

## REPORT OF THE NEW YORK STATE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE

The New York State Avian Records Committee received 65 reports representing 47 records of birds in 1984, as well as one record each from 1955 and 1962, and two records from 1983. In addition, the committee was able to resolve the status of eight records submitted in prior years. Of these records, 32 were found to be acceptable and include an addition to the list of birds recorded from New York as well as an addition to the list of species found nesting there. Twenty-six reports were not accepted. One report from 1981 remains unresolved within the Committee. In addition, reports for two records of Varied Thrush and one each of Bald Eagle and Greater White-fronted Goose were received and filed without review. The list of species normally reviewed by this Committee may be found in *The Kingbird*, Vol. 33: 246-247; 1983.

The proportion of reports not accepted is higher than in recent years, reflecting the increasing number of reports difficult to judge being submitted to this Committee. As in past years, inadequate details remain the primary cause for a record not being accepted. Supposedly "unmistakable" species continue to cause the most problems, usually because of the brevity of the report. We have commented on a few of the reports not accepted in the summary below, especially when they illustrate recurrent problems with submitted reports. These comments are intended to apply generally to the species, as well as to the report(s), in question.

We remain hampered by reports that are difficult to read and/or to reproduce for circulation within the Committee, and by the submission of duplicates rather than original reports in some instances. An important function of this Committee is the archiving of submitted reports for later generations of ornithologists. Your written account may be more durable than a photograph, especially a color slide. Contributors should submit reports in *black ink; type or write clearly; give the exact locality* (including the county) for the observation and their *printed name* as well as their signature.

Reports to the NYSARC should be submitted to:

Mr. Steve Sibley, Secretary  
The New York State Avian Records Committee  
% Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology  
159 Sapsucker Woods Road  
Ithaca, New York 14850

A number of errors and inconsistencies in past reports of the NYSARC are corrected below. As noted at the end of this report, membership of the Committee changes with this report as well.

As in past reports, the term "documented" means that there is a report on file for an observation. The term "substantiated" means that material evidence accompanies the documentation. Only those persons who have submitted reports to the NYSARC are acknowledged in the summary below, regardless of how many observers actually were involved. Most reports since 1978 which have not been reviewed by this Committee are omitted from summaries of a species' status in New York.

#### 1955 Accepted Report

**Boreal Owl** (*Aegolius funereus*). 1955-1-A adult, Lake Kan-ac-to, Town of Webb, Herkimer Co., 18 March 1955 (JMCP), photograph on file. This becomes, historically, the eighth record from New York (see below).

#### 1981 Accepted Reports

**Thayer's Gull** (*Larus thayeri*). 1981-44-A immature (Basic I plumage), town of Onondaga, Onondaga Co., 17 Dec. (FGS). A very few Thayer's Gulls are found almost every winter in the Oneida Lake Basin Region, usually along the Oswego River. Its identification is sufficiently difficult, and its numbers so small, that the Committee desires to review all reports from New York State. This report was delayed by problems in duplicating it for circulation within the Committee.

**Northern Hawk-Owl** (*Surnia ulula*). 1981-53-A one, Town of Ohio "in a bog near Route 8," Oneida Co., Dec. [day not given] (DWC), photograph on file. This is about the 42nd report from New York State; it was delayed in Committee by the sketchy details, submitted second-hand, that accompanied the photograph.

#### 1983 Accepted Report

**Great Gray Owl** (*Strix nebulosa*). 1983-40-A one found shot near Masena, St. Lawrence Co., 5 Feb. (PAD), photograph on file. This bird was sent to Cornell University for rehabilitation, where it died; its remains were destroyed in autopsy and not preserved. This is the only substantiated record from New York during the winter of 1982/83.

#### 1984 Accepted Reports

**Northern Gannet** (*Sula bassanus*). 1984-34-A immature found dead, Oswego, Oswego Co., 3 March (GM), specimen at Rice Creek Biological Station, SUNY Oswego. This report follows several late 1983 sightings reviewed in our previous report; there are about 40 records from upstate New York, but only six are substantiated.

**Ross' Goose** (*Chen rossii*). 1984-2-A,B one, Henderson Pond, Town of

Henderson, Jefferson Co., 25 March to 1 April (LBC, DWC). This is the second record from New York, coming only a year after the first; none are substantiated.

**Yellow Rail** (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*). 1984-40-A one, Town of Knox, Albany Co., 15 May (KPA). There are about 100 reports of this species from New York, most made before 1930. This is only the fifth report in the last decade.

**Sandhill Crane** (*Grus canadensis*). 1984-43-A one, Chappaqua, Westchester Co., 6 June (BW), photograph on file. This is the 20th record from New York.

**Wilson's Plover** (*Charadrius wilsonia*). 1984-17-A one (?female), Great Kills National Recreation Area, Richmond Co., 7 June (AM). This is the 29th record from New York, the last in 1978.

**Piping Plover** (*Charadrius melodus*). 1984-20-A-C nesting pair, Sandy Pond, Oswego Co., 21 May to 25 July (FGS, DWC, JJB), photographs on file. This species last nested at this upstate locality in 1959, and is now sporadic here; there are only four other records from upstate New York in the last decade.

**American Avocet** (*Recurvirostra americana*). 1983-31-A female, Hogan Pt., Town of Greece, Monroe Co., 12 May (RGS). There are about 17 prior records from upstate New York.

**Thayer's Gull** (*Larus thayeri*). 1984-8-A immature (Basic I plumage), Fulton, Oswego Co., 19 Jan. (FGS). 1984-23-A,B,C immature (Basic I plumage), Fulton, Oswego Co., 28 Jan. (FGS, DWC, BJS), photographs on file. See the comments under the 1983 accepted record above.

**Forster's Tern** (*Sterna forsteri*). 1984-12-A,B adult, Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, Seneca Co., 21 April (LC, PJM). This appears to be the earliest record for New York by two days. This species is rarely reported upstate during the spring migration, when it is especially similar to the Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*.) Nonetheless, the NYSARC will not review future reports of this species.

**Great Gray Owl** (*Strix nebulosa*). 1984-24-A one, North Road ("Helena road"), St. Lawrence Co., 21 Jan. (JMCP), photograph published in High Peaks Audubon Newsletter 12:15 on file. 1984-25-A. St. Regis Indian Reservation, Franklin Co., 21 Jan. (JMCP), photograph published in High Peaks Audubon Newsletter 12:16 on file. There are perhaps 100 reports of this species from New York, of which about two-thirds have satisfactory details. Most records come from winters when irruptions occur, as was the case for these reports. Other reports from the winter 1983/84 may be found in our previous report and below under 1984 records not accepted.

**Boreal Owl** (*Aegolius funereus*). 1984-5-A adult, Snake Swamp, Town of Oswego, Oswego Co., 3-15 Feb. (LDH), photographs on file. This is the 21st record from New York State, the previous in 1979.

**Three-toed Woodpecker** (*Picoides tridactylus*). 1984-44-A female, Irvington-on-Hudson, Westchester Co., 17 Dec. (LRS). The Committee has seen several reports of extralimital birds with insufficient detail to preclude aberrant Hairy Woodpeckers (*Picoides villosus*), which rarely show either back-barring or flank-barring, or both, and which may become dark-stained during the nesting season. The brief description of this bird is entirely consistent with birds from eastern North American populations of this species, which has been recorded in New York away from the Adirondacks on about ten prior occasions.

**Western Kingbird** (*Tyrannus verticalis*). 1984-38-A one, west spit Little Sodus Bay, Fairhaven, Cayuga Co., 23 Sept. (MSR). This is only the fourth record from the Oneida Lake Basin Region, and about the 22nd from upstate New York.

**Fish Crow** (*Corvus ossifragus*). 1984-22-A one, Derby Hill, Oswego Co., 28 April (FGS). Seen and heard with a group of American Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) at a time when juveniles of the latter are absent, this bird is far from populations on the Hudson River and the isolated colony in Ithaca. All observations of this species outside of known nesting areas should be submitted to the NYSARC for review.

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** (*Poliophtila caerulea*). 1984-45-A one, Croton Point, Westchester Co., 15 Dec. (BW). This latest record (the first for Dec.) from New York follows a season of exceptional numbers nesting in the lower Hudson Valley, and others were reported elsewhere in New England during the early winter.

**Northern Wheatear** (*Oenanthe oenanthe*). 1984-46-A-D immature, Town of North Elba, Essex Co., 28-29 Sept. (GTC, RKH, POT, CSL). This is the 22nd record from New York and the tenth upstate.

**Yellow-throated Warbler** (*Dendroica dominica*). 1984-16-A,B pair at nest, South Cairo, Greene Co., 6 June to 1 July (DNN, DEE), nest in American Museum of Natural History. 1984-35-A pair at nest, Allegany State Park, Cattaraugus Co., 9-21 July (WD'A), nest in Buffalo Museum of Science. 1984-26-A two, Hamburg, Erie Co., 1 May (LH & RDL). Full details of these first nesting records from New York may be found in *The Kingbird* Vol. 34: 221. There are about 40 prior records from upstate New York, and it is found almost annually in migration on Long Island.

**Summer Tanager** (*Piranga rubra*). 1984-18-A female, Canastota, Madison

Co., 11 May (DWC). 1984-21-A female, Martisco, Onondaga Co., 27 May (FGS). There are about 25 previous satisfactory records from upstate New York; it is found on Long Island and the lower Hudson Valley in the spring of most years.

**Painted Bunting** (*Passerina ciris*). 1984-13-A adult male, Town of Preble 3 mi. s. Tully, Cortland Co., 5-6 May (DWC, FGS), photographs on file. This is the 12th record from New York, and the sixth upstate.

**Lark Sparrow** (*Chondestes grammacus*). 1984-14-A one, Point Peninsula, Jefferson Co., 14 May (J&MT). Although this species is found most falls on Long Island, there are only about a dozen prior records from upstate New York.

**Brewer's Blackbird** (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*). 1984-47-A,B one, Essex, Essex Co., 6-14 Dec. (JP, GC, JMCP). It is not known if the remains of this bird, salvaged from a local cat, were preserved; this is about the 13th record from New York.

**Brambling** (*Fringilla montifringilla*). 1984-11-A-D male, Town of Pleasant Valley, Dutchess Co., 13-27 March (EP, MEV, JWK, MCK), photographs on file. Full details of this first state record appear in *The Kingbird* Vol. 34: 214; it becomes the 428th species to have been recorded from New York. Many other Bramblings were found at widely scattered points in the United States and Canada during the winter 1983/84. The distribution of records of this and of other Palaearctic species suggests a Siberian origin for this bird. This was the eastern-most bird reported, although there are earlier records from western Massachusetts and New Jersey.

#### 1962 Report Not Accepted

**Brambling** (*Fringilla montifringilla*). 1962-1-A one, Tupper Lake Village, Franklin Co., 6 April. This report, whose submission was prompted by the 1984 record above, illustrates the importance of a central repository for reports especially well. The original sketches and notes for this observation have been lost during the intervening years, and this report now is a recollection from more than 20 years ago.

#### 1977 Report Not Accepted

**Anhinga** (*Anhinga anhinga*). 1981-32-A one, Middle Line Island, Nassau Co., 23 July. Although this bird may have been this species, the Committee felt that the circumstances of the observation and the lack of unanimity among its observers, as noted in the account published in *The Kingbird* (Vol. 28: 3-4; 1978), precludes its admission to the state list on the basis of this report.

#### 1981 Report Not Accepted

**Gyr Falcon** (*Falco rusticolus*). 1981-43-A,B one, Derby Hill, Oswego Co., 23 Nov. See below.

### 1982 Report Not Accepted

**California Gull** (*Larus californicus*). 1982-26-A subadult, Mecox Bay, Suffolk Co., 1 Sept. Great care is required to identify vagrant subadults of this species, and observers even should consider the possibility of hybrids, especially Lesser Black-backed x Herring Gull, which could be similar in appearance.

### 1983 Reports Not Accepted

**Little Blue Heron** (*Egretta caerulea*). 1983-30-A immature, Plattsburgh, Clinton Co., 3-4 Sept.

**Gyr Falcon** (*Falco rusticolus*). 1983-32-A one, Shelter Island, Suffolk Co., 30 Dec. See below.

**Arctic Tern** (*Sterna paradisaea*). 1983-23-A one, Lake Sagaponack, Suffolk Co., 18 Sept.

**MacGillivray's Warbler** (*Oporornis tolmiei*). 1983-39-A "female," Fredonia, Erie Co., 29 Oct. Although this bird was trapped and measured in hand, it escaped before it could be photographed. One of the measurements used to separate it from the Mourning Warbler (*Oporornis philadelphia*) was taken "incorrectly," and can never be verified independently. This is one of the few American birds that may be unidentifiable out of range under field conditions, especially in the fall.

### 1984 Reports Not Accepted

**Band-rumped Storm-Petrel** (*Oceanodroma castro*). 1984-36-A one, Hudson Canyon, 26 May. This report also was evaluated by David S. Lee, North Carolina State Museum, who also feels that this suggestive report is sufficiently atypical to preclude its acceptance as a New York record.

**Tricolored Heron** (*Egretta tricolor*). 1984-41-A one near Plattsburgh, Clinton Co., 5 June.

**Black Vulture** (*Coragyps atratus*). 1984-5-A one, Charlotteville, Schoharie Co., 12 Jan. 1984-29-A one, Webster, Monroe Co., 5 April.

**"Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawk** (*Buteo jamaicensis harlani*). 1984-32-A one, Perinton, Monroe Co., 6 May. Current data on variation and distribution of this form suggest that even under the best conditions (which did not apply to this report), one can regard vagrant birds only as "showing the characteristics of this race." Nonetheless, any future observations of "Harlan's" Hawk from New York should be submitted to the NYSARC.

**Ferruginous Hawk** (*Buteo regalis*). 1984-28-A one, Baskets, Monroe Co., 31 March.

**Merlin** (*Falco columbarius*). 1984-7-A one, Bond's Lake, Niagara Co., 8 Jan.

- Gyr Falcon** (*Falco rusticolus*). 1984-1-A one, New Lebanon, Columbia Co., 7 Jan. 1984-6-A one, village of Lisbon, St. Lawrence Co., 13 Feb. Most Gyr Falcon reports seen by the NYSARC are too brief to exclude other raptor species. Also, free-flying Gyr Falcons wearing jesses occasionally have been seen in New York. Identification of this species is further complicated by various falcon hybrids deliberately produced by falconers and which have been found loose in New York on at least two occasions. One of these hybrids eventually was traced to a Missouri falconer!
- Sandhill Crane** (*Grus canadensis*). 1984-30-A one, Webster, Monroe Co., 20 May.
- Thayer's Gull** (*Larus thayeri*). 1984-6-A immature, Montauk Pt., Suffolk Co., 14 Jan. 1984-48-A,B,C immature, Westport, Essex Co., 17 May.
- Roseate Tern** (*Sterna dougallii*). 1984-10-A adult, Elmira, Chemung Co., 4 May.
- Great Gray Owl** (*Strix nebulosa*). 1984-9-A one, LaFargeville, Jefferson Co., 28 Jan. This bird was seen in silhouette at great distance from a rapidly moving car by four experienced observers who had just seen this species in Canada; all simultaneously made the identification, but were unable to view the bird more closely. Most observers have experienced similar situations when they confidently identify a bird based on a fleeting view. Each observer must decide whether to submit such observations to others formally or informally. While there may be more value in documenting such an observation when you know of other similar sightings, the NYSARC is unlikely to find them acceptable as formal records, as in this case.
- Rufous Hummingbird** (*Selasphorus rufus*). 1984-42-A,B male, Castleton-on-Hudson, Rensselaer Co., 26-27 Aug.
- Varied Thrush** (*Ixoreus naevius*). 1984-19-A immature, Fredonia, Erie Co., 11 Aug.
- Western Tanager** (*Piranga ludoviciana*). 1984-27-A male, Lansing Village, Tompkins Co., 16 May.
- Blue Grosbeak** (*Guiraca caerulea*). 1984-33-A pair, Steuben City, Steuben Co., mid-June.
- Painted Bunting** (*Passerina ciris*). 1984-39-A one, Trumansburg, Tompkins Co., 16 May.
- Lark Sparrow** (*Chondestes grammacus*). 1984-15-A one, Webster, Monroe Co., 30 April.

### Corrigenda

The following errors of commission or omission have crept into past reports. For each error, the citation gives the Volume and Page where the report was originally published. In addition, some years have report

numbers that either were not reviewed, were unused, or are still pending a decision by the NYSARC.

**1979 report (Vol. 29)**

**Purple Gallinule:** filed as 1978-10, *not* 1978-11 (p. 122).

**Sabine's Gull:** filed as 1978-29, *not* 1978-19 (p. 122).

**1980 report (Vol. 30)**

**White-faced Storm-Petrel:** observed 19 Sept. 1979 (p. 202).

**American Flamingo:** filed as 1979-5 (p. 202).

**Sabine's Gull:** filed as 1979-42, *not* 1979-36 (p. 203).

**1982 report (Vol. 32)**

**Brewer's Blackbird:** filed as 1981-47, *not* 1981-42 (p. 232).

**1983 report (Vol. 33)**

**N. Gannet:** filed as 1981-54, *not* 1981-46 (p. 247).

**Ivory Gull:** filed as 1981-51, *not* 1981-43 (p. 247).

**Tanager sp.:** filed as 1981-52, *not* 1981-44 (p. 249).

**Hoary Redpoll;** the several reports from Pompey, Onondaga Co., begin with number 1982-3, *not* 1982-2 (p. 249).

**1984 report (Vol. 34)**

**Piping Plover:** observed 14 Sept. 1983 (p. 218).

**American Avocet:** *delete* record 1983-27 (p. 218); it is a duplicate of 1982-40 with an incorrect date, re-evaluated through an error by the Committee. (Both reviews resulted in identical evaluations.)

**Western Kingbird:** report 1983-34 was submitted by David J. Messineo, *not* DS, and the bird was seen in Chenango, *not* Chemung Co. (p. 219).

With this report Paul DeBenedictis resigns from the NYSARC to assume editorship of *The Kingbird*. In seven years of service, it has been his great pleasure to see the growth in acceptance of the NYSARC and in the quality of reports submitted to it; it has been equally difficult to have had to turn down reports felt to be correct, sometimes submitted by good friends, because of inadequate details. The committee accepts with sadness the resignation of Thomas H. Davis, for reasons of health. We welcome Drs. F. G. Scheider and Barbara J. Spencer as their replacements.

Respectfully submitted,  
Paul DeBenedictis, Chairman  
Kenneth P. Able  
Robert F. Andrie  
Thomas H. Davis  
Robert O. Paxton

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