

2013 Annual Report of the South Carolina Bird Records Committee

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In 2013, the South Carolina Bird Records Committee (SCBRC) took action on 26 new reports of which 21 were accepted, 3 not accepted and 2 recommended for outside review. We also voted a second time on 3 reports for which the original votes had been inconclusive and we had obtained comment by outside experts. Of those three reports, 1 was accepted by the committee and 2 not accepted. Additionally, the committee received 5 other reports that were not circulated, 2 because they were withdrawn by the submitter before a vote, and 3 because the reports involved non-review species.

The 2013 submissions added two species to South Carolina's Main Species List, MacGillivray's Warbler and Anna's Hummingbird, bringing the state's list to 429 species. The most recent version of the list is available online at <http://carolinabirdclub.org/brc>.

In 2013, the committee membership expanded to 9 members, with Keith McCullough (Charleston), Aaron Given (Kiawah Island) and Jeff Click (Easley) joining the Committee, J. B. Hines III rotating off the committee, and Chris Hill becoming chair. The following report details actions taken by the SC Bird Records Committee in 2013.

Accepted reports

Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*) (12-12-17). This report, submitted by Matthew Campbell, involved a bird at the campus of Charleston Southern University in Charleston that remained from 18 January to 11 December 2012. Greater White-fronted Geese are not a review species in South Carolina overall, but since known patterns of occurrence are strictly as a winter visitor (Post and Gauthreaux 1989) the committee reviewed this record as a first documented summer record. Though with waterfowl it is difficult to prove wild origin beyond a doubt, the report fits a pattern of overwintering geese in the southeast and was accepted as a wild bird by the committee.

Aechmophorus sp. (01-11-05). This report of two grebes seen from Hilton Head Island on 12 February 2011 was submitted by Dr. Beverly Schneider as pertaining to Western Grebes. An inconclusive vote when circulated two years ago occasioned a revote on this record after the committee received comments from two outside reviewers. The report was accepted unanimously at the level of *Aechmophorus sp.*, but only one member voted in favor of acceptance to species, so the record is accepted at the level of genus only. This report constitutes the fifth *Aechmophorus* grebe record for South Carolina. Two previous records, a specimen from McClellanville 22 June 1936 (Post and Gauthreaux 1989) and a bird observed from late August to late October 1999 in Bennettsville and accepted by the committee (Glover et al. 2002), pertain to Western Grebes, and two additional sight reports (14 April 1957 Horry Co; 23 Nov 1966 Charleston Harbor) (Post and Gauthreaux 1989) were not described well enough to distinguish them from Clark's, and should be assigned to *Aechmophorus sp.*

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) (09-08-30). This report, with photographs by Lauren Nybeck, was submitted by Chris Hill. The report concerned a banded bird, picked up alive on Surfside Beach on 6 September 2008, the day after Tropical Storm Hannah hit, taken to a veterinarian and rehabber, and later released. The report included information (from the band and communication with the bander) about the bird's origin. The bird had been banded as a chick on 2 March 2003 at French Cap, St. Thomas, USVI. This record is the third documented occurrence in the state. The previous records are of a specimen from 4 January 1968 in Charleston (Post and Gauthreaux 1989) and a bird at Huntington Beach State Park and North Island, Georgetown County, 8-25 June 2012 (Pitts et al. 2013).

Dovekie (*Alle alle*) (03-03-20). Found alive 31 March 2013, Horry County by T. Brun.

Dovekie (02-10-21). Found alive on a road in Surfside Beach, Horry County, 6 February 2010.

Dovekie (00-13-22). Found dead at Hobcaw Barony, Georgetown County, on a dirt road or causeway by J. Beissinger. Date uncertain, but in January, February or March 2013.

Dovekie (04-13-23). Found alive, 8 April 2013, brought to a veterinarian's office in Surfside Beach, Horry County.

All four reports of Dovekies were submitted by Chris Hill and accompanied by photographs. The three birds found alive all died soon after they were picked up. Those three are now specimens in the collection at Coastal Carolina University (the fourth was decomposed and was discarded). Post and Gauthreaux (1989) cite 14 Dovekie reports up to 1950, and the committee had previously accepted three other reports between 2005 and 2011

(Slyce et al. 2006, 2008; Slyce et al. 2011). The Dovekie found on 8 April establishes the late date for the species in South Carolina.

Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*) (09-13-07). The committee accepted a written report and photograph submitted by Rebecca Byrd of two individuals at Lake Hartwell on 15 September 2013, viewed from the Georgia side. This report constitutes the third record for South Carolina, all in the same mid-September window, the others being an individual photographed 7 September 1985 off Georgetown County (Post and Gauthreaux 1989), and an individual seen 13 September 1992 at the Charleston jetties (McNair and Post 1993).

Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*) (12-13-34). Chris Feeney submitted this written report and accompanying photographs of a bird at Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Charleston Co., on 15 December 2013, with Chris Snook also submitting a description of the same bird. There are at least 15 valid records of Snowy Owl for South Carolina, but only 5 since 1956, most recently one in January 2012 in Kershaw Co. that died soon after being photographed alive (Pitts et al. 2013).

Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) (12-07-25). This written description by Chris Hill, including some detail on vocalizations, of a bird encountered on the Winyah Bay Christmas Bird Count on 20 December 2007, was accepted by the committee. Post and Gauthreaux (1989) consider Northern Saw-whet Owl a rare winter visitor throughout the state.

Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*) (12-10-33). A report from bander Doreen Cubie of a bird at Hanahan in Berkeley County in 2010 was very well documented with description and photographs. This is the first accepted record for the state, and diagnostic photographs place it on the definitive list.

Buff-bellied Hummingbird (*Amazilia yucatanensis*) (12-12-20). Lori Owenby submitted an excellent report accompanied by in-hand photographs from when Dwayne Martin banded the bird on 19 December 2012. This bird was photographed and seen by many observers at McClellanville during its stay in the winter of 2012-2013. This constitutes the second Buff-bellied Hummingbird record for the state, with the previous being one banded by Bill Hilton in December 2001 (Slyce et al. 2004).

Alder Flycatcher (*Empidonax alnorum*) (08-13-06). Irvin Pitts submitted detailed notes and a photograph of a bird seen and heard on 26 August 2013 at Carolina Sandhills NWR, in Chesterfield County, by Pitts and Dennis Forsythe. Accepted on the basis of the description, particularly of the vocalizations of the bird, which sang.

Alder Flycatcher (09-13-31). This report from Aaron Given is of a bird banded at Kiawah Island, Charleston County, on September 25, 2013, and it

was accepted based on excellent description, extensive measurements and comparison with criteria published in Pyle (1997).

Although a photograph accompanied one of these reports, Alder Flycatcher remains on the Provisional I list, meaning that written reports have been accepted but there is not yet documentary evidence (photo, specimen, sound recording) sufficient to move it to the Definitive List. The photograph submitted with the first record above was consistent with Alder, but not definitive without the accompanying description of the vocalizations. There is one previous documented record of Alder Flycatcher in the state, of a bird in hand by bander Chris Snook on 16 September 2009 at Folly Island, Charleston County, (Pitts et al. 2012).

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) (11-13-32). Aaron Given submitted a report including definitive photos, of a bird banded on Kiawah Island on 4 November 2013. This constitutes the fifth record for South Carolina.

Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*) (09-13-32). A report by Aaron Given, with photographs, of a bird banded on Kiawah Island on 9 September 2013.

Bell's Vireo (2014-012). Another report by Aaron Given, with photographs, of a bird banded on Kiawah Island on 6 September 2012.

The Kiawah Island fall banding project has captured one Bell's Vireo in each of the past three years, on dates from 6 to 17 September (Pitts et al. 2012). In addition to those records, there is a specimen in the Charleston Museum (14 October 1985, Mt. Pleasant (Post and Gauthreaux 1989), and a sight report from the Caw Caw Interpretive Center in Charleston County in April 2000 accepted by the committee (Slyce et al. 2004). One additional report published in *American Birds* without details (LeGrand 1989) has not been evaluated by the committee.

Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) (2014-001). This submission by Chris Snook consisted of notes (including a photocopy of field notes) describing a Cave Swallow seen on the McClellanville Christmas Bird Count on 15 December 2013. The SCBRC has accepted three previous reports, including a specimen salvaged October 1994. Although Cave Swallows have been reported extensively from South Carolina in the last decade, submission of documentation is still encouraged, especially from areas away from the coast.

Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*) (12-12-35). Reviewed as an out of season record, this submission by Irvin Pitts included excellent photos of a bird observed 5-11 December 2012 in Lexington, Lexington County. Any non-Hermit brown-backed thrush in December is noteworthy, and so many

Hermit Thrushes get misidentified in winter as other thrushes that the true winter status of Swainson's Thrush, Veery, and Wood Thrush is difficult to discern, which makes this record valuable. This record is the latest documented Swainson's Thrush in South Carolina.

MacGillivray's Warbler (*Geothlypis tolmiei*) (10-13-27). Aaron Given submitted a written report and four photos of a bird banded on Kiawah Island on 18 October 2013. This is the first record of the species in South Carolina and the diagnostic photos place this bird on the definitive list.

Northern Parula (*Setophaga americana*) (01-13-01). This report consisted of an excellent written description by Simon Harvey of a late lingering bird watched at Lake Conestee Nature Park, Greenville County, on 5 January 2013. Post and Gauthreaux (1989) say that in the Piedmont and mountains Northern Parula is accidental in winter and list one record, from 15 December 1984 in Martin, Allendale County.

American Tree Sparrow (*Spizella arborea*) (05-13-04). This well-written report by Aaron Given included convincing details of a bird seen on Dewees Island, Charleston County on 5 May 2013. Post and Gauthreaux (1989) mention an "extremely late" record of this rare winter visitor, a bird photographed 26 April 1985 when it landed on a boat 20 km east of Edisto Island. The current report establishes a new late date and the second report outside of the winter months.

Non-accepted reports

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) (04-12-08). This report received an inconclusive vote in 2012. It was recirculated with comments from reviewers familiar with problems in identifying *Plegadis* ibis. A re-vote elicited another split vote with the preponderance of members concluding that although the blurry photograph was suggestive of White-faced Ibis, the evidence did not meet the standard needed to establish a first state record.

Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) (02-13-02). This written description of a bird seen in flight at Savannah NWR, in Jasper County in January 2013, was judged by the committee not to conclusively establish the identity of the bird.

Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*) (07-10-08). This report of two birds in Charleston County, with a blurry photo, also received an inconclusive vote in 2010. After recirculation with comments from two outside experts, the record was not accepted, with most committee members concluding the photograph represented young Eastern Screech-Owls.

Black-chinned Hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*) (04-13-03). Sight report from the ACE Basin NWR Combahee Unit on 28 April 2013. This description relied heavily on the appearance of a black throat, and did not provide details that would eliminate a Ruby-throated Hummingbird viewed from an angle where the reflective gorget feathers appeared black.

Common Redpoll (*Acanthis flammea*) (11-13-29). This written report from a backyard bird bath in Rock Hill, York County 29 November 2013, did not provide enough detail to conclusively eliminate House Finch.

Unresolved reports

Certain split votes, according to committee bylaws, require the soliciting of input from outside reviewers, followed by a re-vote by the committee. The following reports are awaiting outside review.

Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) (10-13-19). Written report of a bird seen at Lighthouse Inlet Heritage Preserve on 26 October 2013 on Folly Island, Charleston County.

Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) (02-10-10). Written report of a sighting 15 February 2010 in Columbia, SC.

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The committee thanks all the observers who submitted reports. Your actions increase our understanding of bird occurrence in the state. We thank J.B. Hines III for four years of service on the Bird Records Committee. We thank Bill Pranty, Dennis Paulson, Bill Hubick, Sherman Suter, Joshua Uffman, William Rowe, Mark Robbins Chris Wood and Tony Leukering for supplying comments on unresolved reports from previous years.

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