

2011 Annual Report of the South Carolina Bird Records Committee

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In 2011, the South Carolina Bird Records Committee completed action on 19 records of which 12 were accepted, four rejected, and three left unresolved, with the decisions on these pending outside review. Committee actions in 2011 resulted in the placement of two new species on the Main List, both of these birds having been previously categorized as Hypothetical. These two species are Ash-throated Flycatcher, elevated to Definitive status, and Alder Flycatcher, elevated to Provisional I. With these changes, South Carolina's Main List now stands at 427 species, not including those 16 birds categorized as Provisional II species and 12 others classified as Hypothetical. The most recent revision of the state list can be found online at <http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/brc>. The state list available online includes review categories in addition to list categories for each species.

In October 2011, Donna Slyce stepped down as committee chair and was replaced by Irvin Pitts. The remaining committee membership was unchanged, and the committee still consists of seven people. The committee expresses its sincere thanks to Donna for her 10 years of excellent service, and for her dedication and professionalism demonstrated as Chair.

Accepted Reports:

American White Pelican (11-11-10). A report submitted by Peter Keller of a single bird on 3 November 2011 at the Bluff Unit of the Santee National Wildlife Refuge, Clarendon County was unanimously accepted. A flock of 20+ American White Pelicans was observed by a number of folks in the Cantey Bay area during the winter months of 2011–2012 and was still present as of 18 February. This species now occurs quite regularly in the coastal counties, though it is still considered to be a review species 30 miles inland.

Black-headed Gull (10-10-05). A report submitted by Bill Boyle of a molting adult bird found standing among a group of gulls on the beach at Kiawah Island, Charleston County on 10 October 2011 was unanimously accepted. This record constitutes the ninth report of this species in the state, with the previous early date being 29 October.

Iceland Gull (02-05-16). A well-written report submitted by Steve Calver and accompanied by an excellent set of digital photos of a second-year bird on 25 February 2005 at the Savannah Harbor spoil area, Jasper County was unanimously accepted. This species was first added to the state's

Definitive list on 14 January 1985 (Post and Belser 1985), and this report constitutes the third accepted record since then.

Arctic Tern (05-10-03). For the second straight year, the committee received an Arctic Tern report for review. This well-documented report, submitted by Wendy and Dennis Allen, was of two birds seen and photographed on 16 May 2010, nine miles southeast of Winyah Bay. It was unanimously accepted. This report constitutes the third record of this species with supporting physical evidence since 2004, all from the month of May. The Arctic Tern was first placed on the state's Provisional List by a narrowly accepted committee vote in 1993, this record being of a bird observed offshore from Charleston on 16 May 1992.

Dovekie (02-11-02). The committee unanimously accepted a report and photos submitted by Ritch Lilly of a bird found resting on the beach near the jetty at Huntington Beach State Park, Georgetown County on 2 February 2011. This record constitutes the third report of this species accepted by the committee and the second one documented by photographs.

Alder Flycatcher (09-09-07). A well-written report submitted by Chris Snook of a bird banded on 16 September 2009 at Folly Island, Charleston County was unanimously accepted. The committee based its decision on the report's detailed descriptions of body measurements and references to Pyle's (1997) work. The species is elevated to the Provisional I category of the main state list. The status of this flycatcher as a fall migrant has been uncertain due to the great difficulty in making accurate field identification without reference to vocalizations and to the absence of records detailing such closely-studied birds as this one.

Vermilion Flycatcher (10-11-09). A report and photograph submitted by Irvin Pitts of an immature male observed by Nathan Dias, John Cox, and himself at the Pine Island Unit of Santee National Wildlife Refuge, Clarendon County on 22 October, 2011 was accepted, with the reporting member abstaining. This species occurs as a very rare but regular visitor to the state and there have been at least nine other records of its occurrence, including two previously acted on by the Committee.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (01-11-01). A very detailed report accompanied by excellent digital photos was submitted by James Flynn, Jr. of a bird at the Savannah Harbor spoil area, Jasper County on 15 January 2011. This report was unanimously accepted, constituting the first accepted record with photographic evidence, thus elevating this species to the Definitive category on the main state list.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (06-10-04). A report of a successful nesting pair near the town of Piedmont was unanimously accepted. This report, submitted by Paul Serridge, was accompanied by a series of excellent photographs and a well-detailed log describing observations by members of the Greenville County Bird Club during the period of 15 June through 30 August 2010. The birds were first reported by Lorraine Brown on 14 June. Though this species now occurs regularly in the state during the summer months, particularly in the lower piedmont region, very few successful

breeding records have been documented. The first nesting in the state was verified at Young's Community in Laurens County in 1982.

Bell's Vireo (09-11-08). A report submitted by Aaron Given of a hatch-year bird banded at Kiawah Island, Charleston County on 17 September, 2011 was unanimously accepted. This report, providing wing and tail measurements and accompanied by a conclusive close-up digital photo, constitutes the fourth accepted record of this species in the state.

Harris's Sparrow (12-10-09). A report submitted with digital photos of a Harris's Sparrow at the home of Gene Ott in Laurens County near Waterloo was unanimously accepted. This bird was first observed at Mr. Ott's feeders on 6 December 2010 and remained until at least 1 May 2011. During this period it was observed and photographed by a number of people. This report constitutes the fifth documented report of this species in the state since 1962.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak (06-10-06). The committee, through a mixed vote, accepted the identity of two flighted young birds found by Marion Clark on 24 June 2010 in the Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area, Greenville County, near the summit of Standingstone Mountain. The committee felt, however, that because of close proximity to the North Carolina border, this evidence was not sufficient to constitute the state's first confirmed breeding record. This observation is the second report of this species from the mountains of Greenville County during the month of June, the first being of a singing male near Caesars Head on 19 June 1965 (Post and Gauthreaux 1989).

Non-accepted Reports:

Whooping Crane (12-10-04). The identification of a bird videotaped with a small group of Sandhill Cranes in the upstate was deemed to be correct, but the report was rejected because of its unaccepted origin status.

Spotted Redshank (04-10-02). A report submitted of a bird observed near the coast was not accepted due primarily to the lack of substantiating details in the report. This species is currently placed on South Carolina's Hypothetical List.

Ringed Kingfisher (10-11-07). A brief report of a bird found near the coast was not accepted. The committee as a whole felt that the report's details did not sufficiently support the species identification. There have been no previously accepted records of this species in South Carolina.

Scott's Oriole (05-11-06). A report submitted with digital photos of a bird near the coast was not accepted. The majority of committee members felt that the evidence did not sufficiently support the species identification as reported. There have been no previously accepted records of this bird in South Carolina.

Unresolved Reports:

The following three records were submitted for outside review. The decision to circulate these reports to outside reviewers was made based on committee rules that dictate procedures resulting from close vote tallies. Further action by the committee will be taken on these records once outside comments are received and re-circulated to the committee members for a second vote. A final determination for each species' validity will be presented in the 2012 annual report.

Western Grebe (02-11-05). A report of two birds found near the coast was submitted to outside review, as required by committee rules. Previously, the records committee has accepted one other report of this species, a bird observed by many at Lake Wallace in Bennettsville, Marlboro County from August through October, 1999 (Glover et al. 2002).

Great Skua (02-11-03). A report of two Great Skuas sighted from shore at Huntington Beach was submitted to outside review, as required by committee rules. There have been no other previously accepted records of this species in South Carolina.

Burrowing Owl (07-10-08). A report and photograph of a bird found at the coast was submitted to outside review, as required by committee rules. The status of this species is already classified as Definitive on the state's main list.

Literature Cited:

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- Pyle, Peter. 1997. Identification guide to North American Birds: Part I Columbidae to Ploceidae. Slate Creek Press, Bolinas, CA.

Received 29 February 2012