



# **Actions of the Michigan Bird Records Committee for 2012**

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This is the 23rd report of the Michigan Bird Records Committee (MBRC). It covers the committee's actions during 2012.

In 2012 the MBRC consisted of regular members Philip Chu (Minnesota), James Dawe (Oscoda Co.), Louis Dombroski (Bay Co.), Christopher "Skye" Haas (Marquette Co.), Scott Hickman (Alger Co.), Bradley Murphy (Oakland Co.), and David Slager (Ohio), and alternate members Allen Chartier (Wayne Co.) and Scott Terry (Oakland Co.). Chu chaired the committee and Murphy was its secretary.

During 2012 the committee made decisions on 129 records, with 83 (64.3%) garnering acceptance at some level. "Acceptance at some level" means that, for a given record, at least one of the individuals reported was accepted. Note, however, that an individual might be accepted as something other than what was claimed: for example, a pair of diving birds submitted as Western Grebes (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) were not accepted as such, but were then reviewed again and accepted as *Aechmophorus* grebes.

For each record the following information is provided: a vote tally, an inventory of the documentation submitted, the number of individuals claimed, and the date(s) and location reported. In addition, for accepted records only, observers who contributed documentation are listed, and the names of the persons who first located the bird are listed and underlined, whether those persons submitted documentation or not.

MBRC actions during 2012 resulted in the following changes to the Michigan bird list. First, two species, Great Shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*) and Plumbeous Vireo (*Vireo plumbeus*), were added, bringing to 444 the number of species accepted for Michigan. Second, two species were upgraded in status – the Cinnamon Teal (*Anas cyanoptera*) from Accidental to Casual and the Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*) from Casual to Regular; as per MBRC



bylaw D.1., although the towhee has moved to Regular status it will remain on the committee's review list through 2015. And third, four species were downgraded in status: the Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*), Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*), Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*), and Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*), all from Casual to Accidental.

## Records Accepted

### Brant (*Branta bernicla*)

vote: 7-0

photofiles: Allen Chartier, Scott Jennex, Jerome Jourdan, Scott Terry

One light-bellied adult spent 20 and 21 October 2011 at Belle Isle, Wayne Co. (67th state record, 1st county record).

### Brant (*Branta bernicla*)

vote: 7-0

photofiles: Timothy Baerwald, Rhoda Johnson, Michael Mahler

A light-bellied adult was at St. Joseph, Berrien Co., on 8 October 2012 (68th state record, 5th county record).

### Brant (*Branta bernicla*)

vote: 7-0

description: Todd Palgut

On 4 November 2012 one was at Tawas Point State Park, Iosco Co. (70th state record, 3rd county record).

### Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

vote: 7-0

descriptions: Patrick Baize, Allen Chartier

photofiles: Lyle Hamilton, Donald Henise, Scott Jennex, Bradley Murphy

A male in basic plumage was seen by many at Kensington Metropark, Oakland Co., from 14 to 19 April 2012 (43rd state record, 2nd county record).

### Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

vote: 7-0

descriptions: James Dawe, David Slager

photofiles: Myles McNally, David Slager

From 19 April to 5 May 2012, a male in basic plumage was at the Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area in Bay Co. (44th state record, 2nd county record).

### Cinnamon Teal (*Anas cyanoptera*)

vote: 7-0

description: Richard Yarsevich

photofiles: Adam Byrne, Richard Yarsevich

One male in basic plumage – found by Edward and Lise Schools – was at the Maple River State Game Area in Gratiot Co. on 25 March 2012 (7th state record, 1st county record).

### Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)

vote: 7-0

descriptions: Jerome Jourdan, David Slager

photofiles: Adam Byrne, Catherine Carroll, Christopher Haas, Scott Jennex, Jerome Jourdan, Rodney Laura, Myles McNally, Bradley Murphy, David Slager

One first-cycle individual was at Sterling State Park, Monroe Co., from 25 November to 14 December 2011 (43rd state record, 1st county record).

### **Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)**

vote: 6-1

descriptions: Matthew Johnstone, Kenneth Mettie, Jr., Jason St. Pierre

One – either a first-cycle bird or an adult in basic plumage – landed off Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 13 September 2012 (44th state record, 26th county record).

### **Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*)**

vote: 7-0

descriptions: Scott Hickman, J. D. Phillips

photofiles: Amanda Ingraham

One in its first-cycle was observed in Munising Bay, Alger Co., on 8 and 11 January 2012 (2nd state record, 1st county record); searches on the intervening days were unsuccessful.

### **Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)**

vote: 6-1

descriptions: Thomas Wheeler, Sean Williams

One, co-found by Chloe Williams, was at Lake Lansing in Ingham Co. on 21 and 22 October 2011 (36th state record, 1st county record).

### **Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)**

vote: 6-1

photofile: Karl Bardon

On 9 May 2012 one was at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (37th state record, 3rd county record).

### ***Aechmophorus grebe***

vote: 7-0

description: Monica Essenmacher

Two were at Caseville, Huron Co., on 27 October 2011 (13th state record, 1st county record). In fact, the two were submitted as Western Grebes, not merely as members of the genus *Aechmophorus*, but as Westerns they were not accepted; see the Western Grebe record under “Records Not Accepted” below.

### **Great Shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*)**

vote: 7-0

photofiles: Alice Van Zoeren

specimen: UMMZ 243270, which is to be on long-term loan from the National Park Service to the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology.

An individual that seemed to be in poor condition was discovered in the near-shore swells at Sleeping Bear Dunes



National Lakeshore, Benzie Co., on 8 September 2012 (1st state record, 1st county record); the next morning searchers hoping to find it alive found its carcass instead. For more details on this remarkable record, see Van Zoeren (2013) and Chartier and Wuepper (2013).

**Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*)**

vote: 7-0

descriptions: Philip Chu, Louis Dombroski, Leonard Graf, Christopher Haas, Caleb Putnam  
photofiles: Adam Byrne, Lyle Hamilton, Steven Joyner, Bradley Murphy, Scott Schuette, Scott Terry, Warren Whaley, Kirk Zufelt

One at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., from 6 October to 1 December 2011 was the 13th state record and 1st county record; apparently it was also the 1st record for Lake Superior (Svingen 2012). The bird was adult-like in appearance, except for two black secondaries in the right wing; Pyle (2008) recommends aging such birds as “ATY/A4Y,” i.e., more than three or four years old.

Remarkably, a gannet – presumed to be the same individual – passed by Whitefish Point on 24 April 2012.

**solid species**

vote: 7-0

description: Douglas McWhirter

One in its first or second cycle was seen plunge-diving at

South Haven, Van Buren Co., on 1 November 2012 (3rd state record, 1st county record).

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

vote: 7-0

description: Curtis Hofer

photofiles: James Fox, Scott Jennex, Bradley Murphy, Scott Terry

One adult – found by Elizabeth O’Neal – frequented a Black-crowned Night-Heron rookery in Royal Oak, Oakland Co., between 8 May and 17 June 2012 (103rd state record, 5th county record). Early in this period multiple observers noted that the bird was manipulating sticks as if to begin building a nest, but apparently no nest was built.

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

vote: 6-1

description: Martin Bialecki

Manchester Twp. in Washtenaw Co. hosted an adult of this species on 12 May 2012 (104th state record, 2nd county record).

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

vote: 7-0

photofiles: Paul Poronto

One adult, found by Curtis Edward, was in Grosse Pointe Shores in Macomb Co. on 8 June 2012 (105th state record, 4th county record).

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

vote: 7-0

description: Adam Byrne

photofile: Adam Byrne

On 5 August 2012 a first-cycle bird was observed at the Pte. Mouillee State Game Area in Monroe Co. (106th state record, 24th county record).

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

vote: 7-0

photofiles: Scott Jennex

One, co-found by Mary Trombley, was at the Erie Marsh Preserve in Monroe Co. on 12 August 2012 (107th state record, 25th county record). The bird was undergoing its second prebasic molt, i.e., it was transitioning from its first cycle into its second.

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

vote: 7-0

photofiles: Jennifer Smith

A first-cycle individual was in Ross Twp., Kalamazoo Co., on 4 September 2012 (108th state record, 8th county record).

**White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*)**

vote: 7-0

description: Karl Overman

photofiles: Darlene Friedman, Karl Overman, Jennifer Uppleger

One in its first cycle made sporadic visits to a drainage ditch in

Casco Twp., St. Clair Co., between 28 and 30 June 2012 (7th state record, 2nd county record).

**White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*)**

vote: 7-0

descriptions: Allen Chartier, Zachary DeBruine, James Fox, Donald Henise, Michael Mencotti  
 photofiles: Adam Byrne, Allen Chartier, Dan Fox, James Fox, Donald Henise, Bradley Murphy, Andrew Sturgess, Scott Terry, Mary Trombley

From 21 to 29 July 2012 a first-cycle White Ibis was at the Pte. Mouillee State Game Area in Monroe Co. (8th state record, 1st county record).

**White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*)**

vote: 7-0

descriptions: Zachary DeBruine, Stephen Minard

photofiles: Adam Byrne, Zachary DeBruine, Bruce Delamarter, Richard Hamlin, Stephen Minard, Tracy Smith

One adult wearing alternate plumage spent the day at the Muskegon County Wastewater Management System, Muskegon Co., on 21 April 2012 (21st state record, 2nd county record).

**White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*)**

vote: 7-0 for all three individuals

descriptions: Lori Jackson, James VanAllen



photofiles: Sean Fitzgerald, Lori Jackson, Scott Jennex, James VanAllen

Three adults wearing alternate plumage – co-found by Douglas Jackson – were at the Fish Point State Wildlife Area, Tuscola Co., from 9 through at least 11 May 2012 (22nd state record, 2nd county record). One of the three was still present on 14 May.

### **White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*)**

vote: 7-0 for both individuals

description: Adam Byrne

photofiles: Karl Overman, Scott Terry

Two adults wearing alternate plumage were at the Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co., from 23 June to at least 4 July 2012; at least one was still there on 8 July (23rd state record, 8th county record).

Also present at Pte. Mouillee on 23-30 June was a third bird that was documented only as a member of the genus *Plegadis*. See the second accepted *Plegadis* ibis record below.

### ***Plegadis* ibis**

vote: 6-1

description: David Herdegen

photofiles: Annette and Kenneth Allen

One was in Grand Haven Twp., Ottawa Co., on 20 April 2012 (26th state record, 1st county record). Herdegen initially guessed

that the bird was a Glossy Ibis on the basis of range, but later wondered if it might have been the White-faced Ibis that was seen one day later in adjacent Muskegon Co. (see above); in the end he concluded that “dark ibis” would be the most honest identification.

### ***Plegadis* ibis**

vote: 7-0

description: Adam Byrne

photofiles: Karl Overman, Scott Terry

One alternate-plumaged adult was at the Pte. Mouillee State Game Area in Monroe Co. from 23 to 30 June 2012 (28th state record, 9th county record).

Though this bird was an adult, and though it was seen well, the observers declined to identify it. They declined because of bare-part colors: quoting from Byrne’s description, the bird had “dull facial skin with some pink tones,” and its “eyes were brownish, with some subtle red tones in certain lighting.” Thus its bare parts were intermediate between those of an adult Glossy Ibis and an adult White-faced – and in fact Byrne wrote that he suspected the bird to be a hybrid between those two species.

The possible hybrid was with two White-faced Ibises; see the third White-faced Ibis record above.

2012 is the third year in a row for intermediate-looking *Plegadis* ibises at Pte. Mouillee (see also Chu 2012), and therefore any observer encountering a dark ibis in Michigan should seriously consider the possibility that the bird is neither a Glossy nor a White-faced, but something in-between.

***Plegadis* ibis**

vote: 7-0

description: Caleb Putnam

One – a second-cycle or older bird wearing alternate plumage – was found by Putnam and Sean Fitzgerald at the Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co., on 25 July 2012 (29th state record, 10th county record). The bird was seen only in flight, was 300 to 500 yards away, and was “backlit somewhat.” For these reasons the observers weren’t sure if they were seeing a Glossy Ibis, a White-faced Ibis, or an intergrade between the two.

**Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)**

vote: 7-0 in the second round

description: Arthur Green

One was seen at Brockway Mountain, Keweenaw Co., on 25 April, 29 April, and 2 May 2011 (23rd state record, 4th county record).

**Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)**

vote: 7-0

description: Caleb Putnam

photofiles: Caleb Putnam

In what he described as an “incredibly lucky encounter,” Putnam saw the bird in question while driving on I-96 in Portland Twp., Ionia Co., on 16 March 2012 (25th state record, 1st county record). In part the encounter was lucky because it occurred just before an exit ramp, so that Putnam was able to pull off immediately and get out his camera.

**Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)**

vote: 7-0

description: Steven Baker

photofiles: Steven Baker

Two were at Mackinaw City, Emmet Co., on 9 April 2012 (26th state record, 2nd county record).

**Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)**

vote: 7-0 for one individual (out of two reported)

description: Monica Essenmacher

Two were described from Port Austin Twp., Huron Co., on 16 April 2012. Of these, one was accepted (27th state record, 2nd county record), whereas the other received an inconclusive vote; as per MBRC bylaw E.1, the latter will be submitted for a second round of voting.

**Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)**

vote: 7-0

description: James Fowler, Jr.

photofile: James Fowler, Jr.



One – co-found by David Washington – was in West Bloomfield Twp., Oakland Co., on 30 June and 1 July 2012 (28th state record, 1st county record).

**Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)**

vote: 6-1

description: John “Jack” Reinoehl

One in at least its second cycle was in Otsego, Allegan Co., on 15 September 2012 (29th state record, 2nd county record). This is just the fifth fall record for the Mississippi Kite in Michigan.

**King Rail (*Rallus elegans*)**

vote: 7-0

descriptions: Adam Byrne, Philip Chu

photofile: Scott Terry

audiofiles: Bradley Murphy

One – a male on the basis of the long series of “kek” notes that it gave (“kek kek kek kek...” – was at the Pte. Mouillee State Game Area in Monroe Co. from 18 to 30 May 2012 (137th state record, 37th county record).

**Snowy Plover (*Charadrius nivosus*)**

vote: 7-0

description: Christopher Lipps, Caleb Putnam

photofiles: Nathan and Zachary DeBruine, Christopher Lipps, Myles McNally, Bradley Murphy, Caleb Putnam, Scott Terry

An individual with heavily

abraded plumage was at Ludington State Park, Mason Co., from 12 to 15 June 2012 (3rd state record, 1st county record).

**Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*)**

vote: 7-0

description: Jeffrey Buecking

photofiles: Scott Jennex, Bradley Murphy, Jason St. Pierre

One wearing alternate plumage spent several hours in Argentine Twp., Genesee Co., on 5 May 2012 (53rd state record, 2nd county record).

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

vote: 6-1

photofiles: Timothy Baerwald

One, found by Thomas Steele, was in Royalton Twp., Berrien Co., on 18 and 19 April 2012.

This is the 14th accepted spring record for the state, and the 4th for the county, since 1993; the MBRC began reviewing spring Baird's in 1993 because of concerns about the species being over-reported in that season.

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

vote: 7-0

description: Adam Byrne

photofiles: Bradley Murphy, Scott Terry

One juvenile was at the Pte. Mouillee State Game Area, Monroe Co., from 3 to 6 September 2012 (214th state record, 65th county record).

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

vote: 7-0

description: Matthew Hysell

photofiles: Matthew Hysell

One wearing a mix of alternate and basic plumages was found by Timothy Baerwald at St. Joseph, Berrien Co., on 15 September 2012 (215th state record, 27th county record). Though Berrien Co. has been the site for a substantial number of Western Sandpiper records, the present bird was the first Western in Berrien since 1996.

**Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*)**

vote: 7-0 in the second round

photofiles: Matthew Hysell

Two in their first cycle were found by Hysell and Timothy Baerwald offshore of St. Joseph, Berrien Co., on 5 October 2011 (88th state record, 19th county record). In 2011, one of the two was accepted and the other was resubmitted for a second round of voting (Chu 2012); in 2012 the latter bird was accepted.

**Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*)**

vote: 7-0

photofiles: Scott Jennex, Jonathan Lautenbach

One in its first cycle (co-found with Michael Lautenbach and Kevin Welsh) was at the Muskegon County Wastewater Management

System in Muskegon Co. from 20 to 24 October 2012 (90th state record, 20th county record).

**California Gull (*Larus californicus*)**

vote: 6-1

description: Amar Ayyashphotofiles: Amar Ayyash

One in its first cycle was well-photographed at New Buffalo, Berrien Co., on 27 October 2012 (21st state record, 13th county record).

**Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*)**

vote: 7-0

descriptions: James Dawe, Nathan DeBruine, Louis Dombroski

photofiles: Adam Byrne, Nathan DeBruine, Dan Duso, Roger Eriksson, Bradley Murphy, Karl Overman, Caleb Putnam, Scott Terry

One was in Pinconning Twp., Bay Co., from 12 to 16 December 2011 (2nd state record, 1st county record). The bird wore definitive basic plumage, but some thought it to be in its fourth cycle because its bill was grayish white proximally with a subterminal black band.

**Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)**

vote: 7-0

description: Adam Byrnephotofiles: Bradley Murphy, Scott Terry

One second-cycle or older bird wearing alternate plumage was found at the Pte. Mouillee State



Game Area in Monroe Co. on 30 May 2012 (21st state record, 5th county record).

**Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)**

vote: 7-0

description: David Pavlik

photofiles: David Pavlik

One juvenile (co-found by Jeffrey Pavlik) was at Muskegon, Muskegon Co., on 20 October 2012 (22nd state record, 1st county record).

**Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)**

vote: 7-0

descriptions: Brian Allen, David Dister

photofiles: David Dister

Ludington, Mason Co., hosted a juvenile on 22 and 23 October 2012 (23rd state record, 1st county record).

**Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)**

vote: 6-1

photofile: Timothy Baerwald

One was at St. Joseph, Berrien Co., on 21 March 2012 (9th state record, 3rd county record).

**White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*)**

vote: 7-0

photofile: Timothy Baerwald

One flew by St. Joseph, Berrien Co., on 1 May 2012 (18th state record, 1st county record).

**Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)**

vote: 7-0

photofiles: Lori Martin

One – found in poor condition in Coopersville, Ottawa Co., on 21 May 2012 (123rd state record, 3rd county record) – was brought to Blandford Nature Center in Kent Co. for rehabilitation. Over the next six months its condition improved dramatically, and on 30 November 2012 it was released back into “the wild” (Anonymous 2012).

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

vote: 7-0

videofile: Jeremy Overway

One was recorded in Holland, Ottawa Co., on 28 April 2012 (14th state record, 1st county record).

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

vote: 7-0

audiofile: Donald Henise

One (co-found with Robyn Henise) was in Norvel Twp., Jackson Co., from 10 May to 27 July 2012 (15th state record, 2nd county record). A Chuck-will's-widow was at this same location in 2011 (Chu 2012).

**Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)**

vote: 7-0

descriptions: Allen Chartier, Philip

Chu, Steven Mueller

*photofiles:* Allen Chartier, Nathan DeBruine, James Fox, Susan McClelland, Myles McNally

One first-cycle female was in Lowell, Kent Co., from late September 2011 to 11 January 2012 (28th state record, 1st county record).

**Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)**

vote: 7-0

*description:* Allen Chartier

*photofiles:* Allen Chartier

One first-cycle female (found by Cynthia and Kenneth Vandenberg) was in Richland Twp., Kalamazoo Co., from early October to 10 December 2011 (29th state record, 2nd county record).

**Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)**

vote: 7-0

*description:* Allen Chartier

*photofiles:* Allen Chartier

One first-cycle female (found by Deborah Quinn) was in Prairieville Twp., Barry Co., from mid-October to 13 November 2011 (30th state record, 1st county record).

**Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)**

vote: 7-0

*description:* Allen Chartier

*photofiles:* Allen Chartier, Jerome Jourdan

One first-cycle female (found by Mark Wloch) was in Southgate, Wayne Co., from 7 to 14 November 2011 (32nd state record, 1st county record).

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*)**

vote: 7-0

*descriptions:* Allen Chartier, Latham Clafin

*photofiles:* Allen Chartier, Scott Jennex, Jerome Jourdan, Bradley Murphy

One (found by Nathan Crawford) spent 1 and 2 May 2012 at the Lower Huron Metropark in Wayne Co. (40th state record, 1st county record).

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*)**

vote: 7-0

*description:* James Ratliff

One – co-found with Erin and Nathaniel Fuller and Heather Ratliff – was in Chikaming Twp., Berrien Co., on 12 May 2012 (41st state record, 2nd county record).

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*)**

vote: 7-0

*photofiles:* Judith Semroc

One was found by a Cleveland Museum of Natural History field-trip group – Semroc and Carol Brown, Buddy and Joanne Burge, Charles Klaus, Marianne Nolan, Kris Powers, and



Lawrence Rosche – in Whitefish Twp., Chippewa Co., on 8 June 2012 (42nd state record, 17th county record).

**Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)**

vote: 7-0

photofiles: Steven Baker

On 7 May 2012 one was photographed in Mackinaw City, Emmet Co. (150th state record, 2nd county record).

**Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)**

vote: 7-0

photofiles: Roger Eriksson, Scott Jennex, Scott Terry

One in its first cycle was in Oscoda Twp., Iosco Co., on 25 May 2012 (151st state record, 2nd county record).

**Plumbeous Vireo (*Vireo plumbeus*)**

vote: 7-0

description: Bradley Anderson

photofile: Bradley Anderson

One was at Warren Dunes State Park in Berrien Co. on 1 October 2012 (1st state record, 1st county record). This is just the third accepted record for any Great Lakes state or province, with the first two being from Ontario (Wormington 1997; Dobos 1998; Roy 2002).

**Black-billed Magpie (*Pica hudsonia*)**

vote: 7-0

description: one jointly by Charles and Linda Scribner

One was observed on 17 July 2012 at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, Leelanau Co. (8th state record, 1st county record).

**Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*)**

vote: 6-1

photofiles: Jason Bojczyk

One was found by Bojczyk and Jason St. Pierre at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 25 October 2012 (13th state record, 4th county record).

**Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*)**

vote: 7-0 for one individual and 6-1 for four more

description: Darrell Lawson

Five (co-found by Allen and Kathy Lawson) were at Fisherman's Island State Park, Charlevoix Co., on 10 November 2012 (17th state record, 1st county record).

**Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*)**

vote: 7-0 for one individual

description: Jason St. Pierre

photofiles: Jason St. Pierre

One was at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 12 November 2012 (18th state record, 5th county record).

In fact, two Cave Swallows were reported at Whitefish Point on 12 November, but one was not accepted. See the third Cave Swallow account below under "Records Not Accepted."

**Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*)**

vote: 6-1

description: Jason St. Pierre

photofiles: Jason St. Pierre

One was at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 13 November 2012 (19th state record, 6th county record).

**Smith's Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*)**

vote: 7-0

photofiles: Timothy Baerwald

One – apparently a male in basic plumage on the basis of the very prominent white patch on its lesser upper secondary coverts – flew by St. Joseph, Berrien Co., on 21 March 2012 (20th state record, 3rd county record).

The number of Smith's Longspurs reported from St. Joseph on 21 March was four, not one, but three of the four were not accepted; see the Smith's Longspur account under "Records Not Accepted" below.

**Smith's Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*)**

vote: 7-0 for both individuals

photofiles: Timothy Baerwald, Andre Moncrieff

Two, a female and a male wearing alternate plumage, were in Galien Twp., Berrien Co., on 4 and 5 May 2012 (21st state record, 4th county record).

**Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*)**

vote: 7-0

photofiles: Christopher Haas

One female, found by Evelyn Wood, was photographed in Burt Twp., Alger Co., on 29 May 2012 (10th state record, 2nd county record).

**Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)**

vote: 7-0

descriptions: Philip Chu, Louis

Dombroski, Charles Weaver

photofiles: Rick Brigham, Adam

Byrne, Sarah D'Angelo, Christopher

Haas, Scott Jennex, Steven Joyner,

Bradley Murphy, Caleb Putnam,

Scott Schuette, Warren Whaley

One long-staying individual was at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., from 15 October to 8 December 2011 (104th state record, 32nd county record).

**Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*)**

vote: 7-0

photofile: Willard Wallgren

On 13 May 2012 an adult male appeared in Saugatuck, Allegan Co. (21st state record, 2nd county record).

**Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*)**

vote: 7-0

descriptions: David Essian, Bethany Olson

photofiles: Louis Dombroski, David Essian, Christopher Haas, Bethany Olson



One first-cycle male was in Marquette, Marquette Co., on 17 and 18 May 2012 (22nd state record, 2nd county record).

**Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)**

vote: 7-0

photofiles: Matthew Hysell

One was photographed at St. Joseph, Berrien Co., on 14 May 2012 (37th state record, 6th county record).

**Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)**

vote: 7-0

photofiles: Jonathan Lautenbach

One was at the Muskegon County Wastewater Management System in Muskegon Co. on 22 September 2012 (38th state record, 2nd county record).

**Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)**

vote: 7-0

description: Christopher Wood

One was at the Lake St. Clair Metropark, Macomb Co., on 28 September 2012 (39th state record, 1st county record).

**Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)**

vote: 7-0

descriptions: Bruce Cohen, Sean Williams

photofiles: Sean Williams

One was in Leslie Twp., Ingham Co., from 30 September to 5 October 2012 (40th state record, 1st county record).

On 5 October a second individual was reported, but was not accepted. See the third Nelson's Sparrow account below under "Records Not Accepted."

**Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)**

vote: 7-0

description: Jason St. Pierre

On 9 October 2012 one was found by St. Pierre and Jeffrey McCoy at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co. (41st state record, 5th county record).

**Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*)**

vote: 7-0

description: Alexander Egan

photofile: Alexander Egan

One appeared at Isle Royale National Park, Keweenaw Co., on 6 May 2012 (6th state record, 1st county record).

**Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*)**

vote: 7-0

description: David Slager, Jonathan Wuepper

photofiles: Bradley Anderson, Scott Jennex, David Slager

One adult male was in Pokagon Twp., Cass Co., from 11 May to 17 August 2012 (17th state record, 2nd county record); a

female was also reported, but was not reviewed until 2013.

Note that the Pokagon Twp. location also hosted an adult male in 2011 (Chu 2012).

### **Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*)**

vote: 7-0

descriptions: Louis Dombroski, one jointly by Joanie and Mark Hubinger, Jo Willson

photofiles: Christopher Haas, Mark Hubinger, Scott Jennex, Gail Stanek, Jo Willson

An adult male was in Norway Twp., Dickinson Co., from 26 June to 9 August 2012 (18th state record, 1st county record).

### **Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*)**

vote: 7-0

descriptions: Gregory Bodker, John Reinoehl

photofiles: Rick Brigham

Two, an adult male and a female, were in Clyde Twp., Allegan Co., from 11 to 28 July 2012, with reports of the male continuing through 11 August (19th state record, 2nd county record).

### **Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*)**

vote: 7-0

description: Dana Richter

photofile: Dana Richter

One adult male – found by Carol Treganowan – was in Eagle River, Keweenaw Co., from 15 to 23 June 2012 (23rd state record, 2nd county record).

### **Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*)**

vote: 7-0

photofile: Karl Bardon

One appeared at Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 23 May 2012 (9th state record, 4th county record).

### **Records Not Accepted**

#### **Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)**

vote: 3-4

five photofiles

At the end of 2009 the Ross's Goose was removed from the MBRC review list; however, the present bird – photographed in Ann Arbor, Washtenaw Co., on 18 January 2009 – predated the removal, and so was reviewed.

All committee members agreed that the bird in question was, at the least, a good candidate for a Ross's Goose; however, in the sharpest photos the bill/facial-feathering interface appeared to be curved rather than straight, and the curvature suggested to some that Snow Goose alleles might be present, i.e., that the bird might not be "pure-blooded."

#### **Brant (*Branta bernicla*)**

vote: 0-7 for all "100+" individuals  
one description

An observer reported "100+" Brants in Huron Twp., Huron Co., on 1 November 2012, but the birds were so distant that



neither color nor pattern could be discerned.

Under such conditions, the birds were identified as Brants because they looked too bulky for ducks but too short-necked for Canada Geese, and because of the way they were flying – one mass “in seemingly no formation,” and the rest partitioned into four or five skeins that looked like “gracefully, deeply undulating ribbons.” Unfortunately, these shape and flight-style characteristics could describe not only Brants but also other waterfowl, e.g., Cackling Geese.

Although this record was not accepted, multiple committee members noted its plausibility, given the Hurricane Sandy-associated presence of at least 155 Brants at the southern tip of Lake Huron on 30 October (Chartier and Wuepper 2013a).

### **Mottled Duck (*Anas fulvigula*)**

vote: 3-4  
one description  
two photofiles

One male was identified in Benton Twp., Berrien Co., on 12 October 2012.

The observer’s photofiles show a Mallard-sized duck that was mostly dark brownish with a pale buff head, an olive-yellow bill, a bluish speculum with weak white borders, and a heavy dark line on the wrist area of the underwing.

In addition, the observer provided a few written details: “unstreaked chin/throat, buffy edging on the body feathers, black gape spot, etc.”

Of the characteristics listed above, most are inconclusive because they could match either a Mottled Duck or an American Black Duck with some Mallard alleles; however, there are two exceptions. The unstreaked chin/throat matches a Mottled Duck, but not a Black Duck. Conversely, the heavy dark line on the underside of the wrist matches many Black Ducks, but apparently not a Mottled Duck: evidence gathered thus far indicates that Mottled Ducks show at most sparse mottling in this area, with the under-wrist of males tending to be unmarked or nearly so.

Given multiple characters that are inconclusive, one that indicates a Mottled Duck, and one that indicates a Black Duck, a majority of the MBRC was hesitant to vote for acceptance.

### **White-cheeked Pintail (*Anas bahamensis*)**

vote: 2-5  
one photofile

One was photographed at the Pte. Mouillee State Game Area in Monroe Co. on 25 August 2012, and, though its identity was not in doubt, its origin was questioned by most committee members.

Note that a White-cheeked Pintail was found dead in Wisconsin on 21 September 1929, with the remains being deposited in the Milwaukee Public Museum (Gromme 1930). On this basis the species was included on the Wisconsin bird list (e.g., Robbins 1991); however, it was later removed from the list because of concerns about origin (Frank 2003).

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

vote: 0-7

one description

One, said to be a female, was at Holland State Park, Ottawa Co., on 12 January 2012; however, the bird in question was described only as being “large overall” and as having an “Unusually large bill,” descriptors that match, e.g., a Common Loon as well as they match any duck.

### **Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)**

vote: 0-7

one description

One, either a first-cycle bird or an adult in basic plumage, was reported from LaSalle Twp., Monroe Co., at midday on 14 December 2011.

Early that morning the Pacific Loon at Sterling State Park in Monroe Co. – see above under “Records Accepted” – was seen for the last time (Jack Volker, *vide* Jerome Jourdan), and Sterling is

just six miles away from the LaSalle Twp. site. For these reasons some speculated that the LaSalle bird was, in fact, the Sterling bird.

Unfortunately, the LaSalle description was not conclusive. It noted a bird that was “almost twice the size” of a Horned Grebe with a straight thin bill; the bird was dark above and white beneath with no pale area around the eye and a “sharp contrast + clean line” where the white of the foreneck met the dark of the hindneck. These details are, indeed, consistent with a Pacific Loon, but they do not rule out an Arctic Loon, a Red-throated Loon, or even a Western Grebe.

### **Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)**

vote: 2-5 in the second round  
one description

Two were described from Caseville in Huron Co. on 27 October 2011, and the description provided three characteristics that bear on the separation of Western and Clark’s grebes. Specifically, it noted, for both birds, that “Eye details were not distinguishable against the black background” on top of the head; that the flanks were gray with “no white or even ‘light’ tones”; and that the “bill color was not bright, but muted, yellow – no orange tones.”

Of the three above characters, the gray flanks and dull yellow bill are appropriate for a

Western Grebe; the face pattern, however, is less clear.

Regarding the face, one committee member wrote the following:

...the observer said that the eyes were “not distinguishable against the black background,” but if the eyes were not seen then that doesn’t mean that they were ENCLOSED by black; it might mean only that they were AT THE EDGE OF, i.e., intersected by, the black. This is an important distinction: in a Clark’s outside of the breeding season, black can intersect the eye, but below the eye there is little or no melanin, whereas all Westerns have moderate to heavy melanin pigmentation in the suborbital region (Storer and Nuechterlein 1985).

Thus, the observer's description could be consistent with a Clark's-like face pattern, and if the two birds could have had a Clark's face then most committee members were reluctant to treat them as unequivocal Westerns.

Although the two birds were not accepted as Westerns, they were later accepted as *Aechmophorus* grebes. See the single *Aechmophorus* grebe record under "Records Accepted" above.

### Clark's Grebe (*Aechmophorus clarkii*)

vote: 0-7

one description

One claimed from Harrisville, Alcona Co., on 23 November 2011 was documented with just two telegraphic sentences – “Large dagger orange bill” and “Eye on white face.” Those sentences do indeed describe a Clark’s Grebe, but they also fit a Great Egret!

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

vote: 0-7

two photofiles

One in its first cycle was reported from Garden Twp., Delta Co., on 20 June 2012, but the documenting photofiles showed only a distant bird flying away – the body reduced to a dot, and the wings to arched lines extending away from the dot on either side.

### Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)

vote: 1-6

two descriptions

33 photofiles

One first-cycle ibis in Pentwater Twp., Oceana Co., from 26 to 28 September 2012 was identified as a Glossy.

Unfortunately, like most *Plegadis* ibises in the fall of their first year, the bird in question had inconclusive bare-part colors. Its irises were brown, as is typical for

first-fall individuals of both Glossy and White-faced ibises. As for its face, the bare facial skin was black-gray with a hint of an off-white line on its upper edge. Older Glossy Ibises show a blue-white line here, and older White-faced Ibises can show a pinkish line, so the presence of a pale line might presage the adult condition of either species.

Of course, the problem of identifying a first-fall ibis is even more difficult if one has to consider not only Glossys and White-faceds but also intergrades between the two.

### **Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)**

vote: 3-4

one description

One was claimed from Pickford Twp., Chippewa Co., in early April of 2011.

As one committee member noted of this claim, "The description of size, shape, plumage, and flight behavior is spot-on, and the bird was viewed up close through 10x binoculars"; the only problem is that the description was written after a long delay – about a year after the bird in question was seen.

Given these facts, the committee was split between those who were convinced by the "spot-on" description and those who were reluctant to trust the description because it was based on year-old memories.

### **Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)**

vote: 1-6

one description

One was reported feeding on a road-killed deer in Benzonias Twp., Benzie Co., on 15 March 2012. The report noted an unfeathered black head, black plumage, and a tail that was "hardly apparent beyond [the] folded primaries." However, it also explicitly described the primaries as black, and that is incorrect for a Black Vulture, which has outer and middle primaries that are contrastingly pale.

This discrepancy might have been easier to overlook if the bird had been seen perched only: when a Black Vulture's wings are folded they look wholly black, mainly because so much of the primaries is concealed by the tertials and secondaries. However, the bird was seen twice in flight, i.e., with its wings spread – once as it flew up off of the deer carcass into a roadside tree and then again as it flew out of the tree and away.

### **Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)**

vote: 1-6

one description

One was reported from the boundary between Columbia and Elmwood twps. in Tuscola Co. on "about March 15th" 2012.

As described, the bird was appropriate for a Black Vulture in size, shape, and flight style. It was



be much heavier than a Ring-billed Gull (range 375-650 g, n = 99; Ryder 1978) – such that both of the 19 October jaegers could have been Parasitics, even though they differed in size.

Perhaps the most important question is, could a Parasitic Jaeger with pale-barred tail coverts also show a dark head and hindneck? In this regard Olsen and Larsson (1997) asserted that dark-headed, dark-necked juveniles never have pale upper tail covert barring; however, they also wrote that dark adults in basic plumage often have pale barring on the tail coverts, and there is nothing that precludes the present bird from being an older immature or a basic-plumaged adult with the elongated central tail-feathers missing due to, e.g., molt.

**Pomarine Jaeger (*Stercorarius pomarinus*)**

vote: 0-7

one description

One “light phase” individual was identified at the Bay City State Recreation Area, Bay Co., on 19 October 2011, and the identification was based on size: the bird in question was bigger than another jaeger that was with it, such that the two were thought to be a Pomarine and a Parasitic. However, as is noted above, some Parasitics can be nearly twice the mass of others, so even an impressive size

difference does not necessarily indicate that two species are present.

**Pomarine Jaeger (*Stercorarius pomarinus*)**

vote: 0-7

one description

One “light morph” individual in Saugatuck Twp., Allegan Co., on 5 November 2012 was identified as a Pomarine because it “seemed almost double” the size of the Bonaparte’s Gulls it was chasing, because of its “huge, powerful, slow wingbeats,” and because it had “noticeable spotting in the dark chest band.”

Regrettably, these characteristics do not eliminate a Parasitic Jaeger. A Parasitic can easily double the mass of a Bonaparte’s Gull: adult male Parasitics average 417 g (n = 166; Belopolskii 1961), as compared to an average of 222 g for adult male Bonaparte’s (n = 58; Braune 1985). Any pale Parasitic in fall or winter is likely to show darker mottling or barring in the breast band. And flight-style characteristics are at best suggestive, not diagnostic.

**Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia*)**

vote: 0-7 in the second round  
one specimen (UMMZ 206012)

One – a mounted specimen of either a first-cycle bird or an adult in basic plumage, collected on 17 December 1896 – was initially

reviewed in 1994. The review yielded an intermediate result, neither positive enough for outright acceptance nor negative enough for outright rejection. By rule (MBRC bylaw E.1) the record should have been resubmitted for a second round of voting, but due to a series of oversights that second round did not occur until 2012.

The question, in 1994 as in 2012, was not identification but collection locality. The specimen is unambiguously a Thick-billed Murre. However, it lacks original labels, with the only label being a recent UMMZ tag that gives the locality as “[Michigan].” The brackets mean that the bracketed information did not come from original tags, but was obtained from some other source – but what was the other source, and how reliable is it?

On the back side of the UMMZ tag is written, "received from Hope College 15 April 1982," so the MBRC contacted the Hope College Biology Department to see if anyone there could shed light on the collection locality for 206012.

In response, Hope Professor Emeritus Eldon Greij indicated that the specimen was one of three murrelets that he found at Hope when he first arrived there, and he continued with the following:

A number of mounted birds from the late 1890s were believed to have been prepared from local taxidermists. I checked records

and learned that in 1896 there had been an inland flight of Thick-billed Murres resulting in something like 6-9 sightings in eastern North America. The three at Hope were in the same year, but were not included in that group. If I remember correctly, I had identified them as immatures, which is often the case with birds wandering out of range. In my mind, I assumed they were from Lake Michigan, as I believed the taxidermists were local.

In fact, Michigan does have an accepted Thick-billed Murre specimen from 1896 (Chu 1993) that was reportedly collected from a "flock of several" (Wood 1897), and Barrows (1912:43) later wrote that "probably a score or more were taken in Michigan waters" during the winter of 1896-1897. Thus, Greij's assumption about locality had a factual basis – but it was still an assumption, and MBRC members could not endorse a locality that was merely assumed. Indeed, Greij himself took the same position and concluded his remarks to the MBRC by writing, "Obviously, you want verifiable data to assemble state records, especially of birds significantly out of their range."

**murre (*Uria*) species**

vote: 0-7

one specimen (UMMZ 206012)

Having been reviewed as a Thick-billed Murre and not accepted, the mounted bird from 17 December 1896 – its collection locality given as “[Michigan]” on the specimen tag – was reviewed again, this time under the more inclusive designation “murre species.”

As indicated in the preceding account, the specimen was rejected because of uncertainty about where it was collected, not because of identification. Thus, changing the review designation from “Thick-billed Murre” to “murre species” had no effect on the outcome of review: the collection locality was still uncertain, so the record was still unacceptable.

### **Atlantic Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*)**

vote: 0-7

one description

One was claimed from the Brighton State Recreation Area, Livingston Co., on 7 March 2012, and some interest was aroused by the details supporting the claim. The bird's head was black except for a white face, its neck was black, its back was black, its “underside” was white, and its beak had a “very large triangular shape” and was “bright red in color.”

Unfortunately, the bill – an Atlantic Puffin's most striking feature – was incorrectly described for that species. It is not all red; the distal portion is red, but a significant

proximal portion (extending, at the tomium, almost halfway to the bill tip) is dark blue-gray.

Given this discrepancy, MBRC members could not confidently vouch for the record.

### **alcid species**

vote: 0-7

one specimen (UMMZ 206012)

Having been reviewed and not accepted twice, first as a Thick-billed Murre and then as a murre species, the mounted bird from 17 December 1896 – collection locality “[Michigan],” according to the specimen tag – was reviewed a third time, this time as an alcid species.

As indicated in the Thick-billed Murre and murre species accounts above, the problem with this specimen was uncertainty about where it was collected, and changing the review designation to “alcid species” did not lessen the uncertainty.

### **Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)**

vote: 0-7

one description

One – said to be in Harrisville, Alcona Co., on 17 May 2012 – was described with the single phrase “Yellow at base of bill with dark tip,” but that description does not fit a Black-headed Gull of any age.



## Mew Gull (*Larus canus*)

vote: 2-5

five photofiles

This first-cycle bird – a small white-headed gull with a mostly dark underbody – was at Bay City, Bay Co., from 21 to 25 February 2012.

Most MBRC members thought either that the bird was an unusually dark Ring-billed Gull, or that an unusually dark Ring-billed could not be eliminated. Characteristics favoring a Ring-billed are as follows.

- (1) The bill was long – about as long as the distance from the bill-base to the back of the eye. This is appropriate for some Ring-billeds, but long for a Mew: in the former bill length is typically greater than or equal to the distance from the bill-base to the middle of the eye, whereas in the latter bill length is typically less than or equal to that distance.
- (2) The inner greater upper secondary coverts were marked with ill-defined darker bars, and though barred greaters are expected in first-cycle Ring-billeds they are uncommon or rare in first-cycle Mews.
- (3) The pigmentation on the underbody, though nearly solid on the lower belly, consisted of well-defined bars on the foreneck, breast, and upper belly. This is correct for a

heavily pigmented first-cycle Ring-billed but does not match the blurry clouding on the underbody of a first-cycle Mew.

- (4) The outermost tail feather on the right side, partially visible in one photofile, was whitish with a broad black subterminal band – the usual pattern in first-cycle Ring-billeds, but inconsistent with the wholly dark tail of most first-cycle Mews.

## California Gull (*Larus californicus*)

vote: 0-7

one description

One, said to be a “First-year bird in mostly juvenile plumage,” was reported from Sterling State Park, Monroe Co., on 6 December 2011.

The gull in question was identified as a California for several reasons. It “looked a bit smaller than the smallest female Herring Gull.” It had an “overall look of slenderness and the primary tips extended far beyond the tail tip.” Its bill was pale with a “very sharply defined” black tip. Its folded primaries were blackish brown. And its head and neck were heavily streaked, with the streaking coalescing on the face to form a “very dark eye-mask.”

The size estimate is difficult to weight heavily, as “The gull was alone with no others in the immediate area.”

As for the remaining characteristics, they could match a first-cycle Herring Gull. Herrings vary considerably in shape, with some having a slim build and long primary projection; first-cycle Herrings can have a sharply bicolored bill, albeit only rarely; all Herrings in their first fall and winter have folded primaries that are black-brown or brown-black; and many are heavily streaked on the head and neck with a darker area around the eye.

**California Gull (*Larus californicus*)**

vote: 1-6

one description

One said to be “in second-winter plumage” was described from Brownstown Twp., Wayne Co., on 30 January 2012, and the following items in the description were, according to the observer, important for identification. Size was intermediate between nearby Herring and Ring-billed gulls. As for shape, the bird in question was “very slender looking” and had a “very long wing projection.” Its bill had a “pale basal portion and sharply defined black tip,” its primaries were black, and in flight – the observer wrote, “the subject took flight and was rising as it went almost directly over the top of me” – the underwing “showed solid dusky color on the secondaries.”

All of these characteristics are consistent with either a small female Herring Gull in its second cycle or a large male Ring-billed Gull in its first cycle. This is true even for the dark under-secondaries: in a second-cycle Herring or first-cycle Ring-billed flying overhead, light passing through the blackish secondaries could make the trailing edge of the inner underwing appear to be dark.

**“European” Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus argentatus* or *L. a. argenteus*)**

vote: 2-5

four photofiles

One first-cycle Herring Gull was photographed at St. Joseph, Berrien Co., on 22 November 2011, and the photofiles are interesting in multiple respects. The bird’s greater upper secondary coverts were conspicuously barred. The tips of its inner primaries – at least, P1 through P3 – appeared to lack dark tips to the inner webs. The rump and upper tail coverts were white with dark flecks and bars, respectively, and as such were quite pale. The base of the tail was heavily white-marbled. And the flanks and vent region – the only underbody areas visible in the photos – were rather pale for a first-cycle “American” Herring (*L. argentatus smithsonianus*).

All of the above characters suggest a “European” Herring Gull, but can also fit a first-cycle “Vega” Herring (*L. argentatus vegae*). Indeed, Howell and Dunn (2007:414) wrote that first-cycle individuals of the “European” and “Vega” forms are “very similar overall” and are “perhaps not safely told” from each other.

**Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis*)**

vote: 0-7  
one description

For this bird, seen in Harrisville, Alcona Co., on 20 December 2011, the terse description stated, "Large as Herring Gull, square head, bright yellow eyes, YELLOW LEGS." However, these characteristics could apply to a Yellow-footed Gull, to a male Lesser Black-backed Gull, or even to an aberrantly colored Herring Gull. (Regarding the latter, Howell and Dunn [2007:407] wrote, "legs...lemon yellow on some birds.")

**Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisaqus*)**

vote: 2-5  
one description

One adult in basic plumage was claimed from Van Buren Twp., Wayne Co., on 22 February 2012.

This interesting bird was described as follows. "Its overall size (length) was about the same

as a number of large male Herring Gulls nearby.” It had a dark mantle – a “solid slaty gray” that “contrasted noticeably with the primaries” – and its white scapular and tertial crescents were “noticeably wider” than those of nearby Herring Gulls. Its legs were “a much brighter reddish color than any of the Herring Gulls present.” And its primaries showed a “very large” mirror on P10, a smaller mirror on P9, and “an array of large white spots...on the tongues of some of the inner primaries.”

Although these characteristics are interesting, most of them – large size, slaty mantle, large mirror on P10, smaller mirror on P9, and white tongue-tips – can be matched by presumed “American” Herring Gull x Great Black-backed Gull hybrids (Jehl 1960; Howell and Dunn 2007) and presumed Slaty-backed Gull x “Vega” Herring Gull hybrids (Vaurie 1965; Howell and Dunn 2007). Eliminating such hybrids from consideration would require details beyond those included in the Wayne Co. report – including, for example, the number of primaries with black marks, the extent to which the white mirror and white apex on P10 are separated, and a more precise specification of which primaries had white tongue-tips.

In fact, as multiple MBRC members noted, the Wayne Co. description refers to white tongue-spots on “some of the inner primaries,” and this is incorrect: a Slaty-backed’s white tongue-tips are on the middle and outer primaries (P5, P6, P7, and sometimes P8). If there were white spots on the tongues of the inner primaries and none on the tongues of the middle and outer primaries, then the bird in question could not have been a Slaty-backed.

Finally, the “brighter reddish” legs of the Wayne Co. bird were said to be a point in favor of Slaty-backed, but redness of the legs should be viewed with a measure of caution: the red comes from dietarily acquired carotenoid pigments, so redder legs could be a function of recent diet.

### **Glaucous-winged Gull (*Larus glaucescens*)**

vote: 0-7

two descriptions

eight photofiles

One in its second cycle was reported from Bay City, Bay Co., on 13-17 January 2012, and the two observers based their identification on several characteristics. The bird was said to be large – “2 inches bigger than [a] Herring” Gull according to one observer and “clearly 1-2 inches larger than [the] Herring Gulls it was standing next to” according to the other

observer. The bill was, according to the more detailed of the two descriptions, “the unique shape of Glaucous-winged Gull,” having “a large tip with [a] noticeably strong angle at [the] gonys.” And, as both observers wrote, the folded primaries and the tail were about the same color as the mantle.

Committee members had some difficulty matching the described characters to the observers’ photofiles. In one photo of the bird standing on the ice, the bird looked bigger than most or all of the nearby Herring Gulls; in another photo of the bird on the water, the bird looked smaller than the nearby Herrings. In all of the photos in which the bill could be seen reasonably well, it looked straight-sided and unexceptional in thickness, not heavy and blob-tipped as in some Glaucous-winged Gulls. And though the folded primaries were indeed about the same color as the mantle, the uppersurface of the tail looked considerably blacker in the photos that show it clearly.

In addition, the best photos showed coarse marbling on the tertials, inner secondaries, greater upper secondary coverts, and inner median upper secondary coverts – areas in which a second-cycle Glaucous-winged is typically muddy-looking, with just a hint of marbling if any.

In short, for the bird in question, neither size nor shape clearly favored a Glaucous-winged, and both the dark tail and the marbling in the folded upperwing were incorrect for that species.

**noddy (*Anous*) species**

vote: 0-7

one description

A bird in Van Buren Twp., Wayne Co., on 6 December 2009 was originally submitted to seasonal-survey compilers as a “mystery bird” – but, the observer wrote, “Almost everything about this mystery bird puts it into the *Anous* genus.” Specifically, its plumage was “almost completely dark,” having “a blackish look without being as dark as a crow;” in contrast, its “crown and upper nape were a dirty white color.” Its bill was dark, slender, tapering, and looked disproportionately long, relative to the many gulls that were present.

The foregoing notwithstanding, the observer's original submission rejected the possibility of a noddy because of the bird's size – "about equal in size to a small Herring Gull" – and because the bird's bill-tip was blunt rather than pointed.

Two years later the former “mystery bird” was resubmitted as a noddy, but the MBRC was unanimous in agreeing with the observer’s original reservations. A noddy’s bill

should be pointed, not blunt, and any noddy should be much slimmer than a Ring-billed Gull, not the size of a Herring (for the largest member of the genus *Anous*, the Brown Noddy, Chardine and Morris [1989] gave a range of 142-221 g [n = 377], whereas Ryder [1978] gave a range of 375-650 g [n = 99] for Ring-billed Gulls).

## Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

vote: 1-6

one description

One in Champion Twp., Marquette Co., on 10 June 2012 was unquestionably a collared-dove; the question is, was it a “pure-blooded” Eurasian, or did its plumage suggest the presence of Ringed Turtle-Dove alleles?

To confirm that a Eurasian is pure, observers should document three things. First, the primaries should be dark brown to blackish, and, being dark, they should contrast strongly with the sandy upper secondary coverts. Second, the under tail coverts should be gray. And third, the underside of the outer tail feathers should be black proximally and white distally, with the outer-web black extending farther toward the tail-tip than the inner-web black.

In the present case, only the gray under tail coverts were noted; there was no information about the appearance of the primaries or the

underside of the outer tail feathers, and without that information concerns about “mixed blood” could not be fully eliminated.

### **White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*)**

vote: 3-4

one description

One was reported from Blissfield, Lenawee Co., on 12 October 2012.

The report indicated that the bird in question was larger than the Mourning Doves that it accompanied, with a rounded tail and wings that were “darker” with a “wide white area.”

Such details are consistent with a White-winged Dove, but they could also fit an oddly plumaged Rock Pigeon. Indeed, two experienced Minnesota observers reported a Rock Pigeon with white wing patches “exactly where you might see white in the wings of a White-winged Dove” (M. Hendrickson, pers. comm.).

### **Anna’s Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*)**

vote: 2-5

one description

An adult male was claimed from Grosse Pointe Woods, Wayne Co., in mid-June 2012, and the claim included a head that was “like a cap or hood that was very iridescent or shiny.” The head was “red, almost a ruby red,” with

“Maybe just a hint of violet.”

Additionally, the bird was described as being “very dark all over” – “Almost a black, bronze, olive color with some shading at the neck/chest.”

Although a dark hummingbird with a shining reddish hood inspires interest, committee members were uneasy about the specifics described. The description of the shining color on the head as being “almost a ruby red” with “Maybe just a hint of violet” is not quite right for an Anna’s; in an Anna’s, the cap and gorget are a shining pinkish purple. As for the description of the rest of the bird – “Almost a black, bronze, olive color” – it covers several possibilities, but none of them is the metallic green that characterizes the upperbody and flanks of an Anna’s.

### **“Prairie” Merlin (*Falco columbarius richardsonii*)**

vote: 2-5 in the second round  
one description

One adult male was reported from Peninsula Point, Delta Co., on 20 October 2009, and the report described a bird that was, in multiple ways, typical of a “Prairie” Merlin. Its crown was a “light blue color with dark streaks,” and, similarly, its back, scapulars, and upper secondary coverts were “light blue” with “strongly contrasting dark feather shafts.” Moreover, the “base color of the tail was a



of the extremely out of range drab 'Arizona' type, and also some degree of yellow, at least in the flanks, were it a member of the more likely 'Eastern' type."

The first bird was said to have a "Harsh scolding voice," and the second bird, which was heard only, was identified because it had a voice like the first – an identification criterion that might have been sufficient if the first had been an unquestionable Bell's. However, because there were questions about the identity of the first bird, there were questions about the identity of the second bird as well.

#### **Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*)**

vote: 2-5 in the second round  
one description

Two were reported from Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 7 November 2011.

Each of the two was said to have a "rusty-orange" rump, dark crown, dark forehead, and "pale orangey" throat. Those features are consistent with a Cave Swallow. However, they might also match a juvenile Cliff Swallow – in which, according to Brown and Brown (1995), the forehead can be dark and the throat can be buff- or cinnamon-colored.

In this regard, the key is the ear coverts – pale in a Cave, dark in a Cliff. Alas, ear-covert

appearance was not mentioned in the single report.

#### **Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*)**

vote: 0-7

one description

A swallow at Belle Isle, Wayne Co., on 25 October 2012 – claimed to be a Cave – was described as having a "buffy rump, dark cap, square tail, [and] pale throat and nape." However, this does not eliminate a juvenile Cliff Swallow, some of which can also be pale-throated (Brown and Brown 1995).

#### **Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*)**

vote: 3-4

one description

four photofiles

Of the two Cave Swallows reported from Whitefish Point, Chippewa Co., on 12 November 2012, one was accepted but the other one was not.

The latter was described as "short-tailed," with "brownish upper sides," "pale" cheeks, and a "pale" throat that was "a shade darker than" the white belly – all characteristics that match a Northern Rough-winged Swallow at least as well as they match a Cave Swallow.

The description was accompanied by photofiles, and the photos do show a Cave Swallow – but, as all of them depict only one bird, they may pertain to the



individual that was accepted rather than the one that was not.

For information about the accepted individual, see the third Cave Swallow account under “Records Accepted” above.

**Smith’s Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*)**

vote: 2-5 for all three individuals  
two photofiles

Of four Smith’s Longspurs reported from St. Joseph, Berrien Co., on 21 March 2012, three were not accepted. One of the three was said to be a male, whereas no sex information was given for the other two.

For the three that were not accepted, two were undocumented; the third – the bird sexed as a male – was photographed, but the photo was taken from directly underneath, and showed only a buff underbody and a blackish undertail with white outer tail feathers. Thus, the photo did not show enough to eliminate an American Pipit, particularly one that is buffier and more poorly streaked below.

(For information about the single 21 March individual that did garner acceptance, see the first Smith’s Longspur account under “Records Accepted” above.)

**Virginia’s Warbler (*Oreothlypis virginiae*)**

vote: 0-7  
one description

Two were claimed from Newberry, Luce Co., on 19 May 2012, and the claim was supported by the following terse description: “It had a solid gray head, complete white eye ring, and a solid dark beak.”

In response, one MBRC member wrote, “Only three features are described, all of them confined to the head, and one of these is incorrect for Virginia’s Warbler.” Specifically, in Virginia’s the head is not “solid gray,” but has a paler throat that ranges from gray-white through white to dull yellowish.

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

vote: 3-4  
one photofile

One warbler said to be a “Yellow” Palm was photographed at the Sarrett Nature Center in Berrien Co. on 23 November 2011.

For this Palm with an undeniably yellow underbody, MBRC members wrestled with the separation of *hypochrysea* from bright individuals of *S. palmarum palmarum* and from intergrades between the two – a problem that Dunn and Garrett (1997:373) addressed as follows:

In fall, many individuals of nominate *palmarum* get a suffusion of pale yellow throughout the belly; these are often incorrectly identified as

intergrades or as *hypochrysea*. Nominate birds at the yellowish extreme differ from *hypochrysea* in that the yellow of the belly still contrasts with the bright yellow undertail coverts; the upperparts are more grayish brown, with less of a yellow-green tint; the tips and edges to the wing coverts are more buffy, less reddish brown; the supercilium is whitish (yellow in *hypochrysea*); and the rump is duller green (yellow in *hypochrysea*). Intergrades show intermediacy in the extent of yellow on the underparts.

The supercilium of the bird in question was definitely yellowish; however, some committee members thought that the crissum was a brighter and truer yellow than the rest of the underparts, that the upperparts lacked a yellow-green tint, and that the margins of the median and greater upper secondary coverts were closer to gray-buff than to red-brown. (As for the rump, it was not visible in the single photo.)

Given that the relative brightness of the crissum, the color of the upperparts, and the color of the upper secondary coverts were arguable, it is unsurprising that the MBRC could not agree about subspecific identity of the Sarrett bird.

### **Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)**

vote: 0-7

one description

One was reported from the Muskegon County Wastewater Management System, Muskegon Co., on 9 September 2012.

The report listed three color characters – “orange on face and down throat,” an “unstreaked buff/white breast,” and a “gray patch on the bird’s cheek” – and the Nelson’s does have an orangey face, gray ear coverts, and a warmly colored chest; however, its chest is streaked, not plain.

Multiple committee members noted that the combination of gray ear coverts, orangey face, and unstreaked buff chest can be shown by another species, the Le Conte’s Sparrow.

### **Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)**

vote: 0-7

one description

One was claimed in Ingham Twp., Ingham Co., on 24 September 2012, and the claim consisted of the following characteristics. There was a “bright orange-yellow face and gray cheek”; the flanks were “yellow” with “faded brown” streaks that “were unbroken and flowed down the flank”; the belly was white, in “sharp contrast” to the flanks; and the tail feathers were pointed. Importantly, the

appearance of the flanks was determined during a two-to-three second naked-eye view from two meters away.

Commenting on what was seen, the observer wrote the following:

I did not see the gray nape and central crown stripe, but I did see the flank streaking. In my experience, this feature is diagnostic. On a Nelson's Sparrow, the streaks are brown, faded, and usually flow unbroken down the sides. On a Le Conte's, the streaks appear broken (or of varying thicknesses), and are a definite solid black.

Although the observer was correct to note that some Nelson's have "washed out" flank streaking, committee members were hesitant to rely on that alone to eliminate a Le Conte's, especially under the circumstances reported: as one reviewer wrote, "Given the incomplete view of the bird, and that the purportedly diagnostic aspects of the flank streaking were seen only momentarily and without optics, accepting the report would not seem prudent."

### Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)

vote: 3-4

one description

Of two Nelson's Sparrows  
reported from Leslie Twp., Ingham

Co., on 5 October 2012, one was accepted but the other was not.

For the latter, features noted were a gray hindneck, yellow on the breast, yellow on the flanks with brown streaking, a white belly that contrasted sharply with the yellow of the breast and flanks, and pointed tail feathers.

One question is, do these features eliminate a Saltmarsh Sparrow? The contrast between breast/flanks and belly is not diagnostic, as the breast and flanks in some Saltmarshes are bright yellow-buff and contrast strongly with the white of the belly. As for the hue of the flank streaking, Sibley (1996) claimed that it is “reddish brown” in the Prairie form of Nelson’s (*A. nelsoni nelsoni*) and “blackish” in the Saltmarsh, but the claimed difference is not apparent in the photos that Sibley presented.

Arguably a more important issue is the circumstances of observation. The observer was walking back to his vehicle when, in the midst of flushing other sparrows, the bird in question “perched up and flew.” The initial perch was close, just three meters away – but how long the bird remained on its perch was unspecified, leaving open the possibility that it was perched for just a fraction of a second.

Given views that may have been very brief, one wonders how much weight can be placed on the description: most observers have

had the experience of getting a quick look at something and thinking that certain features are present, only to later get longer looks that show the initial impressions to have been incorrect.

As was mentioned above, although the present individual was not accepted, a second Leslie Twp. individual did gain acceptance. For information about the latter, see the fourth Nelson's Sparrow account under "Records Accepted" above.

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

vote: 1-6

one specimen

The specimen in question – MCZ 192931, whose label gives the collecting locality as "Michigan (Detroit)" and the date of collection as 1 June 1886 – was reviewed as a Saltmarsh Sparrow and not accepted in 2011 (Chu 2012). The identification of the specimen was not in doubt; however, there were questions about the data on the specimen label (Sibley 2005), and so about whether or not the specimen was really collected in Michigan.

Having not been accepted as a Saltmarsh Sparrow in 2011, the specimen in question was reviewed again in 2012, this time as a Nelson's/Saltmarsh Sparrow. However, again the record was not accepted, because changing the review designation

(from "Saltmarsh" to "Nelson's/Saltmarsh") did nothing to alleviate the uncertainty about collection locality.

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

vote: 0-7

one description

This bird – a claimed Nelson's Sparrow from Harrisville State Park, Alcona Co., on 4 October 2011 – was reviewed as a Nelson's and not accepted in 2011 (Chu 2012); then in 2012 it was reviewed as a Nelson's/Saltmarsh and rejected again.

In both cases the unfavorable outcome resulted from three characteristics. First, the crown was described as "dark brown," without the gray median-crown stripe of *nelsoni* and *caudacutus*. Second, the face was said to have a "bright tan triangle around [the] eye/ear," but this is of questionable propriety for either Nelson's or Saltmarsh – as one committee member noted, "usually they are bright enough [on the face] that the word 'orange' fits better than the word 'tan'." And third, the underparts were described as "Overall...white," with no mention of the breast and flank streaking that both Nelson's and Saltmarsh have.

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**Corrigenda**

Eight items in Chu (2012) require correction, and for seven the correction is straightforward. First, for the two White-faced Ibises from Monroe Co. in 2010, photofiles were provided not only by Adam Byrne, Jerome Jourdan, and William Weber but also by Bradley Murphy. Second, for the Mississippi Kite from Chippewa Co. in 2011, the vote was not 7-0 but 6-1. Third, for the Ruff from Monroe Co. in 2011, the documentation consisted of not only photofiles but also descriptions – and in fact there were two descriptions, one from Andrew Dettling and the other from Jerome Jourdan. Fourth, for the two Anna's Hummingbirds from Alger Co. in 2011, the documentation consisted of not only descriptions and photofiles but also a videofile from Caleb Putnam. Fifth and sixth, for the two Loggerhead Shrike records the numbering was incorrect: the shrike from Delta Co. in 2011 was listed as the 138th state record but was actually the 148th, and the shrike from Marquette Co. in 2011 was listed as the 139th state record but was actually the 149th. And seventh, for the Spotted Towhee record from Ottawa Co. in 2010, there was just one description, not two, with the one being from Barbara Quinlan.

The eighth correction concerns the Fish Crows from Berrien Co. in 2009. For that record, both Putnam (2011) and Chu (2012) correctly indicated that three individuals were accepted in an initial 2010 review, and that the initial review inadvertently excluded one observer's audiofiles. However, as Putnam wrote, and contrary to the account in Chu,

- (1) the record was submitted for reconsideration in 2010, with the committee being asked to determine the total number of Fish Crows present;
- (2) the 2010 reconsideration resulted in three individuals that were accepted, one that was not accepted, and two that were to be resubmitted; and
- (3) the latter two were resubmitted in 2011.

Chu was correct in noting that one of the last two was accepted whereas the other was not, and that this action brought to four the total number of 2009 Fish Crows accepted.

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