

Actions of the Michigan Bird Records Committee for 1994

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This is the fifth report of the Michigan Bird Records Committee (MBRC). It covers the committee's actions during 1994.

In 1994, the MBRC comprised members William Bouton (Kent Co.), James Fowler, Jr. (Wayne Co.), Douglas McWhirter (Eaton Co.), Kip Miller (Berrien Co.), Karl Overman (Oakland Co.), Rod Planck (Alpena Co.), and Ron Weeks (Midland Co.), and alternates Philip Chu and Michael Kielb (both Washtenaw Co.). The committee was chaired by Fowler, and Chu was its secretary.

During 1994, the MBRC reviewed the documentation for 125 records, 99 of which were accepted. Rules for the acceptance or non-acceptance of documentation are given by Granlund (1988).

For each record, 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, the observers who provided documentation are listed, and the name of the person who discovered the bird is given in boldface, whether that person submitted documentation or not.

In the accounts that follow, two kinds of documentation are represented by abbreviations (written description = de; photograph = ph).

Records accepted

Arctic/Pacific Loon (de AB KT): one adult in alternate plumage, 26 May 1994, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (6-0).

Arctic/Pacific Loon (de AB): one adult in alternate plumage, 27 May 1994, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

Arctic/Pacific Loon (de AB): one adult in alternate plumage, 22 Sep. 1994, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

Western Grebe (GRPM 100009, collected by FE): one, 17 Feb. 1917, Cascade Twp., Kent Co. (7-0).

Western Grebe (de JVB): one, 17 Oct. 1993, Saugatuck Twp., Allegan Co. (7-0).

Western Grebe (de KM): one, 7 Dec. 1993, New Buffalo, Berrien Co. (7-0). The 7 Dec. observation was preceded on 21 Nov. 1993 by another Western Grebe report from New Buffalo. The Nov. report consisted of an anonymous message left on a rare-bird-alert answering machine (K. Miller, pers. comm.).

The New Buffalo reports were complemented by three other Lake Michigan sightings in the late fall of 1993: single Westerns at two sites in Illinois waters, at Wilmette on 29 Nov. and Chicago on 2 Dec. (Chapel 1994), and a single in Indiana waters on 18 Dec. (Brown 1994b).

This is the second consecutive year with late-fall Western Grebe records at the foot of Lake Michigan. In 1992 a Western was observed at New Buffalo from 6 to 12 Nov. (Granlund 1993), and single Westerns were seen at several locations along Illinois' Lake Michigan waterfront between 17 Nov. and 19 Dec. (Walters 1993).

Western Grebe (Mr. Kelly; de AB; ph JS): one, 22-25 Jan. 1994, Kochville Twp., Saginaw Co. (7-0). Between 20 and 22 Jan. 1994, four grebes were found grounded in Bay, Midland, and Saginaw cos. (S. Miner, Tri-County Wildlife Support Team, pers. comm.). One of the

four was a Western.

On 24 Jan., the Western Grebe was released into the area's only open water - the plant-outflow canal at the Consumer's Power Karn-Weadock Plant in Bay City, Bay Co. The grebe stayed there for a day but was gone on 26 Jan., coincident with a break-up of the ice in adjacent Saginaw Bay.

Western/Clark's Grebe (de JSF): one, 5 Jul. 1943, Wampler's Lake, Jackson and Lenawee cos. (5-2 in round two).

Northern Gannet (Empey 88-167, collected by ME): one in its first fall, 10 Nov. 1925, Thunder Bay, Alpena Co. (7-0).

Northern Gannet (CIS 2-1584, collected by FF): one, Dec. 1929, Strawberry Island, St. Clair Co. (7-0). This specimen is adultlike in plumage, but with some dark rectrices and secondaries and scattered dark feathers in the back, scapulars, and upper secondary coverts. Such features suggest a bird in its third or fourth fall (Nelson 1978).

Northern Gannet (de JGG): one in its first or second fall, 26 Nov. 1993, Pere Marquette Park, Muskegon Co. (6-1). It is interesting to note that young gannets were reported from several locations along southern Lake Michigan in Nov. 1993. In addition to the Michigan report, single immatures were reported from the Indiana lakeshore on 5 Nov. (Brown 1994a) and from two different Chicago locations, one on 6 Nov. and the other on 9 Nov. (Chapel 1994; Farrell 1994).

Brown Pelican (de AC PC WP SS LWe; ph AC JGG KO): one adult in alternate plumage, 5-11 Jun. 1994, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (7-0). The Michigan record was accompanied by a spate of Ontario records of single adult Brown Pelicans. These are: 10 May 1994, Hamilton Harbor, western Lake Ontario (Ridout 1994a); 31 May-3 Jun., Long Point Bay, northern Lake Erie; 16 Jun., Timmins; 2-16 Jul., the Parry Sound area in Georgian Bay, Lake Huron; and

10-24 Jul., a series of lakes between Algonquin Provincial Park and Newboro (all Ridout 1994b).

Ridout (1994a, b) believed that these records involved at least two Brown Pelicans. One moved west from Hamilton Harbor to Long Point Bay and then to Pte. Mouillee, and from there perhaps north to Parry Sound; the other moved northwest to southeast from the Algonquin area to Newboro.

Conversely, the Ontario Bird Records Committee (Pittaway 1995:49), which had no documentation for the Ontario reports from Timmins and Parry Sound, indicated a "strong possibility" that a single wandering bird was responsible for all Brown Pelican sightings in the spring and summer of 1994.

White Ibis (de DP): one in juvenal plumage, 2 Sep. 1994, Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, Saginaw Co. (7-0).

Glossy Ibis (Empey 88-542, collected by ME): one adult in alternate plumage, a female by measurements, 4 Jun. 1939, Yoncom, Bay Co. (7-0).

Glossy Ibis (PD; de PC JGG): one in its first fall, 4-17 Sep. 1994, Wolf Lake Fish Hatchery, Van Buren Co. (6-0). This ibis was aged as a first-fall bird on the basis of its brown underparts (lacking any chestnut feathers) and its plain, oily green upperwings (without any chestnut feathers or rose-purple reflections in the secondary coverts). However, its bare facial skin was like that of an adult in alternate plumage, being blackish with two pale-blue lines, one from the top front of the eye to the culmen and the other from the bottom front of the eye to the chin.

White-faced Ibis (de AB AC PC SS): one adult with the prebasic molt at least partially completed (as judged by the absence of white facial feathering), 3-12 Aug. 1994, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (7-0).

Glossy/White-faced Ibis (MH; de PC; ph RP): one in its first fall, 10-30 Oct. 1987, Quanicassee Wildlife Area, Tuscola Co. (7-0).

Ross' Goose (WP; de PC): one in its first fall, 16-24 Dec. 1993, Lake Erie Metropark, Wayne Co. (7-0).

Ross' Goose (de RW): one in basic plumage (i.e., with no juvenal feathers evident in the field), 8-10 Apr. 1994, Midland, Midland Co. (6-0). In his report, RW wrote, "Two white geese were seen in this same pond on the 4th [of Apr.] and a single white goose was seen on the 7th. Both of these sightings were of birds too distant to identify to species, but indicate the Ross' Goose may have been present earlier..."

Cinnamon Teal (de RA): one male in alternate plumage, 6 May 1961, Grand Mere Lakes, Berrien Co. (7-0).

Cinnamon Teal (MSU 6161, collected by EB): one male molting into alternate plumage, 3 Oct. 1969, Marcellus, Cass Co. (7-0).

Tufted Duck (ph of a mounted specimen from the Melling personal collection, collected by CM): one adult male in alternate plumage, Oct. 1973, Whitmore Lake, Livingston and Washtenaw cos. (7-0).

Barrow's Goldeneye (UMMZ 114543, collected by LT): one male in alternate plumage, 7 Nov. 1946, Gun Lake, Barry Co. (7-0).

Barrow's Goldeneye (EC EW; de NI): one male in alternate plumage, 24 Apr.-6 May 1962, Marquette, Marquette Co. (7-0).

Barrow's Goldeneye (ph JMcA): one male in alternate plumage, 28 Mar.-3 Apr. 1986, Kensington Metropark, Livingston Co. (7-0).

Barrow's Goldeneye (JB; de DJ): one male in alternate plumage, 14 Nov. 1993-23 Jan. 1994, Elk Rapids, Antrim Co. (7-0). This record marks the sixth consecutive winter that a male Barrow's Goldeneye has been recorded at Elk Rapids.

Only in the winter of 1993-1994 was it reported before early Dec., and only in the winter of 1991-1992 (when it lingered until 16 Feb.) was it reported after late Jan. (Chu 1993, 1995).

Mississippi Kite (de MK): one adult, 14 May 1987, La Salle Twp., Monroe Co. (7-0).

Mississippi Kite (de PC JH; ph JGG): three, two first-spring birds (wearing a combination of juvenile and first basic plumage) and an adult, 21-23 May 1994, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (7-0). Some observers speculated that four or more kites were present, and this speculation was published (Reinoehl 1994). However, neither photographs nor written details support the presence of more than three birds.

Purple Gallinule (UMMZ 206191, salvaged by JT): one adult male, 17 Apr. 1983, Mackinaw City, Cheboygan Co. (7-0). The bird died on 19 Apr. 1983, two days after its discovery.

Snowy Plover (de AB AC PC SS; ph KO): one thought to be an adult female, 7 Aug.-4 Sep. 1994, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (7-0). On 31 Jul. 1994 a Piping Plover was reported at Pte. Mouillee, and reports of that species continued until 7 Aug., when the Snowy Plover was identified. This sequence of events is often interpreted to mean that the Piping and the Snowy were one and the same, i.e., that the Snowy was present for about a week before it was identified correctly.

Single Snowy Plovers were also documented from the western Lake Erie marshes during the fall of 1993: one at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, Ohio, from 1 to 7 Aug. 1993, and one (thought to be a different individual) at Metzger Marsh Wildlife Management Area, Ohio, from 11 to 13 Sep. 1993 (Harlan 1994).

Curlew Sandpiper (de AB AC PC SS): one in alternate plumage, 30 Jul.-9 Aug. 1994, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (7-0). With this record, single

Curlew Sandpipers in alternate plumage have been documented from the western Lake Erie marshes for seven consecutive years. All were at the Pte. Mouillee State Game Area except in 1993, when on 1 Aug. one was described from Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge in Ohio (Harlan 1994).

Pomarine Jaeger (de CP DR): two dark individuals (shown in Rupert's sketch as lacking elongate central tail feathers), 9 Oct. 1993, Port Huron, St. Clair Co. (7-0). DR suggested that the two Pominers were immatures, but age cannot be determined from the descriptions that he and CP provided.

Pomarine Jaeger (de AB KT): one dark individual, 29 Aug. 1994, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (5-2). AB noted, "Overall plumage [was] dark chocolate brown...and central rectrices were not noticeable.... At one time, I got the impression of some pale mottling...on the...underwing, but this impression was much too brief to tell with certainty." With these observations in hand, he correctly declined to make an age assignment.

Long-tailed Jaeger (MSU 4796, collected by EH): one adult male in alternate plumage, 17 Aug. 1965, Keweenaw Bay, Baraga Co. (7-0).

Long-tailed Jaeger (de CP DR): one, either an adult partially in basic plumage or an older subadult, 9 Oct. 1993, Port Huron, St. Clair Co. (7-0).

Long-tailed Jaeger (UMMZ 233617, salvaged by DM): one adult female beginning the prebasic molt, salvaged sometime between 20 and 24 Oct. 1993, Trout Creek, Ontonagon Co. (7-0).

Long-tailed Jaeger (de AB): one adult or older subadult in alternate plumage, 7 Sep. 1994, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (6-1).

Long-tailed Jaeger (de WAB): one, either an adult beginning the prebasic molt or an older subadult, 24 Sep. 1994, White River mouth, Muskegon Co. (6-0).

Common Black-headed Gull (de and ph KO): one appearing to be in definitive basic plumage, 4 Jul. 1994, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (7-0).

Common Black-headed Gull (de VJ JMcD): one, 6 Aug. 1994, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (7-0). Both observers described a complete hood, with VJ's caveat that, "A little area near the base of the upper mandible showed white feathering...." An imperfect hood might indicate an adult in prebasic molt, but it might also indicate a bird in first alternate plumage.

Regardless of the proper age assignment, the presence of a hood suggests that this bird is not the hoodless individual seen a month earlier at this same location.

California Gull (de KM): one in third or definitive alternate plumage, 18 Jun. 1993, New Buffalo, Berrien Co. (7-0).

Arctic Tern (de AB AC PC WP SS): one in alternate plumage, 18 Jun.-10 Jul. 1994, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (6-0).

Arctic Tern (de KT): one adult in alternate plumage, 6 Jul. 1994, New Buffalo, Berrien Co. (7-0).

Least Tern (de KB JKC): one adult in alternate plumage, 18 Aug. 1994, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (7-0).

Thick-billed Murre (ph of a mounted specimen, salvager unknown): one in basic plumage, 13 Dec. 1894, Flat River near Greenville, Montcalm Co. (7-0).

Common/Thick-billed Murre (UMMZ 151879, salvaged by FD): one in its first fall, 23 Nov. 1950, New Baltimore, Macomb Co. (7-0). UMMZ 151879 is a skeletal specimen, and thus poses an unfamiliar identification problem to the MBRC. It is certainly either a Thick-billed Murre or a Common Murre. However, which of the two is less obvious, and committee members elected to defer until a later time the search for species-specific skeletal features.

According to Wickstrom (1951), the bird was kept alive in captivity for about a month after salvage.

Three-toed Woodpecker (de I.CI): two, one with "an indistinct area of dull or dirty lemon yellow on top of the head" (either an adult male or a juvenile) and one in which the top of the head was not seen, 21 Aug. 1994, Ziegler Lake, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

Gray Kingbird (de JLW; ph TH JP): one in its first fall, 14-18 Oct. 1984, Leavitt Twp., Oceana Co. (7-0).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (de PY): one, 10 Jun. 1983, Troy, Oakland Co. (7-0).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (de TA): one, 31 Oct. 1984, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (de JH LO): one, 29 May 1994, Vermilion, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

Black-billed Magpie (EL; de by an anonymous writer for the *Manistique Pioneer-Tribune*): one, 28 Jan.-2 Feb. 1975, Germfask, Schoolcraft Co. (7-0).

Bewick's Wren (UMMZ 106106, collected by FC): one male, 8 Apr. 1879, Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo Co. (7-0).

Bewick's Wren (UMMZ 106107, collected by BS): one male, 13 May 1881, Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo Co. (7-0).

Bewick's Wren (UMMZ 54157, collected by WK): one male, 22 May 1920, Ann Arbor, Washtenaw Co. (7-0).

Bewick's Wren (UMMZ 63177, collected by WK): one female, 30 Apr. 1922, Waterloo, Jackson Co. (7-0).

Bewick's Wren (UMMZ 63176, collected by WK): one female, 12 May 1923, Waterloo, Jackson Co. (7-0).

Bewick's Wren (UMMZ 59450, collected by Jvt): one male, 25 Apr. 1928, Ann Arbor, Washtenaw Co. (7-0).

Bewick's Wren (UMMZ 153859, salvaged by RC): one female, 11 Feb. 1958, Waterloo, Jackson Co. (7-0).

Bewick's Wren (de PY): one, 14 May 1982, Chesterfield Twp., Macomb Co. (7-0).

Northern Wheatear (de OB): one, 7-9 Oct. 1943, T45N R11W, Luce Co. (7-0).
Northern Wheatear (de AW): one, 19 Sep. 1980, St. Ignace, Mackinac Co. (7-0). The observer thought she saw a second wheatear as well. "I did not get a chance to observe the second bird carefully as it only flitted into my binocular view very briefly, ...but it appeared to be of the same species" (Weir 1981).

Northern Wheatear (de OS): one, 7-8 Sep. 1994, Mackinaw City, Cheboygan Co. (7-0).

Mountain Bluebird (de JWu): one male, 22 Oct. 1980, St. Joseph, Berrien Co. (7-0).

Varied Thrush (de CF): one (found because it was heard singing over a 20-minute period!), 26-27 Jun. 1994, T27N R15W, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, Benzie Co. (6-1). A literature review revealed this Varied Thrush record to be without precedent. There are apparently no other Jun. records for the Great Lakes region. Indeed, there are only four May records: one from southern Ontario (Goodwin 1981), one from Illinois (Kleen 1980), and two from Minnesota (Janssen 1987).

Sprague's Pipit (de SP): one, 21 May 1960, Groveland Twp., Oakland Co. (6-1).

Sprague's Pipit (de JLW): one, 12 May-9 Jun. 1979, Muskegon Wastewater System, Muskegon Co. (6-1).

Black-throated Gray Warbler (de JAF): one male, 29 Apr. 1975, Greenfield Village, Wayne Co. (7-0).

Kirtland's Warbler (de JAC): one, 12 May 1994, Dearborn, Wayne Co. (5-1). According to the observer, the bird "strongly resembled pictures I have seen of immature male Kirtland's Warblers." However, if the bird had finished molting into alternate plumage, then it was a female, not a male, because it was grayish on the forecrown and lores (alternate-plumaged males of all ages are blackish there).

Blue Grosbeak (de JH LO; ph LO): one adult male, 29 May 1994, Vermilion, Chippewa Co. (7-0).

Painted Bunting (de WMB): one adult male, 30 Apr. 1966, Benton Harbor, Berrien Co. (5-2).

Green-tailed Towhee (de written jointly by LE ST): one, 20 May 1979, West Olive, Ottawa Co. (6-1).

Lark Bunting (de and ph EL): one male in alternate plumage, 23-25 July 1964, Port Inland, Schoolcraft Co. (7-0).

Lark Bunting (de JL): one male in alternate plumage, 27 May 1975, Houghton Lake Wildlife Research Area, Missaukee Co. (5-2).

Lark Bunting (ph CW SW): one male in alternate plumage, 15-18 May 1994, Saux Head Lake, Marquette Co. (7-0).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (UMMZ 49200; according to the specimen label, "killed with stone from slingshot" by JCW): one male, 27 Sep. 1893, Springwells Twp. (present-day Dearborn), Wayne Co. (7-0).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (UMMZ 208780, collected by SG): one female, 25 Sep. 1933, Conway Lake, Marquette Co. (7-0).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (UMMZ 75164, collected by RO): one female, 23 Sep. 1934, Portage Lake, Jackson Co. (7-0).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (UMMZ 83187, collected by JHW): one female, 16 Oct. 1935, Sharpes Lake, Jackson Co. (7-0).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (UMMZ 83642, collected by LDC): one male, 4 Oct. 1936, Portage Lake, Jackson Co. (7-0).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (UMMZ 104788, collected by LWC): one female, 29 May 1939, Erie Twp., Monroe Co. (7-0).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (UMMZ 104881, collected by LDC JLG): one male, 30 Sep. 1939, Portage Lake, Jackson Co. (7-0).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (UMMZ 150884, collected by LB RM DZ RZ): one first-fall female, 28 Sep. 1955, McIntyre Lake, Livingston Co. (7-0). In the fall of 1955, Sharp-taileds were observed at McIntyre Lake from 24 Sep. to 9 Oct., with a

maximum of three on 8 Oct. (Mumford and Zimmerman 1958).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (UMMZ 151955, collected by RM): one adult female, 7 Oct. 1956, McIntyre Lake, Livingston Co. (7-0). In 1956 Sharp-taileds were observed on 16 Sep. and 7 Oct. (Mumford and Zimmerman 1958). According to the label for UMMZ 151955, at least four were seen on the latter date.

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (UMMZ 152609, collected by LB RB RPK RM LLW): one adult female, 21 Sep. 1957, McIntyre Lake, Livingston Co. (7-0).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (UMMZ 152607; the specimen label states, "netted by group," and according to Mumford and Zimmerman [1958] the group included various combinations of LB GB RB NF RPK RM HS PS RS HT LLW RZ): one adult male, 28 Sep. 1957, McIntyre Lake, Livingston Co. (7-0).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (UMMZ 152610; no collector listed on the specimen label): one adult male, 28 Sep. 1957, McIntyre Lake, Livingston Co. (7-0).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (UMMZ 152608, collected by RB RM RS RZ): one adult male, 5 Oct. 1957, McIntyre Lake, Livingston Co. (7-0).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (UMMZ 152611; the specimen label states, "netted by group"): one adult male, 5 Oct. 1957, McIntyre Lake, Livingston Co. (7-0).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (UMMZ 152612; the specimen label states, "netted by group"): one adult female, 5 Oct. 1957, McIntyre Lake, Livingston Co. (7-0).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (UMMZ 155600, collected by KA): one adult male, 8 Oct. 1960, McIntyre Lake, Livingston Co. (7-0). Kenaga (1961) states that Sharp-taileds were seen at this site on both 8 and 16 Oct., with a maximum of six on the former date.

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (UMMZ 212822, collected by HT): one first-fall male, 1

Oct. 1967, McIntyre Lake, Livingston Co. (7-0).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (de JPK): one, 27 Dec. 1975, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (7-0).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (JKA; de PC): one, 30 May 1994, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (6-0).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (de BA; ph CF): one, 25 Sep. 1994, Arcadia Twp., Manistee Co. (7-0).

Smith's Longspur (AB; ph CF): maximum of three, at least two of them in basic plumage, 7-16 Sep. 1994, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. One individual appeared on 7 Sep., swelling to three (two of them photographed) on 9-10 Sep.; thereafter, only a single bird was present.

Smith's Longspur (de AB): one, 25 Sep. 1994, Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (6-0). The bird was wearing either juvenal or basic plumage. The latter is more likely, given the following two statements in AB's report: "faint streaking on the flanks and upper breast" and "Lesser coverts appeared to be entirely white."

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch (ph RKA): one, 26 Feb.-late Mar. 1984, Romeo, Macomb Co. (7-0).

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch (TB; de PC; ph RP): one, 24-27 Feb. 1991, McKinley Twp., Huron Co. (7-0). Ranking of the New World rosy-finch forms has been in flux. Three or four species were recognized until the early 1980s, when they were all merged because of evidence of interbreeding (American Ornithologist's Union 1983). Later, however, that evidence was judged to be insufficient, and a reversion to three species was recommended (American Ornithologists' Union 1993).

Because of the switch from one species to three, the Michigan rosy-finch records have now been reviewed twice: once when the three forms were treated as conspecific (Chu 1992, 1993), and again when each form was raised to species rank.

Records not accepted

Red-necked Grebe (dc): three identified as immatures, 23 Jun. 1994, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (0-7). This record - reviewed because a midsummer Red-necked Grebe on western Lake Erie would be remarkable - included the following details.

- (1) "Two of the birds had the 'ear tufts' at the point where the crown and nape meet. The other had a more rounded crown...."
- (2) For all three birds, the bill was "the correct length, shape and color for Red-necked Grebes."
- (3) The eyes appeared to be dark.
- (4) The crown was contrastingly darker than the dusky-colored face. "None of the birds had much white on or around the face or head in general...."
- (5) There were "four thin and faint white lines" that "ran fore and aft on the closed wings."
- (6) Finally, "large white armpits could be seen during wing lifts."

Some of these details, like the absence of a pale throat and the presence of white stripes on the upperparts, are not consistent with any plumage of the Red-necked Grebe. All of them, however, are consistent with another thin-billed, tuft-headed bird: the female Hooded Merganser.

Perhaps by coincidence, three female Hooded Mergansers were observed at the Red-necked Grebe site within several hours of the grebe sighting (J. Haw, pers. comm.).

Mississippi Kite (dc): one, an adult if identified correctly, 5 Sep. 1994, Warren Dunes State Park, Berrien Co. (1-5). The observers obtained views of a raptor that seemed unusual. It was shaped like a

falcon and was estimated to be intermediate between an American Kestrel and a Cooper's Hawk in size. Its wings and tail were dark underneath and its throat and belly were light. Finally, its flight action consisted of several flaps followed by a glide.

The majority view of this record was expressed by the reviewer who commented that, "None of the truly diagnostic features of...[a Mississippi Kite] are mentioned. The pattern for vagrancy of this species is late spring so an early fall record, at a time where Sharp-shinned Hawks, Merlins and Kestrels can all be migrating in good numbers, needs [to be able to stand up to] more scrutiny."

Harlan's (Red-tailed) Hawk (dc): one believed to be an immature (i.e., in its first winter), 21 Dec. 1993, Lake Erie Metropark, Wayne Co. (0-5 in round two). In a report exemplary for its clarity and detail, the observer described an unusual buteonine hawk. The hawk was brownish-black overall with white mottling in the upper and under secondary coverts, white spotting on the breast, and white barring on the under tail coverts. Its tail was never seen well, but the undersides of its flight feathers were heavily barred. Based on these features, it was identified as an immature Harlan's Hawk.

Although the features described are typical of an immature Harlan's, reviewers were unanimous in expressing reservations. As one said, "Red-tail plumages are highly variable; assigning a bird to 'subspecies' is problematic." This opinion is seconded by Clark (1987:71), who states that the immature Harlan's is "Separated in the field only with difficulty from immature dark-morph Red-tail." Dunne et al. (1988:25) are even more emphatic: "Immature Harlan's Hawks are not always separable from other dark Red-taileds. Differences are a matter of degree, and hybrids occur. Immature Harlan's may...be distinguished [but only]

if the observer is willing to allow a generous margin for error."

Possible confirmation of these statements is provided by UMMZ 62218, a first-year Red-tailed. UMMZ 62218 looks like a typical immature *harlani* - it is brownish-black with white barring on the crissum, white mottling on the breast, and white mottling in the upper and under secondary coverts - yet the specimen label assigns it to the widespread western race *calurus*, not to *harlani*. If UMMZ 62218 is correctly identified, then some immature *calurus* can closely duplicate the features typical of immature *harlani*. **Long-tailed Jaeger** (dc): one, 7 Jul. 1983, Hope Twp., Midland Co. (0-7). A bird with tapering wings and a long, pointed tail circled overhead twice before disappearing. It was grayish with "very noticeable white or pale wing patches on the inner wings, including secondary coverts and perhaps also the basal secondaries." As it flew, it "vocalized periodically: a fairly high, sweet, only slightly burry 'wreet wreet wreet'."

These details are not consistent with any plumage of the Long-tailed Jaeger. Adult and near-adult Long-taileds are grayish above and on the posterior underparts, but the anterior underparts are whitish and the wings lack pale areas; younger subadults have pale areas in the wings, but the pale areas are in the primaries, not the secondaries or secondary coverts, and the plumage is not predominately grayish.

One possibility is that this sighting refers to an escaped Cockatiel (*Nymphicus hollandicus*). The Cockatiel has tapering wings and a long tail and is gray with prominent white secondary coverts. Forshaw (1969:108) states that its "contact call, given frequently during flight, is a prolonged, warbling note terminating with a pronounced upward inflection. It is repeated three or four times and resembles the words 'queel-queel'." Coincidentally, the observer

stated (pers. comm.) that he initially thought the bird to be a parrot.

Ross' Gull (dc): one, if correctly identified an adult in basic plumage, 8 Jan. 1994, Cannon Twp., Kent Co. (1-6). The observer described a small gull with light gray underwings, a pale body with a rosy bloom, and a wedge-shaped tail. Such details, if correct, can pertain only to a Ross' Gull.

Unfortunately, these details were perceived under less-than-ideal conditions. The observer was apparently not near a lake, river, or pond - the habitat was described as "open - snow covered ground - a lot of people around" - and was, by his own admission, limited to "a very brief view" without any optical equipment.

Confronted with these particulars and a potential first state record, one committee member wrote, "The description does point out some key field marks. However, I am bothered by the circumstances surrounding the observation - 'snow covered ground with a lot of people around,' no optical equipment, no other observers and apparent brevity of the observation. I am also concerned about the fact that the observer - while trying to separate the bird from Bonaparte's Gull and Little Gull - never ruled out the possibility of a feral Rock Dove, which is approximately the same size as Ross' Gull."

Least Tern (dc): one believed to be in its first summer, 14 Aug. 1993, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (4-3 in round two). A small tern ("noticeably smaller than the nearby Forster's Terns") was observed in flight. It was described as having a pale forehead, dark bill, dark bridle running from eye to eye around the back of the head, and dark outer primaries.

These features are consistent with a Least Tern in its first summer. However, they are also consistent with a first-summer Black Tern.

Barn Owl (de): one, 5 Dec. 1993, Sturgis, St. Joseph Co. (2-5 in round two). For about ten minutes on an early-winter afternoon, a flying owl was mobbed by a group of 50 to 70 American Crows. Identified as a Barn Owl, it "would fly back and forth as if it were stuck in some aerial maze. Ever so slowly gaining altitude in the still afternoon air (sic). As the owl climbed higher and higher, crows would begin to drop or drift away from the mass assault. Until the Barn Owl was at its highest altitude and only five crows persisted in the fray (sic). Then without a moment's notice, the crows shifted [away] and started gliding to the west and the Barn Owl appeared to be following.... Then the crows doubled back on the owl and the pursuit was on again...."

Seen only from below, the owl was crow-sized and had a heart-shaped face. It appeared to be entirely creamy white, with the face being brighter white. The only contrasting mark was a dark spot in the wrist area on the underwing; the spot was "probably no larger than a nickel, very subtle and...easily overlooked."

A majority of reviewers found the documentation to be inconclusive. As one said, "Why couldn't this be a Short-eared Owl? Barn Owls are primarily nocturnal and the crepuscular behavior noted suggests a Short-eared Owl. The observer also mentions a dark spot on the wrist of the wing - which is not a field mark that I am familiar with on Barn Owls. However, Short-eared Owls do have commas in the approximate area of the wrist. I am also troubled by the notes on field behavior - the observer mentions the bird increasing altitude, then gliding off. I have seen this behavior in association with Short-eared Owls, but do not associate it with Barn Owls."

However, other reviewers expressed strong opposing opinions. For example, one wrote, "I just saw 8 different Short-eared Owls last night. No way they could be described as having a pale facial disk

area." He continued, "I think [other committee members are making] too much...of a 'nickel-sized' black dot at the wrist."

Burrowing Owl (WSU 807, according to the specimen label "shot by farmer"): one, May 1966, Cranbrook, Oakland Co. (2-5). Although WSU 807 is undeniably a Burrowing Owl, the specimen shows signs of captivity. The tarsometatarsus and toes are covered with a flaking corneous material. More importantly, the outer primaries on both wings appear to have been clipped; the wingtips are sheared off cleanly, as if someone extended each wing and used scissors to cut the primaries along a diagonal line.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (ph): one, 4-23 Oct. 1993, T46N R1W, Chippewa Co. (0-6). The available documentation, a single color print, shows the distant but unmistakable silhouette of a streamer-tailed flycatcher. Unfortunately, because the bird is visible only as a silhouette, it could be a Fork-tailed Flycatcher instead of a Scissor-tailed.

Curve-billed Thrasher (de): one, 12 May 1965, Walker, Kent Co. (3-4 in round two). The description - provided by a physician who had recently seen Curve-billed Thrashers in Arizona - includes the following details. The bird was "gray in color, with the long thrasher tail and the typical thrasher profile." It also had a curved bill and red eyes, and it made a sound "like a low chuckle."

Some committee members believed these details to be adequate because they eliminated other species. One commented, "The description provided certainly seems to be...of a thrasher species - yet easily eliminates the expected Brown Thrasher as a possibility. Separation from other grayish western thrasher species [is] more problematic, but I think the eye color described eliminates these...."

Others, however, believed that the details were too few to provide a compelling description of the species claimed: "Perhaps this individual did observe a Curve-billed Thrasher, but this description lacks too much to be considered for a first state record."

Still others believed that parts of the description were inconsistent with a Curve-billed Thrasher. For example, eye color in the Curve-billed is yellow to orange, not red (England and Laudenslayer 1993). In addition, the vocalization described, a low chuckle, seems unlike the "whit-wheel" call of the Curve-billed.

Incidentally, Payne (1983:63) felt that this record was "Unlikely on the basis of distribution." However, a number of well-documented Curve-billed Thrasher records now exist for the western Great Lakes region: two from Wisconsin (Robinson 1972, Follen 1987), two from Minnesota (Eckert 1976, Carlson 1991), and one from Illinois (Fink and De Neal 1993).

Hermit Warbler (de): one adult male, 19 May 1994, Ann Arbor, Washtenaw Co. (5-2 in round two). An unusual parulid, identified as a Hermit Warbler, was seen for about two minutes as it foraged in a treetop. It was about the size of a Black-throated Green Warbler, and like that species had a yellowish face and black throat; however, the yellow was plain, without a dark eyeline or cheek patch, and had a distinct lime tinge. In addition, the hindcrown and nape were black, like the throat, forming a half-cap that extended forward to the back of the eye. Finally, the upper back and shoulders were dark, with a broad white wingbar in the shoulder area, and the breast was white and unmarked. The belly, lower back, and other posterior parts were obscured by leaves and so were not described.

The majority view of the documentation was summarized by the reviewer who wrote, "While it is unfortunate that the

entire bird could not be seen, the written details and sketch provided...accurately portray a Hermit Warbler. Other similar species are effectively eliminated for the reasons outlined in the documentation."

However, two reviewers dissented with the majority view. One stated, "Pieces of the description just don't fit for me. How could the bird have been 'actively feeding' for two minutes, but only the head and shoulders were ever visible?" The other was more emphatic: "I don't believe the single observer had the type of walk-away views of this rare stray to the East to add it to the state list. It could have been a transmutation of a Black-throated Green."

To place a species on the state list, at least one of the relevant records must be accepted unanimously (Granlund 1988). The record discussed above, the first for the Hermit Warbler, received two "No" votes; by rule, therefore, it was not accepted.

Western Tanager (de): one thought to be a male, 27 Apr. 1965, Kensington Metropark, Oakland Co. (0-7). The observer was terse: "there is no doubt in my mind about what it was. The only difference between it and Peterson's illustration is that the back of the head was not red...."

Speaking for the committee, one reviewer wrote, "comparison - to a field guide illustration or whatever - is not an adequate substitute for description. A description can be evaluated; an observer's ability to compare cannot."

Western Tanager (de): one described as an adult male, 3 Aug. 1973, Little Girl's Point, Gogebic Co. (1-6). The observer wrote, "My first impression was of a bird with a red-orange head - and I quickly found the Western Tanager in Birds of North America for verification.... My only impression of the bird which differed from the book is that his rump looked to me to have some of the same shade of

orange that his face was, but not as intense. The book shows the yellow body and yellow rump to be identical in color."

As this account describes a reddish head and implies that the body was yellow, many committee members felt that the bird in question may, in fact, have been a Western Tanager.

However, the features described are hard to interpret in the absence of additional detail. For example, those features can be approximated by male Summer Tanagers in first alternate plumage, which may combine a reddish head (or head and breast) with yellow underparts and reddish feathers in the upper tail coverts (e.g., CM 113872 and 114379). Of course, male Summer and Western tanagers differ conspicuously with respect to other features, like back color and wing pattern, but the observer did not describe any other features.

In addition, the details provided may not be fully appropriate for a Western Tanager. In a sample of 78 specimens of after-hatch-year male Westerns at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, only one (CM 15822) has an orange rump, and that specimen is orangey on the underparts and wingbars as well.

Western Tanager (de): one male, 3 Jun. 1981, T46N R9W, Luce Co. (0-7). The letter reviewed by the MBRC contained only one sentence describing the bird: "The bright red on the head really stood out for a field mark."

Black-headed Grosbeak (de): one believed to be a female, 20 Nov. 1963-18 Jan. 1964, Flint, Genesee Co. (2-5). Although considerable detail was provided with respect to this bird's behavior and dietary preferences, its appearance was described only briefly: "The bird could have been none other than a Black-headed Grosbeak, female. The buffy breast and absence of streaks was strikingly characteristic."

One committee member responded, "Of course, lots of birds have an unstreaked buffy breast, among them species as diverse as Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Carolina Wren, and LeConte's Sparrow." He continued: "For the sake of argument, let's assume that the bird in question was a female or first fall male *Pheucticus* grosbeak. Among female or young male grosbeaks, the possession of an unstreaked buffy breast is typical for Black-headed and atypical for Rose-breasted. Nonetheless, the occasional Rose-breasted can approximate this appearance. For example, both UMMZ 30343 and 212282 have a pale buff breast that is nearly unstreaked."

The most interesting comments were provided by committee member Overman: "This letter is a classic illustration about what a different mentality people had towards rare birds before the [American] Birding Association and rare bird alerts. [There were] No phone calls followed by a rush of birders. Letters [were] written to distant locations like Bay City and Port Huron to try to entice established birders to come and look...but apparently 70 miles was too far for birders to travel then. Little did the observer know that at the time there were two active birders in Flint who would have been happy to see his rare bird and who, thirty years later, must judge his report - Doug McWhirter and Karl Overman. Only trouble is [that] neither had a driver's license at the time."

Black-headed Grosbeak (de): one, a male if correctly identified, undated (but occurring prior to 18 Aug. 1981, when the description was written), Charlevoix, Charlevoix Co. (1-6). This report - unusual because the date of observation is listed as "can't remember" - described a yellow-billed bird with a black head, rusty-orange breast, and black and white wings. The bird was said to be the "same size as other grosbeaks."

The plumage features described are appropriate for a male Black-headed Grosbeak, but the bill color is not. In the male Black-headed the bill is not yellow; instead, it is dark gray on the upper mandible and grayish to pinkish on the lower (Morlan 1993). Given this conflict between plumage and soft-part colors, a prudent course of action is to vote against acceptance.

Most reviewers were troubled less by bill color than by the observer's inability to remember even the year of observation. The latter raised the troubling possibility that the report was written long after the observation took place; the details of a particular sighting become hard to remember accurately within hours or days, much less months or years.

Black-headed Grosbeak (de): one identified as a male, 27 May 1983, Deep Lake, Barry Co. (1-5 in round two). This bird was described as having a black head, russet-colored breast and rump, and black and white wings. These features apply to the male Black-headed Grosbeak, but they also apply to the male Orchard Oriole.

Several reviewers noted that the grosbeak-versus-oriole confusion would have been eliminated if only the report had mentioned the appearance of the bill.

Blue Grosbeak (de): three males, 8-15 Jun. 1959, Orangeville Twp., Barry Co. (0-7). At least three birds were briefly described. All three resembled the Northern Cardinal "in size and shape and general appearance and bearing." Two were "dark blue, almost black;" the third was light blue with brown mottling.

Several species with conical bills could appear bluish-black. One is the Blue Grosbeak and another is the Indigo Bunting, though either would look blackish in poor light only; a third is the Brown-headed Cowbird.

Similarly, both the Blue Grosbeak and the Indigo Bunting can be blue with brown mottling, and for some mottled individuals the blue color can appear pale (e.g., UMMZ 135117 for the Blue Grosbeak and UMMZ 110598 for the Indigo Bunting).

One committee member summarized his thoughts on this record by writing, "Overall, each of the three birds described here could be a Blue Grosbeak, but each could be something else as well. Details that would have helped to resolve the situation include a description of the wings; a clearer description of size, with some indication of what size was judged against; and an explicit description of bill size and shape, particularly as it compared to Indigo Bunting. The reference to Northern Cardinal does suggest a comparatively massive bill, as befits Blue Grosbeak; on the other hand, it also brings to mind a bird that is larger and more ample-tailed than any Blue Grosbeak would be."

Blue Grosbeak (de): one, 25 Sep. 1973, Cooper Twp., Kalamazoo Co. (0-7). After a discussion with the two observers, a third individual drafted a report that listed the following details. The bird was larger than a House Sparrow and was "brown or at least a tan brown with some blue in [the] wings, tail, or on [the] breast." Its bill was "much more substantial than [that of] an Indigo Bunting."

Most committee members were reluctant to take these details at face value because the description was written not by the observers, but by someone who talked with the observers about their sighting. As one reviewer said, "In general, such second-hand documentation is problematic: it's hard to know if the person who questioned the observers left out an important detail, added his own interpretation to something the observers said, or influenced the contents of the description by the kinds of questions he asked."

Blue Grosbeak (de): one male, 19 Aug. 1994, Pleasant Plains Township, Lake Co. (1-5, with one abstention). The observer saw a finch-billed bird that was blue with rusty wingbars and black streaking on its back. A strong resemblance to the Indigo Bunting was noted, but this bird seemed larger and was judged to be "catbird sized?".

Members of the MBRC were concerned that these details do not exclude the Indigo Bunting from consideration. For example, brownish wingbars can be observed on male Indigo Buntings of all ages (Payne 1992), and though most males with wingbars have brown or blue-brown mottling elsewhere in the plumage, a few completely blue males have wingbars as well (e.g., UMMZ 92498).

In addition, male Indigo Buntings can have dark back markings. Rare individuals have moderately broad black shaft streaks that might be visible in the field under ideal conditions (e.g., UMMZ 84968). More commonly, individuals have scattered, dull, brown or blue-brown feathers that contrast with the bright blue feathers around them; in the field such birds, wearing back feathers of two different ages, could appear to have conspicuous dark mottling in the back.

Finally, most committee members were reluctant to weight the statement "catbird sized?" very heavily, given the absence of information about how size was estimated; accurate size estimation can be difficult, especially when a bird is seen alone or in silhouette.

Painted Bunting (de): two, presumably a male and a female, Apr. 1961, T52N R34W, Houghton Co. (1-5 in round two). The documentation provides little detail about the two birds observed: one was green, the other was red and green, and each had a notably large bill.

These features are consistent with the Painted Bunting. However, they are also consistent with the Scarlet Tanager, a species in which spring males can be

strikingly red and green (e.g., UMMZ 201604).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (de): one, 16 Sep. 1976, Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. (2-5). A sparrow with an orangey face and breast and white back striping was observed. However, despite a five-minute observation period, more details could not be obtained: "The bird was so active, ...spiralling up to the tops of reeds, only to squirrel down again and rush through the marsh grass to another reed and again ascend, that the view was anything but good."

The orangey foreparts and white back stripes are suggestive of a Sharp-tailed Sparrow. However, the LeConte's Sparrow has similar features - a bright, golden-buff face and breast in combination with pale, sand-colored striping on the back.

Given the poor views obtained, most reviewers were reluctant to place much weight on precise differences in face color (orange versus golden-buff) or back color (white versus sandy striping), and so voted against acceptance.

Golden-crowned Sparrow (de): one, 14 Oct. 1976, East Lansing, Ingham Co. (0-6, with one abstention). The documentation available includes one sentence describing the bird in question: "It is difficult to see what this bird could be confused with...the crown was most definitely gold/yellow bordered by black."

In the absence of information about size, shape, or other regions of plumage, the MBRC was forced to acknowledge that this description could apply not only to a Golden-crowned Sparrow, but also to a Golden-crowned Kinglet.

Hooded Oriole (de): one identified as a male, 17 May 1969, North Point, Alpena Co. (0-6, with one abstention). The report, of a Hooded Oriole with three Northern Orioles, noted only that the bird in question "seemed brighter and more striking than the others."

Hooded Oriole (de): one, "for about two weeks" starting on 27 Nov. 1987, New Buffalo, Berrien Co. (2-5). An unknown bird was sketched and described by a Berrien County feeder-watcher. Its head, neck, and underparts were "bright orange to rust," set off by a black face "very similar to that of a cardinal and...not large," black tail, black back, and black and white wings. There were two areas of orange in the posterior upperparts, one near the middle of the back and the other near the base of the tail.

Although the mystery bird was present for about two weeks, it only visited the observer's bird feeder once. The rest of the time it kept to the ground, "looking for insects under leaves and debris."

Among reviewers, opinions varied with respect to the identity of this bird. Some believed that it might indeed be a Hooded Oriole, whereas others suggested that it might be a Black-headed Grosbeak or a Brambling.

Even if the features match a Hooded Oriole better than they match anything else, they are less than fully convincing. For example, in the Hooded Oriole, the black on the head is not cardinal-like, but continues down into the middle of the breast, forming a conspicuous black bib. In addition, the rump and upper tail coverts of the Hooded Oriole are wholly orange, not black with two orange spots. And finally, the prevalence of ground-feeding behavior seems inappropriate for an oriole, Hooded or otherwise.

Although neither of the Hooded Oriole records listed here was accepted, the species has occurred once in the Great Lakes area. An adult male was netted and subsequently photographed at Long Point, Ontario, on 19 May 1992 (Boardman 1992).

Audubon's Oriole (de): one, 9 May 1982, Lamont, Ottawa Co. (0-7). Several features were noted on this medium-sized bird (size estimated as eight inches) with

a sharply pointed beak. The head, neck, bill, and eyes were black, contrasting strongly with the bright yellow breast. Additionally, the wings were black with bright yellow shoulders. Back color, however, was not recorded, as the bird was facing the observer throughout the observation period.

One reviewer noted that the features described would be consistent with a yellowish, carotenoid-deficient Northern Oriole. "I've never seen such a bird; however, because carotenoid pigments (which confer red, orange, and yellow coloration) are dietarily acquired, it seems possible that a bird with a dietary deficiency could be yellowish instead of orange."

Most committee members, however, agreed with the reviewer who wrote, "The details provided are insufficient - back color not noticed - to separate the individual described from Scott's Oriole." Indeed, the Scott's Oriole has occurred in the western Great Lakes region; a second-year male Scott's was netted, measured, and photographed in Duluth, Minnesota, on 23 May 1974 (Sundquist 1975) and remained nearby into mid-June (Janssen 1976).

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[Author's Note: The MBRC actions described in this paper took place in 1994, and so do not reflect subsequent taxonomic and nomenclatural decisions.]