

2022 Annual Report of the South Carolina Bird Records Committee

Keith McCullough¹, Chair; Lex Glover, Secretary; Jeff Click, Aaron Given, Simon Harvey, Chris Hill, Matt Johnson, Amy Tegeler, Steve Patterson, Irvin Pitts

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In 2022 the South Carolina Bird Records Committee (SCBRC) acted on 26 reports, of which 19 were accepted, four were not accepted, and three were unresolved (to be re-reviewed in 2023). Two of these reports, one ultimately accepted and the other not accepted, were voted on previously in 2021 and remained unresolved until the committee's first ballot of 2022.

After many years of dedicated service, Giff Beaton rolled off the committee in early 2022 to make way for new members. Linda Montgomery decided not to return to the committee for another year. As a result of these departures, Amy Tegeler and Matt Johnson were welcomed as new members.

The required annual meeting of the SCBRC took place virtually via Zoom on 7 November 2022 and was attended by Keith McCullough, Jeff Click, Aaron Given, Chris Hill, Matt Johnson, Simon Harvey, and Steve Patterson. Not in attendance were Lex Glover, Amy Tegeler, Irvin Pitts, and Will Post. Keith McCullough was re-elected as Chair. Since there were no unresolved reports due for a fourth and final in-person vote, the meeting was spent reviewing forms, processes, and the review status of species on the South Carolina main list. The presence of a review status is determined in part by the number of accepted records processed by the committee. It was determined that no species needed a status change in 2022.

In 2022, only Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*) was added to South Carolina's Main List, bringing the total to 449 species. A few of the accepted reports this year passed with an 8-1 result (Accept-Non Accept). SCBRC bylaws state that more than one non-accept vote is needed to produce a result other than Accept. These and the other reports that reached a conclusion are detailed below.

Accepted Reports

Brant (*Branta bernicla*). 2022-007. Accept (8-1). Aaron Given submitted a written report of a Brant from the southwest end of Kiawah Island (Charleston County), seen on 14 March 2022. All but one member felt that the field marks described, along with the experience of the observer, were enough to accept.

Brant (*Branta bernicla*). 2022-026. Accept (9-0). Kimberly Nesbitt reported and photographed a Brant from Bulls Island (Charleston County), seen on 23 November 2022. The clear photo left no doubt among committee members.

Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*). 2022-023. Accept (8-1). Samuel Payne submitted a written report of a Common Merganser from Lake Robinson (Greenville County), first seen 27 December 2022. Many of the committee members wished for

images that were larger and sharper than what were available, but only one member thought that Red-breasted Merganser was a possibility.



*Red-necked Grebe,
26 Nov 2022, McCormick County, SC.
Photograph by John Patten Moss.*

Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*). 2022-028. Accept (9-0). An excellent photo accompanied a written report by John Patten Moss for a Red-necked Grebe at the J. Strom Thurmond Reservoir (McCormick County), first spotted on 26 November 2022. The written details helped confirm the location of the bird in South Carolina, and the photo confirmed the identification.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*). 2022-025. Accept (8-1). A Western Grebe from Bulls Island (Charleston County) was described and photographed by various birders beginning

on 20 November 2022. One committee member did not feel that Clark's Grebe was adequately ruled out in the descriptions.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*). 2022-027. Accept (9-0). John Demchak reported a Western Grebe along with four photos from Lake Wylie (York County), seen on 19 December 2022. Other observers located and photographed the bird two days later at the same location. The excellent photographs helped produce a unanimous vote.



*Western Grebe, 19 December 2022, York County, SC.
Photograph by John Demchak.*

Snowy Plover (*Charadrius nivosus*). 2022-016. Accept (9-0). Mary-Catherine Martin reported and photographed a Snowy Plover at Sand Island of Yawkey Wildlife Center (Georgetown County), seen on 22 February 2022. All members thought that the photos eliminated similar species.



*Hudsonian Godwit,
16 April 2022, Charleston County, SC.
Photograph by Keith McCullough.*

Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*). 2022-006. Accept (9-0). Keith McCullough submitted one written report and one photo for a Hudsonian Godwit from NE Kiawah Island Beach (Charleston County), seen on 16 April 2022. The photograph showed lifted wings and helped all members vote to accept this report.

Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*). 2022-012. Accept (9-0). Steve Calver submitted one written report with two photos of a Ruff from the CDF Spoil Site (Jasper County), seen 7 September 2020. All committee members voted to accept this report based on the photos provided.

Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*). 2022-014. Accept (9-0). Matt Johnson submitted

one written report with three photos of a Ruff from Huntington Beach State Park (Georgetown County), seen from 28-30 May 2022. All committee members voted to accept this report based on the photos provided.

Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) 2022-029. Accept (9-0). John Patten Moss submitted one written report with six photos of a Black-legged Kittiwake from the J. Strom Thurmond Reservoir (McCormick County), seen 25-26 November 2022. This species carries a review status in South Carolina of “inland only”. Some members felt that the photos were enough to accept by themselves, others felt that the description of field marks helped in favor of acceptance.

Iceland Gull (Thayer's) (*Larus glaucooides thayeri*). 2022-009. Accept (8-1). Brandon Holden reported an adult Iceland Gull of the Thayer's subspecies from a stationary roosting area watch at The Caribbean Resort and Villas (Horry County), seen 30 December 2021. All but one member felt that the combination of features visible in the photos warranted acceptance of this report.

Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*). 2022-001. Accept (9-0). Chris Hill submitted a written report along with a detailed photo essay of a Slaty-backed Gull from the Horry County Landfill (Horry County), seen 03 January 2022. Shawn Smolen-Morton also

submitted a report for this species, detected at the same location on 04 January 2022. Many other observers reported this species between the 3-8 January 2022. This observation was widely accepted by the birding community in South Carolina and beyond, and thus received a unanimous vote to accept. This is the first documented record of Slaty-backed Gull in South Carolina.

Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*). 2022-015. Accept (8-1). Christine Kozlosky submitted a written report with three photos of a Glaucous Gull from Hilton Head Island (Beaufort County), seen 25 May 2022. Most of the comments given by committee members about this report indicate that similar looking “bleached-white” Herring Gulls were considered as a point of caution. However, only one member felt there was enough uncertainty to give a non-accept vote.

Brown Noddy (*Anous stolidus*). 2022-024. Accept (9-0). Scott Hartley reported and provided a photo of a Brown Noddy resting on pavement at Myrtle Beach State Park (Horry County) following the passing of Hurricane Ian. This bird was seen on 30 September 2022.

Crested Caracara (*Caracara plancus*). 2022-013. Accept (9-0). Harry Doswell submitted a written report, including a photo by Harry James, of a Crested Caracara near Hunting and Harbor Islands (Beaufort County), seen 19 August 2022. Several observers located the bird between 19-21 August 2022 in an area between these two islands. No members expressed concerns about provenance.

Alder Flycatcher (*Empidonax alnorum*). 2022-009. Accept (9-0). Steve Patterson submitted a written report and a video to support an Alder Flycatcher in Townville (Anderson County), seen/heard 20 August 2021. This report was unable to reach a conclusion after two previous rounds of voting, each round producing two non-accept votes. The dissenting members were initially concerned with the audio description as well as the approximately 90-minute gap between hearing vocalizations and seeing an *Empidonax*. However, after the 3rd round of voting, all members agreed to accept this report based on the description of the vocalizations and the observer’s experience.

Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*). 2022-003. Accept (9-0). Jack Volker submitted a written report along with a photo of a Snowy Owl from DeBordieu Colony (Georgetown County), seen 17 February 2022.

Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*). 2022-011. Accept (9-0). Steve Calver submitted a written report with three photos of a Shiny Cowbird at the CDF Dredge Material Site (Jasper County), seen 6-7 July 2020.

Non-Accepted Reports

Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*). 2022-002. Non-Accept (4-5). An early 2022 written report of Common Merganser from Horry County was considered and not accepted by the committee. Most members felt that the description did not provide enough specific information to rule out Red-breasted Merganser.

Iceland Gull (Thayer's) (*Larus glaucooides thayeri*). 2022-008. Non-Accept (4-5). A report of a Thayer's subspecies of Iceland Gull from Horry County that included eight photos was considered by the committee. Some members felt the bird appeared as an Iceland Gull in only some photos, others were not confident with any of the photos, and one stated concern over hybrid possibilities.

Sooty Tern (*Onychoprion fuscatus*) 2021-016. Non-Accept (2-7). A written report of 10 Sooty Terns that included one photo from Abbeville County in 2021 was considered for the 2nd time in 2022. Because there were multiple non-accept votes after the first circulation, but not enough to be a majority, the report was re-circulated. The majority of the committee felt that the observation distance of nearly one mile, along with the poor photo, provided enough concern to warrant a non-accept vote. Some felt that the description did not adequately rule out Bridled Tern or Black Tern.

Yellow-billed Magpie (*Pica nuttalli*) 2022-020. Non-Accept. (0-9). A written report of Yellow-billed Magpie from early 2022 in Beaufort County was considered by the committee. All members expressed concern over the minimal details provided and uncertainty within the report on the part of the observer.

Did You Know?

Full copies of *The Chat* dating back to the very first issue, March 1937, are available for viewing online. Find these and more at:

<https://www.carolinabirdclub.org/chat/>

