the site of a successful Trumpeter Swan introduction program. Between 1960 and 1962, 57 Trumpeter chicks were brought to Lacreek for release (Ellis 1970); by 1989, the so-called "Lacreek population" had increased to 282 (Kraft 1990). Birds belonging to the Lacreek population breed across western South Dakota,

western Nebraska, and southeastern Wyoming, but almost all of them return to Lacreek for the winter (R. H. Kraft in Backstrom 1991).

Because the population that produced 36FA was introduced over 30 years ago, and because that population is self-sustaining, MBRC voted to accept 36FA as a "countable" Trumpeter Swan.

For a Lacreek Trumpeter, 36FA has an unusual history. It was banded at Lacreek in 1988, but was not seen again until 1990 (Backstrom 1991). In 1990, it appeared in Schoolcraft Co., where it was intermittently present at Tee Lake from 28 May to 19 Oct. (K. Leinaar, pers. comm.). Then, on 14 Jan. 1991, it was discovered on the Mississippi River in Wabasha Co., Minnesota (Backstrom 1991). Several months later it returned to spend a second consecutive summer on Tee Lake; however, since leaving Tee Lake in Oct. 1991 it has not been reliably reported in either Minnesota or Michigan.

**COMMON EIDER** (A. Rider; description: D. Rupert; photograph: D. Miller): one female, 8-25 Apr. 1978, Port Huron, St. Clair Co. (7-0). The Common Eider has been reported at least nine times in Michigan. Of these nine reports, five were documented; however, MBRC was unable to find any of the five acceptable (Chu 1992, 1993). As a result, the species was removed from the Michigan list (Chu 1992).

The present record is one of the five rejected previously. It was rejected because it was supported only by Rupert's description, and Rupert did not see the bird in question on the Michigan side of the St. Clair River.

The record was resubmitted in 1993 because of a heretofore-unknown photograph provided by Miller. Miller's excellent photograph shows the bird floating in Michigan waters and lays to rest any lingering questions about its identity.

With the acceptance of this record, the Common Eider is returned to the state list.

**BARROW'S GOLDENEYE** (description: D. Jennette): one male in adult alternate plumage, 10 Dec. 1992-31 Jan. 1993, Elk Rapids, Antrim Co. (7-0). This is the fourth consecutive winter that a male in adult alternate plumage has been recorded at this site (D. Jennette in Chu 1993).

**MISSISSIPPI KITE** (description: B. Anderson): one adult, 7 May 1993, Warren Dunes State Park, Berrien Co. (5-1 in round two).

**MISSISSIPPI KITE** (description: K. Miller): one in transition from juvenal to first basic plumage, 11 May 1993, Warren Dunes State Park, Berrien Co. (5-2).

**PRAIRIE FALCON** (description: written jointly by J. Baumgartner, D. Ewert): one, 3 May 1982, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (5-2).

**WILSON'S PLOVER** (M. Willard; descriptions: P. Chu, J. Granlund; photographs: R. Weeks): one, 1-7 May 1993, Tawas Point, Iosco Co. (7-0). There was no black in the forehead or the lores, and the breast-band was brown or mostly brown as well. These features suggest a female or first-spring male.

There are a small number of records for the Wilson's Plover in the western Great Lakes region, all of them in the spring and summer. Of these, the present record is the earliest. The other records are: 17 Jun. 1936, Lucas Co., Ohio (Campbell 1940); 4 Jul. 1981, St. Louis Co., Minnesota (Eckert 1981); 15-20 May 1982, St. Louis Co., Minnesota (Lamey 1982, Weber 1982); and 26 May-2 Jun. 1990, Hamilton-Wentworth municipal region, Ontario (McLaughlin 1990).

**BAIRD'S SANDPIPER** (description: C. Powell): one, 20 May 1993, Erie Twp., Monroe Co. (5-2). Spring status of the Baird's Sandpiper in Michigan is a mystery. In most years, the species is reported one to three times in May or early June. However, only one spring report - the present one - is documented. Given the near-absence of documented spring records, and given the trouble that most observers have with "peep" identification, the Baird's Sandpiper may be considerably rarer in the spring than published reports indicate. Therefore, observers are urged to fully document any spring Baird's that they encounter.

**POMARINE JAEGER** (description: T. Leukering): one intermediate individual, 5 Sep. 1992, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (7-0). Barring on the throat, breast, flanks, and crissum indicated either that the bird had acquired some basic plumage or that it was a subadult.

**POMARINE JAEGER** (description: A. Byrne): one light individual in at least partial alternate plumage, 30 Aug. 1993, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (6-1).

**POMARINE JAEGER** (description: L. Binford): one light to intermediate individual, old enough to have elongate, partially twisted, blunt-tipped central tail feathers, 5 Sep. 1993, Agate Harbor, Keweenaw Co. (7-0).

**LONG-TAILED JAEGER** (descriptions: A. Byrne, K. Mettie, Jr.): two in adult alternate plumage, 15 Sep. 1993, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

**COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL** (description and photograph: D. Rupert): one in adult basic plumage, 2-3 Jan. 1982, East China Twp., St. Clair Co. (7-0). This record was reviewed in both 1992 and 1993. In 1992 it was rejected because of location: every site listed in the description is on the Ontario side of the St. Clair River (Chu 1993). However, in 1993 the record was resubmitted and accepted because of a letter from

Rupert indicating that the bird in question did occur in Michigan waters.

**MEW GULL** (description: K. Miller): one in adult basic plumage, 1 Jan. 1993, New Buffalo, Berrien Co. (7-0).

**MEW GULL** (descriptions: D. McWhirter, K. Thomas): one in adult basic plumage, 24-28 Jan. 1993, Lake Macatawa, Ottawa Co. (7-0).

**CALIFORNIA GULL** (description and photographs: D. Rupert): one in adult basic plumage, 20 Dec. 1982, East China Twp., St. Clair Co. (7-0). This record was reviewed and rejected in 1992, only to be resubmitted and accepted in 1993. The initial decision, to reject, was made because all of the locations listed in the description are on the Ontario side of the St. Clair River (Chu 1993). The subsequent decision, to accept, was made because of a letter from Rupert stating that the bird in question had occurred not only on the Ontario side of the river but also on the Michigan side.

**CALIFORNIA GULL** (C. R. Smith; description and photographs: K. Miller): one in third or adult alternate plumage, 30 April 1993, St. Joseph, Berrien Co. (7-0).

**ARCTIC TERN** (description: P. Young): one in adult alternate plumage, 9 Jun. 1981, Nayanquing Point Wildlife Area, Bay Co. (6-1).

**ARCTIC TERN** (descriptions: R. Planck, B. Stout): one at least partially in juvenal plumage, 23-24 Sep. 1992, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

**ARCTIC TERN** (description: K. Miller): one at least partially in juvenal plumage, 6 Nov. 1993, New Buffalo, Berrien Co. (6-1).

**LEAST TERN** (description: W. Booth): one, thought by the observer to be an adult, 4 Jun. 1970, St. Joseph, Berrien Co. (5-2 in round two).

**ANCIENT MURRELET** (description: A. Byrne): one, 1 Nov. 1993, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

**GROOVE-BILLED ANI** (UMMZ 134124, collected by L. Miner): one, 14 Nov. 1951, Allegan Twp., Allegan Co. (7-0).

**GROOVE-BILLED ANI** (photograph: B. Ebberts): one, 8-9 Oct. 1975, Parchment, Kalamazoo Co. (7-0).

**GROOVE-BILLED ANI** (photograph: J. Ponshair): one, 16 Oct. 1976, Allendale Twp., Ottawa Co. (7-0).

**COMMON BARN OWL** (description: J. Wuepper): one, 3 Aug. 1990, Green Lake Twp., Grand Traverse Co. (5-2).

**BURROWING OWL** (description: A. Weaver): one, 24 Apr. 1979, Redridge, Houghton Co. (6-1).

**RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD** (description: H. Ewald): one adult male, 9 Oct. 1974, Fabius Twp., St. Joseph Co. (6-1 in round two).

**RUFIOUS/ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD** (R. Wagner; description: P.



Chu): one, 7 Sep.-9 Dec. 1988, Lincoln Twp., Berrien Co. (6-0). The plumage criteria in Stiles (1972) suggested that the bird was an adult female.

**THREE-TOED WOODPECKER** (description: written jointly by T. Van't Hof, H. Van't Hof, G. Waldbauer): one male, 24 Jul. 1982, T45N, R7W, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

**THREE-TOED WOODPECKER** (description: D. McWhirter): one female, 24 Sep. 1992, T45N, R6W, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

**THREE-TOED WOODPECKER** (descriptions: L. Graf, B. Stout): one male, 26 Oct. 1992, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

**SAY'S PHOEBE** (description: N. Sloan): one, 2 May 1974, Sturgeon River, Houghton Co. (5-2).

**SAY'S PHOEBE** (description: written jointly by A. Twist, M. Twist): one, 2 May 1975, Muskegon, Muskegon Co. (6-1).

**SAY'S PHOEBE** (description: H. Hutchins): four, 27 May 1979, Beaver Island, Charlevoix Co. (6-1).

**SAY'S PHOEBE** (descriptions: A. Byrne, C. Freeman; photographs: C. Freeman): one, 9 Sep. 1993, Vermilion, Chippewa Co. (6-0).

**SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** (Mrs. J. Gavit; photographs: A. Gavit): one, 30 May-2 Jun. 1962, Spaulding Twp., Saginaw Co. (7-0).

**SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** (D. Jennette; photographs: V. Guntzville): one, 18 Oct. 1984, Elk Rapids, Antrim Co. (7-0).

**SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** (J. Bogle, P. Bogle; photograph: B. Bouton): one, 23-26 May 1987, near Fowler, Clinton Co. (6-0).

**BEWICK'S WREN** (description: W. Hall): one, 12 May 1993, Bloomfield Hills, Oakland Co. (7-0).

**NORTHERN WHEATEAR** (descriptions: A. Byrne, M. Teesdale; photographs: A. Byrne): one, 16 Sep. 1993, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

**VIRGINIA'S WARBLER** (J. Craves; photographs: M. Harhold): one, 13 May 1993, Dearborn, Wayne Co. (7-0). The present record aside, there are only three credible records of the Virginia's Warbler for the western Great Lakes region, all of them from Essex Co., Ontario: 16 May 1958 (Dow 1962), 9-11 May 1974 (Goodwin and Rosche 1974), and 5 May 1975 (Goodwin 1975).

**BLACK-THROATED SPARROW** (descriptions: D. Evers, B. Stout, R. Ziarno; photographs: D. Evers): one, 13-15 Nov. 1992, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

**LARK BUNTING** (description: L. Binford; photographs: R. Metsaranta): one male partially in adult basic plumage, 10 Oct. 1993, Copper Harbor, Keweenaw Co. (7-0).

**SHARP-TAILED SPARROW** (description: L. Binford): one, 10 Oct.

1993, Copper Harbor, Keweenaw Co. (7-0).

**SMITH'S LONGSPUR** (descriptions: A. Byrne, L. Dombroski, C. Powell; photographs: A. Byrne, D. Stimac): one in basic plumage, 17-20 Sep. 1993, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

### Records not accepted

**ARCTIC/PACIFIC LOON** (two descriptions): one, 22 Sep. 1993, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (2-5 in round two). As it flew by Whitefish Point, this loon appeared to have the gestalt of a Common Loon. "It had noticeably large feet trailing with a short neck, big head look [sic]. The wingbeat was slow and the flight direct with no head movement."

Unexpectedly, this Common-like gestalt was combined with a plumage that was inappropriate for the Common Loon. The head was a uniform gray color, and the upperparts appeared to be blackish and unmarked.

All MBRC members agreed that this combination of plumage features and gestalt was peculiar; however, most also felt that it was peculiar in a way that did not necessarily suggest an Arctic/Pacific Loon. The plain gray head and the absence of pale markings in the back are not right for *arctica* or *pacifica* in alternate plumage. Indeed, the plain gray head does not seem right for *arctica* or *pacifica* at any time of year.

**NORTHERN GANNET** (description): one, 24 Oct. 1992, Oak Beach, Huron Co. (2-5 in round two). The observer described a big bird with long, narrow wings. There appeared to be "as much 'bird' in front of [the] wings as behind." Plumage was white with black wingtips and dark mottling across the back and upper secondary coverts. The tail was white and tapered and the bill was long, bluntly pointed, and pale in color.

All committee members agreed that the description was compelling, with the exception of one detail: the tail, which was described as "pure white." Nelson (1978), in his examination of plumage variation in immature gannets, found that all birds with dark mottling on the upper secondary coverts and back had at least one black tail feather. Conversely, in those birds with an all-white tail, the black in the mantle area was limited to a few secondaries.

In view of the apparent inconsistency between a pure white tail and black mottling on the upper secondary coverts and back, the majority of committee members chose not to accept.

**ANHINGA** (description): one, 10 Oct. 1992, Little Trout Lake, Chippewa Co. (0-7). A bird with a pointed yellow bill and long black neck was observed swimming and diving. It apparently floated low in

the water, as evidenced by the statement that, "Its back was barely visible and the few glimpses we could catch gave an impression of some 'grayness'."

Summarizing the committee's position, one reviewer wrote, "I would like to believe the observer saw an Anhinga, ...but the description is brief and there is no mention of familiarity with this species or similar species such as [the Double-crested] Cormorant. Granted, the bill of a cormorant should not be pointed, but [it] might appear so to an...observer [who is not familiar with the species]."

**GLOSSY IBIS** (description): one, 15 May 1962, Isabella Twp., Isabella Co. (1-6 in round two). This ibis was only briefly described: "There were no white or light areas on the bird. Its head and neck were a rich reddish brown."

Presumably, the bird was identified as a Glossy because it lacked white facial feathering. However, some White-faceds lack white as well, even in May (Howell and de Montes 1989), underscoring the importance of looking at other features like the color of the facial skin, eyes, and legs.

**EURASIAN WIGEON** (description): one, identified as a male in alternate plumage, 28 Apr. 1975, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (3-4 in round two). A short-billed duck with a gray body, reddish head, and cream-colored forehead flew past Whitefish Point. The duck also had white wing patches, but the position of the white was not described.

Bill size notwithstanding, some reviewers were concerned because the female of a much more abundant species, the Common Merganser, also has a gray body, reddish head, pale areas on the foreface, and white wing patches.

**BLACK VULTURE** (description): one, 26 May 1974, Good Harbor Bay, Leelanau Co. (6-1 in round two). The observer saw two birds soaring together - a Turkey Vulture and the bird in question. The latter was described only as differing "from the Turkey Vulture by having a patch of white on the tip of its wings and a tail much shorter than a Turkey Vulture."

Most committee members believed that these details, although minimal, are correct for the Black Vulture and incorrect for anything else. However, one reviewer dissented, stating that, "The...description fails to distinguish the bird that was sighted from a Golden Eagle. The only actual words of description are 'patch of white on tip of wings' (admittedly slightly out of place for Golden Eagle) and 'tail much shorter than Turkey Vulture.'"

Michigan has three published Black Vulture records, none of them documented well enough to receive a unanimous vote for acceptance. Because at least one record must be unanimously accepted to place a

species on the state list (Granlund 1988), and because no Black Vulture record meets that criterion, the Black Vulture is now removed from the list.

**MISSISSIPPI KITE** (description): one, 30 Apr. 1984, Cooper Twp., Kalamazoo Co. (1-5, with one abstention, in round two).

In the midst of a telephone conversation, the observer looked through his office window and spotted a raptor flying against an overcast sky. He wrote, "I immediately ended the telephone conversation and concentrated on watching the bird." As he watched, the bird glided away from the office towards some nearby woods, where it made a graceful turn before drifting out of sight. The observer did not have binoculars, but noted that, "my initial view of the bird was at a distance of no greater than 30-35 yards."

The bird was described as follows. It had pointed wings and a notched tail. Beneath it was gray, becoming almost whitish on the throat. When it turned the upperwings were observed, appearing "darkest on the primaries and noticeably light on the rear edge of the secondaries." The flight action was buoyant, with flat-winged glides interspersed.

Although committee members believed these details to be kite-like, they were uncomfortable with the conditions under which the details were recorded. One reviewer expressed the committee's reservations when he asked,

So what do we have? A raptor appeared overhead in a window, catching the observer in the middle of a telephone conversation. The bird may have been visible only very briefly, and [because the sky was overcast] plumage details may have been difficult to assess accurately. In addition, the observer did not use binoculars. Given these circumstances, I wonder how [other species] can be confidently eliminated.

**SWAINSON'S HAWK** (description): one light adult, 31 Jan. 1993, Berlin Twp., Ionia Co. (1-6). While driving on an expressway, the observer saw a perched raptor, which then flew across the road in front of the observer's vehicle "so low and close I thought I might hit him." The raptor, judged to be a buteo, had clear underparts with a rusty bib; the undersides of the remiges were dark gray, whereas the underwing coverts were a paler gray; and the underside of the tail was gray with lighter bands.

Most committee members were concerned because, under the conditions described (a brief view from a moving car), a Red-tailed Hawk might approximate the features of the bird in question. Some Red-tails have a brownish bib across the lower throat or upper breast, and a percentage of those combine the bib with a nearly plain belly (e.g.,

UMMZ 91517 and 99754). In addition, in a brief view a Red-tailed might appear to have grayish flight feathers from underneath.

In winter, the Swainson's Hawk is very rare in the United States or Canada. A literature review revealed only two documented records (Gibson 1984, McLaren 1992) north of California, Florida, and the Gulf Coast states. Bailey and Niedrach (1965) list four winter specimens from Colorado, but the specimens cannot be located and should be disregarded (Andrews and Righter 1992).

**LONG-TAILED JAEGER** (description): one, 2 Jun. 1993, St. Vital Point, Chippewa Co. (1-6 in round two). On a calm spring day, the observer saw a jaeger fly by. He wrote, "The primary reason for identification of the bird as a Long-tailed Jaeger, and not a Parasitic or Pomarine Jaeger, was the even gray color of the wings and back and the absence of white wing patches, the long tail (the tail was folded so it appeared almost like a short streamer), and the Caspian Tern-like flight pattern."

Committee members expressed reservations about several of these criteria.

(1) At least some of the adult Parasitics seen in the spring at Whitefish Point do not show an obvious white flash in the under-primaries.

(2) The tail length, as described, is difficult to evaluate. More useful would have been a comparison of streamer projection with the length of the rest of the tail. Measurements in Cramp (1983) suggest the following rule of thumb: if the streamer projection is obviously greater than the length of the rest of the tail, then the bird is likely to be a Long-tailed, and unlikely to be a Parasitic; if not, then the bird may belong to either species.

(3) In nearly windless conditions, the flight action of known Parasitics can involve measured, stiff wingbeats that are reminiscent of a tern (or even a big shorebird).

In light of this information, one committee member wrote, "the ONLY character [clearly] favoring identification as a Long-tailed is back color. I'm afraid that I wouldn't feel comfortable identifying a fly-by Long-tailed on back color alone; other corroborating features (e.g., contrastingly blackish secondaries; only two whitish primary shafts above) would be of critical importance."

**COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL** (description): one in basic plumage, 6 Dec. 1975, Monroe, Monroe Co. (2-5 in round two).

In the midst of a large flock of Bonaparte's, Herring, and Ring-billed gulls, a gull "roughly the size of a Bonaparte's" was seen. It resembled a basic-plumaged Bonaparte's Gull, except that "the underside of the wings, when seen briefly, showed a conspicuous black area near the tips.... The bird was too far away and too difficult to follow in the

milling flock to observe any other specific field marks."

In response, one committee member wrote, "this report seems reasonable but the underside of the wing, the most important character, was 'seen briefly.' I have seen what I thought were birds with dark underwings which turned out to be Bonaparte's, and the dark underwings a quirk of the lighting."

**ARCTIC TERN** (description): one in transition from juvenal to first basic plumage, 12 Sep. 1981, Muskegon State Park, Muskegon Co. (4-3 in round two).

A lone bird was observed from as close as ten yards as it rested on the beach. Its upperwings were characterized by uniform gray primaries, white secondaries, and grayish-white secondary coverts with a dark carpal bar; its underwings were said to be white with a narrow black border to the primaries and secondaries.

Some of the features described favor an Arctic Tern; others can be applied equally to both the Arctic and Common terns; and still others do not fit any North American tern. The white secondaries and the narrow trailing edge to the under-primaries are both diagnostic for an Arctic Tern in its first fall. The uniform gray primaries and dark carpal bar are shared by both the first-fall Arctic and first-fall Common terns (though the carpal bar is less conspicuous in the former). Finally, the grayish-white secondary coverts and dark trailing edge to the under-secondaries are not consistent with either species.

Given this mix of features, some of which are appropriate for an Arctic Tern and others of which are not, several committee members elected to vote against acceptance.

**SMOOTH-BILLED ANI** (description): one, 25 Oct. 1971, Allendale Twp., Ottawa Co. (0-7).

The observer described a black, grackle-sized bird with a long tail, short wings, and a flap-and-glide wing action. It had "an enormous beak, which seemed to protrude above the bird's head." Grooving in the bill was repeatedly looked for, but not seen.

The absence of grooving is one of two features traditionally used to identify the Smooth-billed Ani. However, some Groove-billed Anis have a smooth bill as well. Many of the latter are first-fall birds (e.g., UMMZ 164201), but others are older (e.g., photo II in Balch 1979).

The second feature traditionally used to identify the Smooth-billed Ani is a bulging, rather than flat, proximal culmen. However, some Groove-billeds also have a bulging culmen (e.g., UMMZ 137364). Those Groove-billed Anis with the largest bills have the species' characteristic maxillary grooves, but even those without grooves can have the culmen projecting above the crown (e.g., UMMZ 164021).



Given this information, committee members felt that the ani in question could not be identified with certainty to either species.

Incidentally, Balch (1979) claims that the color of the feather edges on the head and nape is a reliable feature for ani identification, with the edges being iridescent greenish in the Groove-billed and iridescent brownish-bronze in the Smooth-billed. However, an examination of specimens suggests that Groove-billeds (e.g., UMMZ 163999) may closely approach the Smooth-billed condition.

**SMOOTH-BILLED ANI** (description): one, 1 Oct. 1992, Bruce Crossing, Ontonagon Co. (0-7).

A former south Florida resident encountered a bird that was "immediately recognized...as a Smooth-billed Ani." It was recognized by "the broad bill, the long tail, [and] the cuckoo-like posture" that it displayed.

Committee members felt that the bird in question was probably an ani. However, they were reluctant to endorse the identification as a Smooth-billed, especially given the absence of more detailed information about the appearance of the bill.

**WHITE-THROATED SWIFT** (description): one, 12-26 Jul. 1969, Pentwater, Oceana Co. (1-6 in round two). The observer saw a bird that was swallow-like, with "a rather large wing spread for any type of swallow I know." It had a striking black and white body, a black mark near the eye, and white "outer edges" on the upperwings. It was said to be "skimming over the water feeding on insects."

These details could pertain to a White-throated Swift. However, the white in the upperwing excepted, they could also pertain to a molting Black Tern.

**WHITE-THROATED SWIFT** (description): two, 31 Oct. 1983, Copper Harbor, Keweenaw Co. (0-7).

While driving along a cliff-top road, the observer saw two unusual birds and immediately parked along the roadside. In the observer's words,

The birds would fly low (not higher than 3-4 ft.) along the road and then would rise and plunge over the cliff at incredible speed. Sometimes they seemed to ride the thermals. They flew so fast and so close to the car - seemingly right over the hood - that binoculars were useless except at one critical point. The birds appeared to be somewhat larger than our swifts and swallows.... Until one lit in a nearby tree (c. 20 yds. distant), we could only see that they were very dark in color with light underparts. When the one bird paused for 30 seconds or so at close range, the unmistakable face pattern was perfectly clear with binoculars in good light.

One reviewer spoke for most committee members when he said,

"The habitat and flight behavior almost sound convincing, but the physical description is very limited and I, for one, have never observed this or any other species of swift perched in a tree!!" In support of the latter point, another reviewer wrote, "while landing in trees is not unheard of for swifts (e.g., Holmgren 1993) it has apparently never been observed in White-throats. Even Bent (1940:316), a collection of anecdotes if ever there was one, stated that, 'no one has ever seen [a White-throated Swift] alight on the ground, on a tree, or on any kind of perch.'"

**MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD** (description): one thought to be an adult male, 6 Nov. 1983, Kingston Plains, Alger Co. (4-3 in round two).

This bird was described very briefly: it had "a gray breast and very pale light blue back, with noticeable blue on the primaries and tail area." It was observed from as little as 20 feet over a period of two hours.

Given the description above, MBRC was unable to reach a consensus. A minority of committee members believed that the Mountain Bluebird is unlikely to possess both a blue back and a gray breast.

Males in fresh basic plumage have grayish tips to the blue feathers of the crown, nape, back, scapulars, throat, breast, and flanks. The tipping is most prominent in September and October (e.g., UMMZ 84708), and may be retained as late as March or April (e.g., UMMZ 138671). Heavily marked birds appear to have soft gray barring on the blue feathers of the upperparts, and below appear grayish with prominent blue blotches (e.g., UMMZ 196508).... From this, I conclude that a plain gray breast is inappropriate for a blue-backed male.

However, a majority of committee members believed that the observer did in fact see a Mountain Bluebird.

I have seen dull-looking Mountain Bluebird males.... This was an accurate description of what the observer saw, and his conclusion - Mountain Bluebird - was also accurate.

**BENDIRE'S THRASHER** (description): one, 12 Jun. 1984, Copper Harbor, Keweenaw Co. (0-7). The description indicates a bird that was thrush-like, but with a droop-tipped bill and longer tail. The rest of the description reads, "Olive, gray, brown in color. Top of head, back, and tail all the same color. Gray face, yellow eye, lighter breast with fine streaks, lightish legs."

MBRC was unanimous in believing that this description was not conclusive. The word used to describe the breast streaking ("fine") could apply to the Bendire's Thrasher, but it could also apply to the very similar Curve-billed Thrasher (compare, e.g., the third and sixth figures in Kaufman and Bowers 1990). In addition, the words used to describe bill shape ("droop at end") are better applied to the Curve-billed, and the leg color is not correct for either species.

It is interesting to note that the Curve-billed Thrasher has been recorded several times in the western Great Lakes region: twice in Minnesota (Eckert 1976, Carlson 1991), twice in Wisconsin (Robbins 1972, Follen 1987), and once in Illinois (Fink and De Neal 1993). In contrast, the Bendire's has not been recorded anywhere in eastern or central North America (England and Laudenslayer 1993).

**SWAINSON'S WARBLER** (description and recording): one, late May-at least 1 July 1993, Benona Twp., Oceana Co. (0-7).

An unfamiliar song was heard in a dune woods for over a month, but without the singer revealing itself. Then, on 1 July, a bird was seen flying through the woods; it was described as having olive-brown upperparts, plain wings, a plain "mousy gray" breast, and a long, spike-like bill. Upon disappearing into the foliage, and presumably alighting, the bird commenced singing, revealing itself to be the aforementioned mystery singer.

MBRC reviewed a recording of the bird made by the observer. The songs recorded were a less frequently heard song type of the Hooded Warbler.

An unanswered question is, if the songs were those of a Hooded Warbler, then what did the observer see? It is, of course, impossible to know. However, because the bird sang a Hooded Warbler song, voting to accept it as a Swainson's would have been difficult, regardless of its appearance.

**BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK** (description): a male and a female together, 30 May 1982, Baraga Co. (0-7). The observer wrote, "I saw alongside the road both a male and female Black-headed Grosbeak. Grosbeak shape, but not Evening Grosbeak colors. Female was (on short sighting) very brownish looking and male was rusty orange with the black head. A very fast look - they flew into the trees alongside the road.... I pulled out my book immediately to make sure they couldn't be something else, but I admit my sighting was from the car, moving at 50 miles an hour."

One reviewer expressed the committee's unanimous opinion in this way: the "details, if correct, can pertain only to Black-headed Grosbeak; however, as they were obtained during a quick glance from a speeding car, I can't vote to accept them - I've been fooled too many times on split-second glimpses."

**BLUE GROSBEAK** (description): one adult male, 20 May 1993, Leelanau State Park, Leelanau Co. (2-5). An entirely blue bird with rusty wingbars and a finch bill was observed. The observer wrote, "it was of medium size...obviously a larger sized bird than the Indigo Bunting."

Most reviewers were concerned that these details did not convinc-

ingly eliminate the Indigo Bunting. It is not uncommon for male buntings to have brownish wingbars (e.g., UMMZ 475t, UMMZ 151515), and the observer's size estimate is difficult to evaluate, given the absence of information about how size was estimated.

**SHARP-TAILED SPARROW** (description): one, 4 Jun. 1982, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (1-6 in round two). The observer noted three features: a gray ear patch surrounded by yellowish, the absence of prominent streaking on the breast, and white stripes on the back. These features are appropriate for a Sharp-tailed Sparrow, but they are also appropriate for a LeConte's Sparrow; LeConte's has grayish ear coverts set in a golden-buff face, an unstreaked breast, and pale striping on the back.

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