

2017 Annual Report of the South Carolina Bird Records Committee

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In 2017, the South Carolina Bird Records Committee acted on 27 new reports, of which 26 were accepted and one sent out for outside review. Two additional reports were submitted but were not voted on by the Committee. One was a report of a coastal Magnificent Frigatebird, which is only a review species in the inland parts of the state. The other was a bird that was originally misidentified.

The accepted records detailed below add five species to South Carolina's Main List: Great Kiskadee, Black-whiskered Vireo, White-faced Ibis, South Polar Skua (replacing Skua sp.), and American Flamingo. Thayer's Gull was removed from the Main List after the American Ornithological Society determined that it was a subspecies of Iceland Gull (Chesser et al. 2017). The Main List now includes 437 species.

The 2017 Atlantic hurricane season was very active, and Hurricane Irma, in particular, had a temporary effect in bird distribution in the southeastern U.S. Irma made its way west across the Caribbean, turned north after hitting Cuba, and made its U.S. landfall in Florida on 10 September. It proceeded to skirt the west coast of Florida before heading up through Georgia. In the days following the passage of Irma, several individuals including two Brown Boobies, two Brown Noddies, and an American Flamingo were reported in South Carolina.

The annual meeting of the SCBRC was held on 15 April 2017 at Santee National Wildlife Refuge. The meeting was attended by Jeff Click, Aaron Given, Lex Glover, Chris Hill, and Steve Wagner. Chris Hill stepped down as the committee Chair, and the committee elected Aaron Given as the new Chair. Lex Glover was elected Secretary, and Jeff Click and Chris Hill were elected to the Nomination Committee.

The Committee agreed to remove Eurasian Wigeon (coastal only) and Western Tanager from the review list. Both species are becoming nearly annual in South Carolina, and sometimes with multiple individuals.

Because eBird has become so widely used and available to everyone, many good records reported there are not being reported to the Committee. To alleviate the amount of time it takes for an observer to file an additional report to the Committee, the Committee discussed creating a potential "auto-accept" policy of eBirded reports of certain species. These

reports would not have to be voted on by the committee but would become part of the official records. Reports that would qualify for this “auto-accept” policy would be species that regularly occur in the state and/or species that are easily identified via a photograph or recording with no issue of provenance. The committee will continue to discuss this idea over the next year and determine if this policy would be beneficial in maintaining the official records of South Carolina. Other state records committees have adopted similar policies (Garvey and Iliff 2013).

Accepted Reports

King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*). 2017-001. Chris Hill submitted a report with two photographs, on behalf of the observer, of a King Eider that was harvested on 24 November 2015 in the ocean off Georgetown (Georgetown Co.) The report was accepted unanimously. Although this is only the 2nd record that has come through the committee, according to eBird there may be as many as three additional reports; all from Huntington Beach State Park in January/February (1990, 1996, 2014).

American Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*). 2017-019. Felicia Sanders submitted a report accompanied by one photograph and one short video clip of an American Flamingo at Santee Coastal Reserve (Murphy Island; Charleston Co.) from 9-10 October 2017. This record was accepted by a vote of 7-1 (QO). Questions of origin are always a concern with a flamingo report outside of Florida. The video showed that the bird was not banded and had bright pink plumage. For most committee members, the issue of provenance was satisfied based on these features. This is a first record for South Carolina, and because of photographic evidence, it will be moved from the Hypothetical List to the Definitive List.

Potentially in conjunction with this report, on 11 September 2017, an American Flamingo was reported flying south along the beach at Myrtle Beach State Park (see 2017-018 in Unresolved reports). The following day on 12 September 2017, a boater took a blurry photo of an apparent American Flamingo in the tidal marsh near Tibwin Creek about 53 miles south of Myrtle Beach. Despite several attempts to relocate this bird, it was not relocated. This sighting did not result in a vote by the BRC, although this may be reconsidered. Then on 9 October 2017, staff at SCDNR got photographs and video of an American Flamingo on Murphy Island (Santee Coastal Reserve) which is only approximately 12 miles north of the Tibwin Creek sighting location. The bird was relocated at the same location the following day. It is possible that all these sightings represent the same individual that may have been displaced from the Florida population (?) by Hurricane Irma.

Limpkin (*Aramus guarana*). 2017-005. Barb Hennessy submitted a written report along with two photos of a Limpkin at Lake Robinson in

Taylor's (Greenville Co.) on 2 May 2017. The report was accepted unanimously.

Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*). 2017-006. Ann Wilson submitted a written report along with two photos of a Limpkin at Santee State Park (Orangeburg Co.) on 12 May 2017. The report was accepted unanimously.

Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*). 2017-009. Jonas Younts submitted a written report accompanied by two photos of Limpkin at Lake Greenwood in Waterloo (Laurens Co.) on 3 July 2017. The report was accepted unanimously.

Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*). 2017-010. Mark Johnson submitted a written report along with one photo of a Limpkin at Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge (Georgetown Co.) on 8 July 2017. The report was accepted unanimously.

South Polar Skua (*Stercorarius maccormicki*). 2017-012. Dan Vickers submitted a written report with multiple photos of a South Polar Skua seen on a pelagic trip on 22 June 2012. The geographical coordinates provided in the report confirmed that the bird was observed in South Carolina waters based on "closest point of land". The report was accepted unanimously. This represents the first record for South Carolina, and because of photographic evidence, it will be moved from the Hypothetical List to the Definitive List. At least four other eBird reports exist for this species in the waters off South Carolina.

Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*). 2017-026. Aaron Given submitted a written report along with 10 photographs, on behalf of the observer, of a Long-tailed Jaeger from Shipyard Beach in Hilton Head (Beaufort Co.) on 8 October 2017. The bird was found near the shoreline by some children playing on the beach. They moved the bird to a surfboard on the dunes. The bird was taken to a certified rehabber associated with the Center for Birds of Prey in St. Helena to examine. The bird presented with an open fracture of the left radius and ulna. The bird was euthanized in St. Helena while in communication with Center for Birds of Prey medical staff. The bird was kept in refrigeration until it was transported to the Center on 18 October 2017. The report was accepted unanimously.

Brown Noddy (*Anous stolidus*). 2017-016. Chris Hill submitted a report of a Brown Noddy, on behalf of the observer, and based on three photographs that he received from the Center for Birds of Prey in Awendaw. The bird was observed sitting on a beach walkover at the Isle of the Palms (Charleston Co.) on 12 September 2017, one day following the passing of Hurricane Irma. The bird appeared to be injured or exhausted but flew to the water after being approached by a dog. The report was accepted unanimously.

Brown Noddy (*Anous stolidus*). 2017-017. Chris Hill submitted a report and two photographs, on behalf of the observers (Amanda and Paul Laurent), of a Brown Noddy at Huntington Beach State Park (Georgetown Co.) on 12 September 2017. The report was accepted unanimously.

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*). 2017-002. Larry Gates submitted a written report of a Pacific Loon observed in the ocean off Litchfield Beach (Georgetown) on 29 December 2016. The report was accepted unanimously. This represents the 5th record for South Carolina.

Cory's Shearwater (Scopoli's) (*Calonectris diomedea diomedea*). 2017-013. The British Ornithologists' Union split Cory's Shearwater into three species (Sangster et al. 2012), including two that likely occur in South Carolina: Cory's Shearwater (*C.d. borealis*) and Scopoli's Shearwater (*C.d. diomedea*). The Committee feels that it is important to track records of Scopoli's to not only help determine occurrence but to document them for the record should the American Ornithological Society ever decide to split them.

Dan Vickers submitted a written report accompanied by one photograph of a Cory's Shearwater (Scopoli's) from a pelagic trip on 22 June 2012. The geographical coordinates provided in the report confirmed that the bird was observed in South Carolina waters based on "closest point of land". The report was accepted unanimously.

Sooty Shearwater (*Ardenna grisea*). 2017-014. Dan Vickers submitted a written report accompanied by 4 photographs of a Sooty Shearwater from a pelagic trip on 22 June 2012. The geographical coordinates provided in the report confirmed that the bird was observed in South Carolina waters based on "closest point of land". The report was accepted unanimously.

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*). 2017-020. Scott Hartley submitted a written report with two photographs of a Brown Booby from Myrtle Beach State Park (Horry Co.) on 12 September 2017. The report was accepted unanimously.

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*). 2017-027. Aaron Given submitted a written report accompanied by 3 photographs, on behalf of the observer, of a Brown Booby from Bluffton (Beaufort Co.) on 14 September 2017. This bird was found in the backyard of a house in Bluffton. The homeowner said the bird kept colliding with the fence causing minor abrasions to the head. Melissa Davis, mammal rehabber on Daufuskie Island, captured the bird and contacted the Center for Birds of Prey in Awendaw, SC. The bird was transported to the Center on the following day. The bird appeared to be healthy and no signs of injury according to the Center. The bird was transferred to the Marine Science Center in Ponce Inlet Florida on 6 October 2017. The bird was planned for release via a pelagic boat to a Brown Booby colony in South Florida. The report was accepted unanimously.

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*). 2017-011. Steve Patterson submitted a written report accompanied by three photographs and one video of a White-faced Ibis at Springdale Racetrack in Camden (Kershaw Co.) on 24 June 2017. The report was accepted unanimously. This represents the first record for South Carolina, and because of photographic evidence, it will

be placed on the Definitive List. There are three eBird reports of a White-faced Ibis from Savannah National Wildlife Refuge (Jasper Co.) that had been reportedly seen by multiple observers spanning the dates of 10 November 2000 and 18 February 2001. There are no photographs or descriptions associated with any of the eBird reports.

Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*). 2017-024. Aaron Given submitted a written report along with 4 photographs, on behalf of the observer, of a Snowy Owl from Myrtle Beach (Horry Co.) on 12 December 2017. The bird was photographed eating a pigeon and posted on Facebook. The bird reportedly allowed close approach and people feared the bird was injured, so the Center for Birds of Prey captured the bird the same day and took it back to the Center for treatment. The Center reported that the bird was malnourished and had a heavy parasite load. On 22 December 2017, after treatment and care the bird was transferred to Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research in Newark, Delaware. The bird will be banded and released via coordinators from the Project Snow Storm. The report was accepted unanimously.

Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*). 2017-021. Chris Hill and Lois Stacey submitted written reports along with several photographs of a female Vermilion Flycatcher at a planned development site (Craven's Grant) in Georgetown (Georgetown Co.). The bird was extremely cooperative and was enjoyed by dozens of birders from 23 November 2017 to 2 January 2018. The report was accepted unanimously.

Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*). 2017-022. Harold Donnelly submitted a written report along with 4 photographs of a male Vermilion Flycatcher from private property in Orangeburg Co from 6 December 2017 to 2 January 2018. The report was accepted unanimously.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*). 2017-025. Steve Calver submitted a written report accompanied with 7 photographs of an Ash-throated Flycatcher from the Savannah Spoil Area (Jasper Co.) on 30 December 2017. The report was accepted unanimously.

Great Kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*). 2017-004. Steve Patterson and Ed Blicht each submitted a written report accompanied by five photos from Ed Blicht, Dennis Forsythe, and Kelly Luikey of a Great Kiskadee observed at Bear Island Wildlife Management Area in Green Pond (Colleton Co.) from 9 February 2017 to 26 March 2017. The bird was originally reported by Kelly Luikey on 9 February 2017 and over the next several weeks, the bird was seen by countless numbers of birders from all over the Carolinas and Georgia. The report was accepted unanimously. This represents the first record for South Carolina and because of photographic evidence, it will be placed on the Definitive List.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*). 2017-007. Imtiaz Haque submitted a written report and 1 photograph of a Fork-tailed Flycatcher at Dobbins Farm in Townville (Anderson Co.) on 21 May 2017. The observer provided a nice photograph alongside an Eastern Kingbird sitting on a barb-wired fence. The report was accepted unanimously. This

represents the 2nd record for South Carolina. There is an additional report on eBird from 1 November 1973 at Bulls Island (Charleston Co.) but has no information other than date and location.

Black-whiskered Vireo (*Vireo altiloquus*). 2017-008. Irvin Pitts and David McLean submitted a written report along with four photographs and an audio recording of a Black-whiskered Vireo at Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge (Bulls Island; Charleston Co.) on 13 June 2017. The record was accepted unanimously. This represents the first record for South Carolina, and because of photographic evidence it will be placed on the Definitive List.

Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*). 2017-003. Two written reports submitted by Jeff Click and Paul Serridge accompanied by two photos by David Booth of a Wood Thrush observed at Santee Coastal Reserve in McClellanville (Charleston Co.) on 12 February 2017. The bird was seen by many individuals from the Greenville County Bird Club as part of their Coastal South Carolina outing. The report was accepted unanimously. This appears to be the 1st winter record of Wood Thrush in South Carolina.

Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*). 2017-023. Craig Watson submitted a written report accompanied by 4 photographs of a Bobolink seen during the Winyah Bay Christmas Bird Count at a private plantation in Georgetown County on 14 December 2017. The report was accepted unanimously and represents the first winter record of Bobolink in South Carolina.

Kirtland's Warbler (*Setophaga kirtlandii*). 2017-015. Steve Patterson submitted a written report of a Kirtland's Warbler seen in Camden (Kershaw Co.) on 17 October 2016. The report was accepted unanimously.

Unresolved

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 report awaits outside review.

American Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*). 2017-018. A written report was submitted of an American Flamingo from Myrtle Beach State Park (Horry Co.) on 11 September 2017. This record received six votes to accept and two votes to not accept (1 ID, 1 QO). The report will be sent out for outside review and the committee will revote on the record.

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 South Carolina.

Literature Cited

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Sangster, G.J., M. Collinson, P. Crochet, A.G. Knox, D.T. Parkin, S.C. Votier. 2012. Taxonomic recommendations for British birds: eighth report. *Ibis* 154 (4): 874-883.



Limpkin
2 May 2017
Lake Robinson, SC (Greenville County)
Photo by Barb Hennessy