

2013 Annual Report of the North Carolina Bird Records Committee

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The roster of North Carolina Records Committee members changed in 2013 with Douglas Pratt and Steven Shultz replacing Eric Dean and Wayne Forsythe, and with the addition of Taylor Piephoff and Nathan Swick. We thank Eric and Wayne for their service to the committee.

Accepted as Valid. The following reports were judged to be acceptable.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) (13-06, 13-07). A single bird was found by Gilbert S. Grant on 26 May 2013 in Wilmington, New Hanover County and photographed by Grant and Jamie Adams. In addition, a flock of 12 individuals found by Wayne K. Forsythe on 12 June 2013 in the Mills River area of Henderson County was seen and photographed by Forsythe and other observers. Both records were unanimously accepted. The Mills River birds constitute the westernmost occurrence of this species from the state and the first from the mountain region. The species is already on the Definitive List, with multiple records from three coastal counties (LeGrand et al. 2014).

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) (13-18). A single immature bird was seen and photographed by Luis J. Suau on Jordan Lake, Chatham County on 19 December 2013. Based on the photographs, the NCBRC accepted the report. Eight members voted AV (Accept as Valid) and one voted QO (Questionable Origin). While the species is already on the Definitive List, this sighting constitutes the first Piedmont record and the westernmost known occurrence of the two accepted records for the species from the state.

Zino's Petrel (*Pterodroma madeira*) (12-02.2). A bird photographed by Brian Patteson on 16 September 1995 off Hatteras, Dare County and published by Howell (2012) as a Zino's Petrel was reviewed by the NCBRC (Tove et al. 2013) and not accepted. In its decision, the NCBRC cited concerns about the reliability of field marks used to reach that identification, including an unaddressed contradiction of the bird's wing proportion with descriptions in the published literature plus insufficient general knowledge of field

identification of the Fea's Petrel (*P. feae*)/Zino's Petrel complex to adequately rule out Fea's Petrel. Subsequently, new significant information was provided to the NCBRC (Shirihai et al., 2010, Flood and Fisher, 2013). In addition, the NCBRC, in cooperation with the American Birding Association Checklist Committee (ABA CLC), solicited and received written reviews by Hadoram Shirihai and Killian Mullarney who kindly provided an additional series of personal photographs. Based on the weight of this new evidence, the NCBRC reconsidered this report and unanimously voted to accept. With this vote and based on Patteson's photos published in Howell (2012) and Flood and Fisher (2013), Zino's Petrel is added to the Definitive List. Finally, the NCBRC wants to extend thanks to Bill Pranty, chair of the ABA CLC for his assistance in providing us with this body of evidence.

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) (13-03). A group of up to 5 birds identified as this species were reported from 25 February through 8 April 2013 from Lake Mattamuskeet, Hyde County. The NCBRC was able to review formal written documentations of single birds by Ryan Bakelaar and Scott Winton, as well as informal communications from Susan Campbell who reported that up to 5 individuals were present. The NCBRC unanimously accepted the collective reports. This species is already on the Definitive List based on two previous records from the state (LeGrand et al. 2014).

Roseate Spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*) (13-15). The NCBRC reviewed a second-hand report from 14 September 2009 seen by David Jackson at Lake Townsend, Greensboro, Guilford County. The report was accepted by eight members and not accepted by one. The dissenting member expressed concern that regardless of how obvious the species may be, second hand descriptions are "hear-say" evidence and should not be deemed reliable evidence. This species is already on the Definitive List. Though most records are from the coast, there are multiple inland records west to the western Piedmont (LeGrand et al. 2014).

Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis harlani*) (13-17). The NCBRC reviewed photographs of a NC Museum of Natural Sciences specimen of an adult male of this western race of Red-tailed Hawk, taken in Charlotte, Mecklenburg County on 13 January 2003. Seven members accepted the identification, one voted Inadequately Documented (ID) and one abstained. This record is accepted. Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk is currently on the Provisional List based on a single previous sight record. With acceptance of the specimen, this subspecies is elevated to the Definitive List. Normally the NCBRC does not review reports of recognized subspecies. However, in this case, there are prominent raptor biologists who believe Harlan's is a distinct species. Regardless of that future determination, it clearly is a distinct form. Therefore, this vote seemed to be warranted.

Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) (13-02). A single individual was first reported by Martin Wall on 24 February 2013 West of Roxboro, Person County and subsequently was seen by scores of observers through 8 March 2013. The NCBRC reviewed four written reports from Martin Wall, Kent Fiala, Harry LeGrand, and Michael Tove plus photographs by Wall, Kent Fiala, Ali Iyoob and Tom Justice. Based on this body of evidence, the NCBRC unanimously accepted the bird. There are two previous records from the state, one from the coast documented by photographs and a specimen from the Piedmont (LeGrand et al. 2014). This is the first that was observed over multiple days by numerous observers.

Snowy Plover (*Charadrius nivosus*) (13-01, 13-11). Two reports of this species from Onslow County were received and unanimously accepted. The first was a bird observed and photographed at Hammocks Beach State Park near Swansboro on 18 February 2013 by Ed Corey. The second was photographed by Gilbert S. Grant on 3 September 2013 at North Topsail Beach. Although the NCBRC voted on these two reports separately, with only 12 miles separating the two locations, there is a distinct possibility that both sightings refer to the same individual. While this species is already on the state Definitive List based on 8-9 previous records, all from the coast (LeGrand et al. 2014), the Hammocks Beach record constitutes the first winter record from the state. If both records do refer to the same individual, it suggests the possibility that this species might, on occasion, occur as a year-round visitor.

Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) (13-13). An adult was photographed at Lake Norman, Mecklenburg County on 11 September 2013 by Chris Talkington. Based on the photographs, this report was unanimously accepted. While this species is a regular, if not uncommon migrant to NC's offshore waters, there is only a single previous inland record, a 1960 specimen from Wake County (LeGrand et al. 2014). This is by far the westernmost record of the species from the state.

Wagtail sp. (*Motacilla sp.*) (13-19). A bird seen on 15 September 2013 by John Fussell, Jack Fennell, Chandra Biggerstaff, and Stan Rule at the Cedar Island Ferry Terminal, Carteret County was identified to genus only. While suspected of being a White Wagtail (*M. alba*), the observers were unable to get adequate views of the species to satisfactorily eliminate other species of the group. The NCBRC unanimously accepted the written report by Fussell. There are two previous records of wagtail from NC, both White Wagtails including one from the same location as the present bird (LeGrand et al. 2014). As White Wagtail is currently on the Definitive List, a record of *Motacilla sp.* results in no change to the status of that genus from the state.

Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*) (13-04). A male of indeterminate age was photographed at a feeder by Maryann Mayer at Jamestown, Guilford County on 2 April 2013. Based on a single photograph and to a lesser degree, a written description, this report was unanimously accepted. This species is already on the Definitive List based on a single previous well documented record from the coast. This constitutes the first record from the Piedmont (LeGrand et al. 2014).

Not Accepted. The following reports were judged to be unacceptable by a majority of NCBRC Members.

Muscovy Duck (*Cairina moschata*) (13-08). The NCBRC considered the possibility of adding Muscovy Duck to the Not Established (NE) List. That this species occurs in the state as an exotic is not disputed but the question of whether it constitutes a feral, self-sustaining (albeit highly domesticated) population was considered. The NE List is a new list category whose purpose is to recognize certain non-native or captive-reared repatriated species whose populations may be in the process of becoming established but are currently insufficiently established to be considered on either the Provisional or Definitive Lists. By a vote of four in favor (NE) and five against (QO - Questionable Origin), the NCBRC deferred adding this species to the NE List. Two dissenting members cited concerns that because of insufficient documentation of free-flying birds and/or breeding without direct human intervention, adding the species to the NE List at this time is premature.

Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*) (13-05). The NCBRC reviewed photographs of a specimen of an individual picked up in a parking lot in Charlotte, Mecklenburg County on 25 October 2005. The bird had been banded as a chick in Alberta, Canada during the previous summer. The specimen was noted to have suffered a skull fracture and died (presumably) of cerebral hematoma, suggesting that it collided with a vehicle. Ultimately, the NCBRC concluded that the bird more than likely was hit by a car or truck somewhere out of state, got lodged in that vehicle's superstructure and thusly transported into the state. Accordingly, the record is considered QO (Questionable Origin). There are two previous accepted records from the state and the species is already on the Definitive List.

White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*) (13-20). A bird seen by an observer, without the aid of binoculars, was reported as this South American species. Two members voted to Accept as Valid (AV), and seven voted to not accept (4 ID - Inadequately Documented, 3 US - Unaccepted Sighting). Accordingly, this report is not accepted.

The NCBRC also reviewed reports of four other species that were unanimously non-accepted. It is the policy of the NCBRC to not publish any details, including the reported name, of any species which received no acceptance reports. The NCBRC feels that exercise serves no useful purpose while putting the name of the species in print in *The Chat*, where it might be indexed. Finally, the NCBRC received reports of six species which are too common to warrant BRC review plus one report of “Do not know.” While the NCBRC welcomes rare bird reports from anyone of any skill level, we ask that observers first check to ensure their sighting is actually rare and not submit a report of something for which they cannot identify.

Delisted. The following species are removed from their current placement on lists of Birds from North Carolina.

Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*) (11-17). A bird reported in Chapel Hill, Orange County on 1 October 2011 that was previously accepted (Tove et al. 2012), was reconsidered. In light of the discovery that the photograph offered as evidence may have been of a bird from other than North Carolina, the original observer requested that the NCBRC rescind the record. The NCBRC unanimously agreed and the species was removed from the NC List. With this action, the species is now regarded to have not occurred in North Carolina.

Pine Grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator*) (13-10). This species is currently on the Definitive List by virtue of nine previously published reports (LeGrand et al. 2014). However, because none of those reports contained photographic documentation or compelling descriptions, the NCBRC unanimously voted to remove the species from the Definitive List. Seven members felt that the species was adequately documented to be retained on the Provisional List while two members felt the possibility of misidentification and inadequate documentation warranted delisting altogether. Accordingly, Pine Grosbeak is removed from the Definitive List and added to the Provisional List.

Summary

With this round of voting, Zino’s Petrel is added to the Definitive List, Harlan’s Red-tailed Hawk is elevated from the Provisional List to Definitive List, Pine Grosbeak is moved from the Definitive List to the Provisional List, and Violet-green Swallow is delisted altogether. The total number of species from North Carolina remains at 474 on the Accepted List, of which 460 are considered Definitive (a net loss of one species, not including subspecies), one is considered Not Established, and 13 are Provisional (a net increase of one for that category).

Literature Cited

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Corrigendum to the 2012 Annual Report: The 2012 report of the NCBRC referenced a Monk Parakeet reported in Davie County in Farmington, NC on August 6, 2008. The photograph of this bird was taken by Phil Dickinson, not by Ron Morris as was originally stated. The two did observe the bird together.

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