

2008 Annual Report of the North Carolina Bird Records Committee

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This report enumerates the decisions of the Carolina Bird Club's North Carolina Bird Records Committee during 2008. The Committee expanded from seven members to nine members during the year, with the addition of Jeffrey Phippen and Michael Tove. Committee voting information is referenced in parentheses (i.e., year report received, reference number).

Accepted as Valid

The reported identification is judged to be accurate, and the bird is judged to be of wild origin. Photographs and/or written descriptions of all accepted records have been deposited in the NC Museum of Natural Sciences.

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*) (08-17). One was seen at Lake Townsend near Greensboro, Guilford County, in late 2008. The bird was first found on 18 November 2008, by Henry Link, Scott DePue, and George Wheaton, and it remained on the lake for over a month. The Committee accepted photos taken by Link, Melissa Whitmire, and Harry Sell. The species is already on the Official List, as there are numerous coastal records. However, this is just the second inland record (away from tidal water), the other being from Lake Tahoma in McDowell County.

Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma monorhis*) (08-07). One was photographed in the Gulf Stream off Hatteras Inlet on 2 June 2008. The Committee accepted a photo taken by Steve Howell. This is the second record for the state. As the first was also documented by photos, the species is already on the Official List. These are the only two known records for United States waters.

Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) (08-09). One was seen on 17 September 2008 at the Ocracoke Inlet spit in Hyde County by Sidney Maddock. The Committee accepted Maddock's photos. This is the fourth state record, and as several previous records have been documented by photos, the Snowy Plover is already on the Official List.

Snowy Plover (08-10). Another individual, presumably different from the above bird, was seen at Bear Island in Hammocks Beach State Park on 22 September 2008, by Emily Rice and Alexandra Houston. The Committee accepted a photo taken by Houston. This is the fifth state record. There is the

chance that this was the same individual as seen five days earlier much farther northward along the coast. However, because different observers were involved, in different counties, the Committee regarded these as two separate records.

Common Murre (*Uria aalge*) (08-06). One adult, essentially in breeding plumage, was found injured on the beach at Emerald Isle, Carteret County, on 2 April 2008. It died in a wildlife shelter soon thereafter (specimen to the NC Museum of Natural Sciences). The Committee accepted photos taken by John Fussell. This is the second accepted record for the state. As the first record was of a photographed bird, the species is already on the Official List. This record is remarkable in its late date (April) and is the first spring record for the state.

Broad-billed Hummingbird (*Cynanthus latirostris*) (08-15). A male spent several months in 2008 at feeders in the yard of Patti Holland in New Bern, Craven County. Its identity was confirmed on 9 November 2008 by Susan Campbell, who trapped the bird; it had been banded near Charleston, SC, the previous winter. The Committee accepted photos taken by John Ennis, Derb Carter, and Harry Sell. The species is already on the Official List, as this is the third state record, all documented by photos. Interestingly, one of the previous two records is also from the New Bern area.

Kirtland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*) (08-13). One was seen by eight observers at "Hospital Fields" in Transylvania County, on 1 October 2008. The thorough written description, provided by Norma and Bill Siebenheller, was accepted by the Committee. The species is already on the Official List. This is the fourth accepted record for the state, with three from the mountains and one from the piedmont. None of the records is documented by photos or specimen. (Several additional reports in the literature were not accepted by the Committee in earlier years.)

MacGillivray's Warbler (*Oporornis tolmiei*) (08-01). One was observed on 29 December 2007, by Ricky Davis, and on 1 January 2008 by a number of birders, at Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge, Hyde County. The Committee accepted Davis's written details and photos taken by Jeff Lewis. This is the second state record, both being from Hyde County. The species is already on the Official List as the first record was a specimen found dead near New Holland.

Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco (*Junco hyemalis oregonus*) (08-02). One male was seen and photographed by Luke Appling at a feeder in his yard at Beech Mountain, Watauga County, on 16 December 2007. Though there are about ten previous state reports of this subspecies listed in the Avendex database, this is the first report that has been reviewed by the Committee.

Scott's Oriole (*Icterus parisorum*) (08-04). A sub-adult male was seen at the feeders of Becky Duggan near Conover in Catawba County, from 29 January into February 2008. The Committee accepted the written report from Dwayne Martin and photographs taken by Will Cook, Jeff Pippen, and Harry Sell. This is the first report for the state, and acceptance of photos places the species directly onto the Official List.

Unaccepted Sighting

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

Common Black-Hawk (*Buteogallus anthracinus*) (08-05). One adult was reported from the eastern piedmont in April 2008. Though it was seen at leisure by a single observer who has observed the species in Central America, and was described in moderate detail, all but one Committee member did not consider the report to be convincing, even at the genus level. The Committee felt that a single-observer sight report of a species that is essentially unknown in the eastern United States north of southern Florida was too unlikely for it to be placed onto the state's bird list. There are no state records for this species.

Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*) (08-03). One was reported from a central piedmont county in February 2008. The Committee did not accept the single photo, as the image, of a hawk sitting on the ground, was not definitive enough to separate the species from a Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*). The written description also did not completely rule out a Red-tailed Hawk, which can be quite variable in plumage and is common in the area. There are no accepted state records for the Ferruginous Hawk.

Wandering Tattler (*Tringa incana*) (08-16). Three were reported from a beach along the central coast in September 2008. Though fairly thorough details were provided by the sole observer, the birds were not photographed. The Committee was unanimous in not accepting the report, believing that Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) was the likely species in question. In addition, the very similar Gray-tailed Tattler (*Tringa brevipes*), as with the Wandering essentially unknown in eastern North America, was not ruled out. There are no accepted records of Wandering Tattler for the state.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*) (08-12). One was reported from a central piedmont county in August 2008. As the report was made by a relatively inexperienced observer, birding alone, and with no photographs for documentation, the Committee did not accept the written description. However, the species is already on the Official List, with two records (from coastal areas), one of which was documented by photos.

Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*) (08-14). A report of two adults, from a foothills site in September 2008, was not accepted. This species formerly bred in the state's mountain region until about 1970, but observations in the state have essentially been non-existent since perhaps 1980, as the eastern edge of the breeding range of the species has shrunk to the western parts of Tennessee at the present time. The Committee felt that the failure to see or report several key field marks, the unlikely habitat (a steep and forested hillside), and the fact that a male was reported as singing the song pattern of a "western Bewick's Wren" seemed to suggest that Carolina Wrens (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) were involved. Even if the latter species was not involved, more conclusive documentation for a basically "extirpated" species in Atlantic coastal states was needed.

Unaccepted Origin

The reported identification is judged to be accurate, but the origin of the bird is uncertain (and thus might not be of natural origin).

White-checked Pintail (*Anas bahamensis*) (08-08). One was well photographed in the lower Cape Fear River across from the Fort Fisher ferry landing, on 9 July 2008, by Michael Polito. Though the Committee accepted the photos as being of this species, the members were unanimous in giving a vote of “questionable origin”. The species occurs in South America and northward into the West Indies; however, it is kept in captivity, and thus the Committee was uncomfortable in placing the species on the Official List.

Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*) (08-11). One was seen, at a nest, in Farmington, Davie County, on 6 August 2008, by Phil Dickinson and Ron Morris. The Committee accepted the identification of the species from photos supplied by Dickinson; however, the Committee did not consider the bird to have been from an established breeding population. The American Birding Association (2008) has placed this non-native species on its checklist as “countable”, at least where breeding populations have been established. Some state committees have already given the species a place on their state lists as “countable”. There are a dozen or more records of the species from North Carolina, some involving birds nesting, though likely not for a length of time to establish “countable” populations. However, the Committee has not reviewed these older records, and thus this species is not yet on the North Carolina Official or Provisional lists. The Committee will be working, hopefully with the South Carolina Bird Records Committee, to establish more specific rules and guidelines for acceptance of exotic (non-native) species to the appropriate state lists.

Discussion

The review of reports by the North Carolina Bird Records Committee for 2008 resulted in adding one species, Scott’s Oriole, to the state’s Official List. The current Official List is now 453 species, and the Provisional List is 14 species, for a total of 467 species on the state’s Accepted List.

Acknowledgments

In addition to the many people named above who provided written material and photographs for the Committee to review, we thank Kent Fiala (webmaster of the Carolina Bird Club) for placing a number of the photographs on the club’s website for Committee review and sending electronic submission of Rare Bird Report forms to the Committee chair.

Literature Cited

American Birding Association. 2008. ABA Checklist Update. Retrieved 14 Feb 2009 from <http://www.aba.org/checklist/abachecklist.pdf>.