

2022 Annual Report of the North Carolina Bird Records Committee

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For 2022, the North Carolina Bird Records Committee (NCBRC) included the additions of Jacob A. Farmer, Ryan Justice, and J. Dwayne Martin as voting members, as well as Brian J. O'Shea, who filled the vacant seat left by Henry E. Link's departure from the committee in 2021. C. Wilson Cook, Z. Taylor Piephoff, and Steven P. Shultz cycled off for their hiatus of at least one year. Richard J. Davis and Harry E. LeGrand Jr. continued in their capacities as non-voting advisors.

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

Wedge-tailed Shearwater (*Ardenna pacifica*) (21-07). The NCBRC unanimously accepted (9-0) a thorough report of Wedge-tailed Shearwater from the Gulf Stream waters off Hatteras Inlet in *Dare* County, on 22 May 2021. This well-documented light-morph individual, more commonly found in tropical waters of the Pacific, represents the first record for the species in North Carolina as well as the North Atlantic, and only the second from the entire Atlantic Basin.



*Wedge-tailed
Shearwater,
22 May 2021, off
Hatteras Inlet
(Dare County), NC.
Photograph by Kate
Sutherland.*



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Photograph by Kate
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Pacific Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*) (22-01). The fifth report of Pacific Golden-Plover, presumed by some to represent the same individual over 4 years, was unanimously accepted by the NCBRC. This bird visited the Cape Point area in *Dare* County, like 3 of the previous sightings of the species, with the report coming from 06 July 2022.

Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) (22-02; 22-03). Two reports of Say's Phoebe were unanimously approved by the NCBRC. The *Union* County bird, 22-02, was observed from 10-16 October 2022, which happened to be the day the long-lingering *Guilford* County individual was first noted (22-03). These birds represent the 3rd and 4th records of the species in the Piedmont of NC.

Thick-billed Longspur (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*) (22-04). A first state record of Thick-billed Longspur was found on 22 October 2021, on the south side of Oregon Inlet in *Dare* County, where it lingered until 29 October. The NCBRC accepted this report unanimously (9-0), based in large part on the many supplemental eBird images from multiple observers.



*Thick-billed
Longspur, 23 October
2021, at Oregon Inlet
(Dare County), NC.
Photograph by Bob
Lewis.*

Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) (22-05). A Lake Hickory (*Alexander/Catawba* Counties) Black-legged Kittiwake reported on 03 November 2021 was accepted unanimously by the NCBRC (9-0). This is the third record for the NC Piedmont, and the second seen on this lake.

Veery (*Catharus fuscescens*) (22-07). A report of a Veery seen and photographed in *Cherokee* County on 07 December 2022 was accepted by the NCBRC with a vote of 9-0. This is the first winter record for this mountain breeder in NC.

Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) (22-08). North Carolina's sixth record of Varied Thrush came from Hickory in *Catawba* County, seen on 14 December 2021. The NCBRC unanimously approved this report (9-0).

Blackpoll Warbler (*Setophaga striata*) (22-09). The first winter record from the Piedmont for Blackpoll Warbler was found during the Raleigh Christmas Bird Count in *Wake* County on 18 December 2021 and reported via eBird. This bird was well photographed, leading the NCBRC to accept the report with a vote of 9-0.

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*) (22-11). The state's third confirmed White Wagtail was found on usually restricted Eagle Island in *New Hanover* County on 01 January 2022, by a party with granted access during the Wilmington Christmas Bird Count. The NCBRC voted to approve this report with a vote of 9-0.



*White Wagtail, 1 January 2022,
New Hanover County, NC.
Photograph by Jesse Anderson.*

Yellow Warbler (*Setophaga petechia*) (22-12). A wintering Yellow Warbler was photographed in Black Mountain (*Buncombe* County), where it remained from 13-20 January 2022. This unanimously approved report (9-0) is the first confirmed record of the species overwintering in the mountains of North Carolina.

Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*) (22-13). The first photographed record of Mountain Bluebird was submitted from the Wrightsville Beach area of *New Hanover* County, where it was observed from 11 February to 21 March 2022. This individual was well photographed by many observers and was accepted by the NCBRC unanimously (9-0), moving the species from Provisional to Definitive.



*Mountain Bluebird, 13 February 2022,
New Hanover County, NC,
Photograph by Kent Fiala.*

Heermann's Gull (*Larus heermanni*) (22-14). A much-anticipated first state record of Heermann's Gull was observed on 12 February 2022, at Mason Inlet in *New Hanover* County. This one-day wonder was seen by multiple observers before disappearing, with a similarly-aged gull of this species making a quick stop at Cape Point in *Dare* County on 15 February, leading the NCBRC to consider both observations as a single record, and accepting the species unanimously (9-0).



*Heermann's Gull, 12 February 2022,
New Hanover County, NC.
Photograph by Audrey Whitlock.*

Allen's Hummingbird (*Selasphorus sasin*) (22-16). North Carolina's fifth record of Allen's Hummingbird (and third for the Piedmont) was a returning female, first banded the previous year in *Mecklenburg* County, where it was recaptured on 16 February 2022. The report was accepted with a vote of 8-1 by the NCBRC, with the one dissenting vote concerning the lack of stand-alone identification material in the submission for this report.

Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) (22-18). The third mountain record of Painted Bunting was an adult male found at a feeder in Asheville (*Buncombe* County) in early April of 2022. The NCBRC voted 9-0 to accept the report of this vibrant coastal breeder.

White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*) (22-19). Observers at North River Preserve in *Carteret* County photographed North Carolina's fifth White-tailed Kite on 08 April 2022. The NCBRC approved this record by unanimous vote (9-0).

Heermann's Gull (*Larus heermanni*) (22-22). The second state record of Heermann's Gull was found at multiple sites in *Dare* County between 20 May and 23 May 2022. Likely the same individual as first observed in February of the same year, the NCBRC decided to treat this as a separate report, approving the record unanimously (9-0).

Crested Caracara (*Caracara plancus*) (22-23). A 24 July 2022 observation of Crested Caracara came from Cedar Island in *Carteret* County. Though no photographs were taken, the NCBRC voted in favor of accepting this report 8-1, with one vote concerned with inadequate documentation. This becomes the second accepted record of this species in North Carolina.

Neotropic Cormorant (*Nannopterum brasilianus*) (22-24). North Carolina's second Neotropic Cormorant was discovered on 30 July 2022 at Martin Marietta Park in New Bern (*Craven* County), where it remained until at least 13 October. With a vote of 9-0, the NCBRC unanimously accepted this report.

Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*) (22-25). A Lark Bunting was found on the south side of Oregon Inlet in *Dare* County on 23 September 2022. The report and supplemental eBird checklist (with photos) led to a vote of 9-0 by the NCBRC to approve this record, the seventh for the state and the first since 1991.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*) (22-26). An astounding observation of Fork-tailed Flycatcher at Lake Crabtree in *Wake* County on 01 October 2022, after the passage of Tropical Storm Ian, becomes the fifth record for the state, and the first from the Piedmont. This brief visitor to the Triangle was accepted unanimously (9-0) by the NCBRC.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*) (22-27). Another bird displaced by Tropical Storm Ian on 01 October 2022 was a Wilson's Storm-Petrel seen and captured on video at Jordan Lake in *Chatham* County. This becomes the first accepted report of the species in the Piedmont, with an NCBRC vote of 9-0.

Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) (22-29). EBird reports of Vermilion Flycatcher from Bald Head Island in Brunswick County on 19 October 2022 were accepted by a vote of 9-0. Though observers reported 2 individual males (which would have been a high count for the species in the state), the NCBRC did not feel that this could be confirmed from the evidence submitted.

Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Setophaga nigrescens*) (22-30; 22-31). October 2022 proved to be a good month for sightings of Black-throated Gray Warbler in the Coastal Plain of NC. EBird reports from Chowan County on 16 October (22-30) and New Hanover County on 30 October (22-31) were both approved unanimously by the NCBRC, 9-0. These birds represent the seventh and eighth records for the state, with the majority of those coming from the Coastal Plain.

Not Accepted. The following reports were judged to be inadequate for acceptance.

Gray Kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) (18-21). A late report of a Gray Kingbird from Wake County from 15 September 2018 was deemed unacceptable by the Committee, with a vote of 4-5. The majority of those voting against felt that the bird in question was an Eastern Kingbird, with one member voting the documentation as inadequate.

Lesser Nighthawk (*Chordeiles acutipennis*) (22-06). A 25 November 2021 report of Lesser Nighthawk from the causeway to Figure Eight Island in New Hanover County was rejected by the NCBRC with a vote of 4-5, with those not accepting doing so due to inadequate documentation. While no one argued that it was a different species, multiple Committee members felt that the burden of proof to confidently rule out other nighthawks was not met by the observer, particularly for a second NC record.

Arctic Loon (*Gavia arctica*) (22-10). Two observers submitted details regarding a potential Arctic Loon seen during the Hatteras Christmas Bird Count on 27 December 2021, from Cape Point in Dare County. Though the NCBRC applauded the detailed notes from both observers, this report was not accepted by a vote of 1-8, with those dissenting arguing that the observers did not adequately eliminate other species of loons. This level of detail would be especially important for a first state record, and one of very few reports from the Atlantic Coast.

Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Thalassarche chlororhynchos*) (22-15). A mid-winter eBird report of a Yellow-nosed Albatross from Cape Point in Dare County on 13 February 2022 received a vote of 4-5, with those against rejecting the report due to inadequate documentation. The bird in question was seen in poor conditions at a great distance, and the images provided in the checklist were not considered adequate by members to rule out other albatross species.

Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*) (22-21). A 10 May 2022 report of a Lazuli Bunting from Wake County was not accepted by the NCBRC, with 2 votes for Inadequately Documented and 4 members arguing the bird in question was a female Indigo Bunting with buffier than usual wingbars.

Great Blue Heron (white morph; *Ardea herodias*, in part) (22-28). A Great White Heron, a color morph of the common Great Blue Heron, was submitted from J. Morgan Futch Game Land in Tyrrell County on 28 August 2022. The NCBRC rejected this report, with 1 voting the report as Inadequately Documented, while 8 judged that the bird observed was a Great Egret instead.

Unresolved – Outside Review Pending. Whenever an initial report receives a majority of acceptance votes, but also receives two or more non-acceptance votes, it gets sent for outside review, whereafter a simple majority will suffice for approval.

Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*) (22-17). A review of an eBird report of a Cave Swallow from Transylvania County on 20 March 2022 resulted in a vote of 7-2, with 2 NCBRC members considering this an unacceptable sighting. Concern was voiced over whether this could be a juvenile Cliff Swallow, or another member of the family Hirundinidae.

Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Thalassarche chlororhynchos*) (22-20). A second 2022 report of Yellow-nosed Albatross from the Cape Point area of Dare County, by the same observer, on 23 April came with clearer images of the bird in question. NCBRC members voted 7-2 in favor of acceptance, with those objecting on the basis that the observer did not adequately eliminate other less likely species of albatross.

Summary

With this round of voting, Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Thick-billed Longspur, and Heermann's Gull are directly added to the Definitive List. Acceptance of photos moves Mountain Bluebird from the Provisional List to the Definitive List. Thus, the Definitive List moves from 479 species at the end of 2021 to now 483 species. The Provisional List drops by one (Mountain Bluebird) to 11 species.

Literature Cited

LeGrand, H., J. Haire, N. Swick, and T. Howard. 2023. *Birds of North Carolina: their Distribution and Abundance* [Internet]. Raleigh (NC): North Carolina Biodiversity Project and North Carolina State Parks. Available from <http://ncbirds.carolinabirdclub.org>.