

REPORT OF THE NORTH CAROLINA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE 1991

This report enumerates the decisions of the Carolina Bird Club's North Carolina Bird Records Committee since the publication of the 1990 report (Chat 54:53-58). The 1990 report of the Committee was an evaluation of all species reported in the state that were listed as either Provisional I or Provisional II by the previous Committee. An evaluation of several species on the Official List that have not been documented by either a specimen or photograph was also made in the 1990 report. This 1991 Committee report, however, discusses the decisions of individual sightings, as opposed to species.

The Committee has made a policy of not listing specific dates, locations, or names of observers for previously unpublished reports that have not been accepted. Publishing locations and dates, even for unaccepted records, might inadvertently place them in the literature. The Committee will also not list observers for any unaccepted records, whether unpublished or previously published. However, because the locations and dates of previously published records are mentioned in the literature, these data may be repeated in the Committee report. In all cases of previously published records, the literature citations are printed so that readers can refer to the descriptions in those reports.

ACCEPTED AS VALID. The reported identification is judged to be accurate and the bird is judged to be of wild origin.

SOFT-PLUMAGED PETREL (*Pterodroma mollis*). One was seen by approximately 25 birders on a pelagic trip off Oregon Inlet on 25 May 1991. Details and sketches were provided independently by Michael Tove and by Todd Hass; the bird was not photographed. The Committee has previously (Chat 54:53) accepted one seen by David Lee off Oregon Inlet on 3 June 1981 but had given an Unresolved status to the species because of the taxonomic problems of the Soft-plumaged Petrel complex, as three species might be involved in the complex. Several national and international committees have now accepted the split of the complex into Cape Verde Petrel (*P. feae*), Soft-plumaged Petrel (*P. mollis*), and Madiera Petrel (*P. madiera*); however, the American Ornithologists' Union has not made decisions on the taxonomy because no specimens or photographs of the species complex are yet available for the North American region (Richard Banks, pers. comm.). The principal observers of the May 1991 record are describing the bird as apparently a member of the *feae* taxon in a paper submitted to a national journal. However, the N.C. Bird Records Committee has reviewed (and accepted) the 1991 record as the species complex only, and it may well review the record again at the split taxon (i.e., *feae*) level. In summary, the Committee has accepted the 1991 record, and the Lee record, to the species complex. The Soft-plumaged Petrel complex is thereby considered Provisional in North Carolina, with two accepted sight records; no specimens or photographs are available.

HERALD PETREL (*Pterodroma arminjoniana*). A dark-phase individual was seen and photographed on a pelagic trip off Oregon Inlet on 24 August 1991. Michael Tove provided details to the Committee, and photographs taken by Tove and by Brian Patteson were also reviewed and considered acceptable

to document the species. Herald Petrel is already on the Official List, based on a specimen taken by David Lee on 20 August 1978 (Am. Birds 33:138-139). A sight record on 21 August 1980 (Am. Birds 38:159) has not yet been reviewed by the Committee. A report of one to two birds, including photograph of an intermediate-phase bird, from off Hatteras on 22 May 1991 (Am. Birds 45:433, 511) has also not been reviewed, pending a written description to accompany the photograph.

GARGANEY (*Anas querquedula*). A male seen by numerous observers at Buxton in March 1957 (Chat 21:68-70; 21:88) is considered to be correctly identified and to be of wild origin, as the species is common in Europe and is highly migratory. This is the only record for the state and is placed on the Provisional List.

BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE (*Elanus caeruleus*). One seen on 3 January 1957 near Wilmington by Edna Appleberry and Mrs. Cyril K. Bryan (Chat 21:70-71) is considered valid. As there is a photo available for a bird seen at Fort Fisher in 1989 (see Chat 54:55), the species is on the Official List. These are the only two accepted records for the state.

SPRAGUE'S PIPIT (*Anthus spragueii*). One seen by Rick Knight, on Round Bald at Roan Mountain on 27 October 1991, is accepted, based on details provided on a Rare Bird Sighting Report form. The species is currently listed as Provisional, but further review of other reports of the species will be made.

LARK BUNTING (*Calamospiza melanocorys*). A male in breeding plumage was seen by Allen and Virginia Valpey on 21 May 1991 at Southern Shores in coastal Dare County. Each observer provided a description of the bird on a Rare Bird Sighting Report form, and the record is accepted by the Committee. The species, already on the Official List, has now been seen in the state on approximately six occasions.

HARRIS' SPARROW (*Zonotrichia querula*). One seen by Norm Budnitz in northern Durham County on 21 April 1991 was later seen by all seven Committee members over the next two weeks. There are four or five previous records for the state.

SHINY COWBIRD (*Molothrus bonariensis*). A specimen, a male, was found dead by Bob Holmes in his yard in New Bern on 29 October 1990, after having been seen there from 9 to 12 October 1990 (Am. Birds 45:264). The Committee has studied the specimen and accepts the record based on the specimen, though no written description has been reviewed. The specimen has been corroborated as a Shiny Cowbird by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., where the specimen (USNM 597185) is now deposited. This is the second accepted record for North Carolina, and the specimen places the species on the Official List. The species had been placed on the Provisional List based on a sighting of a male near Aurora on 16 November 1989 (Chat 54:82-85); however, there was dissension among the Committee about the identification of the bird from photos taken by the observer.

UNACCEPTED ORIGIN. The identification is judged to be accurate but the bird is judged to be a likely escapee or a member of an unestablished, introduced population, or to have received significant human assistance such that the bird's survival without that assistance would have been very unlikely.

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE (*Pica pica*). One seen near Chapel Hill on 23 March 1960 (Chat 24:25-26) is judged to be a likely escapee. Although the species does occasionally undergo migratory movements, these movements rarely bring the birds east of the Great Plains. The species is also known to occur in captivity.

UNACCEPTED SIGHTING. The bird is judged to be a species other than that reported, or the bird is insufficiently documented for identification to the species reported.

ARCTIC/PACIFIC LOON (*Gavia arctica/pacifica*). One was reported at Ocracoke in 1974 (Am. Birds 28:626); this sighting was made before the split of the former Arctic Loon into two species -- Arctic Loon (*G. arctica*) and Pacific Loon (*G. pacifica*). The Committee has not accepted the sighting as this species complex, despite its study at close range for an hour, based on unpublished details. These details do not mention the very dark back half of the neck that contrast sharply with the white on the front of the neck. The bird in question may well have been a Red-throated Loon or a Common Loon. There is only one accepted record of the complex, a Pacific Loon in partial breeding plumage at Cape Hatteras on 15 May 1987 (Chat 53:8).

RUFOUS-NECKED STINT (*Calidris ruficollis*). Two birds were reported from the Outer Banks of Dare County in the summer of 1990. The report was not accepted because of several factors: poor viewing conditions (distance and sun orientation), difficulty of identification of the species, and a highly unlikely series of rarities seen in conjunction with this report that were not confirmed by other observers. The Committee believes that the birds may have been misidentified Sanderlings.

RUFOUS-NECKED STINT. A second report, from coastal Brunswick County in the summer of 1990, was made only several days after the preceding report. It also was not accepted. One of the observers told the Committee chairman that the bird(s) in question were believed to be Sanderlings, and the written details also strongly point to misidentified Sanderlings in partial breeding plumage. Thus, there are no accepted records of Rufous-necked Stint for North Carolina.

WHITE-WINGED TERN (*Chlidonias leucopterus*). One reported from coastal Dare County in the summer of 1990, at the same time that the two Rufous-necked Stints were reported, was not accepted. The great distance of the bird from the observer, the difficulty of identification of the species when not in breeding plumage, and the lack of corroboration of the numerous rare species reported at the same time led to the failure of the report to be accepted. There are no accepted records for the species for North Carolina.

VARIED THRUSH (*Ixoreus naevius*). One was reported from a yard in coastal Dare County in early fall of 1990. The written details lean either to Rufous-sided Towhee or Northern (Baltimore) Oriole, probably the latter because it migrates through that area in early fall; the details do not suggest a Varied Thrush. The Varied Thrush typically appears in the Eastern states in winter and is generally found at feeders in the mountains or upper piedmont. Though Virginia has seven accepted state records and Georgia has two such

records, as of 1991, neither North Carolina nor South Carolina have any accepted records.

KIRTLAND'S WARBLER (*Dendroica kirtlandii*). One reported from the Outer Banks during the fall of 1991 is not accepted. This report was sent to two outside reviewers with extensive experience with the species; one thought the bird was correctly identified, though with some reservations, whereas the other suggested that he would not accept the sighting. The Committee members had these outside reviews in hand when they voted on the report. Three members believed the bird was misidentified, three felt the report was inadequately documented, and one accepted the sighting as valid. The report is thus considered as an Unaccepted Sighting.

Three sightings of Kirtland's Warbler by a single observer in the Rocky Mount area from 1936 to 1941 (Chat 1:5, 6:25-26) have not been accepted. Published details were rather sparse, and the likelihood of a single observer seeing three individuals of this exceedingly rare bird in a five-year period, yet with no previous records nor any other published records in the state until 1982, is extremely unlikely.

The species is presently placed on the Provisional List, with one accepted sighting. Because of the extreme rarity of the species, with perhaps only 400 to 500 individuals in existence at the present time, the Committee wishes to be extremely cautious about accepting reports of the species.

UNRESOLVED. Further consideration by the Committee is needed.

WESTERN GREBE (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*). Two reports (Chat 26:17-18)—at Pea Island and at Raleigh—have been reviewed, but further discussion is needed. Other reports for the species will be reviewed. The species is placed on the Provisional List, at least for the time being.

Committee members: Harry E. LeGrand Jr., Chairman
 Richard J. Davis
 John O. Fussell III
 J. Merrill Lynch
 Simon R.B. Thompson
 Michael H. Tove
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REQUEST FOR REPRINTS ON OWLS

Authors of articles or publications dealing with owls and wishing them to be listed in the second edition of a Working Bibliography of Owls of the World are asked to send reprints to:

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