

Actions of the Michigan Bird Records Committee for 1998

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This is the 9th report of the Michigan Bird Records Committee covering the Committee's actions in 1998. The members of the Committee at the beginning of 1998 were Doug McWhirter (Eaton Co.), Brian Allen (Manistee Co.), Adam Byrne (Ingham Co.), Allen Chartier (Wayne Co.), Kip Miller (Berrien Co.), Curt Powell (Wayne Co.), and Kevin Thomas (Ingham Co.), with alternate members Steve Santner (Oakland Co.) and Jack Reinoehl (Hillsdale Co.). During the year, McWhirter and Powell left the Committee and Louis Dombroski (Chippewa Co.) and Chip Francke (Ottawa Co.) joined. At the end of the year, Byrne was Chairman and Francke and Reinoehl alternate members. Reinoehl was Secretary through the year.

The only addition to the state list this year was a Tropical/Couch's Kingbird from the western Upper Peninsula, so on 1 January 1999, the state list stood at 410 species. Also, after examination of specimens at the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology (UMMZ), the Committee voted to change sharp-tailed sparrow sp. to Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow on the state list. This reflects recent taxonomic changes (AOU 1989). Changes to the state list are summarized below.

Changes from list of January 1998:

Casual to Regular

Sabine's Gull

Casual to Accidental

Mew Gull

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow

New species added

Tropical/Couch's Kingbird

Nomenclature changes

Sharp-tailed Sparrow changed to Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow

The records discussed below consist of the 74 records for which a final decision was reached during the calendar year 1998. Of these, 49 (66%) were accepted. Names of contributors of written descriptions or material evidence appear in the heading for accepted records. In voting totals, the

first number represents votes for acceptance, the second votes for rejection, and the third, if any, represents MBRC members abstaining from voting. MBRC bylaws require members to abstain from voting on records for which they have submitted documentation. To find information on more recent records, and to view previous annual reports, the reader is invited to visit the MBRC web site at <http://www.umd.umich.edu/dept/rouge_river/MBRChome.html>.

The author thanks Allen Chartier and Adam Byrne for help in reviewing this manuscript. Both have made several useful suggestions. I'd also like to credit Adam Byrne and Phil Chu for their very useful compilations of Michigan records. Thanks to Janet Hinshaw for information about material in UMMZ.

Records Accepted:

Pacific Loon

vote: 7 - 0

description: Karl Bardon

One on 7 October 1997 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. This bird was picked out in flight by its black throat and lower neck "contrasting sharply with the very pale nape." The primary factor distinguishing this species from the very similar Arctic Loon was "the dark vent strap separat[ing] the white undertail coverts from the white lower belly."

Pacific Loon

vote: 7 - 0

descriptions: Philip C. Chu,
Adam Byrne

One in alternate plumage on 22 May 1998 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. The bird was observed with a scope in flight at a distance estimated at 800 - 1000 yards by both observers. Chu stated: "while the bird was flying away, I made a conscious effort to look at the portion of the body posterior to the wings. On doing so I saw NO

incursion of white up onto the rump sides..." Thus the bird was identified as a Pacific Loon instead of the similar Arctic Loon.

Western Grebe

vote: 5 - 2

description: Louis Taccolini

One on 14 - 16 November 1997 at the Lower Harbor of Marquette, in Marquette Co. This individual was observed from as close as 20 feet.

Tricolored Heron

vote: 7 - 0

description: Bill Grigg

One on 17 July 1998 at Rogers City, Presque Isle Co.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

vote: 7 - 0

description: Adam Byrne

One adult on 6 July 1998 at Pte. Mouillee, Monroe Co.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

vote: 6 - 1

description: David Peters
photographs: Myles Willard

One immature photographed on 30 July 1998 at Shiawassee National

Wildlife Refuge, Saginaw Co. The plumage was generally dark brown with numerous white spots. A decisive feature in the identification was the bill, which was entirely dark and stout with "upper and lower mandibles curving very near equally to the tip." The Black-crowned Night-Heron, in contrast, has a more slender bill with a quite straight yellow lower mandible.

Glossy Ibis

vote: 7 - 0

descriptions: Laurence C. Binford,
Janet Avis Hewett

One adult on 2 - 3 October 1997 at Sturgeon River Sloughs Wildlife Area, Baraga Co. This individual was examined at length by scope at a distance of about 60 yards. The bird was recognized as an adult by its lack of wide whitish streaks on the neck and its greater contrast in body plumage. It was determined to be a Glossy Ibis by its failure to show a bright red eye and the narrow whitish streaks on the bare facial skin, which are not present on the White-faced Ibis in fall and winter. This was thought by Binford to be the first Upper Peninsula record of a *Plegadis* sp.

Ross's Goose

vote: 6 - 1

description: David Peters

Three on 5 March 1998 at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, Saginaw Co.

Ross's Goose

vote: 7 - 0

descriptions: Kip Miller,
Brad Murphy

One on 26 to 28 April 1998 at Berrien Springs, Berrien Co.

Cinnamon Teal

vote: 5 - 2

description: Judith Kay M. Chase

One on 26 April 1998 at Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo Co. The individual observed was said to be "close in size and shape to the 4 male Blue-winged Teal with which it was closely associated." In color the bird was "uniformly a rich cinnamon." The bird was foraging in a shallow grassy wetland with areas of open water that was the result of recent heavy rains.

There was worry about the report by some members due to its lack of detail. One suggested that "the time of the sighting (8:00 PM) in late April indicates that there was likely a low sun angle, which could make many female ducks look very orange or cinnamon-colored." The general feeling was, as another member stated: "in summary, I would have liked more details, but this is a case where the species in question is quite obvious and easy to identify."

This is the 5th accepted state record for this western species; the most recent prior to this sighting was in Bay Co. in 1992. Three out of the 5 records are in mid- to late April.

King Eider

vote: 5 - 2

description: Steve Minard

One immature male on 20 December 1997 at Pere Marquette Park, Muskegon Co.

eider, sp.

vote: 7 - 0

description: Karl Bardon

One on 26 October 1997 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co.

eider, sp.

vote: 6 - 0

descriptions: Adam Byrne, Philip C. Chu

One subadult male on 22 May 1998 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. The bird was seen only at a distance in flight.

Barrow's Goldeneye

vote: 7 - 0

descriptions: John K. Cassidy, Kip Miller

One female on 29 December 1997 at Union Pier, Berrien Co. Cassidy noted that the head was "darker brown with a much steeper forehead" than a Common Goldeneye that was present for direct comparison. The bill was "short, stubby and all yellow-orange in color."

Miller stated in his description that he has "always been suspicious of reports of female Barrow's Goldeneyes in this area" since female Common Goldeneyes sometime have yellow bills. The bill of this individual was however "much brighter and more uniform" than what is observed in Common Goldeneyes. Head shape is also a mark that must be used with caution. In Common Goldeneyes, observed on this occasion, he noted that "after a dive the slope of the forehead was quite flat." But the peak of the crown always appeared "on top of the head," not "in the forecrown area."

Barrow's Goldeneye

vote: 7 - 0

descriptions: Adam Byrne, Phil Chu

One adult male on 14 February 1998 at Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co. This and the above were the first accepted records of this species since 1994.

Mississippi Kite

vote: 6 - 0

description and photographs: Nathan McNett

One present on 15-16 May 1998 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. In the photographs, it appears to be an adult.

Swainson's Hawk

vote: 6 - 1

description: Jeff Schultz

One light-morph immature on 19 September 1993 at Campeau Rd., Wayne Co. This and the 2 sightings below come from the Lake Erie Metropark Hawk Watch.

Swainson's Hawk

vote: 7 - 0

description: Jeff Schultz

One dark-morph adult on 14 October 1996 at Pte. Mouillee Headquarters, Wayne Co.

Swainson's Hawk

vote: 7 - 0

description: Jeff Schultz

One light-morph adult on 14 October 1996 at Pte. Mouillee Headquarters, Wayne Co.

King Rail

vote: 6 - 0

tape recording: Adam Byrne

One recorded on 1 May 1998 at Nayanquing Point Wildlife Area, Bay Co.

King Rail

vote: 7 - 0

description: Adam Byrne
photos: Ronald L. Hosner

One pair that successfully nested at Maple River State Game Area, Gratiot Co. These were first detected on 25 May 1998 and observed through the summer. Photographs of 1 of the

juveniles may be found in Byrne (1999).

Curlew Sandpiper

vote: 6 - 1

description: Kevin Thomas

One on 29 July 1998 in partial molt from alternate plumage to basic plumage at Pte. Mouillee, Monroe Co.

Ruff

vote: 6 - 0

description: Allen Chartier

One adult male on 27 April 1992 south of Luna Pier Road, Monroe Co. This bird showed a dark chestnut head and neck, a somewhat paler throat and a black breast.

Ruff

vote: 7 - 0

descriptions: Walter Pawloski, Tim Smart

One adult male, molting into alternate plumage, between 11 and 20 April 1998 at Pte. Mouillee, Monroe Co.

Ruff

vote: 7 - 0

description: Laurence Binford
photograph: A. S. Weaver

One photographed on 13 August 1998 at Lake Linden, Houghton Co.

Ruff

vote: 7 - 0

description: Adam Byrne

One female on 6 July 1998 at Pte. Mouillee, Monroe Co.

Pomarine Jaeger

vote: 7 - 0

description: Karl Bardon

One juvenile, seen in flight and on the water, on 4 November 1997 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. This individual, first seen in pursuit of a Herring Gull, allowed very satisfactory examination

of size, plumage, and tail feather extension.

California Gull

vote: 6 - 1

description: Robert T. Chapel

One winter-plumaged adult on 25 November 1997 at New Buffalo, Berrien Co. This individual was observed on the beach at a distance of 30 yards. Dark eye and "dull olive-yellow legs" were noted.

There were 7 records accepted for this species during the 10 year period 1987-1996 and this was the 2nd record in 1997. The other was at this same location in April 1997.

Sabine's Gull

vote: 7 - 0

description: Adam Byrne

One juvenile on 31 August 1997 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co.

Sabine's Gull

vote: 6 - 0

description: Jim Granlund

One apparent juvenile on 20 September 1997 at New Buffalo, Berrien Co.

Sabine's Gull

vote: 5 - 2

description: Karl Bardon

One on 23 September 1997 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. Seen at a distance estimated at 1 mile.

Sabine's Gull

vote: 7 - 0

description: Philip C. Chu

One juvenile on 23 October 1997 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co.

Sabine's Gull

vote: 5 - 0

description and photograph:
Joseph YoungmanOne juvenile on 8 October 1998 at
Keweenaw Bay, Baraga Co.**Arctic Tern**

vote: 6 - 1

description: Karl Bardon

One adult in alternate plumage on 27 October 1997 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. "Underparts were an obvious gray color, extending up to the throat... The obvious white cheek separated the blackish cap from the gray underparts" the observer noted. Further, "the flight was very buoyant and snappy, with the upstroke of each wingbeat very emphasized."

White-winged Dove

vote: 7 - 0

descriptions: Adam Byrne,
Scott Terry
photographs: Adam Byrne,
Karl Bardon,
John McDaniel

One on 23 - 24 October 1998 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory. This is the 4th state record, all since 1986.

ani sp.

vote: 7 - 0

description: Roy Smith
photograph: Ralph Gustin

One observed and photographed on 3 - 4 November 1968 at Berrien Springs, Berrien Co. The bird was identified at the time as a Groove-billed Ani by veteran observers (Robbins 1969). In November 1994, the MBRC voted on this record as a Groove-billed Ani, basing their vote on both the photograph and a description by Roy Smith. The vote

was 3-4, leaving the record unresolved until it could be resubmitted. At that time, members felt that the photograph did not show the bill shape sufficiently to distinguish between this species and the very similar Smooth-billed Ani. In a 1998 meeting, the committee voted again on the photo, this time as ani sp.

The date of this observation has been a source of confusion. In Robbins (1969), the date is given as 10 - 11 November but the date on Smith's written documentation is 3 - 4 November. Smith et. al. (undated), in their survey of Berrien Co. birds between 1962 and 1991, indicate in their bar graph for this species that no ani was seen as late as 10 November in Berrien Co. during this time period.

After a Groove-billed Ani specimen taken in Allegan Co. in 1951 for the 1st state record, there were 7 reports of anis in Michigan between 1968 and 1983. These include 1 more specimen and 2 reports accepted as Groove-billed Ani by the MBRC. There has been only 1 report of an ani since, which was submitted as a Smooth-billed Ani and not accepted by the MBRC (Chu 1995). In Mlodinow (1999), we see that this peculiar distribution is closely matched by neighboring states. Wisconsin and Minnesota together had 13 records between 1968 and 1983 and only 2 since.

Rufous Hummingbird

vote: 7 - 0

descriptions: Brian Allen, Adam
Byrne, Philip C. Chu
photographs: Carl Freeman

One adult male between 8 October 1997 and 12 January 1998 at Ludington, Mason Co. This bird had a

full gorget, identifying it as an adult male. On the upperparts, the only green was on the forehead and a few feathers on the uppermost back; the rest was rufous. Chu was also able to examine the retrices, and found the 2nd "deeply notched" and the 5th "not excessively narrow." These both strongly indicated the bird's identity as Rufous and not Allen's Hummingbird.

Rufous/Allen's Hummingbirdvote: 5 - 1 in the second round
descriptions: Thomas A.Hendrickson,
Adam Byrne

One adult female between 31 December 1997 and 11 January 1998 (when captured) at Holland, Ottawa Co. The home owners thought the bird to have been at their feeder for 6 or 7 weeks prior to 31 December. In spite of the fact that this bird was captured and measured, the Committee did not find proof that this individual was a Rufous Hummingbird.

Rufous Hummingbird

vote: 7 - 0

description: Adam Byrne
photographs: Sharon Johnson

One adult male after 25 September 1998 (Chartier 1999) at Williamston, Ingham Co. According to the homeowner, the bird remained until 15 December. The photographs show an entirely rufous back. This is the 5th record for this species accepted by the MBRC. Between 1996 and 1998, there were 4 records either of this species or of Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird in Michigan.

Tropical/Couch's Kingbirdvote: 7 - 0 in the second round
description: Louis Dombroski

One on 23 May 1997 at Eagle Harbor Marina, near the town of Eagle Harbor, in Keweenaw Co. This bird was described as "superficially resembling a Western Kingbird in size, shape and general coloration." The belly and lower breast were bright yellow replaced by "smudgy dark olive or olive-gray on the upper breast" which blended into a pale gray or dull white throat. The tail was "a medium dark dull brownish, not seeming to contrast markedly with the rest of the underparts;" when perched, the tail was "strongly and conspicuously notched." The bill appeared to be "longer than a Western Kingbird's and notably on the heavy side." The call was heard once at a distance estimated at 30 yards. It was described as a "high-pitched twittering with a gentle twinkling quality, not harsh or bickering" and again "a gently rolling ti-ti-ti-ti."

This record was submitted by the observer as a Tropical Kingbird. The concern of the Committee was whether the Couch's Kingbird had been properly eliminated, since the brown notched tail eliminates Western and Cassin's Kingbird. The sibling species Tropical Kingbird and Couch's Kingbird are essentially indistinguishable in field conditions by plumage; vocalizations are the only useful field character. Some members felt much concern that the vocalization were only heard once, noting: "my experience with vocalizations along the Lake Superior shoreline (or any other shore) is that they are not always easy to describe/identify without hearing them repeatedly."

Whichever of the 2 species this individual was, this is a very interesting record. According to Mlodinow (1998), there about 40 records of Tropical Kingbird-type birds in eastern North America. Six of these were identified as Tropical Kingbird and 9 as Couch's Kingbird. The latter has been found north of Arkansas, while Tropical Kingbirds have wandered as far north as Quebec on the east coast (and Alaska on the west coast). None of these 40 records were anywhere near the Great Lakes.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

vote: 7 - 0

description: L. C. Binford

One on 5-6 June 1998 at Copper Harbor, Keweenaw Co.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

vote: 7 - 0

descriptions: Karl Bardon, Scott Terry, Adam Byrne
photograph: Karl Bardon

One on 24 October 1998 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. Since 1984, 5 of the 13 accepted records have been at Whitefish Point between 20 and 31 October during 5 different years; a 6th was on 11 October 1996 at the Point.

Northern Wheatear

vote: 6 - 0

descriptions: Karl Bardon, Scott Terry, Greg Levandoski
photographs: Karl Bardon

One photographed on 17 September 1998 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. With another accepted record from 1997, this is 5th accepted record since 1993. All are from the fall; 3 are from the shores of Lake Huron in the northern Lower Peninsula and the other 2 are from Whitefish Point.

Townsend's Solitaire

vote: 7 - 0

descriptions: Jim Granlund, Jack Reinoehl

One on 28 December 1996 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co.

Townsend's Solitaire

vote: 7 - 0

description: Karl Bardon

One on 2 November 1997 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co.

Western Tanager

vote: 7 - 0

descriptions: Louis Dombroski, Rod Planck, Franklin and Eileen Horne

One apparent young male on 15 June 1998 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. This individual was bright yellow with black back and wings and 2 "prominent pale wing bars." Some reddish about the bill was evident. A "half-hearted attempt" at a song was heard. This is the 7th accepted record for Michigan; 5 of these have been since 1995.

Lark Bunting

vote: 6 - 0

description and photographs: Steve Minard

One photographed on 17 August 1997 at Pere Marquette Park in Muskegon Co. This was the 2nd accepted record of this species in 1997 and the 9th since 1987.

Smith's Longspur

vote: 6 - 1

description: Joseph Youngman

One male on 20 May 1997 at Sturgeon River Sloughs, Houghton Co.

Smith's Longspur

vote: 6 - 0

description and photograph:
Karl Bardon

One photographed on 11 September 1998 at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co. This and the above are the 7th and 8th accepted records since 1993.

Records Not Accepted:

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

vote: 2 - 5

one description

One immature reported between 18 June and 12 July at Pte. Mouillee, Monroe Co. This particular individual was picked out by 2 peculiarities in its plumage, it had "no white spots whatever" and an unusual amount of buff in the wing coverts. The bill seemed short and showed a conical appearance. The neck seemed "long and thin;" the legs appeared long and in flight "the gap between the feet and tail . . . looked to be at least 4 inches."

The primary reservation of Committee members concerning this record was a lack of a definite description. The features of plumage mentioned did not strongly indicate Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, and in the absence of convincing data on plumage, the other details were not convincing. One member stated that "an essentially brown bird noted as having 'no white spots whatsoever' could be quite indicative of a second-year Black-crowned Night-Heron." Another noted that bills and necks of Black-crowned Night-Herons often appear as described above, and that length of legs in flight is often hard to judge.

Black Vulture

vote: 0 - 7

two descriptions

One reported on 29 November 1997 near Whitehall in Muskegon Co. The bird, judged to be the size of a raven, was dark except that "the last 3 - 4 inches of the wing tips were all white." Members felt that this report was too vague to differentiate between this species and other dark raptors such as immature Golden Eagle and dark-phase Rough-legged Hawk. The shape of the bird, an important point of distinction, was not described.

eid, sp.

vote: 3 - 4 in the second round
one description

One reported on 17-18 November 1997 at Rogers City, Presque Isle Co. This report describes a rich brown duck with a darker cap "which first appeared to be a Mallard." A "faint medium blue speculum could be seen at times." On the 17th the bird was inactive but on the 18th it was feeding by "diving repeatedly." The bill profile was not noted.

The first area of concern of committee members was the speculum, which among eiders, is seen only in the Steller's Eider, a

species restricted to the northern Pacific. One member proposed a solution to this record noting that “recent correspondence on the internet brought to light some Mallards in Pennsylvania that have been observed diving for mollusks in a small harbor. The duration of time spent underwater by these individuals was timed, lasting up to 10-12 seconds.” Thus several members concluded that the possibility of a female mallard had not been fully eliminated.

White-tailed Kite

vote: 1 - 6

one description

One reported on 21 April 1998 in Kentwood, Kent Co. The bird, “about the size of a Ring-billed Gull,” was reported to be “tern-like with head and hooked beak always facing down as it flew.” The bird showed a “reddish breast and . . . white tail not tapered with a strong notch.”

The biggest concern with this description was the failure to observe the black shoulders on the upperside of the wings. Several members also pointed out that this kite has a square or slightly rounded tail, not a notched tail.

Prairie Falcon

vote: 1 - 5

one specimen

One hatch-year bird found injured in Baraga Co. on 17 July 1990. It was sent to Minneapolis for rehabilitation and subsequently died on 19 July. It is presently in the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology, specimen #233916.

The identification of the specimen was not an issue. Due to the early date, and the fact that this species is often held

by falconers, the Committee voted not to accept this as a valid record. In particular, it was doubted that a hatchling would have wandered so far from its usual range by mid- July. In the northern part of this falcon’s range, the mean date of hatching is roughly in mid-May and the young become independent about 9 weeks after hatching (Stenhof 1998).

Gyr Falcon

vote: 0 - 7

one description

One reported on 16 November 1997 in Jackson Co. The bird was described as a “large falcon” with a “general gray-blue appearance” and an underside “heavily streaked.” The observer maintained that the bird reported was too large and bulky for a peregrine, but the Committee felt that the smaller species had not been adequately eliminated.

Black Rail

vote: 2 -5 in the second round

one description

One reported on 13 July 1997 near Carney, Menominee Co. An annotated drawing, accompanied by a description of the circumstances of the observation, was provided to the Committee. The bird in question had been captured in a nearby marsh by a dog or cat; the specimen was picked up but unfortunately not saved. The drawing showed a bird having the following features: “white spots on black back”; dark grayish head, breast and belly; “brown nape”; and “green-yellowish legs.” The bird was said to have been 5 inches long, have a black bill with a yellow tinge, and to have some down feathers on the back and rump.

In deliberating this record, the main concern of members of the Committee was the possibility that the bird was a downy young of one of Michigan’s common rails, as suggested by the presence of downy feathering. Young rails are small and black, though they do not have some of the plumage features in this report. The crucial point in the Committee’s final decision was the fact that Black Rails do not have yellowish green legs, they are instead brown in adults and darker and drab in juveniles (Meanley and Stewart 1960, Eddleman et. al. 1994). In view of this discrepancy, the Committee could not accept this record of a bird that has been reported fewer than 10 times in the state.

King Rail

vote: 2 - 5

one description

One reported on 17 July 1998 at Pte. Mouillee, Monroe Co. It was noticed when it took flight, disappearing into a patch of reeds after a flight of 80 to 90 yards. The bird had a “small head and very long bill” as a rail, but was much larger than a Virginia Rail. Although the plumage could not be carefully observed, the bird was dark overall and “showed a lot of rufous.”

Several members expressed the opinion that a Virginia Rail was not ruled out by the documentation provided. It was noted that size is difficult to judge in flight with birds tending to look larger. One member observed also that the “Virginia Rail . . . has much more, and brighter, rufous in the wings [than the King Rail] which would be most noticeable in flight.”

Red-necked Stint

vote: 0 - 6

one description

One reported on 10 August 1994 at Pte. Mouillee in Monroe Co. The individual in question was described to be “distinctly smaller” than a nearby Least Sandpiper. The bill was “relatively short and more blunt than pointed.” The face head and neck were distinctly rufous; the back and wings were more gray than brown but not rufous. The rufous coloring “extended onto the upper breast” and then faded to a lighter “orangey-gray or buffy-gray”. Bill and legs were dark. The observer ended his documentation by suggesting that the bird described was an “adult but non-breeding Rufous-necked Stint,” as in Marchant et. al. (1986), Plate 76, figure 192a.

A typical statement by Committee members regarding this record was “I find nothing in the report that conclusively points to the identification made.” The greatest concern related to the reported size. The Red-necked Stint is similar in size to a Semipalmated Sandpiper and only slightly larger than the Least Sandpiper, so that species would not appear distinctly smaller as reported. It was also noted that in dealing with this difficult group, one must start by determining the age of the individual under observation. See Kaufman (1990) for a discussion of this matter. Without effective determination of the age it was impossible to rule out a “brightly colored juvenile” of some sort.

Long-tailed Jaeger

vote: 0 - 7

one description

One juvenile reported on 13 October 1997 at Lake Erie Metropark in Wayne Co. This bird was said to be

“slightly smaller” than nearby Ring-billed Gulls. The bird was determined to be a jaeger, based on its dark plumage and aggressive behavior. It was noted that “two central tail feathers were slightly longer than the others: perhaps an inch or two inches.” The back and upper wing surface appeared “mainly dark” with 2 “small white streaks.”

The general feelings of the Committee were summarized by a member who stated: “The case for Long-tailed Jaeger is weak. In fact, the size comparison made with a Ring-billed Gull is more suggestive of Parasitic Jaeger than Long-tailed.” It was also noted that the shape of the tail extension was of equal importance to the length, and without knowing this, the age of this individual was uncertain.

California Gull

vote: 4 - 3 in the second round
one description

One non-breeding adult reported on 23 November 1997 from Lake Lansing in Ingham Co. This individual was observed on the water with a 30 power scope at a distance of about 150 meters. Both Herring and Ring-billed Gulls were present, and this individual was judged to be intermediate in size between the two. The eye was “dark as compared to the pale eyes of the surrounding Herring and Ring-billed Gulls.” The bill was “yellow with a dark smudge across the tip” and seemed proportionally longer than that of nearby Ring-billed Gulls. The mantle was “medium gray;” the observer’s attention was, in fact, drawn to the bird by its mantle color, darker than other gulls that were present. The nape and hindneck

were heavily streaked. The white dots on the wing tips were larger than those of nearby Herring Gulls and similar to Ring-billed Gulls. Leg color could not be seen. The observer had much recent experience with this gull and similar species on the West Coast.

This record received substantial support. One member stated that “all the documentation supports adult winter California Gull” and spoke favorably of the observer’s experience with this species. With leg color not observed, however, several members thought that the identification was based on subjective details. It was maintained that many of the marks mentioned could be observed on several species of gulls in some circumstances. To this point, one member noted that “hybrids aside, extreme mantle color variation can be noted when observing large flocks of gulls.” Another member noted, “I’m not inclined to vote for this record based on what seems to me a collection of probable (but not individually conclusive) traits.” A separate concern was addressed by a member who stated that “the distance at which the bird was sighted was too great to confidently discern eye color (they may have looked dark, but were they?) and bill pattern.”

***Selasphorus* sp.**

vote: 1 - 6 in the second round
one description

One reported on 24 August 1993 in Lake Co. The sighting consisted of observation for 2 minutes at a feeder. The bird was reported initially as a Broad-tailed Hummingbird, but the second round vote considered only identification to genus. The bird was described as having a “light rufous

tail” and “darker rufous on part of the wings.” Its breast was “all white, with no reddish seen on the sides.”

This report was rejected since it does not closely match any North American hummingbird. Immature or female individuals from this genus all have green tails and reddish flanks. Wings having some rufous color would not be expected on any green-backed and white-bellied hummingbird.

Three-toed Woodpecker

vote: 3 - 4 in the second round
one description

One reported on 10 May 1997 at Chippewa Lake in Mecosta Co. The description stated that the bird was “about the same size as a Hairy Woodpecker” with “streaking along sides and on the back.” There were 2 white stripes on the side of the face; the back of the head was all black and there was streaking on the forehead. The bird was at a suet block about 30 feet from the observer.

This record received some support, one member noting that “the bird was seen well and several marks were noted, especially on the head.” Others were concerned with a vagueness in the report observing that “the extent of barring on the sides was not discussed.” Another stated that the bird “could possibly have been a Hairy or maybe even a sapsucker.”

Three-toed Woodpecker

vote: 2 - 5
one description

One reported on 10 May 1997 in Houghton Co. The description stated that the bird was the “size of a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, but without red forehead and throat.” It had a “typical ‘ladder’ back pattern, dark

head, wings, tail with outer tail feathers white.” It was thought to have had 3 toes and no white wing patch was observed.

The main concern of members was the lack of detail in the description. There was no mention of barring on the sides and no description of the face pattern, leaving some members concerned that juvenile Hairy Woodpecker, which may show barring on the back, had not been fully eliminated.

Three-toed Woodpecker

vote: 1 - 6
one description

Two reported on 9 May 1998 about eight miles north of the town of Rapid River in Delta Co. One bird was described as having “barred back and yellow on the head” and also a large amount of black on the head. The report to the Committee was a transcription of a verbal report; the author of the report did not observe these birds.

Members felt some inclination in favor of this sighting, one stating that “I think there is a very good chance these birds really were Three-toed Woodpeckers.” Nonetheless, the extremely sketchy information combined with the second-hand nature of the report, dissuaded most members from voting for this record.

Western Kingbird

vote: 0 - 7 in the second round
one description

One reported on 22-23 April at Kentwood in Kent Co. The bird was noted by its “wit” call and observed as it hawked insects over a creek. The tail “showed junco-like white stripes” when its otherwise black tail was

fanned. The “head, wings and back were gray”; the underparts were paler but no yellow was seen. The bird was estimated to be larger than a phoebe. Committee members felt some puzzlement as to the identity of this individual but could not accept it as a Western Kingbird due to lack of observed yellow on the underparts.

Mountain Bluebird

vote: 4 - 3 in the second round
one description

One reported on 8 November 1997 from Copper Harbor, Keweenaw Co. The bird was first noted as it hovered before “swooping down” and landing on a stump 2 feet high. It showed a “very different blue” from an Eastern Bluebird, brighter and perhaps more azure. “The breast was white-tinged & gray. There was no peachy tone or orange seen.” The bird was foraging in a brushy field; temperatures were in the mid 40s ahead of a storm that left 6 to 8 inches of snow the next day.

One point of discussion concerning this record was the lack of blue color beneath, expected on an adult male Mountain Bluebird. One member stated that, “the ones I’ve seen in Pa. could be described . . . as gray rather than blue underneath.” In addition to breast color, those voting against were concerned with the general vagueness of the report. One member observed that “there is no comparison made with other species, other than the ‘different blue’ and the ‘no peach tone or orange seen.’” There remains but a single accepted record of this species for Michigan; there were 10 for Wisconsin as of 1990 (Robbins 1991).

Eurasian Blackbird

vote: 0 - 7
one description

One reported on 6 July 1997 in Kentwood, Kent Co. This was described as an all-black bird the shape and size of an American Robin with a yellow bill and a “slight eye-ring.”

Committee members had several objections to this record. One member suggested that the bird in question might actually be a black American Robin; there is a specimen of a melanistic robin at the UMMZ. Secondly, assuming the bird was not an American Robin, it was wondered whether other black *Turdus* thrushes were properly eliminated. Species matching the above description occur as close as Mexico. Finally, the origin of an actual Eurasian Blackbird would be a serious concern. One of 2 North America records was near the location of “an illicit trade in wild birds” (ABA 1996).

Yellow Warbler

vote: 3 - 4 in the second round
one description

One reported on 27 December 1997 near Pte. Mouillee Headquarters in Wayne Co. This bird was described as “bright, lemon yellow” on the underparts and “greenish yellow” above. The bird was unstreaked and without wingbars; it was judged to be a warbler from its thin bill. It was observed at a distance estimated to be 15 feet for about 30 seconds.

The concern expressed by several members about this sighting was that female Wilson’s Warbler was not properly eliminated by the description. Differences between these 2 forms are subtle. Both species must be considered as possible; Muth (1999) noted that during the mild winter of 1998 - 1999, there were 5

each of Yellow Warbler and Wilson’s Warbler east of the Great Plains and north of the Gulf and southeast Atlantic coasts.

Black-throated Gray Warbler

vote: 2 - 5
one description

One reported on 15 May 1998 at Nayanquing Pt., Bay Co. This was seen without binoculars first, and then through the binoculars “for about a blink of an eye.” It showed a “solid black head [and] throat” and a cheek patch “bordered by white.” The body of the bird “seemed grayish” without “a lot of streaking like a Black-and-white.”

Though members felt that this report was suggestive of a Black-throated Gray Warbler, there was concern expressed both about the brevity of the sighting and about the description itself. It was noted by more than one member that, without mention of a yellow spot on the lores, the description of the plumage of the head matches Black-and-white Warbler better than Black-throated Gray Warbler.

Kirtland’s Warbler

vote: 1 - 6 in the second round
one description

One reported on 20 September 1997 at Sarett Nature Center. This bird first appeared to be a Canada Warbler. Closer inspection showed it was bright yellow beneath with “two distinct black (jagged) stripes down the side and up close to the wings;” further “its back was bluish gray” and it showed “no significant wing bars.”

Committee members felt that this description fails to match a Kirtland’s Warbler most significantly in the

failure to mention streaking on the back. The lack of wing bars were also a problem, since Kirtland’s Warbler does have wing bars and Canada Warbler does not.

sharp-tailed sparrow, sp.

vote: 0 - 7
one description

One reported on 4 October 1997 in St. Joseph, Berrien Co. Only the head and underparts were seen. The top of the head was dark; the bird had “a very distinct buffy triangle going from its beak over its eye then down to and blending with a buffy breast.” It had a small white throat patch and a buffy breast fading to a white belly.

Members were most concerned with a lack of full description of head and back plumage. Both LeConte’s Sparrow and the sharp-tailed sparrows have a light central crown streak, white in LeConte’s and gray in sharp-tailed. If this is not observed, these species can be distinguished only by subtle differences in the back pattern.

sharp-tailed sparrow, sp.

vote: 1 - 6
one description

One reported on 30 August 1998 at the Pte. Mouillee, Monroe Co. The bird was described as having “gray patch on side of face and across back of neck, and bold white stripe on back.” It was “very buffy overall” with light streaking and the chest and a white belly. It was observed in the vicinity of cattails.

The first concern of Committee Members was failure to distinguish between Sharp-tailed Sparrow and the quite similar LeConte’s Sparrow. The primary distinction is that the latter species has a pale median stripe to the

crown while the former has a dark gray median stripe. Most committee members were not convinced that this bird was either of these 2 species, suggesting instead a juvenile of a more common species.

Lincoln's Sparrow

vote: 2 - 5 in the second round
one description

One reported on 21 December 1997 in Washtenaw Co. This bird was observed in a weedy field adjacent to a wet brushy ditch. Its breast and sides were "very finely and distinctly streaked" with the streaked area "a light buffy color." The belly was "not streaked and mostly white." Over the eye was "a wide and prominent streak of gray." The wing showed "hints of reddish-brown/rufous."

The primary concern among Committee Members was failure to distinguish the observed individual from an immature Swamp Sparrow. One member stated: "there is nothing in this description that clearly distinguishes the bird claimed from a juvenile Swamp Sparrow. This is a much trickier identification challenge than is commonly acknowledged." He further noted that "if this was an adult Lincoln's Sparrow, it would have also shown a clean, complete, buffy eye-ring and a buffy malar bordered above and below by dark brown or blackish."

Eurasian Tree Sparrow

vote: 2 - 5
one description

One reported on 14 May at Saux Head Lake in Marquette Co. This individual was observed at a feeder at a distance of 6 to 8 feet. This bird "resembled a House Sparrow in size and overall coloring" but "a black cheek patch

and brown head" was noted. The bird was "similar in size to nearby Chipping Sparrows."

Members were most concerned at the lack of detail of this account, feeling that all details of the appearance of this individual should have been described. For example, one member asked: what was the extent of the black on the chin and did the bird show wingbars? Members also wondered exactly what the black patch looked like and whether or not it was completely surrounded by white. Finally, one member pointed out that both House Sparrows and European Tree Sparrows are noticeably larger than the Chipping Sparrow contrary to the description.

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