

Actions of the Michigan Bird Records Committee for 1996

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This is the seventh report of the Michigan Bird Records Committee covering the Committee's actions in 1996. The members of the Committee were Doug McWhirter (Eaton Co.), Mike Kielb (Washtenaw Co.), Kip Miller (Berrien Co.), Karl Overman (Oakland Co.), Curt Powell (Wayne Co.), Kevin Thomas (Ingham Co.), and Ron Weeks (Midland Co.), with alternate members Brian Allen (Manistee Co.) and Jack Reinoehl (Hillsdale Co.). McWhirter was Chairman and Reinoehl was Secretary during the past year.

This was a year of remarkable changes to Michigan's state list with the addition of several species that are primarily Mexican in their distribution, the White-collared Swift, Green Violet-ear, and Broad-billed Hummingbird. A couple of overdue species, the Black Vulture and Ivory Gull, were also added. Finally, a well-photographed Bullock's Oriole became the first accepted record of a form recently restored to full species status.

Additionally, as a result of the Committee's decision to no longer maintain a "Category C" and either promote these species to regular status or remove them from the state list, the Tufted Duck, Prairie Falcon, and Band-tailed Pigeon were all added to the state list. As a result of these changes and additions, the Michigan list stood at 407 on 1 January 1997.

The author would like to thank Doug McWhirter and Allen Chartier for their help in reviewing this manuscript. Both have made several useful suggestions.

Category C changes:

Tufted Duck

Vote to add: 7-0

This species occurs during the winter in North America on both coasts and also the Great Lakes, based on reports from recent *American Birds* and *Audubon Field Notes*. These, moreover, showed that this species' presence in Michigan in the late winter and spring of 1995 corresponded with the highest recent numbers throughout the east coast and multiple occurrences in Ontario (Reinoehl 1997). Thus there was little dispute that this species is a genuine vagrant to Michigan.

Prairie Falcon

Vote to add: 5-1-1

Committee members noted on the one hand that this species is a regular visitor in nearby states. On the other hand, there is no doubt that this species is much favored by falconers and that escaped or released hawks will often revert to normal behavior. One member stated that this was the "trickiest" of the three species under consideration but that "this bird has an established track record of moving east after breeding and is annual in Minnesota and nearly annual in Illinois."

A comparison between the records from Michigan and Minnesota, prepared by Mike Kielb for the Committee, was useful. The three Michigan records, one of which has not yet been acted upon by the MBRC, are in August, November and May. In Minnesota, nine of the 56 fall records between 1974 and 1991 are in August. October has the greatest number of fall records with twenty, and November has nine. During this same period, May has the most spring records with six of a total of fifteen. Most of Minnesota's records are of one day duration, but roughly 20% are for visits of longer than one day, as is Michigan's August record.

Band-tailed Pigeon

Vote to add: 6-0-1

The Committee's primary concern is the plausibility of the occurrence of this species as a wild vagrant. No one knew of this species being held regularly in captivity, though an individual seen in early 1996 in Bay City with color bands on its legs suggests that this does occur (see discussion below). The Band-tailed Pigeon has been recorded in 24 states and provinces east of the Rocky Mountains (DeSante and Pyle 1986). This propensity to wander, combined with the fact that Michigan's record, which is of a bird seen in Berrien Co. between 24 December 1967 and 22 January 1968, is at a likely time for wandering birds to occur,

convinced the Committee that this species should be added to the state list.

Newly Accepted Records from Previous Years:

According to the by-laws of the MBRC as amended in 1992, once a species has been accepted to the state list by a 7-0 vote of the Committee, those records which previously received votes of 5-2 or 6-1 are considered valid records (Chu 1993). Thus, as a result of the recent addition of Black Vulture and Ivory Gull to the state list, the following records are accepted by the Committee.

Black Vulture

(description: Chuck Nelson)

Vote: 6-1 on second round.

One on 8 April 1972 at Sarett Nature Center, Berrien Co. (Chu 1993).

Black Vulture

(description: Tom Carpenter)

Vote: 6-1 on second round.

One on 26 May 1974 at Grand Harbor Bay, Leelanau Co. (Chu 1995)

Black Vulture

(description: Tom Allen)

Vote: 6-1 on second round.

One on 7 July 1984 seen 3 miles south of Whitefish Point Bird Observatory in Chippewa Co. The bird was "very dark except for tips of primaries under wings, which were white." It was observed "circling lazily over road, with regular flapping flight mixed with soaring."

Ivory Gull

(description: Louis Campbell)

Vote: 6-1 on second round.

One on 12 January 1949 at Grosse Isle, Wayne Co. (Chu 1992) (Black 1949).

During the same winter, this species was

also recorded in Ontario, Illinois, and Minnesota (Griscom 1949).

Accepted Records:**Red-throated Loon**

(description: Ron Weeks)

Vote: 6-0-1

One on 7 - 15 February 1996 at the Karn Plant, Bay City, Bay Co. This species is rare in Michigan away from Whitefish Point.

Western Grebe

(description: Jack Reinoehl)

Vote: 5-1-1

One on 12-13 November 1995 at Lake Belair, Hillsdale Co. The description noted that "the top half of the face was black . . . making [the eye] invisible".

Ross' Goose

(description: Laurence M. Burke)

Vote: 7-0

Two on 22 October - 10 November 1995 at the Muskegon Wastewater System, Muskegon Co.

Ross' Goose

(description: Steve Santner)

Vote: 7-0

Two on 12 November - 26 November 1995 at Allegan State Game Area, Allegan Co. The two described from the 12th were joined by a third on the 26th (Powell 1996).

Ross' Goose

(description: Michael J. Kielb)

Vote: 7-0

One on 25 February 1996 on Pleasant Lake, Washtenaw Co.

Ross' Goose

(description: Jeff Buecking)

Vote: 6-1 on second round.

Four on 30 March 1996 at Fish Pt., Tuscola Co.

Ross' Goose

(description: Ron Weeks)

Vote: 6-0-1

One on 30 March - 5 April 1996 at Nayanquing Point Wildlife Area, Bay Co.

Magnificent Frigatebird

(description: Allen Chartier, Steve Santner; slides: Allen Chartier)

Vote: 7-0

One adult male on 26-28 October 1995, found by Tom Heatley and Mike Mencotti at Metrobeach Metropark, Macomb Co. In his description, Chartier stated that he "purposely tried to see the color of the feet, in order to certainly eliminate the other species of frigatebird, and they were entirely dark, barely visible against the black body." The lack of a carpal bar on the upper wing was also noted. This is the sixth accepted record of a frigatebird for Michigan; these are not all identified to species. A summary of frigatebird records from Michigan and nearby states is found in Mencotti (1996) along with a listing of other inland frigatebird records related to Hurricane Opal.

According to Max Mayfield at the National Hurricane Center (Mayfield 1997), Hurricane Opal made landfall on the evening of 4 October 1995 with sustained winds of 75 to 100 miles/hr. along the Florida panhandle. Weakening rapidly, it was declared a tropical depression by the time it reached southeastern Tennessee on the 5th, eventually entering eastern Ontario.

Tricolored Heron

(description: Jeff Buecking)

Vote: 7 - 0

One on 19 August 1995 at Nayanquing Pt., Bay Co.

Tricolored Heron

(description: Kevin Thomas)

Vote: 5-0-2

Two adults on 31 July - 21 August 1996 at the Karn Plant, Bay City, Bay Co. The later date is from the Michigan Rare Bird Alert.

Glossy Ibis

(description: David Peters)

Vote: 7-0

One on 18 August 1995 at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, Saginaw Co.

Glossy Ibis

(descriptions: Philip Chu, Walter Pawloski, Kevin Thomas)

Vote: 6-0-1

One on 25 April - 12 May 1996 at Lake Erie Metropark, Wayne Co.

White-faced Ibis

(descriptions: Walter Pawloski, Kevin Thomas)

Vote: 6-0-1

One on 25 - 27 April 1996 at Lake Erie Metropark, Wayne Co. Pawloski noted that "[t]he legs were reddish with joints... brightly pink" and that "[t]he eye was red, and the facial skin a light pink." White facial feathering was lacking. Immediate comparison was available with a Glossy Ibis that was present at the same place and time. This is the sixth accepted record for the state, four of which have been this decade.

Black Vulture

(description: Jim Granlund)

Vote: 7-0

One on 22 April 1996 in Section 11 of Prairieville Township in Barry Co. Ray Adams originally discovered and identified this bird, and Granlund relocated it in the early evening. He describes a "very large nearly all black bird" whose wings were "long and very wide giving a rectangular appearance." Additionally "[t]he secondaries were uniformly dark above and below while the primaries, which were held widely spaced, were dark at the tips but white at the bases." With this first unanimously accepted record, there are now a total of four accepted Michigan records; the other three are listed above.

Mississippi Kite

(description: Bill Bouton)

Vote: 7-0

One adult on 9 October 1995 at the intersection of Kalamazoo Ave. and 92nd St. in Kent Co. The observed bird was flying direct in a west-north-westerly direction. This is the first accepted fall record for the state.

Mississippi Kite

(description: Kevin Thomas)

Vote: 6-0-1

One adult on 14 May 1996 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co.

Mississippi Kite

(description: Kevin Thomas)

Vote: 6-0-1

One subadult on 20 May 1996 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. This species has now been observed at WPBO in four out of the last nine springs.

Swainson's Hawk

(description: Michael J. Kielb)

Vote: 6-1

One light phase adult on 13 October 1995 at Lake Erie Metropark, Wayne Co.

Swainson's Hawk

(description: Michael J. Kielb)

Vote: 6-1

One light phase juvenile at 12:56 p.m. on 25 October 1995 at Lake Erie Metropark, Wayne Co.

Swainson's Hawk

(description: Michael J. Kielb)

Vote: 6-1

One dark phase juvenile at 1:27 p. m. on 25 October 1995 at Lake Erie Metropark, Wayne Co.

Swainson's Hawk

(description: Michael J. Kielb)

Vote: 6-1

One near adult on 10 May 1996 at Gallup Park, Washtenaw Co.

Swainson's Hawk

(description: Allen Chartier)

Vote: 7-0

One probable adult on 18 September 1996 near Pte. Mouillee in Monroe Co.

Gyr Falcon

(description: Michael J. Kielb)

Vote: 7-0

One gray phase bird on 9 October 1995 at Lake Erie Metropark, Wayne Co. The falcon disappeared to the west after about 15 minutes of observation.

Purple Gallinule

(photograph: Keith Westphal)

Vote: 7-0

One specimen found and photographed on 19 April 1995 on the beach of Lake Michigan south of Frankfort in Benzie Co. The specimen is now at UMMZ with catalog number 234080 (pers. comm. J. Hinshaw). Westphal suggested, on the basis of tracks found, that this individual had been in the area for a couple of weeks previous to its discovery. This is the sixth accepted record for Michigan and the first since 1983. All accepted records are from April or May.

Ruff

(description: Jean Hoelzle)

Vote: 5-2-1 on second round.

One on 23 August 1995 at Tawas Point State Park, Iosco Co. The description included these features: "2/3 taller than Least S.", "scaly appearing back," "[back] close to color of Least S. next to it," "greenish legs, or greenish yellow," "bill slightly drooped," "faint streaking and buffy wash sides of breast," "stands tall," "supercilium." A sketch that was included with this record shows a dark tail with white on both sides.

The Committee's strongest concerns about this record centered around the possibility of a Pectoral Sandpiper. The main distinctions between a female Ruff and a Pectoral Sandpiper would be the larger size of the Ruff, the sharp well-defined breast pattern of the Pectoral compared to the vague pattern on the breast of the Ruff, and the streaked back of the Pectoral compared to the scaly back of the Ruff. One member thus noted: "Overall size and shape seems correct. Pectoral eliminated by breast description." Briefly considering other similar species, the Upland Sandpiper is ruled out by its strongly streaked breast, the Buff-breasted Sandpiper by its complete lack of breast streaking and the juvenile Sharp-tailed Sandpiper by its stronger

supercilium than shown in the sketch and streaked back.

Jaeger, sp.

(description: Richard Brewer and Katy Takashishi)

Vote: 5-0-2

One on 2 August 1995 on the beach at Good Harbor Bay, Leelanau Co. Brewer stated that the size was "similar to a Herring Gull" which suggests the bird was perhaps a Pomarine Jaeger.

Pomarine Jaeger

(description: Kevin Thomas)

Vote: 5-1-1

One on 4 September 1995 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co.

Pomarine Jaeger

(description: Kevin Thomas)

Vote: 6-0-1

One on 5 September 1995 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co.

Pomarine Jaeger

(description: Kevin Thomas)

Vote: 5-1-1

One probable juvenile on 26 August 1996 at Tisconia Beach, St. Joseph, in Berrien Co.

California Gull

(description: Terry Fuller and Louis Taccolini)

Vote: 6-0-1

One in first winter plumage on 19 December 1995 at the Upper Harbor Area of Marquette in Marquette Co. This is the fifth accepted record for Michigan since 1990.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

(description: Ron Weeks)

Vote: 5-1-1

One first winter bird on 11 December 1995 on the Saginaw River in Bay City, Bay Co.

Black-legged Kittiwake

(description: Brian Allen)

Vote: 5-1-1

Five adults flying north over Lake Michigan on 25 February 1996 off Arcadia in Manistee Co.

Ivory Gull

(description and slide: Terry Fuller)

Vote: 7-0

One subadult on 22 December 1995 and 12 January 1996 at the Lower Harbor, Marquette, in Marquette Co. First spotted standing just in front of a first-year Glaucous Gull, "the bird was clearly very white over all" and had "soot colored markings extending from around the area of the bill to about the eye." There were also black marks on the primaries. The legs were short and black. Further "[t]he bill was dark based with a light to yellow tip." Its flight was "fluid and agile with the wings looking relatively long and crisply white." See Fuller (1997) for further discussion, and for sketch and photograph of this bird. Ivory Gulls were seen in Ontario in both November (Ridout 1996a) and December (Ridout 1996b), the latter bird within sight of Michigan across the St. Clair River. This is the first record accepted by the Committee for this species; as noted above, a second record is now also accepted.

Arctic Tern

(description: Kevin Thomas)

Vote: 6-0-1

One on 25 September 1995 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. This is the fourth accepted fall record at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory.

White-winged Dove

(description: Phil Chu; slides: Tom Ford, Jim Granlund)

Vote: 7-0

One on 5 - 8 August 1996 at Empire in Benzie Co. found by Tom Ford. This was the third record for Michigan and the first to be documented materially.

Barn Owl

(photograph: Glenn Belyea)

Vote: 6-0

One early April 1994 in Cass Co. The bird was picked up in weakened condition and died on the 6th. Glenn Belyea photographed the specimen for the Committee.

Barn Owl

(description: Dana Schindler)

Vote: 7-0

One on 16 March 1995 and 11 May 1996 in Manistee, Manistee Co. It had "white undersides and dark eyes," with no markings except a "dark frame" around its face. It was observed in a barn lit by an electric light. It flew to within ten feet of the observer. Its voice, heard on another occasion, was described as a "horrid raspy screaming sound," given in flight.

White-collared Swift

(descriptions: Jon Dunn, Jeff Buecking, Terry Chapdelaine, Melvin Gabel, Diana Lutz)

Vote: 7-0

One on the afternoon of 19 May 1996 at Tawas Point State Park, Iosco Co. Full details of this sighting and the identification can be found in Dunn (1996). To reiterate some of the more remarkable facts about this record, Jon Dunn, who was leading a tour at Tawas Point at the time, is one of the most respected field observers in North America. The nearest points of normal occurrence of the swift are Cuba and Tamaulipas, Mexico (A.O.U. 1983), both over 1500 miles away. This strong-flying species is non-migratory except for a tendency to wander from its non-breeding range both in the Antilles (A.O.U. 1983) and Western Mexico (Howell and Webb 1995).

The attitude of the Committee toward this sighting was expressed by a committee member who wrote "[g]iven the large size [and] white on the neck coupled with the experience of two of the observers with this species in the tropics, I vote to accept." The white on the neck eliminates the species most closely resembling this, the White-naped Swift of western Mexico. As well as a first record for Michigan, this is only the seventh accepted record for the United States (ABA 1996). Previous records are from

Florida (2), Texas (3), and California (1). The earliest of these is from 1974, and all but the California sighting are from the fall or winter. The record from Louisiana listed in the above reference was a sight record by a single observer without the aid of optics and not accepted by the Louisiana Rare Bird Committee. (pers. comm., D. P. Muth)

North American weather preceding this sighting was marked by several days of strong south winds across the center of the continent. Other Michigan sightings from this time period included Mississippi Kite, Say's Phoebe, two Western Kingbirds, Townsend's Warbler (18 May 1996 in Kalamazoo Co., not yet published but accepted by the MBRC) and perhaps associated but not found until two weeks later, a Broad-billed Hummingbird. However the kismet that brought Jon Dunn and the White-collared Swift to Tawas Point at the same minute goes beyond any facts or figures!

Green Violet-ear

(description: Allen Chartier, Adam Byrne, Phil Chu; photographs: Allen Chartier, Kip Miller)

Vote: 7-0

One immature between 15 July and 17 August 1996 at the home of Paul and Cyndy Callog near Edwardsburg in Cass Co. The circumstances of its discovery and identification are fully discussed in Miller (1996). He estimates that this species, whose closest breeding area is central Mexico (Howell and Webb 1995), was seen by over 800 people.

A first state record, this is one of about six North American records away from Texas and Arkansas. Aside from this sighting, the only records north of Arkansas and North Carolina are one at Thunder Bay, Ontario, and one at Kananaskis Provincial Park, Alberta (Mlodinow and O'Brien 1996).

Broad-billed Hummingbird

(descriptions: Phil Chu, Adam Byrne, Kevin Thomas; photographs: Kevin Thomas)

Vote: 7-0

One on 1 - 7 June 1996 at Lac La Belle in Keweenaw Co. Circumstances of the sighting and a discussion of this species' normal range, migratory habits and other records away from its normal range are found in Binford (1997), along with a photograph by J. Rose.

This was yet another remarkable first state record for Michigan from the summer of 1996. One committee member remarked that "there are a dozen or so green hummers, some with blue below, with red bills tipped with black in the tropics." However, these all differ in some aspects of plumage from this species, and equally important, few have a call note like that of the Broad-billed Hummingbird. The call note was described by Binford for this individual as a "distinctive Ruby-crowned Kinglet-like 'chitt-chitt'" in announcing its arrival at the feeder. The call note combined with the complete documentation and excellent photographs allowed the Committee to accept this remarkable record.

Three-toed Woodpecker

(description: Jack Reinoehl)

Vote: 6-0-1

One on 29 December 1995 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co., during the Whitefish Point Christmas Count.

Three-toed Woodpecker

(photograph: Charlene, Daniel, and Jason Weckstein)

Vote: 7-0

One on 30 December 1995 at Sugar Island, Chippewa Co.

Say's Phoebe

(description: Laurence C. Binford)

Vote: 7-0

One on 21 May 1996 at Brockway Mountain Drive lookout, Keweenaw Co. This is the eighth accepted record in the state and the fourth this decade.

Ash-throated Flycatcher

(description: Louie Dombroski)

Vote: 6-1

One on 26 October 1995 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. The report states that the bird "was very clearly not a Great Crested Flycatcher based on the paleness of the throat and the small size of the bill" which was "thin and short for a *Myiarchus*." Elimination of the other two southwestern *Myiarchus*, Brown-crested Flycatcher and Dusky-capped Flycatcher, was also based primarily on the small bill. This is the second record for Michigan; the first was in 1994.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

(description: Kevin Thomas)

Vote: 6-0-1

One on 10-11 June 1996 on the Michigan State University campus in Ingham Co.

Townsend's Solitaire

(descriptions: Keith Westphal, Brian Allen)

Vote: 7-0

One on 28 December 1995 - 6 January 1996 south of Leeland in Leelanau Co.

Townsend's Solitaire

(description: Don Jennette)

Vote: 7-0

One on 16 February - 12 March 1996 near Northport in Leelanau Co.

Sprague's Pipit

(descriptions: Adam Byrne, Louie Dombroski)

Vote: 7-0

One on 29 October 1995 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. This individual was first detected as it flew over by its call, described by Byrne as "a finchlike squee-eet or whee-eet . . . always given as a series of two to three

notes." On this occasion it disappeared in the direction of the lighthouse. Forty-five minutes later the call was heard again and the bird was seen to land on the beach. While it was on the ground, a partial song of high thin notes was heard. After running on the ground for a while, it allowed only a brief scope examination perched on a piece of driftwood 100 yards away before it flew off for the final time.

Seen in flight about 30 feet overhead, the shape was that of a pipit with the thin bill and white outer tail feathers noted. Dombroski described the plumage as follows: "face, throat and upper breast bright buffy," "eye dark, contrasting with pale face," "head not strongly patterned, though crown was streaked with dark... this extended onto the back, which was very prominently streaked with dark brown and buff." This was the fifth accepted record for the state, and the second for Whitefish Point.

White-eyed Vireo

(description: Louie Dombroski)

Vote: 7-0

One on 12 October 1995 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. Found by Jeff McCoy, this is the first fall record for this vireo at Whitefish Point.

Townsend's Warbler

(description: Kevin Thomas)

Vote: 6-0-1

One male on 13 May 1996 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. As described, "[t]he bird had a black crown [and] black earpatch bordered by yellow above and below. It also had a black throat with black streaks down the flanks. The upper breast was yellow and the belly white. The back was olive green with faint streaks and it had two white wingbars." It was observed at eye level at a distance of 15 feet for about 25 seconds. No other observers saw the bird. This is the second record of Townsend's Warbler for the state.

Painted Bunting

(photograph: Darwin Drake)

Vote: 6-0

One male on 13 May 1996 at Port Huron, St. Clair Co. This is the sixth state record and the fourth in the last three years.

Lark Sparrow

(description: Michael A. Kielb)

Vote: 7-0

One on 18 May 1996 at Furstenberg Park, Washtenaw Co.

Smith's Longspur

(description: Philip Chu)

Vote: 7-0

One male on 25 - 28 May 1996 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. Found by Jim Granlund, this bird was seen and photographed by many people during its stay at the Point. This is the seventh record for the state. Six of those are since 1993.

Bullock's Oriole

(description and slides: Bill Grigg)

Vote: 7-0 on second round.

One on 30 November and 2 December 1995 at Rogers City, Presque Isle Co. This individual was discovered foraging in an apple tree with a group of House Finches. The bird showed a "bright yellow-green head, throat, and chest fading to a drab gray belly . . . [and] noticeable white wing bars on gray wings. The back was gray and unstreaked, the same color as the tail."

Having in mind the resplit of the Baltimore/Bullock's complex that was pending, the Committee was primarily concerned with verifying that this individual was not a hybrid. According to Rising (1970), the distinguishing features of females of these types are:

1. Belly color: yellow in Baltimore, white in Bullock's
2. Head color: black feathers on head in Baltimore, none in Bullock's

3. Under tail coverts: more yellow than white in Baltimore, more white than yellow in Bullock's
4. Rump color: olive green to olive brown in Baltimore, gray with little or no olive in Bullock's
5. Back color: olive green to olive yellow with spotted feathers in Baltimore; uniform gray, spotting reduced or absent in Bullock's.

Characters 1 and 5 above are sometimes intermediate. Examination of one of the slides at the MBRC meeting of November 1996 showed that all characters matched Bullock's with no trace of intermediacy.

This is the first record of the Bullock's Oriole to be accepted by the MBRC. Between the time that the record was received and the final vote on this record, the Northern Oriole was split into the two species mentioned above (A.O.U. 1996). With the acceptance of this record, the Bullock's Oriole is placed on the Michigan state list.

Bullock's Oriole

(description: Michael J. Kielb)

Vote: 5-2 on second round

One male on 28 May 1977 at Wixom Lake, Gladwin Co. The bird is described as having a "dark crown, [an] orange face with a dark eye-stripe," a wide white wing bar, orange sides of the face and black throat. It was the same size as nearby Baltimore Orioles. It was called to the observer's attention by the fact that it was singing a noticeably different song. This sighting was submitted at this late date due to the recent split of the Northern Oriole into two species. The report is based on copious notes taken at the time of the observation.

The by-laws require that a first state record pass with a unanimous vote. Therefore, acceptance of the Rogers City oriole allowed this record to be accepted. The description was sufficient, most committee members felt, to show that this was not a hybrid individual. There are thus two accepted records of this species for Michigan.

Records Not Accepted:

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

(one description)

Vote: 1-6

One reported on 20 November 1995 at Escanaba, Delta Co. The bird was described as having "LONG bright yellow legs and big yellow feet." The observer noted that when the bird "spread its wings and stretch[ed] its neck . . . I could see that it was a brown streaked bird." A heavy green bill and red eyes were observed. The legs extended beyond the tail in flight.

The Committee felt that the possibility that this individual was an American Bittern was not properly ruled out. An immature of the night-heron would be dusky brown with fine spots and streaks; the bittern is warm brown with strong black streaking on the neck. The bill color strongly suggests a bittern, since the bill of the night-heron is dark, and that species would be much more likely in this place and time.

Furthermore, distinguishing between the night-herons is difficult. The legs of both species extend beyond the tail; the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron's legs extend farther beyond the tail in flight but the difference is subtle and varies with circumstances. The stouter bill of the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron is a dependable distinction from the Black-crowned, but this mark is also difficult to use without a lot of experience with both species.

Barrow's Goldeneye

(one description)

Vote: 2-5

One reported on 4 February 1996 at Lake Erie Metropark, Wayne Co. This individual was observed with 6 female and about 8 male Common Goldeneyes. On this individual, the overall body and wing coloration "looked about the same" as the Common Goldeneyes. But the bill was "very obviously shorter and stubbier" than that of the Common Goldeneyes; it was dark "with a yellow band near the tip." Additionally "this bird had a very steep or abrupt forehead and the crown was a bit flatter and had less of a peaked look to it." The net result of the steep forehead and smaller bill was a "decidedly different profile" than the nearby female Common Goldeneyes.

Madge (1988) states that the female Barrow's Goldeneye, compared to the Common Goldeneye, is "larger, with different head and bill shape...and have [a] darker, chocolate-brown head." While Madge states that differences in head and bill shape can be "surprisingly obvious when the two species are together," Palmer (1976) calls the same differences "indefinite and subtle." The most objective difference between these two species is bill color, which, in adult females of the western race is mostly or all yellow except in juvenal plumage. Concerning the transition from juvenal plumage to first basic plumage, Palmer states that "[s]ome time in fall or early winter the iris becomes pale yellowish [and] the bill or part of it lightens."

In considering this record, members were generally troubled by the small number of differences observed between this individual and the nearby Common Goldeneyes. In the absence of further evidence, committee members were not convinced that this individual was not just a Common Goldeneye with forehead somewhat steeper than usual. One

member stated that "the female Barrow's Goldeneyes that I have seen in winter on the Great Lakes have had entire yellow bills." Another that he [the committee member] had "wasted too many hours looking at small-billed/steep-headed Common Goldeneyes."

Swainson's Hawk

(one description)

Vote: 2-5 on second round.

One reported from Estral Beach, Monroe Co. on 25 April 1996. Important features in the plumage of this immature-plumaged hawk were "brown back," the rump showing an "area of white, shaped like a horseshoe." The primaries above were "solid, dark, possibly black." Below, "[t]he belly was light colored and the breast was heavily marked but did not show a bib. The throat looked very white and unmarked." The underwing showed dark primaries, "the secondaries were darker but not enormously so" and the "underwing coverts were very light in color." The flight "closely resembled the flight of a Northern Harrier" and "the wings were very stiffly held in a high dihedral."

This record was regarded favorably by some members of the Committee. One wrote "[t]he horseshoe shape described is consistent with a young Swainson's and most buteos wear their juvenal plumage until the fall of their second year of life. I feel that this description is at least as good as most of our accepted records for this species." The predominant feeling was that the description applied better in some respects to Northern Harrier than Swainson's Hawk, especially the fact that the top of the primaries were very dark.

Black-headed Gull

(one description)

Vote: 2-5

One reported on 16 November 1995 at Lake Erie Metropark, Wayne Co. The bird was watched at about 150 yards, perched with a flock of Bonaparte's Gulls.

It was distinguishable from these by its "much longer" red legs and its "much heavier" bill, "especially in circumference". Its head markings were "those of a hooded gull." Before the bill color could be determined, however, all birds were scared away; the color of the underwing was not seen.

Committee members noted that two very important distinguishing features between Black-headed Gull and Bonaparte's Gull, bill color and underwing pattern, were not observed. Further, the report fails to mention size difference between the observed individual and nearby Bonaparte's Gulls other than its longer legs. Thus, though Black-headed Gull is definitely suggested by this report, too many important details were not observed or not included in the documentation.

Ivory Gull

(three descriptions)

Vote: 4-3-1 on second round.

One reported on 28 April 1996 at the tip of Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. This bird was first noticed by its "unusual flight, much more buoyant than the Herring and Ring-billed Gulls . . . it appeared very white. . . . The body of the bird was very thick and stocky and the wings were wide at the base and the arms very pointed." The closest approach was estimated to be about 400 yards by those most familiar with the tip of the point; at that distance, "the bird appeared very white with the exception of an unusually short, blunt dark bill. . . . The size was about 60% of a Herring Gull." The expected yellow tip on the bill was never seen, nor were any black marks ever seen on the plumage. At one point, the bird made several "dipping dives," the purpose of which was not evident. The bird was in view for about ten minutes. During some of the observation time, the bird was in good light; observations were made with both spotting scopes and binoculars.

This record aroused considerable disagreement among members of the Committee. The basic issue was whether the observed shape and the manner of flight, combined with the white color, could allow for a definitive identification without observation of any of the marks that would unequivocally indicate Ivory Gull instead of a small Iceland Gull or an albino of some sort. These field marks are black legs and a yellow tip of the bill. The course of the Committee's deliberations was well expressed by one member who wrote the following:

"I really agonized over this bird. My gut feeling is that it was an Ivory Gull, but I have gotten increasingly worried about the soft parts which were not seen. I was looking at gulls this morning — Ring-billed Gulls through binoculars only at the distances described in the reports — and in poor light was able to make the feet and bills out to some extent. It leaves me with the feeling that there is a good possibility that the yellow tip on the bill was not seen because it was not there, and that the jet black feet were not seen because they were pale."

Band-tailed Pigeon

(one description)

Vote: 4-3 on second round.

One on 18 February 1996 in Fowlerville, Livingston Co. The description included a bird of generally gray color with a yellowish bill and a white ring around the back of the neck. Seen in direct comparison to Mourning Doves, this bird was definitely larger.

The defining issue was expressed by a committee member who stated the following. "I think this was a Band-tailed Pigeon. The only question might be was it the same one with the leg band that turned up a few months later in Bay City?" Since the description said nothing about the legs, the presence or absence of a band on this individual could not be determined. In the Bay City sighting

mentioned above, which was not submitted to the Committee, the bands were thought to be an indication of a bird escaped from captivity.

White-winged Dove

(one description)

Vote: 0-7

One reported on 25 May 1996 along Highway 27 about one mile south of 5-Point Hwy. in Eaton Co. This bird was observed for about one second from a moving car as it flew "just below level of telephone wires." The bird was described as Morning Dove-like in size and shape with "large white crescent-shaped patches" on its secondaries. The tail was not clearly seen.

Committee members felt that this was simply too brief of an encounter and too incomplete of a description for what would have been only the third state record. As one member stated: "I . . . empathize with the missed opportunity."

Sprague's Pipit

(one description)

Vote: 0-7 on second round.

One reported on 20 August 1995 at Pte. Mouillee, Monroe Co. It was observed walking about on a dike, at one point running across the dike. The description included a "very prominent eye," a back "dark and very scaly in appearance," and dark streaking on the breast.

These features are all shared by the Sprague's Pipit and the juvenile Horned Lark. The primary distinguishing feature between the two in plumage would be the streaked crown and nape of the former. There is also a large difference between these two species in behavior. Unlike the Horned Lark or American Pipit, the Sprague's Pipit strongly prefers grass that is 6 to 12 inches high. Away from its breeding ground, 95% of encounters with this species are of a previously unseen individual flushing, rising in towering flight, and then returning to a new hiding place in the grass. In these circumstances,

it is identified by its loud call note. For further discussion with illustrating photos, see Lehman (1997).

Additionally, the Horned Lark breeds abundantly throughout the summer in the farm fields of southeastern Michigan, and young birds could easily wander to Pte. Mouillee at any time. The Sprague's Pipit nests in the northern Great Plains and it is a late migrant. For example, the earliest fall record in Oklahoma, where it is an uncommon migrant, is 27 September (Grzybowski 1986).

Loggerhead Shrike

(one description)

Vote: 0-7

One reported on 16 December 1996 on Walpole Island, Ontario, from the Anchor Bay Christmas Bird Count. The observers noted "his light breast, small size, [and] slightly hooked beak"; "looking repeatedly at the lower mandible, [we] saw no light coloration." A Northern Shrike seen an hour earlier "was larger, possessed a noticeably more hooked bill, had a barred breast, and light color on its lower mandible."

A Committee member observed that "the barring on Northern Shrikes can easily be missed at a distance. I have photographed Northern Shrikes with entirely black bills." The strongest distinction between these two species is the shape of the mask, about which nothing was said in this report.

sharp-tailed sparrow, sp.

(one description)

Vote: 3-3-2 on second round.

Two reported on 18 May 1996 at Portage Marsh, south of Escanaba in Delta Co. The birds were detected by their song, which "sounded like the words 'blaze-tup' with the first syllable a sizzling low frequency and the second syllable . . . lower in pitch than the first." Examining the birds through a scope "the silhouette of an *Ammodramus* sparrow with a flat head, short tail and small bill" was seen,

but due to poor lighting conditions, no color could be seen. The observer having listened to tapes of LeConte's Sparrow and sharp-tailed sparrow shortly before the trip, this song was thought to be "much lower in pitch and with a more distinctive end note than the LeConte's Sparrow."

The Committee was divided about this record. One member stated "I have been in marshes where both species were singing at the same time and had no difficulty separating the two, so I have no reason to believe that other experienced observers could not do the same." Other members were reluctant to accept such a record based on song alone, one stating "The observers' inexperience and unfamiliarity with this species makes it difficult to accept what is essentially a heard-only bird." The songs of this species and LeConte's Sparrow have a similar pattern but differ substantially in quality. The LeConte's Sparrow's song is a thin buzz, preceded by a short tic; the Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, which the author has heard only on their breeding grounds in Manitoba, sings a single, remarkably unmusical note that sounds almost like white noise, followed by a second short note.

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Bullock's Oriole at Rogers City, Presque Isle Co. on 30 November and 2 December 1995.
First state record.
Photo/Bill Grigg.