

# 2020 Annual Report of the South Carolina Bird Records Committee

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**Aaron Given<sup>1</sup>, Chair, Giff Beaton, Jeff Click, Lex Glover, Simon Harvey, Chris Hill, Keith McCullough, Irvin Pitts, Steve Wagner**  
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In 2020, the South Carolina Bird Records Committee acted on 32 new reports, of which 25 were accepted and seven were not accepted. In addition, the committee reevaluated 25 historical reports that had received a split decision during the first round of voting. These reports were required to be sent to outside review in accordance with the previous version of the bylaws governing the SCBRC, but it appeared that no further action had been taken. The Committee felt that these reports should be resolved. Of the 25 historical reports, 4 were accepted, 12 were not accepted, and 9 will be further reviewed.

The accepted records detailed below add six species to South Carolina's Main List: Little Stint, Short-tailed Hawk, Sage Thrasher, Bronzed Cowbird, and Townsend's Warbler. The Main List now includes 445 species. Townsend's Solitaire has been elevated from the Provisional I List to the Definitive List based on photographic evidence.

The SCBRC had been working diligently on updating their bylaws since 2019 and in August 2020 the CBC Executive Committee voted to approve the new bylaws. The full version of the SCBRC bylaws can be found at <https://www.carolinabirdclub.org/brc/SCbylaws.html> but some of the major changes are summarized here.

1. North Carolina and South Carolina BRCs now have separate bylaws.
2. Committee members will be required to take at least a one-year "retirement" from the committee after two consecutive three-year terms.
3. The SCBRC has created an official Secretary position.
4. The Provisional II and Hypothetical Lists have been dissolved into the new Supplemental List.
5. Reports that do not receive either an "accept" or "non-accept" vote no longer need to be sent to outside reviewers for comments. These reports can now be rereviewed by the SCBRC.
6. The voting category NE (non-established) has been changed from a vote of acceptance to a vote of non-acceptance.

The annual meeting of the SCBRC was held virtually on 5 December 2020. The meeting was attended by Giff Beaton, Jeff Click, Aaron Given, Lex Glover, Simon Harvey, Chris Hill, Keith McCullough, and Steve Wagner. Aaron Given stepped down as Chair, and Keith McCullough was elected the new Chair for 2020. Lex Glover stepped down as a voting member but has agreed to stay involved with the committee as a non-voting member in the role of the Advisory Position. He also agreed to another

term as Secretary. Jeff Click and Chris Hill were reelected to the Nomination Committee. The Committee voted to remove Cave Swallow, Black-bellied Whistling Duck (inland only), and White-winged Scoter (inland only) from the review list. Ash-throated Flycatcher will be removed from the Review List coastally but will remain on the Review List as “inland only”. There were no changes to the membership in 2020.

## ACCEPTED REPORTS

**Common Merganser** (*Mergus merganser*). 2020-009. Accept (9-0). Shawn Smolen-Morton submitted a written report along with photos of a Common Merganser in a pond near an industrial park in Florence (Florence County) on 1 February 2020.

**Red-necked Grebe** (*Podiceps grisegena*). 2020-013. Accept (9-0). Shawn Smolen-Morton submitted a written report of a Red-necked Grebe on Lake Murray (Richland County) on 24 March 2020. Two individuals were originally photographed on 21 March 2020 by Zach Steinhauer (eBird) and at least one individual continued at this location until 5 April 2020.

**Western Grebe** (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*). 2020-001. Accept (9-0). David McLean submitted a written report along with two photos of a Western Grebe at Bulls Island, Cape Romain NWR (Charleston County) on 5 January 2020.

**Buff-bellied Hummingbird** (*Amazilia yucatanensis*). 2020-023. Accept (9-0). Marcie Daniels submitted a written report and photo of a Buff-bellied Hummingbird at a private residence in Summerville (Dorchester County) on 13 November 2020. This report represents the 3<sup>rd</sup> record of this species in South Carolina.

**Little Stint** (*Calidris minuta*). 2020-028. Accept (9-0). The Committee reviewed an incredible sighting by Nathan Dias of a Little Stint at Santee Coastal Reserve (Charleston County) on 19 December 2020. An account of the observation was chronicled on social media outlets such as Facebook and Safaritalk. Photos of the bird revealed that the bird was banded. The band number was readable from the photos and after some inquiries, it was found that the bird was banded in Sweden three months earlier on 19 September 2020. This sighting represents the 1<sup>st</sup> record of this species in South Carolina.

**Parasitic Jaeger** (*Stercorarius parasiticus*). 2018-008. Accept (9-0). The Committee rereviewed an eBird report from Mark Vukovich and Matt Malin of a Parasitic Jaeger from 12 September 2018 at Lake Strom Thurmond (McCormick County). This record received a vote of 7-2 during the first vote.

**Black Guillemot** (*Cepphus grylle*). 2020-004. Accept (9-0). Pam Ford submitted a written report along with photos of a Black Guillemot that was seen by many people on 18 January 2020 at Huntington Beach State Park (Georgetown County) on a field trip during the CBC's winter meeting.

**Glaucous Gull** (*Larus hyperboreus*). 2020-007. Accept (9-0). Lauren Vaughn submitted a written report and two photos of a Glaucous Gull at North Myrtle Beach (Horry County) on 15 March 2020.

**Pacific Loon** (*Gavia pacifica*). 2020-011. Accept (9-0). Jay Mager submitted a written report of a Pacific Loon that was seen on Lake Jocassee (Oconee County) on 28 February 2020. Nina Schoch provided two excellent photos. This bird continued at this location until at least 8 March 2020.

**Pacific Loon** (*Gavia pacifica*). 2020-012. Accept (9-0). Irvin Pitts submitted a written report and four photos of a Pacific Loon that was seen on Lake Murray (Richland County) on 15 March 2020.

**Pacific Loon** (*Gavia pacifica*). 2020-014. Accept (9-0). Steve Patterson submitted a written report and four photos of a Pacific Loon at Sadler's Creek State Park on Lake Hartwell (Anderson County) on 10 March 2020.

**Fea's Petrel** (*Pterodroma feae*). 09-03-08. Accept (8-1). The Committee rereviewed a written report and sketch by Nathan Dias from 53 miles offshore on 27 September 2003. At the time, some SCBRC members voted to not accept this record because they were not comfortable placing the species on the state list as "Fea's Petrel".

**Brown Booby** (*Sula leucogaster*). 2020-018. Accept (9-0). Shawn Smolen-Morton submitted a written report and Brad Sale provided two photos of a juvenile Brown Booby that was seen on 18 October 2020 at Lake Strom Thurmond (McCormick County). This individual was first seen on 18 September 2020 and continued through the end of October.

**Brown Booby** (*Sula leucogaster*). 2020-027. Accept (9-0). The committee reviewed an eBird report from David Nicosia of a juvenile Brown Booby from 17 December 2020 at Folly Beach (Charleston County). The following day the bird was reported lethargic on the beach and was captured for rehabilitation by the Center for Birds of Prey in Awendaw where it later died after receiving treatment.

**American Flamingo** (*Phoenicopterus ruber*). 2017-018. Accept (8-1). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report of an American Flamingo submitted by Linda Wilkerson on 13 September 2017 at Myrtle Beach State Park (Horry County). This report came one day prior to an American Flamingo being photographed at Tibwin and following Tropical Storm Irma. This record received a vote of 6-2 during the first vote.

**Short-tailed Hawk** (*Buteo brachyurus*). 2020-022. Accept (9-0). Keith McCullough submitted a written report and 1 photo of a Short-tailed Hawk at Caw Caw Interpretive Center (Charleston County) from 26 May 2018. This report represents the 1<sup>st</sup> record of this species in South Carolina.

**Fork-tailed Flycatcher** (*Tyrannus savanna*). 2020-017. Accept (9-0). Charles Donnelly submitted a written report along with a photo of a Fork-tailed Flycatcher that was seen at Fort Moultrie National Historic Park on Sullivan's Island (Charleston County) on 16 September 2020. This report represents the 4<sup>th</sup> record of this species in South Carolina.

**Ash-throated Flycatcher** (*Myiarchus cinerascens*). 2020-003. Accept (9-0). Shawn Smolen-Morton submitted a written report of an Ash-throated Flycatcher at Watermark Lake in Mt. Pleasant (Charleston County) on 25 January 2020. Photos accompanying many eBird reports were also included. This individual was first reported on 17 January 2020 and was seen by many until 3 March 2020.

**Ash-throated Flycatcher** (*Myiarchus cinerascens*). 2020-005. Accept (9-0). Mary Alice Tartler submitted a written report and four photos of an Ash-throated Flycatcher that was seen from 30 January to 8 March 2020 at Sea Pines Forest Preserve on Hilton Head Island (Beaufort County).

**Black-whiskered Vireo** (*Vireo altiloquus*). 2020-016. Accept (9-0). Josh Lefever submitted a written report along with several photographs of a Black-whiskered Vireo that was banded at the Kiawah Island Banding Station (Charleston County) on 25 August 2020. This report represents the 2<sup>nd</sup> record of this species in South Carolina.

**Sage Thrasher** (*Oreoscoptes montanus*). 2020-021. Accept (9-0). Michael Robertson submitted a written report and 6 photos of a Sage Thrasher from Lake Conestee Nature Preserve (Greenville County) on 19 November 2020. This report represents the 1<sup>st</sup> record of this species in South Carolina.

**Townsend's Solitaire** (*Myadestes townsendi*). 2020-024. Accept (9-0). Ritch Lilly submitted a written report of a Townsend's Solitaire seen at Huntington Beach State Park (Georgetown County) from 11 October 2020. Word got out quickly and several people saw and photographed the bird. Unfortunately, the bird only stuck around for one day. This report represents the 1<sup>st</sup> record of this species in South Carolina.

**Western Meadowlark** (*Sturnella neglecta*). 2020-020. Accept (9-0). Steve Patterson submitted a written report, three photographs, and a video of Western Meadowlark at Townville (Anderson County) on 12 November 2020. This individual stuck around most of the winter with the last sighting reported by Irvin Pitts on 23 February 2021. This report represents the 2<sup>nd</sup> record of this species in South Carolina.

**Bullock's Oriole** (*Icterus bullockii*). 2020-006. Accept (9-0). Matt Johnson submitted a written report of an adult male Bullock's Oriole at a private residence in Pineville (Berkeley County) from 19 February 2020. This individual was seen by many people from 18 January to 7 March 2020.

**Shiny Cowbird** (*Molothrus bonariensis*). 2020-025. Accept (9-0). Tate Curry submitted a written report and two photos of a Shiny Cowbird seen at a private residence on Daniel Island (Charleston County).

**Bronzed Cowbird** (*Molothrus aeneus*). 2020-026. Accept (9-0). The SCBRC reviewed eBird reports with photos by Nathan Dias and Dennis Forsythe of a Bronzed Cowbird from a private residence in Charleston (Charleston County) from 22-24 November 2008. This sighting represents the 1<sup>st</sup> record of this species in South Carolina.

**Nashville Warbler** (*Leiothlypis ruficapilla*). 03-99-05. Accept (9-0). The SCBRC rereviewed a late winter/early spring report of a Nashville Warbler submitted by Sharon Turner at private residence in Myrtle Beach (Horry County on 19 March 1999).

**Townsend's Warbler** (*Setophaga townsendi*). 2020-029. Accept (9-0). Wendy Allen submitted a written report along with four photographs of a Townsend's Warbler seen at Huntington Beach State Park (Georgetown County) on 22 December 2020. This individual was seen by many observers between 22 December 2020 and 6 January 2021. The bird was then resighted again on 13-14 March 2021. This report represents the 1<sup>st</sup> record of this species in South Carolina.

## NON-ACCEPTED REPORTS

**Egyptian Goose** (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*). 2020-015. Non-accept (0-9). The Committee considered a report of an Egyptian Goose seen by many observers at a farm pond in Columbia (Lexington County) in April 2020. The identification was correct based on photographs that were submitted but the SCBRC felt that origin of the bird remained in question. The chances that this individual escaped from a captivity is just as good as it being a vagrant from an established population. This species will be added to the Supplemental List with a designation of "questionable origin".

**Cackling Goose** (*Branta hutchinsii*). 2020-031. Non-accept (4-5). The SCBRC considered a report of a Cackling Goose at Santee National Wildlife Refuge (Clarendon County) in December 2020. The photos provided showed a small goose with a short neck and smallish bill compared to the Canada Geese it was near. Unfortunately, the photos did not show enough detail for a majority of the committee members to feel confident that smaller forms of Canada Geese could be ruled out.

**Whooper Swan** (*Cygnus cygnus*). 2020-030. Non-accept (0-9). The SCBRC considered a report of a Whooper Swan seen at Santee National Wildlife Refuge (Clarendon County) in December 2020. Photo documentation proved the identification to be correct, but the committee felt that the origin of this individual was in question. There is no pattern of vagrancy for this species in the eastern United States and it is apparently commonly kept in captivity. This species will be added to the Supplemental List with the designation of "questionable origin".

**Garganey** (*Anas querquedula*). 2020-010. Non-accept (3-6). The SCBRC considered a written report supported with photographs of a Garganey at Russell Burgess Coastal Preserve (Horry County) in March 2020. The committee was split on the identity of this individual. Some members felt that this bird was correctly identified while others noted inconsistencies in the plumage and facial pattern suggesting a hybrid or an escaped domestic duck.

**Common Merganser** (*Mergus merganser*). 2018-044. Non-accept (3-6). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report of a Common Merganser at Pawley's Island (Georgetown County) in December 2018. The committee felt that the description provided was not detailed enough to rule out other species.

**Chimney Swift** (*Chaetura pelagica*). 2020-008. Non-accept (0-9). The SCBRC considered a winter report of a Chimney Swift from Columbia (Richland County) in February 2020. The bird apparently struck the glass of a greenhouse and was temporarily immobilized. The reporter took a single photo of the bird in the hand. Unfortunately, the photo did not show enough information to rule out Vaux's Swift which would be a 1<sup>st</sup> record for South Carolina.

**Pomarine Jaeger** (*Stercorarius pomarinus*). 11-99-16. Non-accept (2-7). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report of a Pomarine Jaeger at Lake Keowee (Oconee County) in November 1999. While the committee felt that this bird was a jaeger, the description did not rule out the possibility of a Parasitic Jaeger.

**California Gull** (*Larus californicus*). 01-04-01. Non-accept (2-7). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report of a California Gull at the Spring Island Landfill (Jasper County) in January 2004. The committee felt that the description did not rule out other possibilities.

**Pacific Loon** (*Gavia pacifica*). 03-09-01. Non-accept (4-5). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report of a Pacific Loon at Pawley's Island (Georgetown County) in March 2009.

**Arctic Tern** (*Sterna paradisaea*). 06-98-14. Non-accept (4-5). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report of an Arctic Tern offshore of Murrell's Inlet in June 1998. A majority of committee members felt that Common Tern could not be ruled out based on the information in the report.

**Northern Goshawk** (*Accipiter gentilis*). 01-01-01. Non-accept (3-6). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report of Northern Goshawk at Kiawah Island (Charleston County) in January 2001. Most committee members noted that the report lacked sufficient details to rule out other species.

**Cassin's Vireo** (*Vireo cassinii*). 2018-047. Non-accept (2-7). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report along with several photos of a "Solitary" Vireo that was banded at the Kiawah Island Banding Station (Charleston County) on 28 October 2018. Although the

bird showed a very pale head, other characteristics fell within the overlap range of Cassin's and Blue-headed Vireo leading the committee to exercise caution with this potential 1<sup>st</sup> record for South Carolina.

**Warbling Vireo** (*Vireo gilvus*). 2018-031. Non-accept (3-6). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report from July 2018 of a Warbling Vireo along the Great Pee Dee River (Marlboro County). Committee members felt that the description suggested Warbling Vireo, but the possibility of other species had not been fully ruled out.

**Varied Thrush** (*Ixoreus naevius*). 01-05-04. Non-accept (3-6). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report of a Varied Thrush at Ashmore Heritage Preserve (Greenville County) in January 2005. The report lacked enough details for the committee to accept.

**American Tree Sparrow** (*Spizelloides arborea*). 2020-002. Non-accept (4-5). The SCBRC considered a written report of an American Tree Sparrow at High Falls County Park (Oconee County) in January 2020. Most committee members noted that a key field mark (bicolored bill) was missing from the description which gave them hesitancy to accept.

**Green-tailed Towhee** (*Pipilo chlorurus*). 11-01-08. Non-accept (2-7). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report of a Green-tailed Towhee from November 2001. Committee members noted a lack of detail in the report that did not rule out other species.

**Bullock's Oriole** (*Icterus bullockii*). 2019-024. Non-accept (1-8). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report of a Bullock's Oriole from a private residence in Beaufort County in October 2019. Despite the description matching a male Bullock's Oriole, the short observation period without optics by the observer left the committee with some doubts.

**Black-headed Grosbeak** (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*). 09-01-05. Non-accept (2-7). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report of a Black-headed Grosbeak from Conway (Horry County) in May 2001. Inconsistencies with certain field marks noted in the report created some hesitancy for many committee members to accept this report.

## UNRESOLVED REPORTS

The following reports received a majority of votes to accept but more than one vote to not accept. These reports will need to be reevaluated by the Committee.

**Anna's x Calliope Hummingbird**. 2018-024. Rereview (7-2). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report and photos of a banded Anna's x Calliope Hummingbird hybrid that was captured at a private residence in Spartanburg (Spartanburg County). This report will be recirculated through the committee for a third time.

**Ruff** (*Philomachus pugnax*). 10-00-06. Rereview (6-3). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report of a Ruff from Jasper County in October 2000. This report will be recirculated through the committee for a third time.

**Ruff** (*Philomachus pugnax*). 04-00-02. Rereview (6-3). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report of a Ruff from Santee Coastal Reserve (Charleston County) in April 2000. This report will be recirculated through the committee for a third time.

**Common Murre** (*Uria aalge*). 2020-019. Rereview (5-4). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report of a common Murre from Huntington Beach State Park (Georgetown County) in November 2020.

**Iceland Gull** (*Larus glaucooides*). 05-98-22. Rereview (6-3). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report of an Iceland Gull at Pawley's Island (Georgetown County) in May 1998. This report will be recirculated through the committee for a third time.

**Masked Booby** (*Sula dactylatra*). 11-98-20. Rereview (6-3). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report of a Masked Booby at Litchfield Beach (Georgetown County) in November 1998. This report will be recirculated through the committee for a third time.

**White-faced Ibis** (*Plegadis chihi*). 01-03-12. Rereview (6-3). The SCBRC rereviewed two written reports of a White-faced Ibis at Savannah National Wildlife Refuge (Jasper County) in November 2000. This report will be recirculated through the committee for a third time.

**Say's Phoebe** (*Sayornis saya*). 2019-009. Rereview (5-4). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report of a Say's Phoebe from Little Edisto Island (Charleston County) in September 2019. This report will be recirculated through the committee for a third time.

**Cave Swallow** (*Petrochelidon fulva*). 2019-008. Rereview (5-4). The SCBRC rereviewed a written report with photos of a Cave Swallow at Heritage Shores Nature Preserve (Horry County) in November 2019. This report will be recirculated through the committee for a third time.

**Blackpoll Warbler** (*Setophaga striata*). 12-98-21. Rereview (6-3). The SCBRC rereviewed a written winter report of a Blackpoll Warbler from Anderson County in December 1998. This report will be recirculated through the committee for a third time.

## 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.