
Actions of the Michigan Bird Records Committee for 2009

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This is the 20th report of the Michigan Bird Records Committee, covering the Committee's actions in 2009. The members of the Committee in 2009 were Rick Brigham (Allegan Co.), Adam M. Byrne (Clinton Co.), Lathe Clafin (Jackson Co.), James C. Dawe (Oscoda Co.), Louie Dombroski (Bay Co.), Brad Murphy (Oakland Co.), and Caleb G. Putnam (Kent Co.), with alternate members Philip C. Chu (St. Cloud, MN) and Skye Haas (Marquette Co.). Putnam was Chairman and Byrne was Secretary. Per bylaw E.5 the votes of past Committee member Scott Terry were solicited and used during 2009.

During 2009, the Committee made 273 decisions on 175 records, with 151 (55.3%) of the decisions being to accept. Ninety-four (53.7%) of the records resulted in the acceptance of at least one individual. The discrepancy between the number of decisions and the number of records resulted from two circumstances. First, 22 records involved multiple individual birds, each individual requiring a separate decision. Second, four records were re-reviewed as a different species group following initial rejection; for example, a Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*) which was initially rejected was then re-reviewed as an Arctic/Pacific Loon (*Gavia arctica/pacifica*).

Two species, Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) and Couch's Kingbird (*Tyrannus couchii*), were added to the Michigan state checklist during 2009, each with accidental status. This brings the total state list to 435 species, from 434 in 2008. Because Michigan already had an accepted record of Tropical/Couch's Kingbird prior to 2009, there was a net gain of only one species for the year. Status changes for 2009 were few, and included only Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) and Green Violetear (*Colibri thalassinus*), which were both upgraded from accidental to casual status. Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*), which became a regular species in 2008 (Putnam 2009), is in the second year of its three year grace period before removal from the review list (per bylaw D.1), and will thus remain on the list through at least 2011.



Several nomenclatural and taxonomic changes were made during 2009 to bring the state checklist into concordance with the fiftieth supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union *Checklist of North American Birds* (Chesser et al. 2009). Namely, Boreal Chickadee's (*Poecile hudsonica*) specific epithet was changed to *hudsonicus*; the genus *Piranga* (which includes Scarlet (*P. olivacea*), Summer (*P. rubra*), and Western Tanagers (*P. ludoviciana*)) was moved from the family Thraupidae to the Cardinalidae, and placed at the beginning of that family; Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*) was renamed Nelson's Sparrow, retaining its scientific name; Common and Hoary Redpolls (*Carduelis flamma* and *C. hornemanni*, respectively) were moved to the genus *Acanthis*; and Pine Siskin and American Goldfinch (*C. pinus* and *C. tristis*, respectively) were moved to the genus *Spinus*. (Note: several additional taxonomic changes which did not occur until 2010 are nonetheless reflected in this article because the Committee has subsequently accepted them.)

Requests for Reconsideration

During 2009, the Committee received three requests for reconsideration: a Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*) in Delta Co. on 20 October 2006 (initially rejected), a Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*) in Delta Co. on 17 April 2009 (initially accepted), and a Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) in Allegan Co. on 29 November 2002 (initially accepted). All three were approved by majority vote. The Red Phalarope was voted upon in 2009, and is detailed below (see under "Records Not Accepted"), while the Mountain Bluebird and Ross's Goose were re-voted upon in 2010 (Putnam, *in prep.*).

Bylaws Changes

At the fall meeting, the Committee voted unanimously to change bylaw B.1 to: (new verbiage bolded)

The Michigan Bird Records Committee (MBRC) shall be an autonomous body that serves in an advisory capacity to Michigan Audubon's Research Program. The MBRC shall consist of seven regular members, and two additional members who will be considered first and second alternates. Alternates will vote on each submitted record, but their votes will be tallied only in the absence of a vote or votes by regular voting members. At meetings, alternates will vote on all matters before the committee and all members have the same status on procedural votes.

This change adjusted the relationship between the two entities to better reflect the status of Michigan Audubon's committee structure and to provide autonomy to the Committee in terms of its bylaws and member recruitment procedures.

Also at the fall meeting, the Committee voted unanimously to change bylaw B.2 to (new verbiage bolded):

Each year, committee members will elect by a majority vote of the full committee a Chairperson and a Secretary for the following year. Either position can be filled by a current committee member, or by a former member who has been re-elected to the committee after at least a year's absence. The Chairperson shall be responsible for calling meetings, presiding over the meetings, assuring that the bylaws are properly applied, and soliciting nominations to fill committee vacancies. The Secretary shall be responsible for obtaining necessary documentation, submitting documentation to the committee, maintaining records, and keeping minutes of all meetings. The committee members shall determine the policies of the committee, **document all review species personally identified in Michigan**, vote on all records submitted for evaluation, attend meetings, and carry out other activities as needed. Decisions on policy shall be based on majority vote. Bylaw changes require a 2/3 vote of the full committee. All proposed bylaws changes must be presented in writing to the committee at least 14 days prior to a scheduled meeting. Votes on the final motion will be due 30 days after the meeting.

This change formalizes the heretofore unwritten expectation that Committee members participate fully in the documentation of Michigan's review species.



Corrigenda

The following corrections refer to “Actions of the Michigan Bird Records Committee for 2008” (Putnam 2009).

1) The following account was inadvertently omitted from the section “Records Not Accepted”:

Ross’s Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 3–4, for two of three individuals

Descriptions

Photographs

Three individuals, one adult white morph and two juvenile white morphs, were reported at the Muskegon Wastewater Management System, Muskegon Co., on 25–28 October 2007. The adult was accepted (see above under “Records Accepted”). The juveniles, however, were described by one of the observers as having an anteriorly convex curvature to the bill base/facial junction, a mark judged by the majority of the Committee as inappropriate for the species claimed. As a result, most felt that the two juveniles could have been Snow X Ross’s Geese.

2) For the Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) record under “Records Accepted,” there were not any photographs submitted, only a description.

3) The date range for the Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*) from Houghton Co. under “Records Accepted,” should be 15 October – 17 November 2008, not 17 October – 17 November 2008.

4) The “Yellow” Palm Warbler (*Dendroica palmarum hypochrysea*) under “Records Not Accepted” was rejected 2–5 in the first round, not the second.

5) The male Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*) from Oskar, Houghton Co., under “Records Accepted,” was accepted with a 7–0 vote, not 5–2.

6) For the Common Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) under “Records Not Accepted,” the date range should be 11–27 May 2008, not 24 May 2008.

Records Accepted**Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)**

Vote: 7–0

Photographs: Max Henschell

Descriptions: Laurence C. Binford,
Max Henschell

Five individuals, a white morph adult and four white morph juveniles, were reported at the Calumet Sewage Lagoons, Houghton Co., on 16–17 September 2008. The adult was accepted unanimously, but the juveniles were not (see below under “Records Not Accepted”).

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 7–0, for two individuals

Description: Rick Brigham

Two individuals, both white morph juveniles, were observed at Allegan State Game Area, Allegan Co., on 22 October 2008.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 6–1

Description: Rick Brigham

One individual, a white morph juvenile, was observed at Kalamazoo Lake, Allegan Co., on 31 December 2008.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 7–0

Photographs: David Pavlik

Descriptions: Rick Brigham, David Pavlik

One individual, a white morph juvenile, was observed at Allegan State Game Area, Allegan Co., on 26 January – 4 March 2009.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 6–1

Description: Walter Pawloski

One white morph individual, age unclear, was observed at the Huron River mouth, in both Monroe and Wayne Cos., on 23 February 2009. The bird was thought to be an adult, but reported to have shown “a slight amount of darkness or shadow just above the bill,” which may indicate the bird was a juvenile.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 7–0, for two individuals

Description: Skye Haas

Two white morph individuals, age unknown, were observed at Lotus Road, Monroe Co., on 5 March 2009.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 6–1

Description: Frank Hibbard

Photographs: Frank Hibbard

One white morph individual, age unclear, was observed at Robert Long Park, Commerce Twp., Oakland Co., on 7 March 2009.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 7–0, for four individuals

Description: Thomas R. Wheeler

Four white morph individuals, age unknown, were observed in Aurelius Twp., Ingham Co., on 9–19 March 2009. The group had dwindled to one individual on the final two days of this window (Reinoehl 2009).



Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 6–1, for two individuals, and 7–0, for three individuals

Descriptions: Matt Hysell, Rhoda Johnson, Alison Világ

Photographs: Tim Baerwald, Matt Hysell

Fourteen white morph individuals, thought to include at least one second calendar year individual, were reported at Scottdale Rd. and Linco Rd., Berrien Co., from 10–13 March 2009. Review of this record hinged upon how many of the individuals could be confirmed as pure Ross's Geese. Most members relied on detailed analysis of two photos showing all 14 individuals in one frame. Opinions differed widely, with only five passing muster (see below under "Records Not Accepted" for treatment of the remaining nine individuals).

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Karl Overman

Photographs: Karl Overman

One white morph individual, age unclear, was observed at Linwood, Bay Co., on 17 March 2009.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 6–1

Description: James Fox

Photographs: Allen T. Chartier,

Robert Epstein, James Fox

One white morph individual, possibly a second calendar year individual, was observed at

Kensington Metropark, Oakland Co., on 21–23 March 2009.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 7–0, for five individuals

Description: David J. Peters

Five white morph individuals, age unknown, were observed at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, Saginaw Co., on 27 March 2009.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 6–1

Description: Skye Haas

One white morph individual was observed at the mouth of the Whitefish River, Delta Co., on 17 April 2009. The lone dissenter argued that the apparent verticality of the bill base/facial junction visible in the sketch would require written corroboration of this field mark in order to confirm that this field mark was specifically checked for, and thus confirm the bird's identification. This record was subsequently subject to a request for reconsideration (accepted) and re-voted upon in 2010 (Putnam, *in prep.*).

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Karl Overman

Photographs: Karl Overman

One white morph individual was observed near Lake Hudson State Recreation Area, Lenawee Co., on 4 May 2009.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 7–0

Descriptions: Joseph E. Faggan,
Brian McGee

One white morph individual, age unknown, was observed at Warren, Macomb Co., on 21 October – 11 November 2009.

Brant (*Branta bernicla*)

Vote: 7–0, for two individuals

Descriptions: Adam M. Byrne, Philip C. Chu, Don Jennette

Two individuals were observed at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 27 May 2009.

Brant (*Branta bernicla*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Skye Haas

One juvenile was observed at Big Bay lighthouse, Marquette Co., on 29 September 2009. Age was established by the lack of white patches on the neck.

Brant (*Branta bernicla*)

Vote: 7–0, for two individuals

Description: Skye Haas

Three individuals, age unknown, were reported at Big Bay lighthouse, Marquette Co., on 29 September 2009. Two of the three birds were accepted unanimously, but the third bird was resubmitted and subsequently rejected in 2010 (Putnam, *in prep.*).**King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*)**

Vote: 7–0

Photographs: Chris Neri, Kirk Zufelt
One individual, a hatching year bird of unknown sex or an adult female, was observed at the Tahquamenon River mouth, Chippewa Co., on 6–7 November 2009.**Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)**

Vote: 6–1

Photographs: Max Henschell

Description: Max Henschell

One individual, apparently a juvenile, was observed at Sand Point, Keweenaw Bay, Baraga Co., on 31 October 2008.

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Adam M. Byrne

One individual, wearing alternate plumage, was observed at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 28 May 2009.

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Matthew Hysell

One individual, wearing either definitive basic or formative plumage, was observed at Cherry Beach, Berrien Co., on 4 November 2009.



Arctic/Pacific Loon (*Gavia arctica/pacifica*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Ryne Rutherford
One individual, wearing alternate plumage, was observed at Manitou Island, Keweenaw Co., on 18 May 2009. This record was initially rejected as Pacific Loon (see below under “Records Not Accepted”), but re-reviewed under the broader species grouping per MBRC practice.

Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*)

Vote: 5–2, in the second round

Photograph: Tim Baerwald

One individual, wearing basic or juvenile plumage, was observed at Tiscornia Park, St. Joseph, Berrien Co., on 9 December 2008. Although some members felt the documentation did not completely rule out Horned Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*), the majority of the Committee did.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)

Vote: 7–0

Descriptions: Rick Brigham, Joseph Lautenbach, Ann Luft, Michael

Overway, Caleb G. Putnam

Photographs: Rick Brigham, Lyle Hamilton, Jonathan Lautenbach, Caleb G. Putnam

One individual was observed at Douglas Public Beach, Allegan Co., on 25–28 October 2009.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)

Vote: 7–0

Photographs: Jason Bojczyk, Chris Neri

One individual was observed at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 31 October – 1 November 2009.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)

Vote: 7–0

Descriptions: Alison Világ, Matthew Hysell

Photographs: Matthew Hysell

One individual was observed at New Buffalo, Berrien Co., on 7 November 2009.

***Aechmophorus grebe* (*Aechmophorus occidentalis/clarkii*)**

Vote: 7–0

Description: Greg Cleary

One individual was observed at Marquette, Marquette Co., on 29 November 2008.

***Aechmophorus grebe* (*Aechmophorus occidentalis/clarkii*)**

Vote: 7–0

Description: Skye Haas

One individual was observed at Munising, Alger Co., on 17 October 2009.

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)

Vote: 6–1

Description: Daniel E. Miller

One individual was observed at Port Huron, St. Clair Co., on 27 June 2009.

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*)

Vote: 7–0

Descriptions: Jerome S. Jourdan, Caleb G. Putnam

Photographs: Paul Cypher, Darlene Friedman, Jerome S. Jourdan, Jennifer Olson, Caleb G. Putnam, Jeffrey R. Schultz

One subadult was observed at Lake Erie Metropark, Wayne Co., on 25 April – 7 May 2009.

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*)

Vote: 7–0, for two individuals

Descriptions: Philip C. Chu, Jerome S. Jourdan, Caleb G. Putnam
Photographs: Adam M. Byrne, Jerome S. Jourdan, Caleb G. Putnam

Two individuals, an adult and a subadult, were observed at Pointe Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co., on 15 May – 30 July 2009, only one of the individuals being observed on the final date.

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Andy Johnson

Photographs: Allen T. Chartier, Andy Johnson

One adult was observed at Fletcher Rd., south of I-94, Washtenaw Co., on 21 May 2009.

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Adam Hoisington

Photograph: Joe Soehnel

One adult was observed at Fish Point State Wildlife Area, Tuscola Co., on 21–22 May 2009.

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Matthew Hysell

Photographs: Tim Baerwald, Matthew Hysell

One adult was observed at Three Oaks Sewage Ponds, Berrien Co., on 28 May 2009.

***Plegadis ibis* (*Plegadis falcinellus/chihi*)**

Vote: 7–0

Description: Gerald R. Urquhart

One individual, age unknown, was observed at Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Audubon Sanctuary, Jackson Co., on 1 November 2009.

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)

Vote: 6–1

Photograph: Jeffrey R. Schultz

One individual was observed at Milan, Washtenaw Co., on 1 May 2009.



Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: David Kirschke

Photographs: David Kirschke

One individual was observed near Pellston airport, Emmett Co., on 4 June 2009.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

Vote: 7–0

Descriptions: Lathe Clafin, Don Henise

Photographs: Don Henise

One individual was observed at Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Audubon Sanctuary, Jackson Co., on 15–19 May 2009.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

Vote: 7–0

Descriptions: Josh Haas, Mark Robinson

Photographs: Darlene Friedman, Josh Haas, Mark Robinson, Joan Tisdale

One individual, a subadult (second calendar year), was observed at Lake Erie Metropark, Wayne Co., on 20 September 2009.

Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Louie Dombroski

One individual was observed at Baraga Sewage Ponds, Baraga Co., on 14 May 2009.

Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*)

Vote: 7–0, for two individuals

Description: Joe Kaplan

Photographs: Alec Lindsay

Two individuals were observed at Manitou Island Light Station, Keweenaw Co., on 16 May 2009.

Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*)

Vote: 7–0

Photographs: Skye Haas

One individual was observed at Namha, Delta Co., on 18 May 2009.

Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*)

Vote: 7–0

Photograph: Skye Haas

One individual was observed at Marquette, Marquette Co., on 1 June 2009.

Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*)

Vote: 7–0

Photograph: Joe Kaplan

One individual was observed at Atlantic Mine, Houghton Co., on 1 June 2009.

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)

Vote: 7–0

Descriptions: Adam M. Byrne, James C. Dawe, Brad Murphy

Photograph: Brad Murphy

One individual, a juvenile of unknown sex, was observed at Pointe Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co., on 6 September 2009.

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Douglas Jackson
 Photographs: Douglas Jackson
 One individual, a juvenile of unknown sex, was observed at Tawas Point State Park, Iosco Co., on 20 September 2009.

Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*)

Vote: 7–0

Photographs: Tim Baerwald, Karen and Randy Conat, Chris Neri
 One individual, a first cycle bird with advanced preformative molt, was observed at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 5 October 2008.

Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Philip C. Chu
 Photographs: Giff Beaton, Adam M. Byrne, Brad Murphy
 One individual, a first cycle bird with advanced preformative molt, was observed at Pointe Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co., on 26 November – 2 December 2008.

Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*)

Vote: 7–0

Photographs: Rick Brigham
 One individual was observed at Holland State Park, Ottawa Co., on 1 November 2009.

Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: David Dister
 Photographs: David Dister
 One individual, a first cycle, was observed at Ludington State Park, Mason Co., on 7 November 2009.

Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)

Vote: 6–1

Description: Rick Brigham
 One individual, an adult, was observed at Douglas Public Beach, Allegan Co., on 20 October 2008.

California Gull (*Larus californicus*)

Vote: 7–0, in the second round

Photographs: Tim Baerwald
 One individual, in its third cycle, was observed at Three Oaks Sewage Lagoons, Berrien Co., on 24 November 2008. Clarification of the existence of high resolution versions of the thumbnails initially provided in the voting round allayed all concerns over the identity of the bird.

Pomarine Jaeger (*Stercorarius pomarinus*)

Vote: 6–1

Photograph: Karl Overman
 Description: Karl Overman
 One juvenile was observed at Port Huron, St. Clair Co., on 17 November 2009. The bird's blunt-tipped central rectrices, projecting just slightly beyond the other



rectrices, were photographed refreshingly well, a feat not often achieved in the Great Lakes.

Ancient Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Don Jennette

One individual was observed at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 31 October 2008.

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Curtis Dykstra

Photographs: Curtis Dykstra

One individual was observed 10 miles northeast of Ludington, Mason Co., on 24 April 2009.

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Joe Kaplan

One individual was observed northeast of Skanee, Baraga Co., on 10 May 2009.

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Jonathan T. Wuepper

Specimen: Jonathan T. Wuepper

Several feathers of this species were collected in a barn in Penn Twp., Cass Co., on 7 September 2009. The bird was also observed visually, both in the barn and in a nearby tree.

Chuck-will's-widow (*Caprimulgus carolinensis*)

Vote: 7–0

Descriptions: Philip C. Chu, Louie

Dombroski, Caleb G. Putnam

Audio Recordings: Marvin Budd, Allen T. Chartier

One individual was observed in Berrien Twp. (primarily in or near sections 28, 33, and 34), Berrien Co., on 4 May – 1 August 2009. This general area has hosted this species in each summer since 2005.

Green Violetear (*Colibri thalassinus*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Ray Bowers

Photographs: Ray Bowers

One individual was observed at a private residence in Comstock Park, Kent Co., on 26 September 2009.

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Allen T. Chartier

Photographs: Allen T. Chartier

One individual, an adult female, was observed, captured, and banded at a private residence in Shields, Saginaw Co., on 12 November – 5 December 2008.

American Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides dorsalis*)

Vote: 6–1, in the second round

Description: Jim Hayward

One individual, a female, was observed at Negaunee, Marquette Co., on 30 June 2006.

The record generated debate between members as to whether a juvenile Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*) could be eliminated. Those opposed argued that even though the observer specifically looked for white in the wing in flight and at rest (and didn't find it), that a young sapsucker could give this impression in some circumstances. Furthermore, they argued that the description of the white "barring" on the crown, neck, and mantle was inaccurate for the species claimed, which would instead show spotting or flecking here. Those in favor of the record felt that any sapsucker would show obvious white patches on the upperwing which the observer would have easily seen during such a close observation, and that although spotting or flecking is a better descriptor, that "barring" adequately identified white pigmentation as being where it should be on an American Three-toed Woodpecker.

American Three-toed Woodpecker
(*Picoides dorsalis*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Alexander Egan

Photographs: Katy Goodwin

Video Footage: Katy Goodwin

One individual was observed at T65N, R35W, Isle Royale, Keweenaw Co., on 16 May 2008.

American Three-toed Woodpecker
(*Picoides dorsalis*)

Vote: 7–0

Descriptions: Philip C. Chu, Alison Világ

Photographs: Beth Olson, Joe Youngman

One individual, a female, was observed skirting the Baraga/Houghton Co. boundary, at the shore of Keweenaw Bay, 1–24 January 2009.

American Three-toed Woodpecker
(*Picoides dorsalis*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Joe Youngman

One individual, a male, was observed at Arnheim, Baraga Co., on 23 February 2009.

American Three-toed Woodpecker
(*Picoides dorsalis*)

Vote: 7–0

Photograph: John Heneghan

One individual, a female, was observed at Isle Royale National Park, Keweenaw Co., on 23 May 2009.

American Three-toed Woodpecker
(*Picoides dorsalis*)

Vote: 5–2, in the second round

Description: Jim VanAllen

One individual, a presumed female, was observed at T50N, R27W, Marquette Co., on 29 June 2009.

Dissenting members argued that the sketch appeared to show too broad a supercilium for the species



claimed, and subsequently that a juvenile Yellow-bellied Sapsucker had not been sufficiently addressed as a possibility. Most, however, felt that the documentation adequately eliminated that species from contention. Especially convincing was the lack of white patches on the wings when seen well in flight.

Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*)

Vote: 7–0

Descriptions: Adam M. Byrne, Skye Haas

Photographs: Steve Baker, Mitchell Grant, Skye Haas, Scott Hickman, Joe Kaplan, Brad Murphy

mtDNA analysis: Lindsay, A. and S. Haas. (Unpublished data)

One individual, a first state record, was observed at Au Train, Alger Co., on 29 October – 2 November 2005. Couch’s Kingbird was eliminated from consideration by vocalization. The bird was heard to utter a “series of twittery notes” with a rolling quality. Supporting documentation came in the form of mitochondrial DNA analysis, amplified from a fecal sample and compared against reference samples of museum specimens of both species.

Couch’s Kingbird (*Tyrannus couchii*)

Vote: 7–0

Descriptions: Adam M. Byrne, Philip C. Chu, Brad Murphy

Photographs: Robert Epstein, Brad

Murphy, Brandon Percival, Eli Thomas, Kirk Zufelt

One individual, a first state record, and one of very few ever confirmed away from the southern Great Plains and Texas, was observed at Tawas Point State Park, Iosco Co., on 26–28 May 2007. Tropical Kingbird was eliminated by the bird’s vocalization, which was described as a single “pip” or “keep” given repeatedly. Plumage details, including wing formula (assessed from photographic evidence), and bill proportions, although not diagnostic, were judged to be in support of this remarkable record.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*)

Vote: 7–0

Photographs: Skye Haas, Chris Neri
One individual was observed at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 8 October 2009.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*)

Vote: 7–0

Photographs: Al VanDaele
One individual was observed near Milan, Monroe Co., on 29 October 2009.

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Hank Veldman

Video: Rick Veldman

One individual was observed near Hampton Rd. and Buffalo Rd., Berrien Co., on 12 June 2009.

Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Rosanne Iho

Specimen: Rosanne Iho (UMMZ 241766)

One individual was found dead at a residence in West Mathias Twp., Alger Co., on 29 April 2008. Interestingly, this discovery (a second state record) coincided with Michigan's first record of this species, an individual observed in Marquette on 27–29 April 2008 (Putnam 2009).

Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*)

Vote: 7–0

Descriptions: Allen T. Chartier, Russell Emmons

Photographs: Allen T. Chartier, Russell Emmons, Robert Epstein, Rodolfo Palma

One individual was observed at Port Huron State Game Area, St. Clair Co., on 7 June 2009.

Smith's Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*)

Vote: 7–0, for two individuals

Description: Scott Hickman

Photograph: David Pavlik

Two individuals were observed near Laughing Whitefish Point, Alger Co., on 12 September 2008.

Smith's Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*)

Vote: 7–0 for 20 individuals, and 6–1 for 18 individuals in the first round, and 5–2 for 2 additional individuals, in the second round

Descriptions: Adam M. Byrne, Rick Brigham, Allen T. Chartier, Jonathan Lautenbach, Caleb G. Putnam, Kevin Thomas, Alison Világ, Phil Vreeman
Photographs: Jonathan Lautenbach, Kip Miller, Andre Moncrieff, Caleb G. Putnam

Forty-four individuals, mostly males, were reported on Buffalo Rd. near Beaver Dam Rd., Berrien Co., on 27 April – 9 May 2009. Thirty-eight individuals were accepted during the first round of voting, with an additional two receiving resubmission, and four rejected (see below under "Records Not Accepted"). Identification was never the issue with the record; judgment of the actual number of individuals involved was. Birds were often seen in small groups, often in flight, confounding the observers' abilities to get an accurate head count. The final tally of 40 individuals represents, by more than an order of magnitude, a state high count.



Smith's Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Louie Dombroski

Photograph: Joe Kaplan

One individual, a male, was observed at Brockway Mountain, Keweenaw Co., on 12 May 2009.

“Yellow” Palm Warbler (*Dendroica palmarum hypochrysea*)

Vote: 7–0

Description: Julie Craves

One individual was observed at Dearborn, Wayne Co., on 24 April 2009. This bird featured all of the classic traits of this difficult-to-identify subspecies.

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)

Vote: 7–0

Photograph: Tim Baerwald

One individual was observed at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 12 September 2008.

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)

Vote: 7–0

Photographs: Chris Neri

One individual was observed at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 2–3 November 2008.

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)

Vote: 7–0

Descriptions: Lathe Clafin, Ray

Stocking

Photographs: Bob Arthurs, Andy Johnson

One individual was observed at Nichols Arboretum, Washtenaw Co., on 26 April 2009.

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)

Vote: 7–0

Photographs: Gerald Vork

One individual was observed at St. Ignace, Mackinac Co., on 21 May 2009.

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)

Vote: 7–0

Photographs: Eldon Dodd, Darlene Friedman

One individual was observed at Barry State Game Area, Barry Co., on 28 May – 1 June 2009.

Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)

Vote: 7–0

Specimen: Emily Misko (UMMZ 241416)

One individual was found dead at Canton, Wayne Co., on 27 October 2007.

Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)

Vote: 7–0, for one individual and 6–1, for two individuals

Descriptions: Kip Miller, Andre

Moncrieff, Caleb G. Putnam, Alison

Világ

Photographs: Tim Baerwald, Caleb G. Putnam

Three individuals were reported at Andrews University Dairy Farm, Berrien Co., on 27 September 2008. Members unanimously felt that the third individual, claimed only by one of the four observers, was not described and was thus not acceptable (see below under "Records Not Accepted"). The majority of the Committee did, however, stand by the other two individuals, which were well-described and reported as having been seen "1 inch from one another in clear view."

Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)

Vote: 7-0

Descriptions: Rick Brigham, Matthew Hysell

Photographs: Tim Baerwald, Rick Brigham, Matthew Hysell

One individual was observed at New Buffalo marsh, Berrien Co., on 28-31 May 2009.

Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)

Vote: 7-0

Description: Joe Youngman

One individual was observed at Sturgeon River Sloughs State Wildlife Management Area, Houghton Co., on 17 June 2009.

Nelson's/Saltmarsh Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni/caudacutus*)

Vote: 7-0

Descriptions: Adam M. Byrne, Caleb G. Putnam

One individual was observed at Pointe Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co., on 4 October 2009. The observers' inability to assess the extent and strength of the streaking on the underparts relegated the record to the broader grouping.

Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*)

Vote: 7-0

Description: Rick Brigham

One individual, a male wearing first alternate plumage, was observed at Allegan State Game Area, Allegan Co., on 17 May 2004.

Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*)

Vote: 7-0

Description: Gerald J. Ziarno

Photographs: Jim Pfromm

One individual, a male, was observed in Midland Twp., Midland Co., on 6 May 2009.

Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*)

Vote: 7-0

Description: Roger Eriksson

Photographs: Roger Eriksson, Chris White

One individual, a male, was observed at Mikado, Alcona Co., on 10-14 May 2009.



Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*)

Vote: 7–0

Photograph: Chris Neri

One individual was observed at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 20 May 2009.

Records Not Accepted

“Greenland” Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*)

Vote: 0–7

Photographs

One individual was reported at Boardman Lake, Grand Traverse Co., on 21 November 2008 – “winter 2009.” Members were nearly unanimous in the opinion that the field marks for separation of *A. a. flavirostris* from the North American races *A. a. gambeli* and *A. a. frontalis* are not currently established as diagnostic, and that the identification of any of the former in North America may not be possible without more research. Perhaps most critically, bill color, often asserted as a valuable trait, is best considered unreliable since some North American individuals share the orange bill of *A. a. flavirostris* (Kaufman 1994).

Ross’s Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, age and color morph unclear, was reported at

Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, Saginaw Co., on 16 March 2002. The bird was described as being smaller than Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) and Snow Geese (*C. caerulescens*), with a “small triangle shaped bill,” and lacking a “‘black smile’ line.” Members unanimously agreed that without a description of bill base color and the verticality of the bill base/facial junction, that a Snow Goose X Ross’s Goose hybrid or backcross could not be eliminated.

Ross’s Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 3–4, for two of four juveniles, 2–5, for the other two juveniles

Photographs

Two descriptions

Five individuals, a white morph adult and four white morph juveniles, were reported at the Calumet Sewage Lagoons, Houghton Co., on 16–17 September 2008. The adult was accepted unanimously (See above under “Records Accepted”), but the juveniles were rejected. Many members were concerned about the presence of a convex bulging of the facial feathering into the bill base on all four juveniles, which could not be eliminated as having arisen from hybridization with Snow Goose.

Ross’s Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 3–4

Description

Photographs

One individual, a juvenile white morph, was reported at the Muskegon Wastewater Complex, Muskegon Co., on 17–28 November 2008. The Committee was split on this report, with dissenters arguing that the lack of clarity with regard to the presence/absence of blue or gray coloration on the bill base, the appearance of a curvature to the bill base/facial junction, and apparent large body size prevented a hybrid or backcross Snow X Ross's Goose from being eliminated.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 0–7

Descriptions

One individual, age unclear, was reported at Maple Lake, Paw Paw, Van Buren Co., on 3 January 2009. The Committee was of the opinion that without specific information on the verticality of the bill base/facial junction, and the color of the bill base, that a hybrid or backcross Snow Goose X Ross's Goose could not be eliminated.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual white morph, age unclear, was reported at Mill Rd. and Kruger Rd., Berrien Co., on 8 March 2009. The bird was not described except to say that it was tiny compared to adjacent Snow Geese. The Committee was

of the unanimous opinion that without specific information on the verticality of the bill base/facial junction, the color of the bill base, and the extent of any "grin patch" on the tomium, that a hybrid or backcross Snow Goose X Ross's Goose could not be eliminated.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 4–3, in the second round

Description

Photographs

One individual white morph, age unclear, was reported at Three Oaks Sewage Lagoons, Berrien Co., on 10 March 2009. Though most members agreed this bird possessed nearly all of the features of the species claimed and was thus close to the minimum level of acceptance, many were concerned by one trait: the verticality of the bill base/facial junction. The observer stated that "the interface between the [facial] feathering and the bill was not concave, [but] instead was irregularly vertical." Many felt that the photos corroborated this impression, and that there was a slight but noticeable anterior intrusion of the facial feathering onto the bill base. Subsequently, the dissenters argued, it was not possible to confidently rule out a Snow Goose X Ross's Goose hybrid or backcross.



Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 1–6 for 1 individual, 2–5 for 2 individuals, 3–4 for 2 individuals, and 4–3 for 3 individuals, all in the second round

Photographs

Descriptions

Fourteen white morph individuals, possibly including at least one second calendar year individual, were reported at Scottdale Rd. and Linco Rd., Berrien Co., on 10–13 March 2009. Five of the fourteen were accepted in the first round (see above under “Records Accepted”). For the remaining nine individuals, all of which were resubmitted, votes hinged upon detailed analysis of two photos showing all 14 individuals in one frame. Opinions differed widely, but most members felt the photos could not clearly establish enough facial and bill features (particularly the presence of blue or gray on the caruncles, and the measure of verticality of the bill base/facial junction) to eliminate hybrid and backcross Snow Geese X Ross's Geese from consideration.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Vote: 1–6

Description

Photographs

One individual white morph, age unclear, was reported at Thorn Lake, Jackson Co., on 14 March 2009. The observer reported not seeing a grin patch, and “thinking

[the observer] was seeing the greenish-blue coloring on the base of the bill, but that at 300 yards [the observer] was never quite sure.”

The Committee nearly unanimously agreed that without better clarity on the verticality of the bill base/facial junction, the color of the bill base, and the extent of any “grin patch” on the tomium, that a hybrid or backcross Snow Goose X Ross's Goose could not be eliminated.

Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, a male wearing basic plumage (per the amended terminology of Pyle 2005), was reported at Tawas Point State Park, Iosco Co., on 20 May 2000. The observer reported a wigeon with a “red head and buffy forehead, gray back and flanks...” Members had two primary concerns. First, it was apparent that a period of nearly nine years had passed prior to the description first being written. Second, the description did not include any details of flank or breast pattern, axillary coloration, or upperparts pattern, marks necessary to eliminate hybrid and backcross American Wigeon (*A. americana*) X Eurasian Wigeons from contention.

Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*)

Vote: 1–6

Description

One individual, a male molting into basic plumage, was reported at Harrisville, Alcona Co., on 1 April 2009. The observer reported a bird with a “white face with black cap,” a green bill, a white back with the rest of the body being black, and the eye located fully within the black cap. Several members were troubled by the lack of information on viewing distance, weather, and lighting conditions of the sighting. If the bird had been seen poorly, at significant distance, with significant wave action, for instance, then accurate assessment of such details may have been very difficult, they argued. Other members pointed out that basic male Common Eiders do not have all black bodies (except the back), but instead have fully white breasts. Finally, at least one observer was unclear why, if the green bill was clearly visible, that the green nape wasn’t seen and reported as well. This record was subsequently given reconsideration as King/Common Eider (*Somateria spectabilis/mollissima*) (see below under “Records Not Accepted”).

King/Common Eider (*Somateria spectabilis/mollissima*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, a male molting into basic plumage, was reported at Harrisville, Alcona Co., on 1 April 2009. This record was initially reviewed and rejected

as a Common Eider (see above under “Records Not Accepted” for an enumeration of the traits offered by the observer), and is here given reconsideration under a broader grouping, per current MBRC practice. The white face and black cap, if granted that the bird was an eider, eliminates young male and all female King/Common Eiders, so the bird in question would have to be an adult male wearing basic plumage. Members were unanimously in agreement that this suite of traits could not apply to a King Eider in this age and sex category, which would have a black body, no black cap, and no green on the bill. This, in combination with the unacceptability of the record as a Common Eider, was the primary grounds for rejection.

Barrow's Goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, a male of unknown age, was reported at Sault Ste. Marie, Chippewa Co., on 25–26 February 1995. The bird was described as having a dark back and wings, wings with white spots, and with the face possessing a “crescent shaped dingy white spot behind the bill.” Members unanimously felt that additional detail regarding the exact shape and extent of the facial crescent, as well as that of the lateral breast



spur and scapulars, was necessary to eliminate a formative male or a molting adult male Common Goldeneye (*B. clangula*), which often have non-circular or even crescent-shaped spots on the face (Cramp 1977).

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, wearing alternate plumage, was reported at Manitou Island, Keweenaw Co., on 18 May 2009. The rather complete description was sufficient to rule out all other loon species, the Committee argued, except for Arctic Loon (*G. arctica*). To eliminate that species requires at least a basic description of the posterior flank and rump/uppertail pattern, of which none was offered. This record was subsequently re-reviewed and accepted as Arctic/Pacific Loon (See above under “Records Accepted”).

Red-faced Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax urile*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual was reported at the Platte River mouth, Benzie Co., on 20 July 2009. The observer described seeing a bird roughly the size of a Double-crested Cormorant (*P. auritus*), flying alone but behind a group of 15 Double-crested, with a “white patch on [the] flank,” with a “bulky [shape] ... unlike the

sleek Palegic [sic] Cormorants [*P. pelagicus*],” and yellow on the bill. Voting members were unanimous in the opinion that the report failed to nail down the bird as a cormorant or to eliminate several other similar waterbird species such as Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*), Double-crested Cormorant (especially individuals with a leg band appearing as a white patch in flight), and even Gadwall (*Anas strepera*). Important traits lacking in the report included body color and face pattern (the bird was seen from “25 ft.,” and so these should have been visible), as well as field marks eliminating the other cormorants.

Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

Three individuals were reported at an unknown location in Livingston Co., on 12 August 2008. The birds were described as visible with the naked eye in flight overhead of the observer with “distinctive white bodies with black primaries/secondaries,” dark heads with lighter colored beaks (perceived as a juvenile trait), and “extended necks and long legs,” eliminating them as American White Pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*). Most members were primarily concerned with the lack of information regarding the circumstances of the observation. The description left

open the possibility that the birds were seen from a moving vehicle, without the aid of optics, and from substantial distance (none of these variables were specified). Those utilizing this argument all conceded that if one grants the field marks mentioned, that they could only belong to Wood Storks. A smaller number of members argued that the traits enumerated were insufficient to rule out species such as juvenile White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*), Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*), and American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*).

Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*)

Vote: 3–4

Description

One individual was reported at Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area, Bay Co., on 3–4 May 1996. The bird was described as much smaller than adjacent Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*) and Great Egrets (*A. alba*), with a white belly, a dark throat with light central stripe, and a long thin bill. The Committee was split on this record, with some satisfied by the description. Others shared two primary concerns. First, the description appeared to have been first written down nearly 13 years after the sighting, far too long to rely on memory retention for an accurate description of details. Secondly, several members felt a Snowy Egret (*E. thula*) X Tricolored

Heron, a combination observed at Karn Plant, Bay Co., during this time period (Byrne 2001), could not be ruled out without a better description of soft parts and close examination for odd white feathers in the plumage.

Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*)

Vote: 1–6

Photograph

One individual was reported at Pinconning, Bay Co., on 15 May 2009. Most members felt that the photo established the bird as either a Tricolored Heron, a Little Blue Heron (*E. caerulea*), or a Snowy Egret X Tricolored Heron. However, most also felt that the latter two or the latter possibility alone could not be eliminated without additional detail. Features missing or inconsistent with the species claimed included the following: 1) the presence or absence of white feathers in the body and wings, 2) the color of the facial skin, 3) the exact pattern of the face, throat, and chin, 4) the coloration of the belly, and 5) the presence/absence of a white patch on the hindcrown/hindneck junction (which appears to be present in the photo, but should not be on a Tricolored Heron).

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
(*Nyctanassa violacea*)

Vote: 1–6

Description

One individual was reported at Muskegon, Muskegon Co., on 24 April 2008. The bird was described as larger than a Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) but smaller than a Great Blue Heron, with yellow legs, white and black on its head, and with uniform gray body plumage. Although at least two members were satisfied with the documentation, the majority was not, and voiced the following concerns. First, some felt that other species such as second calendar year Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) and adult Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) were not ruled out. Second, the lack of optics and lack of description of the circumstances of the observation (i.e., was the bird seen only from a moving bike [it was reported on a bike path], and what were the lighting conditions?). Third, at least one member felt that the description of the body plumage was incorrect, given that adult Yellow-crowned Night-Herons (which this bird had to be given the face pattern) show black streaking throughout the mantle, scapulars, and wing coverts. Finally, several members were concerned that mantle pattern was never addressed specifically, rather than just lumped into the description of “the body.” They argued that

the black back of an adult Black-crowned Night-Heron could have been obscured depending on the view of the bird.

***Plegadis ibis* (*Plegadis falcinellus/chihi*)**

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual was reported at Fish Point State Wildlife Area, Tuscola Co., on 21 May 2009. This individual was reported at the same location and on the same date as an adult White-faced Ibis (see above under “Records Accepted”). Members were unanimously troubled by the brevity of the description, which consisted of just two details: 1) the bird was red, and 2) it had a distinctly curved bill. The observer also reported that “we didn’t get a good look at it at all,” without specifying the distance involved. Members argued that this description could fit such species as Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*), Dunlin (*C. alpina*), and Scarlet Ibis (*Eudocimus ruber*), the latter of which is currently present in captivity in Michigan (Detroit Zoological Society 2010) and could conceivably escape.

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)

Vote: 2–5, in the second round

Description

One individual was reported at Lake Erie Metropark, Wayne Co., on 6 October 2008. The

observer described seeing a “slightly smaller-looking bird [than adjacent Turkey Vultures (*Cathartes aura*)], with a fairly flat-winged profile ... [appearing] somewhat more compact than the [Turkey Vultures], [with] squarer wings held in a flatter posture, ... a very short tail, [a] particularly small, dark and featherless [head], ... quick snappy somewhat frenetic [wingbeats], [and] uniformly dark [overall appearance].” The observer conceded not being able to see any white patches in the underwing of the bird in question, but added even though there was heavy backlighting, that the silvery flight feathers of the adjacent Turkey Vultures were readily visible. The Committee was split on the record, some arguing that none of the traits were inconsistent with the species claimed and it was reasonable, given the conditions, not to be able to see white in the under primaries. Dissenters, however, argued that if it was possible to make out such details as the silvery flight feathers (contrasting with the darker underwing coverts) of the Turkey Vultures and the featherless head of the bird in question, that it was inexplicable that the white underprimaries were not visible. They argued this opened the possibility that the underprimaries may have been black, in which case a dark morph *Buteo* or even a corvid such as Common Raven

(*Corvus corax*) could not be ruled out. A final concern of several members was the possibility that the observer may not have used optics for the sighting (making judgment of these field marks very difficult to impossible), as the observer did not specify this information.

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)

Vote: 0–7, for five individuals

Description

Five individuals were reported at Coopersville, Ottawa Co., on 9 May 2009. The brief description included the following traits:

- 1) white tips on underwings, 2) broad tail, and 3) black head.

Members unanimously argued that several species were not eliminated by the description, including Turkey Vulture, Franklin’s Gull (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*), and aberrant/leucistic American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*). At least some description of the overall body color and body size might have addressed these concerns, they argued.

Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*)

Vote: 1–6

Description

One individual was reported just east of Ross Preserve, Van Buren Co., on 21 August 2008. The bird was described as swallow-shaped, large, and boldly black and white, with wings “[that] were black.”



Its body size was described as “nearly twice the size of [Blue Jays accompanying it].” One member was satisfied that no other species could be described this way, but the majority felt that any Swallow-tailed Kite should be described as approximately three to five times larger than a Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) (in length and mass, respectively), and that its underwing is not black, but mixed black (flight feathers) and white (coverts).

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, wearing formative plumage, was reported at Brighton State Recreation Area, Livingston Co., on 13 April 2008. The observer described a bird which was ‘bouncing’ along like a nighthawk, with “weird looking white patches behind the wings,” gray “dorsal surfaces,” and “no black wing tips as in [Northern] Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*).” The bird was said to show traces of juvenile plumage in the form of a banded tail and a streaked breast. Reviewers unanimously agreed that any Mississippi Kite that showed traces of formative plumage (streaked breast and underwing), could not show white on the dorsal surface of the wing (which was assumed to be what was meant by ‘white patches behind the wing’ by

most), as this species retains its all-dark juvenal secondaries through the preformative molt (Pyle 2008). Thus, the description was inconsistent with any known plumage of the species claimed.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

Vote: 0–7, in the second round

Description

Sketch

One individual was reported near Clifford, Tuscola Co., on 4 October 2008. The Committee was provided a field sketch made at the time of the sighting and a considerably more detailed description, which was first written approximately 3.5 months after the sighting. The bird was described as having a “totally unmarked pale grayish breast, neck, throat, [and] under wing (secondaries),” and a “solid black tail with no hint of banding.” Its body size was described as smaller than that of a Cooper’s Hawk (*Accipiter cooperi*), but larger than that of a Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) or Sharp-shinned Hawk (*A. striatus*). All members were troubled by the fact that most of the detail was provided in the written description rather than in the field sketch. This gave the impression that details may have been added to the report during the interim between the sighting and when the description was written, during which the observer

admittedly conducted substantial research on the identification of this species. Most agreed that if one granted all of the traits mentioned in the written description, that the bird had to be a Mississippi Kite, but most voted solely on the details provided in the field sketch ("all light below, no bands on tail, pointed, dark wingtips, smaller than a Cooper's Hawk"), which were deemed insufficient to rule out other species such as Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*).

Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual was reported near Delta College, Bay Co., on 15 January 2003. The bird was described as a large brownish falcon with black axillaries seen in flight and perched but without the benefit of optics. However, these details were relayed to the Committee by someone who did not observe the bird in question. Nearly all members were troubled by the second hand nature of the report, as it is not possible to know how the information might have changed as it was communicated between the observer and the person who wrote the report. Furthermore, it appears that the description may have been first written down six years after the sighting. Some members were also concerned that dark axillaries are

actually shared by similar species such as Merlins and Peregrine Falcons (*F. peregrinus*), and that the important features are 1) whether the dark patch also includes the greater underwing coverts (which it does on Prairie Falcons), and 2) whether the axillary/greater underwing covert patch contrasts strongly with the underparts at large.

Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual was reported at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 24 April 2004. The bird was described as "a brownish falcon with dark axillaries." The observer also mentioned that in the field the observers felt that a juvenile Peregrine Falcon could not be ruled out, but that after the fact, photos taken by another observer of the bird in question showed "the distinct facial pattern of a Prairie Falcon." The Committee was unanimously troubled by the complete lack of description of which facial features were used to identify the bird, and that the photos themselves were not included in the submission. Furthermore, several members felt that if the observers couldn't stand by the identification in the field, that it would be very difficult to accept any such record.

**Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*)**

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual was reported at Muskegon State Game Area, Muskegon Co., on 23 May 2009. The bird was described as “sparrow size [sic] or smaller,” with a slate blue head, a black body and tail, “green (olive)” legs and feet, black eyes and bill, and a three part call annotated as “grr, dee, dee.” Members cited two primary issues with the record. First, the description seemed a better fit for a downy young juvenile of other rail species such as Sora (*Porzana carolina*) and Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*). Second, they argued that the description is inaccurate for the species claimed, which should show red eyes, a head of uniform coloration with the upperparts (not contrasting to them), and brownish or dull flesh-colored legs. Finally, they were confused how the white spotting throughout the plumage, as well as the rufous nape, could have been missed when the bird was observed so closely (six feet).

King Rail (*Rallus elegans*)

Vote: 1–6

Description

One individual was reported at Sarett Nature Center, Berrien Co., on 2 June 2005. It was described as “almost twice” the size of two adjacent Virginia Rails, with a

different vocalization than the latter (described as having a “lower pitch and a different cadence”). Most members were concerned at the lack of any visual description of the bird’s plumage and appearance, given that many species of marsh birds are larger than Virginia Rails and possessing of lower pitched vocalizations (American Coot [*Fulica americana*], Common Moorhen [*Gallinula chloropus*], Least Bittern [*Ixobrychus exilis*], etc.). But a larger problem, in the view of most members, was the nearly three year gap between the observation and the written documentation, with no mention of field notes. If that much time actually elapsed, most members felt that memory was unreliable in recalling the circumstances of a sighting such as this.

King Rail (*Rallus elegans*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, heard only, was reported at North Lyndon Marsh, Washtenaw Co., on 9 May 2009. It was described as uttering a “chick-brrrrr” call in response to the playback of a Virginia Rail recording. All Committee members felt that Virginia Rail could not be eliminated, as it too has a vocalization aptly represented by “chick-brr.” For example, one Committee member alluded to the

following recording of a Virginia Rail giving this call: <<http://www.naturesongs.com/varail3.wav>>.

Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)

Vote: 3–4

Description

One individual was reported at Port Inland, Schoolcraft Co., on 10 June 2009. The observer described and sketched the bird as similar to the Piping Plovers (*C. melodus*) it was with except that it had black legs, a black, slim bill, and a dark “eye patch.” “It also had a tail with a dark center unlike the Piping Plover [which] had a white rump.” The Committee was split on the record with several voting for acceptance. Dissenters, however, argued that since there was no mention of optics or distance from the bird, that it was possible that leg color (and other marks) were misdiagnosed, but were actually mud-caked or in shadow. A final dissenting argument was that given the detail observed, that black on the crown and shoulder area should have been as obvious as the black auricular, which was mentioned.

Wilson’s Plover (*Charadrius wilsonia*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual was reported at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 7 May 2009. The observer described

the bird as “larger than the rest of the plovers,” with “a very stocky black bill, and instead of two bands it had one large band.” Members were unanimously troubled with the report, many arguing that because the other species of plover was never identified, that the size category of this bird was uncertain. Many felt that a Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) fit the description quite closely, or potentially even a hunkering Killdeer (with only one breast band visible in the rainy conditions described by the observer).

Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*)

Vote: 0–7, for five individuals

Description

Five individuals, age unclear, were reported at Muskegon Wastewater Management System, on 24–26 July 2008. The observer described shorebirds with the following attributes: “longer drooping bill,” “strong rufous line across the back of the wing,” “salt-and-pepper scales (most of the birds),” and “strong facial patterns with significant and strong white patches.” Members unanimously judged that these descriptors are inadequate to rule out other shorebirds such as juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper (*C. pusilla*) and juvenile Dunlin.

**Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*)**

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, believed to be wearing basic plumage, was reported at Carleton Farms landfill, Wayne Co., on 30 July – 3 August 2008. The observer described the bird as a small shorebird, larger than a Least Sandpiper (*C. minutilla*) but smaller than Baird's (*C. bairdii*) or White-rumped Sandpipers (*C. fuscicollis*), with black legs, "very fine streaking on the breast [covering] the entire central area of the breast," grayish "upper plumage" contrastingly paler than the tertials, and completely lacking rufous on any feather tract. All members agreed that the field marks provided as eliminating Semipalmated Sandpiper from contention were not useful to this end. Specifically, although breast pattern (in adults) and the amount and location of rufous in the upperparts (in both alternate/transitional adults, and juveniles) can be useful for identification, Semipalmateds and Westerns are not separable by appearance in definitive basic plumage (Paulson 2005), a plumage this bird would have to be in in order to possess gray upperparts lacking rufous.

Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, believed to be

wearing basic plumage, was reported at Pointe Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co., on 30 August 2008. The observer described the bird as just slightly larger than nearby Semipalmated Sandpipers, with a "much longer, slightly drooping and pointier bill," all gray upperparts, and perhaps (but not definitely) "a small amount of gray streaking on the sides of the neck." Members argued that this suite of traits is insufficient to rule out long-billed Semipalmated Sandpipers (especially females originating from the eastern arctic). At least one member was troubled by the lack of clarity of the age of the bird, which changes the criteria for separating the two species. Finally, at least one member felt that a juvenile Dunlin could not be ruled out by the description.

Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, believed to be a juvenile, was reported at Calumet Sewage Lagoons, Houghton Co., on 2 September 2008. The observer described the bird as having "distinctive rufous scapular markings and long bill with a drooped tip much longer than any of the [Least Sandpipers] or [Semipalmated Sandpipers]," and being bigger than the Least Sandpipers it was with and smaller than a nearby Baird's

Sandpiper. All members argued that a Semipalmated Sandpiper, especially a long-billed juvenile female of the eastern population, could match this description closely. More detail on the pattern of rufous in the scapulars may have helped to eliminate bright juvenile Semipalmated Sandpipers, as would have a description of the head.

Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, age unclear, was reported at Grand Lake, Presque Isle Co., on 5 October 2008. The observer described the bird as “a white-looking peep with a thick, droopy bill.” The observer also mentioned that the group present at the time reached “a consensus that it was a Western/Semipalmated Sandpiper officially,” that “got away.” All members felt that the description was insufficient to rule out Semipalmated Sandpiper, with at least one member adding Dunlin to that list. Furthermore, most were concerned that since the observers present at the time were unwilling to identify the bird as a Western Sandpiper, it was hard to stand by the record.

Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, a presumed adult (bright rufous on the crown

and auriculars), was reported at Pointe Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co., on 7 September 2009. The bird was described as notably smaller than accompanying Pectoral Sandpipers (*C. melanotos*) but nearly identical in size to Semipalmated Sandpipers. Its bill was slightly decurved and dark, of medium length, and probably droopier than the bills of Semipalmateds. It was said to show notably bright rufous on scapulars, auriculars and crown, and to possess a structure like Semipalmateds, but with the head and neck appearing bulkier. Finally, its primaries were “about tail length.” A few lines of argument emerged. First, the description of crown and auriculars was judged by many to represent an adult Western Sandpiper. However, most adult Western Sandpipers are transitional if not entirely in basic plumage by mid-August, so this would represent a seriously retarded molt regime for this individual. It also was inexplicable, some argued, that such a bird would not retain some spotting on the flanks and breast. Second, many observers were not convinced that other species could be ruled out, including Semipalmated Sandpiper (especially bright juveniles), juvenile Least Sandpiper, and adult Red-necked (*C. ruficollis*) and Little Stints (*C. minuta*).

**Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*)**

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual was reported at Menominee, Menominee Co., on 7 May 2009. The bird was described as being the “[approximate] size for ... Baird’s,” with dark legs and bill, a pale white eye stripe, a white belly, and buff on the breast. Members unanimously agreed that this is insufficient to rule out several other species including Sanderling (*C. alba*), Pectoral, Least, Semipalmated, and Western Sandpipers.

Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*)

Vote: 1–6

Description

One individual was reported “just east of Au Train,” Alger Co., on 14 May 2009. The bird was described as “a long-winged calidrine with black legs, black bill, black eye, warm rustyish buff breast, [and as having] black splotches on a brightish gray background in the lower scapular/covert region of the folded wing.” A final offering was that the “ventral [surface] of [its] torso [was] white except for the breast as noted above.” Members were unclear what was meant by long-winged. Specifically, they asked, did the bird’s wingtips extend beyond the tail tip at rest, or not? If the answer was assumed to be yes, then Sanderling was still not eliminated from consideration.

However, the observer added that the bird was “too short-winged and chubby [to be a Sanderling].” Most members found this gestalt-based field mark relatively unconvincing, since it can be misjudged and varies according to field conditions. A final concern of other members was that the description of breast pattern and upperpart pattern were not consistent with the species claimed.

Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*)

Vote: 0–7, in the second round

Descriptions

One individual was reported at Peninsula Point, Delta Co., on 20 May 2009. The bird was described as a dark-rumped peep and was seen flying with Dunlins and Least Sandpipers, differing from those species in the following details: longer and straighter bill than other peeps, brownish wash on the breast, and lacking Sanderling’s wide white wing stripe. It was said to be “slightly smaller” than the Dunlins it accompanied. The observers also stated that Pectoral Sandpiper was eliminated “because of the shorter-necked ‘peep’ proportions,” because Pectoral Sandpipers [are] larger than this bird appeared, and by “the lack of a sharp demarcation between a heavily streaked breast and the white belly.” The observer who wrote this latter passage also conceded earlier in the report that “I don’t recall exactly the pattern

of the breast streaking, but it did not appear as prominent and dark as would be expected for a Pectoral Sandpiper.” Despite the support of several members prior to resubmission, support for the record faded following a discussion of published measurements for Pectoral Sandpiper and Dunlin (the species used for size comparison in the field). This analysis revealed that the smallest female Pectoral Sandpipers are smaller than average-sized Dunlins in both mass and wing chord (Cramp 1983, Greenwood 1986, Pitelka 1959, Warnock and Gill 1996) negating the primary field mark used to address the former species. Finally, the only other field mark potentially useful to this end was the description of breast pattern. However, all Committee members agreed that since the primary observer of this trait hedged as to the pattern observed, that it was not useful for clinching the identification.

Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*)

Vote: 1-6 for 2 individuals, 4-3 for 1 individual, both in the second round

Description

Three individuals were reported at Indian Point, Delta Co. on 26 May 2009. Most but not all members felt that the description of the birds, if taken as an accurate rendition, and if taken to apply equally well to all three individuals, was only

that of a Baird's Sandpiper. That said, many were troubled by the circumstances of the writeup itself. Specifically, the report was typed, and in the typeset the observer mentioned that the report was “transcribed from field notes.” However, the observer also penciled in by hand the following verbiage, at some unknown time after typing it: “Description applies [sic] to all three birds which were identical.” Most members were troubled by this addition, as it invited uncertainty about exactly what was in the field notes. It, they argued, was unclear whether this statement was representative of the field notes or added after the fact. If the latter, they were not comfortable granting all of the traits mentioned to all three individuals. Finally, a minority of members did not judge the description to be diagnostic of the species claimed.

Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*)

Vote: 2–5

Description

One individual was reported adjacent to mouth of the AuTrain River, Alger Co., on 30 May 2009. The following details were offered: “the bird was adjacent to another long-winged, elongated, somewhat slender appearing, somewhat long/slenderish billed (with slightly drooped tip) calidrid, but lacked the white rump and dark flank flecks of the other long-winged bird.



It was also more definitively bibbed, and had black triangular markings covering much of the tips of many scapulars.” Members inferred that the adjacent bird was a White-rumped Sandpiper, but nonetheless most agreed that a Sanderling was not ruled out, as a Sanderling’s primaries extend beyond the wingtips and the variability shown in birds transitioning from basic to alternate plumage in May is striking, and thus within the range of the description given.

Baird’s Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*)

Vote: 1–6

Description

One individual was reported at Marquette, Marquette Co., on 30 May 2009. The bird was described as “about one and a half to two times the size of [an adjacent Semipalmated Sandpiper], rather slender, with a thin black bill that was about average length for a sandpiper. [Its] legs were black and of medium length, [its] back was light brownish/grayish and mottled. [The] upper part of [its] breast was light brown and finely mottled, with a rather sharp line of demarcation between this darker area and the white feathering of the lower breast and belly.” Many members again felt that a Sanderling was not eliminated from contention. Others felt that the description of size was either too large (Baird’s not being quite as large as described), or too

vague (length vs. bulk not being specified).

Baird’s Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*)

Vote: 3–4 for three individuals

in the first round, 3–4 for one

individual in the second round

Description

Four individuals were reported at Grand Marais, Alger Co., on 31 May 2009. The birds were said to be associating with Semipalmated, White-rumped, and Least Sandpipers, and to possess “long wing extension past the tail, very clean flanks (no fine streaks), [bills] about like the white-rumped [sandpipers], dark legs, and [backs with] chunky black spots on a whitish background.” They were said to be about the same size as the White-rumped Sandpipers they were with, and at least one individual was said to possess “dark through the tail.” Confusion with this report stemmed primarily from the lack of clarity as to how many individuals each field mark applied. The observer never established that all four individuals were checked equally carefully for each field mark, with parts of the description in the singular, parts in the plural, and other parts unclear as to how many individuals fit the description. Several members felt that the suite of marks diagnostic of Baird’s could only be confidently attributed to one individual, leading to the resubmission of one bird. Additionally, dissenting

members felt that Sanderling could not be eliminated despite all of the features mentioned, as it has wingtips extending beyond its tail, and can possess all of the other traits, especially during its variable prealternate molt period. Following resubmission, voters continued to express concerns about whether all of the traits were clearly referable to this fourth bird and whether the description ruled out Sanderling.

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, a male, was reported at Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area, Bay Co., on 14 May 2002. The bird was described as having an almost complete whitish ruff which the observer used to eliminate all other shorebird species. No further description was offered. Members unanimously felt that although this single sentence description was consistent with a Ruff, it was insufficient to rule out other species, particularly leucistic/amelanistic individuals of common species such as Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) and Pectoral Sandpiper. Further, most felt that at least some basic description of size, proportions, leg color, and bill length might have strengthened the report substantially. A final concern was the apparent seven year lapse between the sighting and when the description was first written.

Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, age unclear, was reported at the Kalamazoo River mouth, Allegan Co., on 29 November 2002. This record was accepted (Byrne 2004), but the observer submitted a request for reconsideration due to 1) uncertainty as to how well the bird was seen during the inclement conditions in which the observation took place, 2) concern that, at the time, the date may have been weighted too heavily in consideration of the identification, biasing the observation, 3) the inability of the observer to see pale at the base of the bill despite looking for it, and 4) a patterned back, which the observer argued was a better fit for Red-necked Phalarope (*P. lobatus*). Members mostly felt that if the observer no longer stood by the record, that the Committee should automatically follow suit. Most also agreed some of the traits mentioned in the original report (slightly downcurved bill, scaling on the upperparts, etc.) and reconsideration request (patterned upperparts, lack of yellow seen on the bill base at close range) were either a poor fit for the species or a better fit for Red-necked Phalarope.

**Mew Gull (*Larus canus*)**

Vote: 0–7, for two individuals

Description

Photograph

Two individuals, age unknown but apparently adults, were reported at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 7 May 2009. They were described as “not as big as ... Herring Gulls (*L. argentatus*) and a little bigger than ... Ring-billed [Gulls] [*L. delawarensis*]” that they were standing with. Both had “yellowish” legs and yellow beaks but “without any red spots.” One which vocalized was said to have uttered a call sounding similar to an online recording of a Mew Gull later discovered by the observer. Members were unanimous in the opinion that more details were necessary to firmly establish the identification, and most felt that the description of size was incorrect, as most Mew Gulls are smaller than most Ring-billed Gulls, and the probability of having two Mew Gulls larger than a Ring-billed Gull was negligible. Furthermore, soft part coloration is variable (and can be modified by caked mud on the bill, for example), and the description of bill and leg coloration was not inaccurate for some third cycle Herring and California Gulls. Finally, most members felt that more description of such features as mantle coloration, tertial and scapular crescent extent, wingtip pattern, and eye color was

necessary to fully establish the age and identity of the birds.

California Gull (*Larus californicus*)

Vote: 4–3, in the second round

Description

Photographs

One individual, wearing first alternate plumage, was reported at Marquette, Marquette Co., on 24 November 2007. The observer provided several photographs and a written description, however, many of the traits described were apparently done so from the photos, causing some members to feel that their review should be based predominately on their own interpretations of the photos (all of which showed the bird at rest only). The photos reveal a gull that 1) is much smaller (in bulk and length) than accompanying Herring Gulls (observer added that there were 100+ Herring Gulls in the vicinity), 2) is just slightly larger (in bulk and length) than accompanying Ring-billed Gulls, 3) has a sharply demarcated pink-based bill with black tip, and 4) has a thin bill with smaller gonydeal angle and more parallel-edged appearance than that of Herring Gull. Some also felt the bird's advanced state of molt for the time of year and the patterning of the scapulars, upperwing coverts, and tertials were all indicative of California Gull. Dissenting members, however, found these

traits less definitive. The Committee was split down the middle on this record, with dissenters arguing that an assessment of dorsal upper primary pattern (presence/absence of a pale inner primary panel), arguably the most critical field mark for identifying first cycle California Gulls, was lacking, thus introducing variant, runt Herring Gulls as a possibility. Those in support of the record, however, argued that the apparent suite of traits identified the bird as a California Gull.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

Photographs

One individual, a first cycle individual, was reported at Harsen's Island, St. Clair Co., on 20 December 2008. The Committee unanimously agreed that the photographs appeared to show a first cycle Great Black-backed Gull (*L. marinus*).

Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*)

Vote: 1–6

Description

One individual, purported to wear second alternate plumage, was reported at Grosse Ile, Wayne Co., on 17 June 2009. The observer described a “dark gray” mantled gull with pale wing coverts and a bill just larger than that of Herring

Gull but lacking a prominent gonydeal angle; several additional traits were mentioned. Members were almost unanimously opposed to the record, on the grounds that it was inconsistent with the plumage and species claimed, and that several other species and hybrids were not eliminated. Specifically, the description of a tail band was judged by at least one member to be incorrect. Several members felt that many first and second cycle individuals of pale-mantled large gull species such as Herring Gull can often appear to be dark-mantled even though they are not. Finally, any identification of Slaty-backed Gull must contend with Vega Gull (*L. [argentatus] vegae*) X Slaty-backed Gull hybrids, pure Vega Gulls, variant Great Black-backed Gulls, and Herring X Great Black-backed Gulls. This report, most members argued, failed to conclusively rule out these possibilities.

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

Vote: 0–7 for two individuals

Description

Two individuals, adults in alternate plumage, were reported at Harrisville, Alcona Co., on 11 May 2009. The birds were described as having gray wings with gray wingtips, gray and white underwings with a “black thin edge [borders],” short red bills, black caps, gray “underbodies,” and white and gray faces. All



members felt that Common Tern (*S. hirundo*) was not eliminated from consideration, as it typically doesn't yet have a well-developed wedge on the upper primaries, and the observer's sketch appears to show the translucent block of flight feathers including only the secondaries and some inner primaries (Arctics should show uniform translucence throughout the primaries and secondaries). Furthermore, Arctic Terns in alternate plumage have fully white underwings, not gray and white.

Murrelet sp. (*Brachyramphus/ Synthliboramphus* sp.)

Vote: 0–7

Photographs

One individual was reported at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 5 November 2008. Members were unanimous in the opinion that the blurry, distant, photos were inconclusive. They appeared to show a largely white object, with perhaps some gray above, but beyond that contained little information. Members argued that at the very least phalaropes (*Phalaropus* sp.), Sanderling, and even guillemots (*Cepphus* sp.) could not be ruled out without better photographs or a written description. This record was subsequently given reconsideration as alcid sp. (see below under "Records Not Accepted").

Alcid sp. (*Alcidae* sp.)

Vote: 0–7

Photographs

One individual was reported at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 5 November 2008. This bird was initially reviewed as murrelet sp. (see above under "Records Not Accepted"). The record was here given reconsideration under a broader grouping, per current MBRC practice. As in the initial review, members unanimously felt that the photographs did not show enough detail to be sure the bird was not a Sanderling, phalarope, or even a Long-tailed Duck (*Clangula hyemalis*), but that a rudimentary description might have clarified the issue.

Golden-fronted Woodpecker (*Melanerpes aurifrons*)

Vote: 0–7

Photographs

One individual was reported at Chatham, Alger Co., on 7 June 2009. Although many members agreed that this individual was slightly unusual for Red-bellied Woodpeckers (*M. carolinus*) (it had a paler red crown and nape, and more yellow-appearing nasal tufts, than most Red-bellied Woodpeckers), all agreed that it was not out of range for that species, or perhaps influenced by pigmentation irregularities such as xanthochroism. Most importantly, the barred black-and-white central

rectrices ruled out Golden-fronted Woodpecker (which has plain black on these feathers).

American Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides dorsalis*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, a male, was reported at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 16 October 1993. The observer reported seeing “a blackish woodpecker with a yellow spot on the back of the head, but also a sizeable amount of white in the middle of the back.” No additional details were available. There were two primary lines of argument against this record. Most prominent was that the observer did not write down the description of the bird until approximately 16 years after the sighting – much too long to be able to expect to remember details accurately. Furthermore, several argued, the description of crown was troubling as this species shows yellow on the forecrown, not the nape. Members took this as evidence that the bird may have been a xanthochroistic Hairy Woodpecker (*P. villosus*), or perhaps a normal juvenile Hairy Woodpecker.

Gray Flycatcher (*Empidonax wrightii*)

Vote: 1–6

Description

One individual was reported at Lake Erie Metropark, Wayne Co., on 31 August – 2 September 2009. The very detailed description offered in summary the following traits: a gray-mantled (lacking green tones) *Empidonax* flycatcher, foraging low to the ground but never (during 40–60 minutes of continuous observation) flicking or dipping the tail, yellowish tints to the belly and vent, short primary projection, white outer webs to the outer rectrices, and a thin bill with a sharply-defined black tip of “relatively small size.” In the final analysis, most members felt that although many of these features were consistent with the species claimed (most significantly, perhaps, bill shape and coloration), that they failed to rule out other species of *Empidonax* flycatchers such as Dusky Flycatcher (*E. oberholseri*), Alder/Willow Flycatcher, (*E. alnorum/traillii*) and Least Flycatcher (*E. minimus*). Judgment of and application of field marks in this group are notoriously difficult and subjective, with many birds left unidentified. Many members cited the lack of observed tail-pumping as a serious problem with the record, as this species, they argued, rarely goes for long periods without exhibiting this distinctive behavior.



Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual was reported at Campau Rd., Wayne Co., on 18 September 2009. The observer described an “unusually large-headed bird, perched perpendicular to the branches (ie. it was more horizontal than vertical [sic])...it was gray, [with] a sizeable black bar across the face, blackish wings, and a stout hooked bill.” Northern Shrike (*L. excubitor*) was eliminated because the “bar across the face was too heavy and I don’t remember Northerns being as big-headed [as this bird was].” Most members agreed that this description likely referred to a shrike, and that the time of year was suggestive of Loggerhead Shrike over Northern Shrike. However, members were not willing to accept the record without additional detail on face pattern, especially the full extent of the mask over the base of the mandible, and whether it fully encased the bird’s eye.

Black-billed Magpie (*Pica hudsonia*)

Vote: 1–6

Description

One individual was reported at 23 Mile Rd. just east of Romeo Plank Rd., Macomb Co., on 16 March 2009. The bird was described as crow-sized, all black except

for “a white belly and white lines and white wing feathers on [its] backside,” with a “long tail.” The observer also mentioned being “pretty sure” of the identification. Most members were troubled by the observer’s hedging on the identification, especially since the bird was seen from a moving vehicle for only 10 seconds, less than ideal conditions for careful analysis. Further, although some of the traits given seemed like a decent fit for the species claimed, some were not convinced that a leucistic Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*) or leucistic Rock Pigeon could be ruled out. A final argument was the body size given was inaccurate, as magpies are actually much lighter than American Crows, perhaps half their mass.

Fish Crow (*Corvus ossifragus*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual was reported at Harrisville, Alcona Co., on 22 April 2009. The bird was described as all-black, smaller than a Ring-billed Gull, with a hooked bill, and no “sheen effect.” Its vocalization, heard once, was reported to be “Uh-Oh.” Members unanimously felt that a single vocalization was insufficient grounds for acceptance of this species, since American Crows give a plethora of variant calls, including imitations of other species. Plumage and size

features, most members felt, are not diagnostic. For example, world expert McGowan (2002) states that “after thousands of hours of looking at [Fish Crows and American Crows], I think I am accurate in my visual [identification] to species only about 80% of the time.”

Sprague’s Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual was reported at Huron National Forest, near East Tawas, Iosco Co., on 9 May 1971. The bird was identified by its “white outer [rectrices], pale legs, whitish eyering and thin pink bill, dark stripes on the back, and very few streaks on the underparts.” Members had two concerns with this report. First, many felt the description was consistent with Vesper Sparrow (*Poocetes gramineus*), American Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*), and juvenile Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*). Second, there was no mention of field notes having been taken, which led to the possibility that the description was first written 38 years post sighting, far too long for accurate retention of detailed field marks.

Smith’s Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*)

Vote: 0–7 for 4 individuals

Descriptions

Photographs

Forty-four individuals, mostly males, were reported on Buffalo Rd. near

Beaver Dam Rd., Berrien Co., on 27 April – 9 May 2009. Thirty-eight individuals were accepted in the first round, with two additional birds added in the second round (see above under “Records Accepted”). The final four individuals, claimed by one of the observers, were rejected as most members felt that sufficient details were not available to clearly establish that the diagnostic traits were present on forty-four individuals.

Smith’s Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, a female, was reported in Leroy Twp., Ingham Co., on 9 May 2009. The following features were given: 1) buffy chest and belly with fine pin stripes which contrasted with the darker feathers on rest of body, 2) approximate size of Horned Lark, 3) a noticeable lighter patch over eye, and 4) a light spot in wing. Members unanimously agreed that the description did not rule out other species, Vesper Sparrow and American Pipit leading the list.

“Audubon’s” Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Dendroica coronata auduboni*)

Vote: 1–6

Description

One individual was reported at Copper Harbor, Keweenaw Co., on 3 May 2009. The individual was

described as like an adult female Myrtle Warbler (*D. c. coronata*), except that it had 1) a pale yellow throat delineated below by grayish wash on upper breast, 2) eye crescents, 3) a “solid cheek,” 4) no supercilium, not even a faint one, and 5) a “whitish” call note. The observer also mentioned a second observer, who had remarked just after the sighting that the bird “lacked the hook-like extension of light feathering coming up from the lateral neck to border the posterior portion of the auriculars [and that] this, coupled with the lack of supercilium above, produced a solid cheek look.” Members unanimously chose to ignore the second hand information provided on behalf of a second observer in favor of a first hand account. After this, most felt that an intergrade “Audubon’s” Yellow-rumped Warbler X “Myrtle” Yellow-rumped Warbler could not be ruled out without more information on the following traits: 1) the presence or absence of a paler area extending from the throat upward behind the ear-coverts, and 2) the ground color of the cheek relative to the ground color of the crown, hindneck, and neck-sides (the same or darker).

Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

Photographs

One individual was reported at

Allouez, Keweenaw Co., on 19 November – 5 December 2008. All members agreed that the bird was clearly not an Eastern Towhee (*P. erythrophthalmus*). However, they also agreed that without a clearer picture of the pattern of white on the bases of the primaries, just distal to the primary coverts, that a hybrid or backcross Eastern Towhee X Spotted Towhee could not be eliminated.

American Tree Sparrow (*Spizella arborea*)

Vote: 1–6

Description

One individual was reported at Lane’s Landing, Muskegon State Game Area, Muskegon Co., on 26 July 2008. The bird was described as having “two white wingbars, a central breast spot on a pale breast, [a] grey [sic] supercilium and cheek, [a] rufous cap and flanks, and a two-[toned] bill.” The call note was described as shorter and sharper than the notes of several adjacent White-throated Sparrows (*Zonotrichia albicollis*), and sounding like “tset” (as opposed to the “tseep” of the latter). Members voiced several concerns with this record. First, the description apparently was first written down approximately 6 months after the sighting, and some members felt this was too long a time period to accurately retain details of what was seen. Secondly, some

members were troubled by the lack of acknowledgment of the rarity of a July American Tree Sparrow in Michigan, and a subsequent concern that the bird has not been properly scrutinized with this in mind. Finally, some members felt that the description of the call note was inconsistent with the species claimed.

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual was reported at “Mason Tract,” Crawford Co., on 9 June 2001. The bird was described as having a “chest spot,” and a “chestnut cheek pattern.” No other details were offered. The Committee unanimously agreed that this did not rule out other species of sparrows such as Clay-colored (*Spizella pallida*) (which occasionally shows a well-developed breast spot). Other members lamented that these details were provided more than seven years after the sighting, without the benefit of field notes, such that their accuracy was called into question.

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)

Vote: 1–6

Description

One individual, believed to be a juvenile, was reported at extreme northwestern Monroe Co., on County

Line Rd. near Maple Rd., on 25 July 2009. The bird was described as having “white on the sides of the tail, [a] reddish streaked crown, and [a] streaked breast and sides.” Most members wished for additional clarification of face pattern, and at least one pointed out that although juvenile Lark Sparrows do have streaked underparts, that they do not have rufous in the crown, an insuperable contradiction.

Nelson’s Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)

Vote: 0–7, for one of three individuals

Descriptions

Photographs

Three individuals were reported at Andrews University Dairy Farm, Berrien Co., on 27 September 2008. The first two individuals were accepted (see above under “Records Accepted”). The third individual, however, claimed by only one of the four observers, was not described and subsequently could not be evaluated.

Nelson’s Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)

Vote: 2–5

Description

One individual was reported at Sleeper Lake burn, in T48N, R10W, Luce Co., on 14 June 2009. The observer first heard, then saw, the bird in question. The song was described as “unmistakably



different from [that of] LeConte's [Sparrow] (*A. leconteii*), similar in total length [and] quietness, but [with a different] 'texture' or quality. The observer continued: "I would describe the LeConte's [Sparrow's] song as buzzy, [and the] song of the [Nelson's as] ... hissy, ... not unlike the sound I personally make when "phishing" in a bird." The observer then mentions that the sound was reminiscent of water hitting a very hot stove. Upon seeing the bird in poor, early morning, light, the observer described "a sparrowlike bird, brownish with a [sic] obvious buffy colored supercilium and [a] buffy color below the eye." Some members accepted the record, while dissenting members felt that although the record was suggestive, that written descriptions of songs were difficult to interpret conclusively. Additionally, at least one member pointed out that the bird was never seen moving its bill, including while the sound was being heard, and that it was possible the sound was not coming from the bird described. This record was re-reviewed as Nelson's/Saltmarsh Sparrow (See below under "Records Not Accepted").

Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)

Vote: 3–4

Descriptions

One individual was reported at T15N, R14E, Huron Co., on 5

October 2009. The observers described as "tinted orange" on the face, breast, back, and flanks, with a white belly. It had a "gray cheek with darker auricular," dark crown with "no white central stripe," dirty white throat, "distinct color separation between the orange breast and the dusty white belly," "some blurred streaks in the white belly and flanks," and "[the] back and wings (topside) were more a brownish orange than the face." The Committee was split on this record, with several approving the report. However, the majority of members felt that Saltmarsh Sparrow could not be eliminated without a more detailed description of the intensity and "blurriness" of the breast streaking, the level of contrast in the color of the throat and face as compared to the background color of the breast, and the precise level of demarcation of the background color of the breast (orange) from the white of the belly.

Nelson's/Saltmarsh Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni/ caudacutus*)

Vote: 3–4

Description

One individual was reported at Sleeper Lake burn, in T48N, R10W, Luce Co., on 14 June 2009. This record was initially reviewed and rejected as Nelson's Sparrow (see above under "Records Not Accepted" for a full enumeration of the details provided). As in the

initial review, dissenting members felt that Le Conte's Sparrow and other species were not conclusively eliminated. The passing of 11 weeks from the time of the sighting to when the description was first written down troubled at least one member, since the observer didn't specify whether field notes existed.

Golden-crowned Sparrow
(*Zonotrichia atricapilla*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

Photographs

One individual, a first year, was reported at Gulliver, Schoolcraft Co., on 25–28 October 2009. Members unanimously judged that the bird in the photos was a typical formative White-crowned Sparrow (*Z. leucophrys*).

Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*)

Vote: 2–5

Photograph

One individual, a male in alternate plumage, was presumably photographed at Channing, Dickinson Co., on an unknown date in May 2001. This report consists solely of a second-hand photograph, photographer unknown, but claimed to originate from Channing (via the second-hand individual who had the photo in his/her possession). Most members felt that this was insufficient evidence that the bird in the photograph,

clearly a male of this species (a unanimous opinion), actually had occurred in Michigan. They felt that the photograph could easily have been taken somewhere else, but then mistakenly claimed to have come from Michigan.

Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, apparently a female in alternate plumage, was reported at Cedar Springs, Kent Co., on 9 May 2009. The bird was described as “the size of a smaller female Rose breasted [sic] Grosbeak (*P. ludovicianus*),” with an “orange breast (not yellow) with very faint stripes, with [a] grosbeak bill, black/brown and white barred wings, distinctive white and brown eyebrow and facial stripes, [and] brown back feathers streaked with some paler color.” The observer also mentioned that it did not have a black head. Members unanimously agreed that an intergrade Rose-breasted Grosbeak X Black-headed Grosbeak could not be ruled out without a description of maxilla coloration, streaking extent and type (“blurry” vs. thin streaks), and belly color and pattern. Furthermore, some members argued that a bright spring female (i.e., with an orangey breast) Rose-breasted Grosbeak was not fully ruled out.



Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*)

Vote: 1–6

Description

One individual, an adult male, was reported at Niles, Berrien Co., on 5 October 2009. The bird was described as a “large, chunky bird,” with a large, conical beak on a large head, no eye rings, blue [on] the chest and sides, a blue body and head, a “rusty-pop’ of the wings (later described simply as “rust on the wing”), and a long tail. Most members felt that although the bird may well have been a Blue Grosbeak, that transitional adult male and second calendar year male Indigo Buntings (*P. cyanea*) were not conclusively eliminated. Both of these can show brown patches on the wing, and more clarity as to the exact color of the patch, and on which feather tracts it was located would be necessary to secure the identification. Finally, body size, although touched upon (it was seen adjacent to a Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*), but no size comparison was offered), was not conclusive.

Brewer’s Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)

Vote: 0–7

Descriptions

Photographs

One individual was reported at Oakwoods Metropark, Wayne Co., on 31 January – 3 February 2009. Committee members felt

that the photos unambiguously showed a Rusty Blackbird (*E. carolinus*), as evidenced by its thin rusty fringes on the scapulars, tertials, and greater and median upperwing coverts. Jaramillo and Burke (1999) state that “Brewer’s Blackbirds never [have] chestnut fringes to the tertials,” and that “On Rusty Blackbird, the edges on the upperpart feathers from the crown to the back are rusty or chestnut, while these are greyish-buff on Brewer’s Blackbird.”

Bullock’s Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual, apparently a male wearing alternate plumage, was reported in Bay Co., on 15 May 2009. The observer reported seeing a black throat and cap, “a black eyeline through the eye on an orange face,” and a “white patch.” All members agreed that a hybrid or backcross Baltimore (*I. galbula*) X Bullock’s Oriole could not be eliminated without additional details such as tail pattern, wing covert pattern, and facial pattern. Others argued that the vague description of a white patch from an unknown area on the bird was insufficient to even establish that the bird was in the Baltimore/Bullock’s Oriole camp.

Common Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

Vote: 1–6

Description

One individual, a male wearing alternate plumage, was reported at Au Train, Alger Co., on 27 April – 1 May 2009. The Committee unanimously agreed with the identification, but most felt that records of this species in Michigan continue to be best regarded as the likely by-product of the well-known circa 2004 release of captive Eurasian fringillids, including this species, in or near Chicago, Illinois (Chu 2005, Craves 2008).

Common Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

Vote: 1–6

Description

One individual, a male wearing alternate plumage, was reported at Copper Harbor, Keweenaw Co., on 7 May 2009. The Committee unanimously agreed with the identification, but most were troubled by the issue of origin (see above Common Chaffinch record for details).

Common Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

Vote: 1–6, for eight individuals

Descriptions

Photographs

Eight individuals, five females and three males, all wearing alternate plumage, were reported

at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 25 May – 8 June 2009. The Committee unanimously agreed with the identification of all eight individuals, but the majority were troubled by the issue of origin (see above Common Chaffinch record for details).

Common Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

Vote: 1–6

Photographs

One individual was reported at Agate Harbor, Keweenaw Co., on 27 May 2009. The entire Committee agreed with the identification, but most were troubled by the issue of origin (see above Common Chaffinch record for details).

Eurasian Siskin (*Spinus spinus*)

Vote: 0–7, for two individuals

Description

Two individuals were reported at Harrisville, Alcona Co., on 5 October 2008 – 15 April 2009. The birds were illustrated and described as having unstreaked rumps and undertail coverts, a yellowish wash on the flanks, and a yellow throat. At least two members argued that these field marks were incorrect for the species claimed. Additional members invoked concerns over the provenance of these individuals, arguing that until a pattern of natural vagrancy is established



for this species in our region, that such records are best treated as a by-product of the well-known circa 2004 release of Eurasian fringillids in or near Chicago (Craves 2008).

Eurasian Siskin (*Spinus spinus*)

Vote: 0–7

Description

One individual was reported at Harrisville, Alcona Co., on 1 April 2009. The bird was illustrated/described as having a hooked bill,

a yellow, unstreaked breast lacking a black bib, unstreaked undertail coverts, and wingtips falling beyond the tail tip, among several other traits. Several members argued that these traits are inaccurate for the species claimed. Others cited the well-known Chicago area release of Eurasian fringillids as a basis for conservatism in accepting records of this species pending well-established natural vagrancy to our region.

Acknowledgements

I thank Adam M. Byrne for substantial editorial assistance with the manuscript.

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