

CHANGES TO THE NYSARC REVIEW LIST

The New York State Avian Records Committee announces the following changes to the Review List.

Reports of the following species from anywhere in New York State will now be reviewed:

Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*)

This eye-catching shorebird is elevated to a full review species (i.e. anywhere in the New York State). Over the last decade, the number of reports of Black-necked Stilt have declined significantly, with few recent recorded individuals staying for more than a day or so. There are very few records away from Long Island. Although identification is relatively simply (except perhaps roosting birds), the decline in the number of sightings has prompted the committee to request descriptions from all Regions of the state.

Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia*)

Formerly a review species for upstate New York only, the committee now requests descriptions of all coastal reports including those seen during pelagic trips. We have noted a sharp decline in the number of reports over the past decade, even from offshore pelagic trips, suggesting a significant change in status. Separation from immature Razorbill (*Alca torda*)

as well as Common Murre (*U. aalge*) can be quite problematic. The committee therefore requests detailed descriptions from all Regions of the state.

The following species are removed from the Review List:

Please note that although no longer required by NYSARC, observers are strongly encouraged to submit detailed descriptions to the appropriate Regional editors for inclusion in *The Kingbird* and *North American Birds* (formerly *Field Notes*).

Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

The committee no longer solicits documentation of records from upstate New York, although detailed reports should still be submitted to Regional committees and editors. This species is found annually in Region 8 during the winter and with increasing frequency on the southeastern shore of Lake Ontario. Great Cormorants remain relatively common in winter in coastal New York (Regions 9 and 10). The separation of Great Cormorant from Double-crested Cormorant is straightforward and is well-described in the popular field guides.

Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*)

Reports of cranes have become quite frequent in the western portion of the state, especially Regions 1 and 2, and typically one or fewer records per annum from the coast (Regions 9 and 10). Although no longer a NYSARC review species, all sightings should be submitted to the appropriate Regional editors together with a description. Observers are reminded to be watchful for other species of crane.

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)

This species continues to expand its range in New York and is now reported annually from several Lake Ontario hawkwatches. The main stronghold continues to be Region 9 where the species now breeds. Interestingly, Black Vultures remain extremely rare in some reporting Regions (Region 1, for example), and again all reports should be submitted to the relevant Regional editors.

Treatment of sightings not accepted to single species

Records accepted to the generic level (for example, *Selasphorus hummingbird* sp.) will now be reported in the 'Accepted Records' portion of the NYSARC annual report together with the observer's name(s). Hopefully in these cases, a short explanation of the identification problems involved will be also be provided.

WORK IN PROGRESS

A number of other changes are still being evaluated. The list includes American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*), Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*), Azure Gallinule (*Porphyryula flavirostris*), Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*), Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*) and non-coastal reports of Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*), Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*), Least Tern (*Sterna albifrons*).

As some readers will have noticed, Azure Gallinule was recently deleted from the American Birding Association Checklist on the basis of unnatural origins (Dunn et al., 1999 Birding 31: 518-524). Currently, NYSARC is conducting its own independent investigation of this sensitive case and would appreciate any new information about the possible origins of the one New York record. We should stress that the identification itself is not in question. All communications will be held in strict confidence.

We encourage all observers to submit detailed documentation of any species or form listed on the NYSARC review list. The review list is meant only as a guideline and under certain circumstances, reports of species not included on the list will be reviewed. Such cases must be accompanied by a cover letter explaining why the record should be examined by NYSARC. A simple example of this category, would be rare wintering records of common breeding species, especially those in which less common species need to be rigorously eliminated. Announcements of additional changes to the NYSARC review list will appear in future issues of The Kingbird.

Respectfully,

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