

# 2020 Annual Report of the North Carolina Bird Records Committee

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The make-up of the 2020 North Carolina Bird Records Committee (NCBRC) included additions of J. Edward Corey, Henry E. Link, and Martina A. Nordstrand as voting members; and the retention of Richard J. Davis and Harry E. LeGrand Jr. in advisory capacities. Keith E. Camburn, Jeffrey S. Pippen, and Robert W. Van Epps, rotated off the Committee for at least a one-year hiatus.

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

**Lazuli Bunting** (*Passerina amoena*) (19-06) A report with photos submitted to the NCBRC by Patricia Finch of an apparent male Lazuli Bunting visiting a feeding station in *Carteret* County from 19-21 August 2019 was left unresolved in 2019, requiring a recirculation with review from outside experts. Upon rereview, the record was accepted 7-1 (Inadequately Documented) with 1 abstention. This represents North Carolina's 3<sup>rd</sup> record of this western Emberizid.

**Red-footed Booby** (*Sula sula*) (20-01). Long considered a likely vagrant to North Carolina, a Red-footed Booby photographed on 8 June 2019 by Tom McElfrish from a cruise ship nearly 200 miles at sea, but assigned to *Carteret* County by closest point of land, was unanimously accepted (9-0) by the NCBRC. Committee members questioned the accuracy of the location, but in the end decided to trust the observer's report and abide by closest point of land standards, even if it is a somewhat unsatisfying way to add this species to the NC list. This represents a 1<sup>st</sup> state record and, by virtue of photos, places Red-footed Booby on the Definitive List.

**Antillean Nighthawk** (*Chordeiles gundlachii*) (20-02). An extremely well documented record of Antillean Nighthawk from 8-15 August 2020 at the Cape Point Campground at Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Buxton (*Dare*) was considered by the NCBRC. The report by Josh Southern with photos and, especially, audio recordings made by Southern and others was considered conclusive and accepted unanimously (9-0). This represents the 3<sup>rd</sup> record of this Caribbean nightjar for the state, all of which come from the vicinity of Cape Point.

**Black Guillemot** (*Cephus grylle*) (20-04). The NCBRC considered a sight record of Black Guillemot from 9 February 2020 at Jennette's Pier (*Dare*) made by Ricky Davis. This record was accepted unanimously (9-0) and represents the state's 4<sup>th</sup> record of this alcid.

**Bobolink** (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) (20-05). A sight record of a wintering Bobolink, made by Taylor Piephoff on the *Gaston* County Christmas Bird Count on 14 December 2019, was unanimously accepted (9-0) by the NCBRC. Though regularly seen in migration throughout the state and a local breeder in the mountains, this would represent the 1<sup>st</sup> credible winter record in North Carolina of a bird that winters in the southern cone of South America. It is one of only a handful of winter Bobolink records in North America.

**Bronzed Cowbird** (*Molothrus aeneus*) (20-06). The NCBRC unanimously accepted (9-0) reports made by Harry LeGrand and Jim Landau with photos by Ed Corey and others of a Bronzed Cowbird at a private residence in Morehead City (*Carteret*) seen from 15-28 February 2020. This represents a 1<sup>st</sup> record of this species for North Carolina, and by virtue of the many photos, it is placed on the Definitive List.

**Bronzed Cowbird** (*Molothrus aeneus*) (20-07). A well-documented report by Ronnie Hewlette of a Bronzed Cowbird at a private residence in James City (*Craven*), from 4-9 May 2020 was unanimously accepted (9-0) by the NCBRC. This record represents the 2<sup>nd</sup> for North Carolina, not even three months after the first!

**Cassin's Kingbird** (*Tyrannus vociferans*) (20-08). The NCBRC considered and unanimously accepted (9-0) a report with photos from Michelle Forte of a Cassin's Kingbird near the Jordan Lake dam in Moncure (*Chatham*) on 30 June 2020. This record was submitted by a self-described non-birder, and the committee appreciates the effort made to document this outstanding record. While Cassin's Kingbird has some pattern of vagrancy in the East, records in the summer are very rare. This represents a 1<sup>st</sup> record of this species in North Carolina, and by virtue of the accompanying photos it is placed on the Definitive list.

**Kirtland's Warbler** (*Setophaga kirtlandii*) The year 2020 was an exceptional one for Kirtland's Warbler in North Carolina. The following three accounts are taken together. In addition to these, two additional credible reports from 30 Sep (*Avery*) and 6 Oct (*Buncombe*) were not considered by the NCBRC this year but may be evaluated in the future.

- (20-09) A well-documented subadult Kirtland's Warbler discovered at the Jordan Lake dam (*Chatham*) by Mark Montazer 27 September 2020 and present through at least the 30<sup>th</sup> was accepted unanimously (9-0) based on a written report by Matt Lawing and photos by many.
- (20-15) A subadult individual at Haw River State Park (*Rockingham*), discovered on 4 October 2020, was accepted unanimously (9-0).
- (20-16) A singing adult male present at Meat Camp Environmental Studies Area (*Watauga*) from 13-14 May 2020 was accepted unanimously (9-0). The vocalizations were recorded and uploaded to Facebook for documentation. This was the first record of a singing bird in North Carolina.

**Neotropic Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) (20-10). Long anticipated in the state, the NCBRC unanimously accepted (9-0) a Neotropic Cormorant discovered by Jelmer Poelstra at Jordan Lake's Crosswinds Marina (*Chatham*) based on submitted reports from Harry LeGrand, David Schroder, and Matt Lawing, along with many photos. This represents a 1<sup>st</sup> record of this species in North Carolina, and by virtue of the accompanying photos it is placed on the Definitive list.

**Pacific Golden-Plover** (*Pluvialis fulva*) (20-11). A Pacific Golden-Plover, discovered at Cape Point Campground at Cape Hatteras National Seashore (*Dare*) on 18 July 2020 and present until 12 August 2020, was unanimously accepted (9-0) by the NCBRC based on a written report by Ed Corey and photos by many. This represents the 2<sup>nd</sup> record of this species in North Carolina, the 1<sup>st</sup> record coming from the exact same location only a year earlier.

**White-winged Tern** (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) (20-12). The NCBRC considered and unanimously accepted (9-0) the report of an apparent adult White-winged Tern present at the Salt Pond, Cape Hatteras National Seashore (*Dare*) from 21 May-2 June 2020 based on written reports by David Fischer and Ed Corey and photos by many. While this record represents a 2<sup>nd</sup> record for this species in North Carolina, it is the 1<sup>st</sup> with photos which moves White-winged Tern from the Provisional List to the Definitive List.

**Painted Redstart** (*Myioborus pictus*) (20-17). A stunning Painted Redstart, seen at Pea Island NWR (*Dare*) from 5-6 October 2020, was unanimously accepted (9-0) by the NCBRC based on written reports by Karen Lebing and Derb Carter and photos by many. This unexpected record represents the 1<sup>st</sup> for this species in North Carolina, and by virtue of the photos it is placed on the Definitive List.

**Black-throated Gray Warbler** (*Setophaga nigrescens*) (20-18). The NCBRC unanimously accepted (9-0) the report of an adult male Black-throated Gray Warbler at Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge (*Mecklenburg*), seen on 6-7 September 2020 from photos and notes submitted to eBird by many birders. This represents the state's 5<sup>th</sup> accepted record of this western warbler, and only the second record for the piedmont region.

**Townsend's Warbler** (*Setophaga townsendi*) (20-19). A report of a female-type Townsend's Warbler, seen and photographed 23-24 September 2020 at a private residence in Hatteras village (*Dare*) and reported to eBird by Haley Rosell, was unanimously accepted (9-0) by the NCBRC. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> record accepted by the BRC, though there are an additional two credible reports. All but two previous accounts have come from Dare County.

**MacGillivray's Warbler** (*Geothlypis tolmiei*) (20-20). The report of an adult male MacGillivray's Warbler from Duck Town Park (*Dare*) and submitted with photos by Nate Swick was unanimously accepted (9-0) by the NCBRC. The bird was initially discovered on 3 December 2020 and was subsequently seen by birders into 2021. This represents the 4<sup>th</sup> record of this species for the state, all of which come from the coastal plain.

**Varied Thrush** (*Ixoreus naevius*) (20-21). The NCBRC reviewed and unanimously accepted (9-0) a written report from Kent Fiala, along with many photos from additional birders, of a Varied Thrush at a private residence in Cary (*Wake*). The bird was initially seen in early December (reported to the birding community on 3 December) and present into 2021. This represents the 5<sup>th</sup> record of this western thrush in the state, all but one of which have been in the piedmont region.

**Pacific-slope/Cordilleran Flycatcher** (*Empidonax difficilis/occidentalis*) (20-22) An *Empidonax* flycatcher identified as Pacific-slope/Cordilleran Flycatcher was captured on private property in *Randolph* County and banded by John Gerwin, et al, of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences on 11 December 2020. It was considered by the NCBRC, who ultimately accepted it 8-0 with 1 abstention based on photos and measurements taken while the bird was in hand. The committee agreed that Pacific-slope Flycatcher was the far more likely candidate, but as this species pair is exceptionally difficult to identify visually, and lacking any recording or description of vocalizations, felt that Pacific-slope/Cordilleran is the safer designation. This represents the 2<sup>nd</sup> record of this species pair for North Carolina.

**Vermilion Flycatcher** (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) (20-24). The NCBRC considered and unanimously accepted (9-0) the report of a first-year male Vermilion Flycatcher on a private farm in *Martin* based on photos by multiple birders. This individual was originally discovered by Bob Koch on 8 December 2020 and present into 2021. This represents the 7<sup>th</sup> record for North Carolina, all of which come from the coastal plain.

**Fork-tailed Flycatcher** (*Tyrannus savanna*) (20-25). A photo with notes of Fork-tailed Flycatcher at South Point of Ocracoke Island (*Hyde*) on 29 June 2020 and submitted to eBird by Camron Robertson and Chelsea Weithman was unanimously accepted (9-0) by the NCBRC. This represents the 4<sup>th</sup> record of this South American austral migrant in North Carolina.

**Black-throated Gray Warbler** (*Setophaga nigrescens*) (20-26). The report of a Black-throated Gray Warbler at North End Park on Roanoke Island (*Dare*), initially discovered by Jeff Lewis on 19 December 2020 and present into 2021, was unanimously accepted (9-0) by the NCBRC based on photos submitted by Lewis and many birders. This represents the 6<sup>th</sup> accepted record of this western warbler in North Carolina, and the second of 2020.

**Allen's Hummingbird** (*Selasphorus sasin*) (20-27). An Allen's Hummingbird report submitted by Steve Shultz of a bird at a private home in Charlotte (*Mecklenburg*) was unanimously accepted 8-0, with 1 abstention. The committee considered a written report by Shultz with in-hand measurements taken by bander Susan Campbell. This represents the 4<sup>th</sup> record for North Carolina, and the second from the western piedmont.

**Not Accepted.** The following reports were judged to be not accepted.

**Lazuli Bunting** (*Passerina amoena*) (19-14) A sight record of a Lazuli Bunting from *Dare* on 19 October 2020 was not accepted by a vote of 1-7 (Inadequately Documented), with 1 abstention on a second ballot. Outside reviewers had uncertainty based on description of the plumage which was reflected by the committee. In the end, it was felt that there was not enough to confirm such a sighting.

**Antillean Nighthawk** (*Chordeiles gundlachii*) (20-03) A report of Antillean Nighthawk from *New Hanover* on 16 June 1990, was not accepted by the committee by a vote of 2-4 (Inadequately Documented) with 3 abstentions. Committee members called into question the submission of the report 30 years after the initial observation. It was noted that while the observer could indeed have seen Antillean Nighthawk, it would be unlikely that such details necessary to confirm what would be, in effect, a retroactive 1<sup>st</sup> state record, could be recalled accurately after so many years.

**Philadelphia Vireo** (*Vireo philadelphicus*) (20-12) The winter season report of a Philadelphia Vireo from *Craven* was considered by the NCBRC and not accepted by a vote of 1-7 (4 Inadequately Documented, 3 Unacceptable Sighting), with 1 abstention. The observer did not rule out other similar, and more likely species, even noting that their own first impression was not of the species so reported.

**Western Spindalis** (*Spindalis zena*) (20-13) The report of a potential state 1<sup>st</sup> Western Spindalis from *Dare* was not accepted by the committee on a vote of 0-8 (5 Inadequately Documented, 3 Unacceptable Sighting), with 1 abstention. The committee notes that documentation submitted was inadequate for a record of such magnitude, and that multiple species of Spindalis, among other more likely species, were not sufficiently eliminated.

### Unresolved - Outside Review Pending

**Hammond's Flycatcher** (*Empidonax hammondii*) (20-23). An *Empidonax* flycatcher identified as Hammond's Flycatcher was captured on private property in *Randolph* County and banded by John Gerwin, et al, of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences on 12 December 2020. The NCBRC considered the record, a potential 1<sup>st</sup> for this species in North Carolina, and voted to accept the record 7-1(Inadequately Documented), with 1 abstention. But because the report received 2 non-acceptance votes, it requires review from outside the committee and subsequent recirculation with these outside opinions or any additional comments or photos from other observers.

### Summary

With this round of voting, Red-footed Booby, Bronzed Cowbird, Cassin's Kingbird, Neotropic Cormorant, and Painted Redstart are added to the Definitive List. White-winged Tern is moved from the Provisional List to the Definitive List. Hammond's Flycatcher is unresolved with outside review pending.

The total number of accepted species from North Carolina is now **490** (+5 over the final 2019 list) of which 477 are Definitive (+6 over the final 2019 list), two are considered Not Established, and 11 are Provisional (-1 from the final 2019 list).

**Literature Cited**

LeGrand, H., J. Haire, N. Swick, and T. Howard. Birds of North Carolina: their Distribution and Abundance