

THE NEW YORK STATE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE

At the annual meeting of the Federation Council of Delegates in Oneonta in September, 1975, upon urging by Gordon Meade, Paul DeBenedictis introduced a proposal for a New York State Avian Records Committee, the essence of which is quoted below:

"Two events make it appropriate for the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs to organize a procedure to deal with records of birds in New York State. First, it is now clear that distributional records of birds cannot all be substantiated by the collecting of specimens, because of restrictions on scientific collecting, the ambience of many records, and the conservation ethic expressed by professional and amateur ornithologists alike. However, this change makes more difficult the task of assembling and verifying new information. American ornithology has long struggled with this problem but with little progress. The system of a Records or Rarities Committee, first devised in Great Britain, has been adopted widely elsewhere and found to be effective by almost all.

"Second, the recent publication of *Birds of New York State* by John Bull (Doubleday Natural History Press, New York, N.Y.; 1974) provides a current summary of known distributional patterns against which the observer may judge how his records conform with previous knowledge. Moreover, this text clearly indicates the impact of non-specimen-backed records on our understanding of avian distribution in New York, as well as the present difficulties in dealing with such records. The *next* state bird book surely will be even more dominated by such records. Unless a system to screen new records is established now, that future author will be overwhelmed by the task of interpreting the new reports that the increasing population of New York ornithologists is sure to produce.

"The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, by its contact with ornithological groups throughout the state, is uniquely able to contact both those persons who will produce new records and also those persons who are qualified to judge their validity. Therefore, this proposal recommends that the Federation establish an organization to review records of birds in New York State, to be known as the New York State Avian Records Committee.

"The New York State Avian Records Committee would review all records of birds in New York State which are of exceptional interest. The Committee would solicit all records of species: a) treated

as 'accidental' or 'casual' within the state; b) not previously reported within the state; c) of more abundant species when the report is greatly anomalous as to date (more than one month outside dates of regular occurrence) or locale (sufficiently distant from areas of regular distribution that listing of individual records remains feasible, such as Gray Jay downstate or alcids upstate) or which alter known status (such as first breeding records); and d) of any additional species whose review is deemed appropriate by the committee. Unless specifically indicated otherwise, the current status of species could be taken from the *Birds of New York State* (*op. cit.*)."

The proposal was tabled after considerable discussion. The Executive Committee has since been working to clarify details of the proposal. We feel that a NYSARC is needed, can be designed to fit conditions in New York, and the system can function in a reasonable manner. We are agreed that submissions to such a committee will be entirely voluntary.

We have corresponded with Records Committees from other states and received generous help. Guidelines, bylaws, and internal operating procedures are now being prepared, and will be presented for the approval of the member clubs at the 1976 Annual Meeting. We need advice and suggestions from clubs and individuals, so that the NYSARC reflects the needs of the membership of the New York State Federation of Bird Clubs.

Any suggestion on composition, membership, manner of operation, types of records to be considered, or anything else, should be sent to one of the three below:

William C. Vaughan	Paul DuBoway	Morgan Jones
760 Main Street	502 Hudson Street	Seneca Army Depot
Niagara Falls, NY 14301	Ithaca, NY 14850	Romulus, NY 14541

EDS. NOTE: We would also invite letters concerning the above to appear in *The Kingbird*. It was apparent from the discussion engendered by this proposal that many persons had strong feelings on the subject. It seems appropriate to air these feelings to the readers of this magazine.