

# 2016 Annual Report of the South Carolina Bird Records Committee

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In 2016, the South Carolina Bird Records Committee took action on 19 new reports, of which 18 were accepted and 1 not accepted. All accepted records received unanimous support from the committee. One additional report was withdrawn by the submitter. Two accepted reports from early 2016, of Thayer's Gull and Scott's Oriole, were published with the 2015 report and are not addressed further here.

The accepted records detailed below add one species to South Carolina's Main Species List: Yellow-green Vireo. The Main Species list currently stands at 434 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 for which we have recently voted.

Simon Harvey joined the committee in 2016. Other than that committee membership was unchanged.

Below we detail actions taken by the SC Bird Records Committee in 2016.

## Accepted reports

**Brant** (*Branta bernicla*) (2016-003). Lex Glover submitted a written report of a Brant seen 17 December 2016 on South Island at the Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center in Georgetown County during the Winyah Bay Christmas Bird Count. The report was accepted unanimously. Brant are rare winter visitors to the South Carolina coast.

**Western Grebe** (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) (2 reports: 2016-004 and 2016-005). David McLean submitted a report with a photograph of this species at Bull Island, Charleston County on 3 January 2016. The committee also accepted two reports of a bird in the ocean at Botany Bay WMA, Beaufort County. David Youngblood found the bird on 27 January 2016 and submitted a report with a clear photograph. Pam Ford relocated the bird on 31 January 2016 and submitted a written description. A possible second individual at Botany Bay on 27 January was not confirmed.

**Black Guillemot** (*Cephus grylle*) (2016-011) Michael Robertson submitted a report with 3 photographs of a bird at the Huntington Beach State Park jetty, Georgetown County, on 27 November 2016. The report was supplemented by a fourth photo from Pam Ford. The bird remained in the area

for several weeks and was seen by many birders. The last report to eBird was on 5 January 2017.

**Brown Booby** (*Sula leucogaster*) (2016-009). Lois Stacey filed a report of a Brown Booby seen at Clark's Hill Dam on Strom Thurmond Lake on 9 October 2016. The report included an excellent description and definitive photos of the bird in flight. This bird was likely blown off course as a result of Hurricane Matthew that made landfall in South Carolina on 8 October 2016.

**Snail Kite** (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*) (2016-017). Very surprising was South Carolina's second record of Snail Kite, seen and well photographed on 30 November 2016, and seen briefly the next morning, on 1 December 2016 at Lake Conestee Nature Park, Greenville County. Paul Serridge filed a report supplemented with excellent photos by Anthony Martin. The juvenal plumaged bird was wearing a field-readable alphanumeric band, and the photos showed the complete code. Tyler Beck, Snail Kite Conservation Coordinator with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission forwarded the history of that bird, which had been "banded just prior to fledging on 16 July 2016 in a private mitigation wetland near Fellsmere, FL."

**Red-tailed Hawk (Kridler's)** (*Buteo jamaicensis kriderii*) (2016-012). Stephen R. Thomas sent the committee two photographs and a report of a flyover Red-tailed Hawk near Doar Plantation in Georgetown County on 21



Immature Snail Kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*) at Lake Conestee Nature Park, Greenville County, SC, 1 December 2016. Photo by Anthony Q. Martin.

November 2016. The committee agreed unanimously that this individual was a Krider's Red-tailed Hawk, a subspecies that nests on northern plains and prairies in the north-central U.S. and adjacent Canada. This subspecies is rarely documented on the East Coast.

**Burrowing Owl** (*Athene cunicularia*) (2016-007). Aaron Given reported a Burrowing Owl that wintered at Kiawah Island, Charleston County (seen from 25 January to 5 March 2016). Some committee members attempted to determine whether the individual was of the Florida population or the subspecies from the western U.S. but as a whole the committee reached no firm conclusion on that.

**Bell's Vireo** (*Vireo bellii*) (4 accepted reports: 2016-013, 2016-014, 2016-015, 2016-018). Although Bell's Vireo was practically unrecorded in South Carolina until recently, the recipe for finding one is clear – operate a fall banding station on the coast near Charleston. This year Aaron Given of the Kiawah Island Banding Station contributed three more records, of birds banded on 5, 12, and 30 September. A newer fall banding station on Sullivan's Island contributed a fourth record, from 21 September, reported and with photos by Jennifer Tyrell. Even at the banding sites, Bell's Vireos are seldom if ever detected unless they are captured.

**Yellow-green Vireo** (*Vireo flavoviridis*) (2016-008). New for South Carolina. Blaine Harris Carnes reported this species, from the Kiawah Island Banding Station, with diagnostic measurements and photographs. As recounted in a blog post at the banding station website, Carnes actually had the bird in hand on 22 September 2016 and due to a mistaken measurement, he misidentified it as a bright Red-eyed Vireo and released it, despite having handled many Yellow-green Vireos in Central and South America. Once he released it, Carnes realized his error. After 5 tense days, the vireo was recaptured on 27 September, and this time measured properly and photographed to document the new species for South Carolina that almost got away. Yellow-green Vireos breed from Mexico to Panama, rarely to south Texas. They are migratory, and regularly stray to the California coast in fall, also straying to the Gulf coast states including Florida. The only previous record on the Atlantic coast north of Florida that the committee is aware of is a bird banded September 2011 in Massachusetts. (Flemer et al. 2011).

**Golden-winged Warbler** (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) (2016-019). Scarce even in migration, a Golden-winged Warbler in February is unprecedented in South Carolina. Keith McCullough provided a report with photographs of this bird, seen by many at Caw Caw Interpretive Center in Charleston County, found 6 February and continuing through 21 February (D. Forsythe pers. comm.).

**Mourning Warbler** (*Geothlypis philadelphia*) (2016-016). Aaron Given submitted a report with definitive photographs of a hatch-year Mourning Warbler banded at the Kiawah Island Banding Station on 12 September 2016.

**Non-accepted reports**

**Masked Duck** (*Nomonyx dominicus*) (2016-010). This intriguing report, of a bird at Savannah National Wildlife Refuge on 22 November 1973, received 2 votes to accept and 6 votes of inadequate documentation. The report came from field notes of long time Augusta, Georgia birder Anne Waters. Lois Stacey came across this report while transcribing these notes and entering unusual sightings into eBird. The field notes submitted to the committee showed an excellent sketch of a *Nomonyx* duck with a dark cap and two horizontal dark stripes on a paler cheek. However, it seemed likely that the sketch was done after the sighting, not during it, and most voters had too many concerns about the lack of details (actions of the bird, specific habitat) to vote in favor.

**Acknowledgements**

The committee thanks all the observers who submitted reports, and those who encouraged others to submit reports. Your actions increase our understanding of bird occurrence in the state.

**Literature Cited**

Flemer, B., W.O. Gette, and D.M. Larson. 2011. Yellow-green Vireo *Vireo flavoviridis* banded at Plum Island, Massachusetts. *Bird Observer*. 39:5.