

2015 Annual Report of the South Carolina Bird Records Committee

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In 2015, the South Carolina Bird Records Committee (SCBRC) took action on 51 new reports, of which 47 were accepted, 4 not accepted. These reports included 24 “reports” which were photographs of review species which had been uploaded to the Carolina Bird Club photo web site without a formal report to the BRC. We also voted on two reports from early 2016, both of which were accepted. We voted a second and final time on a 2014 report. The original vote on that report had been inconclusive, so we obtained comment from an outside expert and then revoted. That report was not accepted in the second vote.

The accepted records added three species to South Carolina’s Main Species List: Trindade Petrel, Thayer’s Gull and Scott’s Oriole. The Main Species list currently stands at 433 species. The most recent version of the list is available online at <http://carolinabirdclub.org/brc>. Also at that site is a list of reports the committee is currently considering, and ones on which we have recently voted.

The committee started 2015 with a ninth member, Irvin Pitts, who resigned to serve as president to the Carolina Bird Club, and we finished the rest of the year with eight members. We thank Irvin for his service on the committee. The committee for 2016 will include all the members listed at the top of the article, plus Simon Harvey of Simpsonville, SC.

Below we detail actions taken by the SC Bird Records Committee in 2015.

Accepted reports

Fulvous Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna bicolor*) (2015-054). A single Fulvous Whistling-Duck was well photographed and banded at Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center in Georgetown County, where it was associating with Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks and other waterfowl. The status of the two *Dendrocygnas* in South Carolina has almost completely reversed in the last 50 years. As of the publication of Post and Gauthreaux’s “Status and Distribution of South Carolina Birds” in 1989, Fulvous was considered an “erratic winter visitor...locally common during invasion years,” while Black-bellied was considered accidental, with only one record. In the intervening

decades, Black-bellied has become a regular feature of the South Carolina avifauna, breeding at many sites in the coastal plain, while Fulvous has become vanishingly scarce. This is the first report voted on by the bird record committee, and the Bird Banding Lab (*vide* Jamie Dozier) reports that it is the first individual banded in the state since 1963.

Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) (Two reports accepted: 2015-003 & 2015-053). Lois Stacey and Willie Malpass each submitted a good description of a drake Eurasian Wigeon seen at Savannah NWR on 24 January 2015. Craig Watson submitted written notes and a photograph of another drake seen at Tibwin Plantation, Charleston County, on 20 December 2015. European Wigeon are rare visitors to the South Carolina coast, and casual inland (Post and Gauthreaux 1989).

Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) (2015-011). The committee voted on photographs of a drake Harlequin Duck submitted to the Carolina Bird Club photo site by Simon Thompson. The bird was seen 15 January 2006 at Huntington Beach State Park. Harlequin Ducks are rare winter visitors to the coast of South Carolina (Post and Gauthreaux 1989; McNair and Post 1993).

White-winged Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*) (2015-031). Rare in the upstate, Paul Serridge submitted written notes and photographs taken by Barry Phillips and David Booth of a bird at Lake Conestee Nature Park in Greenville on 7 and 8 March 2015.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) (2015-055). Seldom documented in South Carolina, a Western Grebe was seen and photographed by Wendy Allen off the south end of Pawleys Island on 30 December 2015 during the Litchfield-Pawleys Island Christmas Bird Count, and seen during the following week by several other observers. This is the first documented report of the species since 1999 (Glover et al. 2002), though a 2011 report was accepted as *Aechmophorus* sp. (Hill et al. 2014).

Trinidad Petrel (*Pterodroma arminjoniana*) (2015-033). New for South Carolina. Tom Johnson photographed an individual of this species and submitted excellent documentation to the Georgia Ornithological Society. The location of the sighting, at 31.161 N, 77.249 W is in South Carolina Waters by the closest point of land criterion, as adopted by both Georgia and South Carolina records committees. With the help of Jim Flynn and Joel McNeal, the report that had been filed with the Georgia committee was communicated to the South Carolina committee and was accepted unanimously. This report and the accompanying photographs place this species on the definitive list for South Carolina.

Fea's Petrel (*Pterodroma feae*) (Two reports accepted: 2015-036 & 2015-044). The committee voted on reports published in two articles (Haney et al. 1993; Dias 2014). The committee accepted the bird in Haney et al. (1993).

Dias (2014) describes three sightings. The committee had previously voted on and accepted independent documentation of one of these birds, from 10 June 2013 (Hill et al. 2015). 2015-036 was the number the committee assigned to a bird reported from 22 June 2012, which the committee also voted to accept.

Roseate Spoonbill (*Platylea ajaja*) (2015-040). Rare inland, the committee accepted a report from Lois Stacey of four birds at Silver Bluff Audubon Center, Aiken County.

White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*) (2015-032). An adult was observed and photographed by Carl Miller at Bear Island WMA on 7 March 2015. This species is known in South Carolina from seven historical reports and specimens (dating back to John James Audubon) (Post and Gauthreaux 1989), plus two other reports accepted by the committee: an adult in April 1999 at Clemson University (Glover et al. 2002), and a bird at the Bluff Unit of Santee NWR in October 2006 (Slyce et al. 2008)

Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) (2015-004). Alan Larmon submitted photographs of an adult Northern Goshawk that hit his bay window in Richland County on December 16, 2000. This is the fourth accepted report of Northern Goshawk in South Carolina. Previous accepted reports included a sight report from the Caesar's Head hawkwatch on 9 October 1995 (Worthington et al. 1997), a specimen found and photographed in December 2007 at Kiawah Island (Slyce et al. 2008) and a bird photographed at the Savannah River Spoils Site on 2 January 2012 (Pitts et al. 2013).

Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops novaboracensis*) (2015-046). A bird in juvenal plumage was picked up in a suburban backyard in Surfside Beach, SC on 11 November 2015, and brought to Ark Animal Hospital where the finders described it as "a young bird fallen from the nest too young to fly" (which it clearly was not!). A photo of the bird was posted on the internet with a query about its identity, and a helpful person from New York identified it as a young European Starling (which again, it clearly was not!). Tim Kalbach, formerly of the Carolinas but now in Florida, spotted the photo on line, notified some locals, and the bird, which expired at the animal hospital, ended up in the collection of Coastal Carolina University. Ah, the wonders of bird identification in the 21st century! Yellow Rails, which formerly wintered regularly in South Carolina coastal marshes, may still do so, but are essentially never reported from there and their status is poorly known. It is likely that they pass through as migrants in late fall, and this bird's unfortunate collision with a suburban window provided evidence of that.

Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*) (2015-039). Michael Barnett and James Yates submitted photographs of a Limpkin seen on 26 July 2015 on the Little Pee Dee River in Marion County. This is the seventh accepted record of Limpkin in the state.

Snowy Plover (*Charadrius nivosus*) (Two reports accepted: 2015-018 & 2014-021) Snowy plovers photographed by Cathy Miller at Kiawah Island on

24 August 2008 and by Sidney Maddock at Deveaux Bank on 27 November 2003 constitute the fifth and sixth accepted records for South Carolina.

Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*) (2015-025). An individual photographed at the Savannah Spoils Site on 31 May 2004 by Steve Calver provides the third accepted report for this species, following one at the Savannah Spoils Site in 1991 and one at North Island, Georgetown County, in 1992 (Carter and Worthington 1992; Worthington 1993).

Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*) (Three reports accepted: 2015-026, 2015-041 & 2015-043). The committee received three documented reports of Ruffs: a male molting out of breeding plumage 1 August 2008 at the Savannah Spoils site, photographed by Steve Calver, a male 18 June 2015 at Santee Coastal Reserve, reported by Steve Thomas, and a juvenile at Myrtle Beach State Park 7 October 2015 found by Scott Hartley and Ann Wilson.

Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia*) (Two reports accepted: 2015-006 & 2015-050). A Thick-billed Murre was photographed near the Cherry Grove Pier in North Myrtle Beach on 17 February 2015 by Bill Bendoritis. Another young Thick-billed Murre was found ashore at Litchfield Beach on 1 December 2015 and brought to the Birds of Prey center in Awendaw, where it perished. The specimen was transferred to Coastal Carolina University to become part of the teaching collection there. Post and Gauthreaux (1989) list one specimen, and one additional report was accepted by the BRC (Slyce et al. 2006), making the records here the third and fourth for South Carolina.

Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) (2015-024). The committee voted to accept a photograph submitted to the Carolina Bird Club photo gallery of a bird seen 25 August 2011 by Steve Calver.

Franklin's Gull (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*) (Four reports accepted: 2015-027, 2015-045, 2015-048, & 2015-049). The first of four Franklin's Gull reports was a photo by Steve Calver of a first year bird from 22 November 2011 from the Savannah Spoils Site. That photo resulted in a split vote, but was accepted 6-1 in the second vote. The other three were part of a large movement of birds down the east coast in November 2015 and included first year birds at Waites Island on the 11th (Chris Hill) and at Sullivan's Island on the 20th (Craig Watson) and an adult at Isle of Palms on the 18th (Matthew Campbell). Post and Gauthreaux (1989) and McNair and Post (1993) list five combined records of Franklin's Gull, and the committee has accepted one other previous report (Glover et al. 2002).

Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*) (2016-002). First for South Carolina. An adult photographed by Chris Hill at the Horry County Landfill on 11 January 2016 was the first accepted record for South Carolina. The photographs put the species on the definitive list.

Brown Noddy (*Anous stolidus*) (2015-007). Due to the acceptance by both South Carolina and Georgia bird record committees of "closest point of land" definitions of pelagic boundaries, a Brown Noddy that had been observed and

photographed on 31 May 2012 by Joel McNeal in what he then considered Georgia waters, and which had been accepted by the Georgia committee, is now considered to have been seen in South Carolina waters. The report to the Georgia committee was viewed this year by the South Carolina committee, who voted to accept the record. The bird was seen perched on Navy Tower R7 at 31.817N, 80.274W. Post and Gauthreaux (1989) list 9 previous records of Brown Noddies, on dates from 16 June to 11 October, with six of the nine sightings taking place in August and September.

Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*) (2015-010). A Snowy Owl was photographed in Clarendon County on 27 February 2015 by Betsey Bergen.

Black-chinned Hummingbird (*Archilocus alexandri*). (Three reports accepted: 2015-002, 2015-028, & 2015-035). An adult male Black-chinned Hummingbird spent two months (6 February to 5 April) in the yard of Edith and Marion Clark in Lexington, where it fed from camelia blossoms and a nectar feeder. A second adult male was on James Island from 14 to 25 January 2015 where it was photographed by Jennifer Tyrell. A third adult male was at Charleston on 17 November 2007 (Doreen Cubie), where it was photographed, and photos were posted to the Carolina Bird Club photo gallery.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) (2015-052). Visiting out-of-state birder Carl Engstrom obtained and submitted identifiable photographs of a bird at Savannah NWR, seen there from 9-14 March 2014. This is the sixth accepted record of the species for South Carolina.

Gray Kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) (2015-020). A photograph by Mike Turner from Columbia was accepted by the committee. Gray Kingbird is a rare vagrant in South Carolina.

Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*) (Three accepted reports: 2015-012, 2015-013 and 2015-047). The committee accepted photo-documented reports from the Georgetown Airport on 14 December 2012 (Dennis Forsythe) and from Huntington Beach State Park on April 15 2006 (Dan Chambers), as well as a written description from North Myrtle Beach on 24 November 2015 (Joseph Gyekis).

Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*) (Four accepted reports: 2015-014, 2015-015, 2015-016 & 2015-017). Western Tanager has reached the status of uncommon winter visitor, rather than a rare vagrant, in South Carolina, and will probably be dropped from the review list at the next revision. These four well-documented reports were from Kiawah Island, Okatie, Hilton Head and Myrtle Beach on 28 March 2014, 16 January 2014, 16 March 2012 and 24 January 2012, and were photographed by Liz King, Diane Rand, Stanton Allaben and Phil Turner respectively.

Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*) (Two accepted reports: 2015-022 & 2015-023). Birds photographed by Steve Calver at the Savannah Spoils Site on 14 October 2011 and 29 October 2008 add to eight previously published records in the state (Post and Gauthreaux 1989; McNair and Post 1993).

Yellow-rumped “Audubon’s” Warbler (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*) (2015-051). A bird photographed by Jack Rogers at Mount Pleasant was the third documented record of this western subspecies of Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*) (2015-009). This record is of a bird photographed at Huntington Beach State Park by Charles Tysinger on 14 June 2006. This species was first documented in the state on 16 July 1989 (McNair and Post 1993), and was documented inland by 1996 (Worthington et al. 1996), and has been shown to breed in the state (Post and Sykes 2011), but has dried up, with no reports since this bird photographed in 2006.

Bullock’s Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*) (Two reports accepted: 2015-005 & 2015-029). Birds were photo-documented by Aaron Given and Jay Chandler near Ravenel and Hemingway, respectively, on 19 February 2015 and 11 December 2011.

Scott’s Oriole (*Icterus parisorum*) (2016-001). A male at a feeder in Six Mile, Pickens County, was seen by many visitors and well documented by Imtiz Haque for a first record of this species in the state. Photographs put this species on the definitive list.

Non-accepted reports

Fea’s Petrel (*Pterodroma feae*) (2015-037). This report refers to the second Fea’s Petrel reported from June 10, 2013 in Dias (2014). The committee had no doubt that the photographed bird was a Fea’s Petrel, but not all members were convinced it was shown to be a different individual from the other Fea’s Petrel reported from the same trip (record 2015-036 above). After an inconclusive first vote, the report was not accepted on a second vote.

Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*) (2014-024). This report from the upstate in winter 2014-2015, which resulted in a split vote in 2014, received a second vote after the committee received feedback from an outside expert. Although the reported bird could well have been a Red-necked Grebe, committee members felt the report lacked conclusive details.

Calliope Hummingbird (*Selasphorus calliope*) (2015-042). The description of a bird from Hilton Head Island did not cite sufficient details to allow specific identification of the bird reported.

Gray Kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) (2015-019). A photograph of a bird posted to the Carolina Bird Club web site, identified as a Gray Kingbird, is more likely an Eastern Kingbird.

Bullock’s Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*) (2015-030). A female-plumaged oriole, initially identified as a Bullock’s, and posted to the Carolina Bird Club photo gallery as a Bullocks, was later identified in hand by the bander as a Baltimore.

Acknowledgements

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