

Further Predictions of Species to be Added to the Checklist of the Birds of New York State

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Some two decades ago an article appeared in *The Kingbird* entitled "Trends In the State List Of New York State" (Able 1983). At that time the "official" list stood at 423 species (NYSARC 1981).

Able invited five of New York State's most active and knowledgeable birders to each compile a list of the next ten species they believed would be added to the official checklist, and do so in descending order of likelihood. In addition they were requested to do the same with the next five new breeders in the state.

The combined predictions listed 32 potential additions. Of these, a remarkable 15, almost half, have since made it to the current NYS list as follows:

Reddish Egret
Ross's Goose
Spotted Redshank
Black-tailed Godwit
Red-necked Stint
Little Stint
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
Mew Gull
Ross's Gull
Ancient Murrelet
Rufous Hummingbird
Hammond's Flycatcher*
Vermilion Flycatcher
Rock Wren
Lazuli Bunting

*Actually, Hammond's Flycatcher, has not as of the date of this publication been acted upon by the New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC) but its approval is a virtual certainty, given the photographic and textual evidence provided by many qualified observers.

As to the breeding predictions, which theoretically should be an easier call, of the 13 species listed, five (38%) attained breeding status subsequently, as follows:

Black Vulture
Wilson's Phalarope
Blue Grosbeak
Boat-tailed Grackle
White-winged Crossbill

A decade later, the same panel, except for Tony Lauro replacing the deceased Tom Davis, was asked to repeat the process (Levine 1994). By this date the official NYS list stood at 441, with the breeding species total at 241.

That panel listed some 16 species not chosen in 1983 as possibilities, with the balance, of course, from the earlier list. Five (5) of these sixteen (16) new choices have since achieved checklist status. They are:

Long-toed Stint
Anna's Hummingbird
Lewis's Woodpecker
MacGillivray's Warbler
Cassin's Sparrow **

** As of this date the NYSARC has not yet voted on Cassin's Sparrow, but just as in the case of the Hammond's Flycatcher, the photographic evidence, the wealth of written evidence, and the large number of competent observers, would seem to preclude a negative vote.

Again the task of predicting new breeding birds proved to be more difficult and the panel presented some eleven (11) new choices that were not on the 1983 list. None of them made it. However the breeding list grew to 244 with the addition of Merlin, White-winged Tern, neither of which was predicted, and the inevitable recognition of Monk Parakeet as a legitimate member of the state's avifauna.

Moving on to the current *Checklist of the Birds of New York State* ©1999, it shows a total of 455 species and 244 breeders, the latest additions to that list being Broad-billed Sandpiper, Black-tailed Gull, Anna's Hummingbird and Lazuli Bunting. Add to this the MacGillivray's Warbler noted in the 1999 NYSARC report (*Kingbird* 52 (1):8), and the total is 456 species. The 2000 NYSARC report will raise that total but for the purposes of this article, let us start with the figure 456 species and 244 breeders, so we will have a point of comparison to the previous lists of predictions.

Just a few lines about the "official" New York State checklist. The first one was issued by the NYSARC in 1989 listing 438 species but not specifying breeders, revised in 1991 adding three species for a total of 441 and acknowledging 239 species as breeding or having bred in the state. In 1996, a new checklist was issued, raising the total species to 451, four of which were the result of taxonomic splits, with breeders pegged at 242. The latest "official" list (green in color) was printed in 1999, tallying 455 species with 244 breeders. It is available at the cost of \$1.00 from FNYSBC, P.O. Box 440, Loch Sheldrake, NY 12759, and any reader wishing to follow the development of these checklists is referred to *Bull's Birds of New York State*, pgs. 74-76.

Returning to the predicted species lists, note that they are in descending order of likelihood. The seers were offered the option of listing their choices in AOU Check-list order, but declined to do so. (See Table 1)

A brief analysis of the new lists will show a total of 31 species selected by the panel as candidates for the next ten additions to the checklist, and 13 species as breeding additions. In other words there was more unanimity among the panel (13 out of a possible 25) in the breeding selections, than in the occurrence additions (31 out of a possible 50). Theoretically it should be easier to predict the new breeders, but this has not proven to be the case in the past.

The Little Egret was the only species unanimously chosen on the occurrence list. Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, Pacific Golden-Plover, Yellow-legged Gull, Black-chinned Hummingbird and Allen's Hummingbird were chosen by three panelists. Garganey, Tropical Kingbird, Carolina Chickadee, Virginia's Warbler and Black-throated Sparrow were the choices named on two lists, with the balance of twenty being singles.

On the breeder list, Sandhill Crane was the choice of four panelists, Yellow Rail and Eurasian Collared-Dove chosen by three, Royal Tern, Carolina Chickadee, Summer Tanager, Brewer's Blackbird and Pine Grosbeak were on two lists, with the remaining dozen being unique choices.

One must also point out, that some in the panel have amended their choices over the years. For instance, there are five (5) species that appear on the 1983 occurrence list that do not appear on the current list. They are Black-browed Albatross, Prairie Falcon, Groove-billed Ani, Sprague's Pipit and Hermit Warbler.

Eurasian Kestrel and European Golden-Plover which were both on the 1994 occurrence list are not in the current tables.

As to the possible breeders, the panel has downgraded Horned Grebe, Manx Shearwater, White-faced Ibis, Black-necked Stilt and Lesser Black-backed Gull of the 1983 predictions, and American Avocet, Fox Sparrow and Yellow-headed Blackbird on the 1994 compilation.

This simply means that those eliminated from the previous lists have been superseded by the new choices, but of course are still very much in the running.

Regarding the rationale behind these choices, suffice to say, that the breeding predictions were influenced logically by the knowledge of what species already breed in contiguous states, and indeed may already have bred here, have already been reported but not to NYSARC, or not reported to NYSARC in a form that could be accepted by that body.

Referring to the occurrence prediction list, again this was influenced by the pundits' keen knowledge of what is happening in surrounding areas such as Carolina Chickadee breeding virtually in sight of southern Staten Island (Richmond Co.) but is not yet on the New York checklist, or the rise in records of southwestern hummingbirds in the Southeast, or the question of provenance in the case of Eurasian Collared-Dove. In addition, all on the panel track bird distribution and movement throughout the country by perusing various publications.

In Ken Able's article of 1983, in reference to that first panel's choices, he states "...there is a strong consensus that western North America will continue to be the predominant source of new species in New York." This has certainly proven to be true if one looks at the twenty additions made from the predictions, with half of the list falling into that category. However, the current panel seems to be opting a bit more towards our unique coastal positioning.

Each panelist did give a reason for his selections. In the case of Tom Burke's choice of Kirtland's Warbler he stated rather whimsically, "wouldn't it be nice, before it disappears !" Hardly scientific or logical, but I say "Amen!"

Literature Cited

- Able, K. 1983 Trends in the State List of New York Birds
Kingbird 33 (1):6-11
Levine, E. 1994 Predictions of Species to Be Added to the New York
State Checklist Kingbird 44 (4):277-280
NYSARC 1981 Report of The New York State Avian Records
Committee for 1981 Kingbird 32 (4): 228-223



Table 1 – The 2002 predicted additions to the New York State Checklist of Birds

P.A. Buckley	T.W. Burke	W. D'Anna	A.J. Lauro	R.O. Paxton
The predicted next ten additions to the New York State List				
Yellow-legged Gull	Little Egret	Snowy Plover	Little Egret	Eurasian Collared-Dove
Little Egret	Band-rumped	Little Egret	Garganey	Little Egret
Black-chinned	Storm-Petrel	Band-rumped	Pacific Golden –Plover	Garganey
Hummingbird	Pacific Golden-Plover	Storm-Petrel	Brown Noddy	Band-rumped
Allen's Hummingbird	Black-chinned	Band-tailed Pigeon	Common Ground-	Storm-Petrel
Pacific Golden-Plover	Hummingbird	Black-chinned	Dove	Allen's Hummingbird
Fea's Petrel	Tropical Kingbird	Hummingbird	Carolina Chickadee	Whiskered Tern
Tropical Kingbird	Yellow-legged Gull	Black-bellied	Shiny Cowbird	Black-throated Sparrow
Western Wood-Pewee	Violet-green Swallow	Whistling-Duck	Common Ringed Plover	Virginia's Warbler
Carolina Chickadee	McCown's Longspur	Yellow-legged Gull	Black-throated Sparrow	Kelp Gull
Gray Flycatcher	Cassin's Vireo	Allen's Hummingbird	Mongolian Plover	Cassin's Kingbird
	Kirtland's Warbler	Virginia's Warbler		
		Great-tailed Grackle		
The predicted next five documented breeding species.				
Pine Grosbeak	Yellow Rail	Eurasian Collared-Dove	Great Cormorant	Summer Tanager
Eurasian Collared-Dove	Brewer's Blackbird	Sandhill Crane	Little Gull	Sandhill Crane
Sandhill Crane	Sandhill Crane	Brown Pelican	Royal Tern	Eurasian Collared-Dove
Yellow Rail	Royal Tern	Red-necked Grebe	Carolina Chickadee	Brewer's Blackbird
American Pipit	Carolina Chickadee	Summer Tanager	Pine Grosbeak	Yellow Rail