

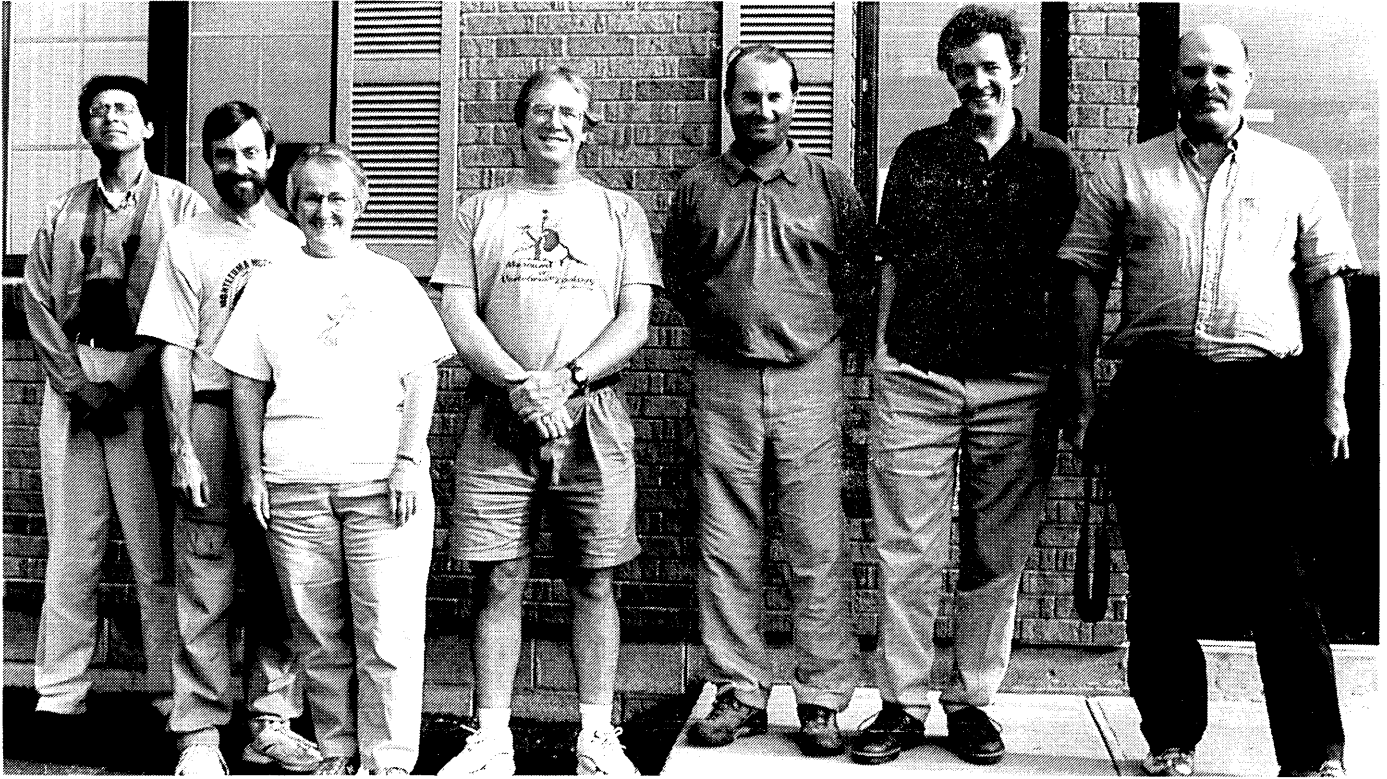


Figure1 - NYSARC members at their annual meeting held in Ithaca on 1 Sep 2002.
From left to right - Shaibal S. Mitra, Willie D'Anna, Jeanne Skelly (Secretary), Kevin J. McGowan, Angus Wilson (Chair), Gerard Phillips, Thomas W. Burke. Member Robert Andrie was unable to attend. Photo by Patricia Lindsay

REPORT OF THE NEW YORK STATE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE FOR 2000

The New York State Avian Records Committee (hereafter NYSARC or the Committee) made decisions on a total of 145 reports involving 45 species and forms. These included 110 reports from 2000, 25 reports from 1999, 8 reports from 1998, and 1 report each from 1994 and 1970. In addition we reviewed 3 third-round reports from 1998 and 4 third-round reports from 1999. In all, 104 reports (72%) were accepted. This is close to our average acceptance rate and testifies to the quality of the majority of the submissions. Thirty-one reports were not accepted because of insufficient documentation or because the descriptions were inconsistent with known identification criteria. Multiple reports were received for only 15% of the sightings, although co-observers were often mentioned. Unfortunately, final decisions on six reports that are undergoing a third round of review could not be made before the publication deadline and are listed as pending. All of the records reviewed by NYSARC (including written descriptions, photographs, videotapes, audio recordings), irrespective of acceptance, are archived at Cornell University in Ithaca and are accessible to the public.

Coverage of the rare birds recorded in New York State remains strong but not perfect. The counties best represented by accepted reports are Monroe 15, Niagara and Wayne 7 each. In total, the committee reviewed reports from 26 counties. All records are sight records unless otherwise indicated. For accepted reports, the names of observers submitting documentation are given in parenthesis and the names of all contributors are listed in full at the end of the report. Occasionally, the names of the original finders (when known) are given in the narrative. The records in this report are arranged taxonomically following The AOU Check-List of North American Birds (AOU 1998). Those contributing photographs, video or sketches, are given special mention in the narrative. With the rapid advances in affordable camera equipment, we have seen an increase in the number of scarce or rare species documented by photographs or video and this is very helpful. Photographs do not need to be 'magazine quality' for them to lend strong support to a written description. Similarly, we will gladly accept copies of video or audiotapes when accompanied by a written report.

Who should submit reports?

A common misconception persists that only the initial discoverer of a bird should submit a report. In actuality, all observers of a rarity (even if it is seen by hundreds of people) should submit written descriptions and/or other forms of documentation (e.g. photographs, video or sketches). As a good rule of thumb, never assume that others will submit anything! A significant number of multi-observer sightings go undocumented and complacency may be partly to blame. Often we receive minimal reports that presume that co-observers will provide the missing details but in reality these have not materialized. Submission of multiple independent reports provides a more compelling and detailed account of the sighting, increasing the likelihood of acceptance.

The review process

We are often asked how the review process works and why it sometimes takes so long. The process itself is relatively simple. When received by the secretary, all reports are duplicated and transmitted to the seven voting members of the committee who write detail commentaries (known as 'review sheets') and cast their votes independently. These are returned to the secretary and the votes are tabulated. Each report is then listed as 'accepted' or 'not accepted'. At least six committee members must vote in the affirmative for an immediate accept; similarly if there are five or more votes against, then the record is not accepted. If no consensus is reached, the reports are sent out again along with the seven review sheets. This allows each committee member to consider the arguments made by the other six before casting a second vote. If necessary, records may even be circulated for a third time. More details of the current voting process are outlined in McGowan and Burke 2000.

There are several reasons why it takes a year or two for NYSARC to publish its decisions. Firstly, we receive a large number of reports and these take a considerable amount of time to compile and carefully review. For a significant fraction of reports, a decision is not reached in the first round of voting and these must be re-circulated through the committee for a second and sometimes third round of review, thus adding to the delay. Secondly, many reports are received weeks or months after the sighting and so we generally cannot begin reviewing until well into the following year. We do our best to work quickly but carefully. Prompt submission, careful preparation of reports and ,where possible, submission of multiple independent reports will help us to reduce the lag to a minimum. The continued cooperation of bird clubs and Regional editors in coordinating submissions is greatly appreciated.

How to submit reports

To learn how to prepare and submit a report, please visit the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs web site:

(<http://birds.cornell.edu/fnysbc/NYSARC/NYSARChome.htm>)

The site also includes a list of species reviewed by NYSARC, information on the composition of the Committee, a gallery of photographs and copies of previous annual reports. NYSARC encourages observers to submit documentation for all species on the review list, as well as species unrecorded in New York. The Committee is very grateful to Carena Pooth and Barbara Butler for redesigning and regularly updating the NYSARC web site.

Documentation or correspondence for the Committee should be sent to:

Jeanne Skelly, Secretary for NYSARC
420 Chili-Scottsville Road
Churchville, NY 14428
E-mail: jdsKelly@frontiernet.net

NYSARC Activities

On 1 Sept 2002, NYSARC (Fig.1) held its mandated annual meeting at the Lab of Ornithology Annex in Dryden near Ithaca. With a full agenda, the committee discussed a broad-range of topics during the lively six-hour meeting. The Committee established policy on the review of published material that has not been submitted as a formal report. It was decided that in the case of potentially important records - such as first state records - the secretary will write to the principal authors of suitable articles alerting them that we are about to review their published material. We feel that this gives observers the opportunity to present their best case and with luck most authors will respond by submitting a formal report that includes all of the supporting information available. In a related vein, the committee agreed that authors of detailed articles may submit these in lieu of a conventional report but need to give permission in writing to the secretary before such articles will be considered a report. It would be helpful, but is not required, for the authors to provide a high-quality copy of the article, which can then be photocopied and circulated. Although the committee has agreed to make these allowances, we wish to stress that published articles are generally not the best format for review. Descriptive details are frequently pared down to the bare minimum and tend to focus on clinching details rather than a full description of the bird. Important supporting documentation such as sketches and field notes are rarely included in published material and photographs are often reproduced in black-and-white rather than color. Observers should be aware that these weaknesses may come to bear on the evaluation of the sighting and that publication itself does not ensure acceptance.

Highlights of the 2000 Report

Chief among the highlights of 2000 was the addition of **Cassin's Sparrow** (*Aimophila cassinii*) to the New York State Checklist. With this inclusion, the state list rises to 457 species. Equally exciting was the discovery of a **Cayenne Tern** (*Sterna sandvicensis eurygnatha*), the first documented example from New York and one of only a small number recorded in North America. Other notable highlights include well-studied and photographed **Red-necked Stint** (*Calidris ruficollis*) and **Little Stint** (*C. minuta*). In an amazing convergence of Neotropical, Western and Eastern Palearctic vagrants, both stints and the Cayenne Tern were observed on the same beach within hours of each other! A **Cave Swallow** (*Petrochelidon fulva*) sighted over Hamlin Beach in late November 1999 was the third record for the state and presumably part of a major incursion that brought birds into many northeastern states and provinces.

NYSARC is indebted to the ninety-two observers who contributed the reports discussed here. Several individuals put forth considerable effort to document important sightings for the permanent record and where possible, their efforts are acknowledged in the narratives. These valiant contributors represent a tiny minority of the many hundreds, if not thousands, of active birders and feeder watchers in the state. Every year we make the same plea to the birding community to submit documentation for all of the rare or out of season birds they

observe in New York. We hope that publication of this expanded annual report and the steady growth of the NYSARC web site and the increased profile of the Committee will contribute to an even greater level of participation from the entire birding community in future years.

2000 REPORTS ACCEPTED

Audubon's Shearwater (*Puffinus lherminieri*)

2000-35-A Five individuals, Hudson Canyon, Suffolk Co., 2 Sep. (Willie D'Anna). The report detailed five of seven Audubon's Shearwaters logged on an organized pelagic trip to the Hudson Sea Canyon. Both Manx Shearwater (*P. puffinus*) and Audubon's Shearwater are known to occur off NY during the warmer months and identification of small black-and-white shearwaters requires a suite of features beyond the extent of coloring on the undertail coverts.

Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*)

2000-44-A One juvenile seen over Lake Ontario from Derby Hill, Mexico, Oswego Co., 4 Nov. (Kevin McGann); 2000-46-A One seen over Lake Ontario from Derby Hill, Mexico, Oswego Co., 11 Nov. (Bill Purcell); 2000-54-A One over Lake Ontario at Golden Hill State Park, Niagara Co., 3 Dec. (Brendan Klick); 2000-71-A One over Lake Ontario from Hamlin Beach State Park, 11 Nov. (Robert Spahn). It is possible that all four records refer to the same juvenile wandering westward along the southern shore of Lake Ontario. For much of the year, Northern Gannets are common along the Atlantic Coast of New York and are frequently seen well into Long Island Sound. Occasionally individuals wander along the St Lawrence River and into Lake Ontario.

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)

2000-24-A One individual over Route 366 in Varna, Tompkins Co. 28 May (Meena Haribal).

Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*)

2000-22-A One on Motor Island in the Niagara River, Erie Co., 26 May (Brendan Klick); 2000-26-A/B One at Tifft Nature Preserve, Erie Co., 12-14 June (Robert Andrie, Brendan Klick). A predominantly coastal species, Tricolored Herons are familiar summer visitors to salt marsh habitat on Long Island, but rare elsewhere, particularly in northern and western parts of the state. The majority of records from western New York occur in the spring or early summer.

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*)

2000-77-A One at Jones Beach SP, Nassau Co., 27 May. (Andrew Guthrie). This alternate-plumaged adult was photographed by the observer on a small ephemeral pool near Parking Field 10 at Jones Beach SP. The description and photographs clearly document the diagnostic red iris, pink facial skin with white feather border and the red flush to the legs. Although reported sporadically from the same pool, no additional descriptions were received.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

2000-38-A Jamaica Bay WR, Queens/Kings Cos., 8 Oct. (Michael Duffy); 2000-66-A Three individuals Point au Roche State Park, Clinton Co., 19 Nov. (Paul Osenbaugh); 2000-68-A One in the Savannah Mucklands, Seneca Co., 20 Nov. (George Kloppel); 2000-79-A One juvenile at Jamaica Bay WR, Queens/Kings Cos., 11 Oct. (Paul Lehman); 2000-81-A One to three individuals, northern Cayuga Co., 13-18 & 20 March. (Gerard Phillips). The juvenile bird from Jamaica Bay accompanied wintering Greater Snow Geese (*C. caerulescens atlanticus*) that feed in the extensive salt marshes of the bay and use refuge ponds as a roosting site and safe haven. It remained until 20 Dec. The number of Ross's Geese reported in the state continues to increase, perhaps a direct reflection of the growth of the population as a whole. Increased observer vigilance may also be a factor.

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis hutchinsii*)

2000-62-A Twenty-five individuals at Ring-neck Marsh, Iroquois NWR, Orleans Co., 19 Oct. (Michael Morgante) Various known as Hutchins's or Richardson's Goose, the northern subspecies *B. c. hutchinsii* has at times been treated as a distinct species known as Tundra Goose (Aldrich, 1946). Observers in western NY, principally in Region 1, are reporting this form with increasing regularity. Often these reports involve small flocks mixed with other Canada Geese. The Committee remains interested in carefully documented reports of this taxon and other small Canada Geese so that we can more accurately ascertain the occurrence in New York.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)

2000-4-A One male, Fishers Landing, Town of Orleans, Jefferson Co., 28 & 29 Jan. (Nick Leone). This male Tufted Duck was found on the St. Lawrence River with several other duck species including a large number of Ring-necked Ducks (*A. collaris*). This handsome diving duck was documented with a very detailed written description supported by a color photograph. The bright white flanks, solid dark mantle and details of bill coloration offered no evidence of hybridization, although the tuft was much shorter than expected for a full adult male. The Tufted Duck population has expanded greatly in western Europe, and migrants, probably from Iceland, are beginning to winter in eastern North America with greater regularity. Tufted Duck is now a regular but rare winter visitor to New York, principally in the Long Island and New York City area where it is no longer a NYSARC review species. The species remains very rare elsewhere in the state, with only a handful of records.

Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*)

2000-19-A/D One adult (Fig.2) at Ripley Hawkwatch site #4, Town of Westfield, Chautauqua Co., 3 May (Leonard DeFrancisco, Melvin & Sally Freeborough, Martha McNeel).. The identification was documented with an exemplary series of reports including detailed descriptions, copies of field notes and very helpful sketches. The authors carefully considered confusion species such as Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*). This is the first record for Region 1 since 1926

and was preceded by several days of warm weather with strong southwesterly winds. The identification was documented with an exemplary series of reports including detailed descriptions, copies of field notes and very helpful sketches. Swallow-tailed Kite is an essentially Neotropical species that breeds in Florida and Louisiana northwards to South Carolina. The majority of New York records have occurred in the spring or fall.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

2000-23-A One, Bashakill Marsh, Sullivan Co., 27 May (John J. Collins). This immature was observed by members of the Queens County Bird Club. The gray/brown body, two-toned wings and barred tail argues for a bird in first summer plumage. Records of Mississippi Kite have become more common in recent years, presumably in response to the northwards and eastwards expansion in breeding range (Parker 1999). The majority of NY occurrences occur in the spring and early summer.

Red-necked Stint (*Calidris ruficollis*)

2000-30-A/D One, Cupsogue Beach County Park and Pike's Beach, Westhampton Dunes, Suffolk Co., 12-14 July (John Fritz, Douglas J. Futuyma, Eric Salzman, Angus Wilson). The bird was discovered on the Moriches Inlet flats by John Fritz and then on subsequent days re-sighted by others about a half mile to the east on Pike's Beach. Studied in the company of Semipalmated Sandpipers (*C. pusilla*), Least Sandpipers (*C. minutilla*) and Western Sandpipers (*C. mauri*) as well as a number of larger species including Sanderling (*C. alba*). The bird was an adult in the early stages of pre-basic molt. Thus it retained an extensive rufous wash across the head, neck and throat extending onto the upper breast. The red rather than orange tone to the upperparts and lack of a pale throat helped to eliminate adult Little Stint (*C. minuta*). At this time of year, many adult Sanderlings retain a strong reddish tone contrasting with whitish upperparts and might be confused for a Red-necked Stint. Two of the reports specifically address this important ID contender, drawing attention to the differences in size and feather patterning as well as the presence of a hind toe on the stint, which definitively rules out Sanderling. Although not submitted with the written descriptions, a number of full-frame video stills taken by Angus Wilson were posted on the internet and published in *North American Birds*, *Birding World*, and *Birdwatch*. This is the fifth record for New York, all of adults retaining alternate-plumage.

Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*)

2000-32-A/D One adult, Pike's Beach, Town of Southampton, Suffolk Co., 16 Jul (John Fritz, Chris Neri, Eric Salzman, Rex and Birgit Stanford). Independently discovered by Eric Salzman and Rex and Birgit Stanford while searching for the Red-necked Stint (see above). The photographs and description clearly indicate an adult in early pre-basic molt (the change from breeding to winter plumage). Red-necked Stint could be eliminated by the orangish rather than reddish wash to the upperparts, fine streaking on the upper breast and solid dark centers on the greater wing coverts. Rex Stanford submitted a series of photographs. This is the third record for the state and the second of an adult. For a full account of the discovery of this bird as well as its identification see Stanford 2000.

Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*)

2000-25-A One adult, Town of Savannah, Wayne Co., 7 June (Ben Fambrough). Adult Baird's Sandpipers are rare in NY at any time of year and the spring date is all the more exceptional. Adult Baird's Sandpipers returning from their South American wintering grounds normally migrate northwards along the Rockies and are rarely encountered in the eastern half of the continent (Harrington 1999). The vast majority of Baird's Sandpipers recorded in New York are southbound juveniles. . Fortunately, direct comparison with adult White-rumped Sandpiper (*C. fuscicollis*) was possible. The buff supercilium and long primary projection ruled out adult Semipalmated Sandpiper (*C. pusilla*), the other major contender.

Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*)

2000-40-A/B One intermediate juvenile, (Fig.3)Derby Hill, Mexico, Oswego Co., 11 Oct. (Kevin McGann, Gerard Phillips). The Long-tailed Jaeger was observed in a small flock of jaegers passing along the lakeshore. Remarkably this flock also contained both Parasitic Jaeger(*S. parasiticus*) and Pomarine Jaeger (*S. pomarinus*). Compared to the other jaegers, the Long-tailed was conspicuously smaller and slimmer. The characteristic upper-wing flash created by white primary shafts, was restricted to the front edge of the outer two or three primaries, contrasting with the more extensive flashes of the accompanying Parasitic Jaegers.

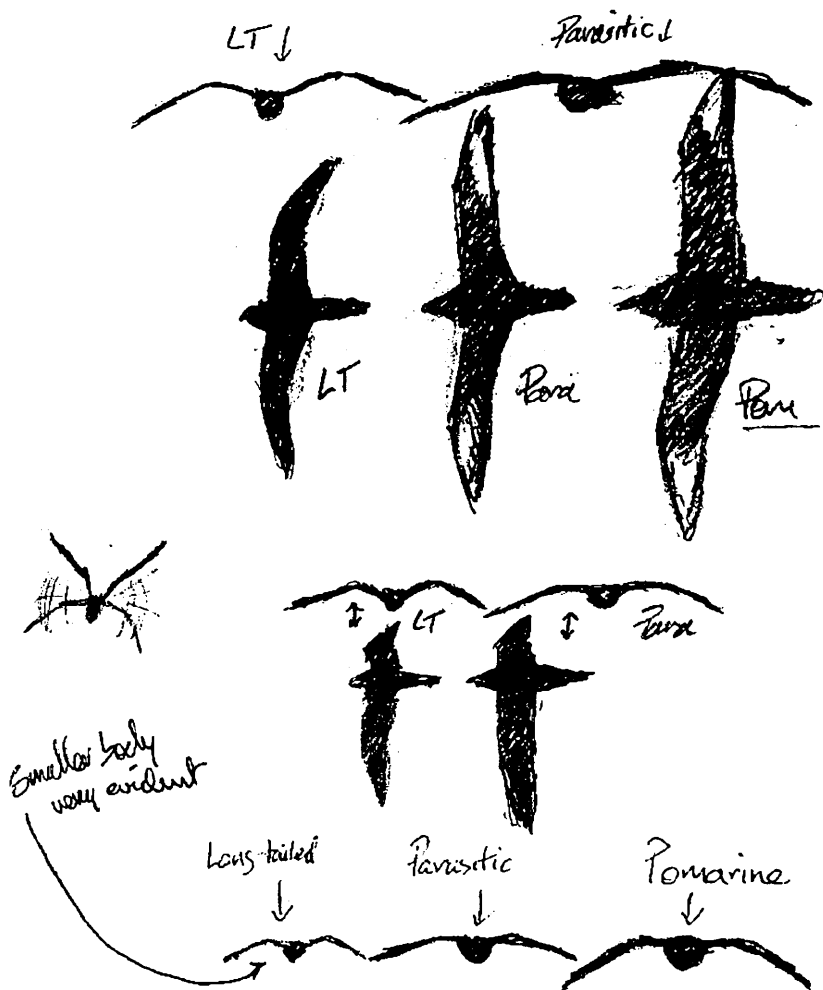
California Gull (*Larus californicus*)

2000-1-A One in third basic plumage, Town of Lewiston, Niagara Co., 1-2 Jan. (Willie D'Anna); 2000-47-A/B One adult in basic plumage, Robert Moses Power Plant, Niagara Co., 12 Nov. (Willie D'Anna, Brendan Klick); 2000-50-A/B One adult in basic plumage, Robert Moses Power Plant, Niagara Co., 10 Dec. (Willie D'Anna, Brendan Klick); 2000-63-A One adult in basic plumage, Niagara Falls, Niagara Co., 30 Nov. (Michael Morgante). The Niagara River remains the premier locality for this western species in New York State (D'Anna 2000). The committee was uncertain as to the number of individuals involved.

Cayenne Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis eurygnatha*)

2000-33-A/B One, Pike's Beach, Town of Southampton, Suffolk Co., 17-18 July (Eric Salzman, Shaibal S.Mitra). This is the first record for New York State of this distinctive subspecies of Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*) and one of less than ten recorded in North America. The bird was discovered by three independent parties each searching for the Red-necked and Little stints (see above) that had been seen at the same locality. The tern was studied by a number of observers during the day as well as the following day. At various times, the Cayenne Tern was observed alongside a typical adult Sandwich Tern (*S. s. acuflavida*) as well as the more expected Royal Tern (*S. maxima*). No report was filed for the Sandwich Tern, although it too is a review species. Cayenne Terns occur as two separate populations: one found in the southern Caribbean and the second scattered along the Atlantic coast of Brazil reaching northern Patagonia. The simultaneous occurrence of Eurasian shorebirds and a Caribbean (or possibly South American) tern is quite puzzling. Could this simply be the result of so many sharp-eyed observers coming to the location – the so-called 'Patagonia picnic table effect'? A detailed account of the New York bird together with an informative discussion of the range and taxonomic status of Cayenne Tern can be found in Mitra and Buckley 2000.

Oct. 11th. Derby Bluffs (Hill). NW/WW 20-30 mph.



Approx. Size / shape ~~comparisons~~ of profile.

Smallest bird (LT) flew with buoyant flight in general but often exhibited an 'aggressive' flight action, keeping up with the other species and essentially flying like a smaller version of Pom.

Figure 3 - On 11 Oct 2000, an intermediate-phase Long-tailed Jaeger (2000-40-A/B) was part of a small flock of jaegers, including Parasitic and Pomarine, moving past Derby Hill. Though not photographed, these sketches by Gerard Phillips provide a valuable record of its shape and appearance.

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

2000-64-A Two subadults at Democrat Point, Fire Island, Suffolk Co., 13-14 June (Patricia Lindsay, Shaibal S. Mitra). Both birds were studied alongside Common (*S. hirundo*) and Roseate Terns (*S. dougallii*). Although Arctic Terns are reported with regularity, relatively few are submitted for NYSARC review and the true status in the state remains uncertain.

Bridled Tern (*Sterna anaethetus*)

2000-36-A/B Up to five individuals on a pelagic trip to Hudson Canyon, 2 Sep (Willie D'Anna, Michael Bochnik). A number of Bridled Terns were observed during this organized pelagic trip and the precise location of each encounter established using a handheld GPS device. Michael Bochnik photographed two of the birds. One of the photographs clearly shows a full adult. Bridled Terns are a subtropical and tropical species with breeding colonies in the Caribbean. In late summer, adults and attending young wander northwards with the Gulf Stream and can reach New York waters in small numbers.

Alcid species

2000-55-A One flying over Lake Ontario at Olcott Beach, Niagara Co., 10 Dec. (Brendan Klick) While the committee agreed that the description adequately described an alcid, it could not be identified to species. All alcids are extremely rare on Lake Ontario and good views are not always possible.

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*)

2000-27-A /B One at a feeder in Durhamville, Town of Verona, Oneida Co., 11-15 June (Brenda Best, Dorothy Crumb). This was an excellent report, comprising a detailed description of the entire bird, not just the key field marks, topped off with a definitive color photograph from Brenda Best. This is an essentially Neotropical species with the northern limit of its breeding range reaching southern California, Texas and Florida. The frequency of sightings in New York has increased in recent years.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*)

2000-37-A One, Jamaica Bay WR, Queens /Kings Cos. 5 Sept. (Michael Duffy); 2000-49-A One, Alley Pond Park, Queens Co., 6 Dec. (Valerie Freer); 2000-75-A One, Prospect Park, Kings Co., 27 Nov. (Robert E. Jett). The Jamaica Bay bird was in an advanced state of molt and this created some confusion over its correct aging. Extensive debate on the internet met with general agreement that this was an Ash-throated Flycatcher but almost certainly not a calendar year bird as suggested by several observers. The Alley Pond bird first appeared on 29 Nov, shortly after the Prospect Park bird. Both remained into December, with the former continuing to 24 Dec. Although we received only one written report for each, all three birds were photographed and seen by a large number of birders.

Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*)

2000-69-A/B Two on North Hamlin Rd, Hamlin, Monroe Co., 30 Aug. (Kurt Fox, Robert G. Spahn). Discovered by Richard O'Hara and Robert McKinney. The

detailed descriptions of plumage and vocalizations clearly eliminated other tyrant flycatcher species. A regular fall migrant to southern New York, this species is much less frequent along the shore of Lake Ontario.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*)

2000-29-A One adult, Oceanside Nature Preserve, Nassau Co., 29 Jun. (Michael A. Farina). The very long tail shown in the accompanying photograph is consistent with a full adult. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers breed in open habitats across the southern United States from New Mexico to Louisiana. Both adults and immatures wander into the northeast, principally during spring and fall.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*)

2000-53-A/B One, Little Neck Bay, Douglaston, Queens Co., 1 June. (Steve Walter, Angus Wilson). Discovered by Steve Walter. Prompt reporting on the internet allowed Angus Wilson and Andy Guthrie to flee work and catch a commuter train to Douglaston and watch the bird until dusk. It was not seen again. The long tail feathers appeared to be broken but were clearly longer than expected for Eastern Kingbird (*T. tyrannus*).

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

2000-60-A/B One, Town of Savannah, Wayne Co., 20 May. (Barbara Herrgesell, Jay McGowan). This Loggerhead Shrike was carefully described and supported by a photograph by Jay McGowan. The number of annual sightings of Loggerhead Shrike in New York has declined significantly in the last two decades and it is important that all occurrences are carefully documented. Special care must be taken to rule out Northern Shrike (*L. excubitor*), which is far more regular in the state and can occur as a spring and fall migrant as well as wintering species.

Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*)

2000-43-A/B One, Hamlin Beach State Park, Monroe Co., 28 Oct (Mike Davids, John Lehr). This bird, found by Mike Davids, did not linger, staying just 25 minutes. With brief sightings especially, multiple reports can provide stronger evidence than a single report. Together, these two reports provided an acceptable record of this occurrence.

Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*)

2000-52-A One at feeder, East Northport, Suffolk Co. 3 Dec. (Vincent Schippa). This handsome and very late warbler was last seen 27 Dec. The lores were described as having a hint of yellow, suggesting the nominate subspecies *D. d. dominica*, which breeds on the Atlantic coastal plain from New Jersey southwards.

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*)

2000-31-A One female, Greenwich Village, New York Co., 4-15 Dec. (Helene Tetrault); 2000-45-A/D One female or immature male, Tiff Nature Preserve, Erie Co., 9-12 Nov. (Willie D'Anna, Brendan Klick, Debbie Sharon,

William Watson; discovered by William Watson); 2000-61-A One female found dead on the road, Old Chatham, Town of Chatham, Columbia Co., 9 June. (William Cook). The specimen (1744) of the Columbia Co. male is in the Institute of Nat. Hist. , Columbia-Greene Comm. College, Hudson, NY.

Western Tanager (*Piranga ludovicianus*)

2000-34-A/B One, Perry Mills, Clinton Co., 24 Aug. (Shelia Arthur, Christine Murphy). Discovered during Atlas 2000 surveying, the date is remarkable and might indicate a bird attempting to breed in our area. Unfortunately no further sightings were made.

Cassin's Sparrow (*Aimophila cassinii*)

2000-39-A/C One, Jones Beach State Park, Nassau Co. 7 Oct. (Tom Burke, Douglas J. Futuyma, Michael Higgiston, Angus Wilson) This constitutes the **first record** for New York State. Tom Burke and Gail Benson discovered the sparrow, when it perched momentarily on a snow fence separating Jones Beach Parking Field 6 from a smaller parking lot. The bird was then seen running along the ground but could not be relocated as the light faded. Local birders were alerted that evening and searched the area the following morning without relocating the bird. However at midday Burke refound it when it again popped up onto the fence, this time revealing the diagnostic ladder of dark markings along the central tail feathers. Some photographs and video of marginal quality were taken. Gradually the pieces of the identification were put together and confirmed by the small crowd that had gathered. Other species, including the rather similar Botteri's Sparrow (*A. botterii*) and Bachman's Sparrow (*A. aestivalis*), were ruled out by the combination of dusky streaking along the lower flanks, absence of buff tones to the upperparts, lack of a rusty crown and presence of horizontal ladder-effect on the central tail feathers (Beadle and Rising 2002; Rising 1996). During the summer, Cassin's Sparrow inhabits the arid grasslands of the southwestern United States reaching as far north as Nebraska. In the cooler months, birds disperse southwards to southern Arizona and Texas and down into central Mexico. There are a handful of previous records from the northeast (New Jersey, Maine and Nova Scotia), two in September and one from May. The Jones Beach bird was seen by many birders during the next two days and was last glimpsed shortly after dawn on 11 Oct. . For a more detailed account of the sighting see Burke 2001.

Lark Bunting

(*Calamospiza melanocorys*)

2000-15-A/F One adult male, (Fig.4) Town of Alabama, Genesee Co., 21-30 April (Willie D'Anna, Michael Galas, Brendan Klick, Jay McGowan, Gail Seamans, William Watson) This nearly alternate-plumaged adult male was discovered and tentatively identified by



Figure 4
Lark Bunting

© Kevin & Jay McGowan

Aron Kehlenbeck, and confirmed by Gail Seamans who notified other birders. Relatively confiding, this handsome bunting was well-documented with a series of detailed reports. The overall black coloring, large white wing patch and thick conical silver-colored bill readily identified it. The bird can be tentatively aged as a second-year based on the white tips to many of the mantle and scapular feathers, as well as a scattering of entirely brown feathers on the back. The last sighting, made by Mr. Kehlenbeck, came on 5 May. This is the first record for Region 1 since a long-staying bird in 1967.

Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*)

2000-20-A One adult, Niagara Mohawk Energy Information Center (EIC), Town of Scriba, Oswego Co., 9 May (Bill Purcell). This well-described adult was in alternate-plumage judging by the gray rather than brown cheeks. This is the fourth record for Region 5 and first in spring.

Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*)

2000-18-A/B One female, Niagara Mohawk Energy Information Center (EIC), Town of Scriba, Oswego Co., 7 May (Bill Purcell, Kevin McGann); 2000-21-A One first year male, Verbank, Town of Union Vale Dutchess Co., 14 May (Barbara Butler). The female at the EIC was the third record for Region 5.

Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*)

2000-67-A/B One, Westlake Rd, Town of Dryden, Tompkins Co., 8 Apr (George Kloppel, Kevin McGowan). Discovered by Ken Rosenberg, this male actively maintained a territory in agricultural fields and may have paired with a female Eastern Meadowlark (*S. magna*). It remained to the end of the spring. The brief written descriptions were supported by super digital photographs by Kevin McGowan, documenting the extension of yellow onto the malar stripe, the narrower barring on the tail and spotted rather than streaked flanks. McGowan also noted the more bubbling and complex song compared to Eastern Meadowlark. Many birders saw the Western Meadowlark during its extended stay but regretably only two filed reports. One reason for this apathy could be the omission of the species from the NYSARC review list, a carryover from times when singing males were found annually on the Great Lakes Plain. In the past ten years the regularity of occurrence has declined precipitously and it is clear that the review status needs to be re-examined.

Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni*)

2000-3-A One Colden, Erie Co., 20, 22, 23 Jan. (James L. Wojewodzki); 2000-5-A One at feeder in Pompey, Onondaga Co., 6 Feb. (Dorothy Crumb); 2000-6-A Two at a feeder Slingerlands, Albany Co., 17-20 Feb. (David L. Martin, Sandra Bloom Martin); 2000-7-A One, Webster, Monroe Co., 27-28 Feb. (Don Traver); 2000-8-A One, Webster, Monroe Co., 8 Mar. (Don & Donna Traver) 2000-11-A One, Colden, Erie Co., 21 Mar. (James L. Wojewodzki); 2000-74-A Two individuals, Town of Greece, Monroe County 7 Mar. (Kevin Griffith); 2000-80-A One, Derby Hill Bird Observatory, Oswego Co., 9 Mar. (Gerard Phillips). Of the two or

more individuals described by Don and Donna Traver, the later bird (2000-8-A) was visibly larger and strikingly pale suggesting it might belong to the less common nominate race (*C. h. hornemanni*). During the winter of 1999/2000 large numbers of Common Redpolls (*C. flammea*) were reported across the state and *The Kingbird* published twenty-eight reports of Hoary Redpoll.

2000 REPORTS ACCEPTED BUT ORIGINS UNCERTAIN

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*)

2000-51-A Four adults and two immatures, Fairhaven State Park, Town of Sterling, Cayuga Co., 3 Dec. (Bill Purcell). These birds were well- described and compared directly with Tundra Swans (*C. columbianus*). The identification is clearly established but there are significant concerns about the natural origins of any Trumpeter Swans in New York. The species is currently excluded from the New York State Checklist, although it is likely to have occurred in our region as a common migrant and possibly breeder prior to European settlement two hundred years ago. In recent times, the first documented examples of breeding occurred in 1996 and involved escapes from a private collection. It is thought that this small 'seed population' survives and may account for many or all of the breeding records from Region 2, 3 and 6. In addition, there is an active reintroduction program in Ontario which began in 1983. The majority of these birds are wing-tagged and examples have been observed in western NY during fall and winter. No Ontario birds have been seen in NY during the nesting season. For a detailed account see Carroll and Swift, 2000.

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

2000-13-A/C One, Lamson Rd, Town of Lysander, Onondaga Co., 16-22 Apr (Barbara Herrgesell, Jay McGowan, Bill Purcell). Barnacle Geese provide perennial headaches for North American records committees. This attractive European goose breeds in small numbers in eastern Greenland and is thus a reasonable candidate for vagrancy to North America. There is a record of a banded Barnacle Goose that was shot in Newfoundland, although this individual originated in Spitzbergen not Greenland. Unfortunately, Barnacle Geese happen to be very popular with wildfowl collectors, both private and commercial. The dilemma for any committee is how to know whether a specific individual represents an escape or a genuine vagrant. The identification of the Lysander bird was not in any doubt and was well- documented including a photograph submitted by Jay McGowan.

Great Tit (*Parus major*)

2000- 14-A One at a private feeder, Town of Lee, Oneida Co. 18 April (Maureen Staloff). The report describes a chickadee-like bird observed and photographed from a kitchen window as it fed on sunflower seed. The description and two color photographs clearly support the observer's identification as a Great Tit. The bold yellow flanks evident in the photographs suggest the Oneida bird belongs to one of the subspecies within the so called 'major' group, which originate in Europe and central Asia (Harrop and Quinn 1995). Northern populations of Great Tits are

short-range migrants principally in response to cold weather. The species has been recorded in Iceland four times, probably as ship-assisted arrivals (Yann Kolbeinsson, *in let.*). Great Tits are kept in captivity in North America and the committee is aware of at least one known escape observed in another northeastern state. There is a sight record from Little Diomed Island in western Alaska, however, this was not accepted by the ABA or AOU Checklist committees due to lack of material documentation (DeBenedictis 1994).

1999 REPORTS ACCEPTED

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

1999-37-C One, May's Point Pool, Montezuma NWR, Seneca Co., 10-14 Oct. (Gerard Phillips) - this is an additional submission to a previously accepted record (1999-37-A/B); 1999-58-A/B/C One, Savannah Mucklands, Montezuma NWR, Wayne Co., 13-14 Mar. (George Kloppel, Gerard Phillips, Dominic Sherony); 1999-74-A/B One, Town of Hamlin, Monroe Co., 20 Mar. (Dominic Sherony, Robert Spahn). This species continues to increase in the state. When reporting a Ross's Goose, it is important that observers carefully consider the possibility of a Snow X Ross's Goose hybrid. Precise size comparisons with Snows, head shape, and bill shape and pattern are most important.

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis hutchinsii*)

1999-59-A Twenty-eight at Ring-neck Marsh, Iroquois NWR, Orleans Co., 21 Oct. (Michael Morgante); 1999-60-A Thirty-two on 13 Nov and 10 on 21 Nov at Ring-neck Marsh, Iroquois NWR, Orleans Co., (Michael Morgante). Until recently, this subspecies of Canada Goose was quite uncommon in New York. As described above, we are witnessing an interesting change in status with reports becoming much more frequent in western and central New York (see comments above). NYSARC is interested in receiving detailed descriptions, if possible with photographs.

Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*)

1999-75-A One at Sodus Bay, Wayne Co., 29 Jan. (Robert Spahn). This female Common Eider was observed together with a King Eider. Common Eiders are very rare on the Great Lakes and need to be documented fully. Three subspecies have occurred in the state and assignment to subspecies would provide clues to their origins.

Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus griseus*)

1999-65-A One, off Rt 31, Packard Valley Farms, Town of Perinton, Monroe Co., 18 May (Dominic Sherony). There are three subspecies of Short-billed Dowitcher, two of which (*griseus* and *hendersoni*) are known to occur in New York. During the spring the predominant form in central and western New York is *L. g. hendersoni*, which migrates through the center of the continent to their breeding grounds in central and western Canada. This report from an experienced birder, described a single adult dowitcher in full alternate (breeding) plumage, which he studied

using a telescope in good light. Unfortunately no other dowitchers were present for direct comparison, the only other shorebirds being Least Sandpipers (*Calidris minutilla*). However, the description of the overall color and distribution of barring and spotting adequately ruled out *L. g. hendersoni*. Comparisons were made to a specimen (No. 7585) attributable to *L. g. griseus* in the Buffalo Science Museum that was collected in Ontario on 18 May 1969. The report would have been stronger if the subspecies *L. g. caurinus* had also been discussed. This rather variable subspecies migrates through the Pacific coastal states and has not been documented in the east.

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

1999-69-A One over Lake Ontario, Hamlin Beach SP, Monroe Co., 5 Oct. (Brett Ewald). This juvenile Arctic Tern was studied through telescopes for more than ten minutes as it flew to and fro along the shore of Lake Ontario. The grayish upperwing coverts and outer primaries, white rump and tail and narrow dark primary tips allowed the observers to rule out Common (*S. hirundo*) and Forster's Tern (*S. forsteri*) of comparable age.

Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*)

1999-70-A One, Hamlin Beach SP, Monroe Co., 23 Nov. (Brett Ewald). Observed flying eastwards along the beach before turning south and over the observers. The pale orange throat and chest and buff rump ruled out adult and immature Cliff Swallow (*P. pyrrhonota*). The late November date is typical for sightings of this species in the northeast. Although no report was submitted, a Cave Swallow was reported on the same day from Braddock Bay and was conceivably the same wandering individual (Griffith 2000). This sighting coincides with a major incursion into the northeast with sightings scattered from Ontario to Rhode Island and south to North Carolina (Curry and McLaughlin 2000; McNair and Post 2001). The arrival of Cave Swallows was associated with strong southerly or southwesterly winds accompanied by warm temperatures stretching from Texas to Ontario. Two subspecies occur in North America and both have been documented in New York. Members of the southwestern subspecies seem to predominate in late fall, although identification in the field requires prolonged and careful observation ideally supported with photographs or specimens (McNair and Post 2001). Although the subspecies at Hamlin Beach could not be firmly established, others associated with the incursion are believed to be *P. f. pallida* (= *pelodoma*), which breed in the southwestern United States and adjacent parts of northeastern Mexico. This is the third record for New York and the first away from New York City (Jamaica Bay and Riis Park/Fort Tilden, Queens Co.).

American Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*)

1999-63-A One, Town of Covington, Wyoming Co., 18 Dec. (Hans Kunze). Although never common in mid-winter, American Pipits are sufficiently regular in central and western New York that NYSARC does not need to consider further reports.

Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*)

1999-17-B One, Golden Hill SP, Niagara Co., 15 May. (Michael Morgante) - this is an additional submission to a previously accepted record (1999-17-A); 1999-71-A One singing male, Letchworth SP, Livingston Co., 30 May. (Robert Spahn); The Niagara Co. bird was well- described, complete with careful rendition of the song. The spring occurrence in western New York is fairly typical and presumably represents northward migrants that have overshot their traditional range. Unfortunately, neither bird could be studied closely enough to determine the subspecies involved. The interior subspecies, *D. d. albilora*, which shows white rather than yellow lores occurs to the south and west and is known to occur in the Great Lakes region in spring.

1998 REPORTS ACCEPTED

Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*)

1998-83-A One immature, off Russell Station, Town of Greece, Monroe Co., 19 Nov. (Robert McKinney). This juvenile was studied as it joined a feeding frenzy of gulls and came relatively close to shore. Northern Gannets, particularly juveniles, have become more frequent on Lake Ontario, perhaps mirroring the steady expansion of the breeding colonies in the Gulf of St. Lawrence (Nelson 2002).

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

1998-87-A One, Lima Road, Town of Geneseo, Livingston Co., 21 Dec. (Jeannine M. Fox). This Ross's Goose was observed on a farm pond in the company of forty or so Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*). The identification was established by the combination of tiny size, very rounded head, blue-pink legs, stubby bill and absence of 'grin patch'.

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)

1998-24-A One, Braddock Bay Hawkwatch, Town of Greece, Monroe Co., 27 March (Carolyn Cass). The description provided minimal details but was accepted after three rounds of review. Because of a sustained change in status, NYSARC has dropped this species from the review list (NYSARC 2000). This said, the species remains very rare in western New York, and full documentation should be submitted to local records committees from that area.

Purple Gallinule (*Porphyrio martinica*)

1998-55-B/C One, Irondequoit Bay, 12 Oct. (Jessie Barry, Kevin Griffith, discovered by Jerry Sullivan). Supplementary descriptions of an immature Purple Gallinule that was watched and photographed as it fed in the open on a small patch of mud flat near the outlet of a creek. An attractive sketch by Jessie Barry as well as superb color photograph by Kevin Griffith, nicely documented the diagnostic combination of golden olive underparts, white undertail coverts and green wings with indigo primaries.

Le Conte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*)

1998-86-A One, Nations Road, Town of Geneseo, Livingston Co., 13 Oct. (Kurt Fox) The sparrow was discovered by Jim Kimball who contacted Kurt Fox. Tentatively identified as a LeConte's Sparrow, Kimball and Fox studied it through a telescope as it popped up in response to the playing of a tape. The detailed description was strengthened by a careful analysis of the identification, ruling out look-alike species including Nelson's Sharp-tailed (*A. nelsoni*) and Grasshopper Sparrows (*A. savannarum*). The salient points included the light brown median crown stripe, obvious white eye-ring and dark eye stripe, comparatively small pinkish bill, dark scapulars edged with white, obvious white mantle braces and crisp streaks on breast but not the chin. Although this species breeds in southern Quebec, it remains a very rare spring and fall migrant through New York. Regrettably a number of recent reports have not been submitted for review, obscuring the true frequency of occurrence in the state. The committee hopes to receive full descriptions for all claims of LeConte's Sparrow.

1994 REPORTS ACCEPTED

Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucicus melanocephalus*)

1994-61-A One male, Goat Island, Niagara Co., 17 May. (Richard W. MacDonald) This belated report described an adult male in alternate plumage. The description clearly eliminated Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*P. ludovicianus*) and Eastern Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*). However, the committee expressed some reservations as to whether the description fully eliminates a Black-headed x Rose-breasted Grosbeak hybrid. The challenging nature of hybrids is illustrated to good effect in Sibley 2000.

REPORTS NOT ACCEPTED

A number of factors may contribute to a record being denied acceptance. By far the most common is that the material submitted was considered insufficient or simply too vague to properly document the occurrence and/or eliminate other similar species. For example, written documentation or descriptions prepared entirely from memory weeks, months, or years after a sighting are seldom voted on favorably and the Committee cannot overstate the importance of taking field notes of uncommon or rare birds. These should be taken while the bird is under study or, if this is not possible, immediately afterwards. It is very helpful to include a photocopy of these notes with the formal report. This helps the committee to know what was seen at the time of the observation before field guides or other birders were consulted.

Advice on report preparation is available on our web site (see above) as well as published articles. We recommend the benchmark article by Dittman and Lasley (1992). The key elements to a good report are (1) the description of the bird with as much detail as possible, (2) the names and contact details of the

observers, (3) location and date of the sighting and lastly (4) an explanation of how the identification was made. This last category is frequently omitted but is extremely important. Ask yourself the following questions: What features led you to this conclusion as to the species involved? What other species might this bird be confused with and how were these possibilities ruled out? By providing this information, you invariably build upon the basic description and present a much more compelling case. By necessity, the preparation of a good report takes time and effort. It is not enough to scribble a few disjointed lines of description and leave it at that. Once the description of what you saw has gone down on paper, it is a good idea to consult reference books, audio tapes and so on. From the details you recorded, can you determine the age and sex of the bird? Are there identifiable subspecies that might tell us where the bird came from? What similar species are there and how can these be ruled out from the details you recorded? The latter it is especially important. Sometimes it is worth considering and discussing exotic possibilities. Escaped waterfowl, birds of prey, parrots and finches are relatively common and some closely resemble North American species.

We do not reject records because the observer is unfamiliar to us or has had records rejected in the past. Likewise, it is relatively uncommon for records to be rejected because the bird was clearly misidentified. We make every effort to be as fair and objective as possible but if the Committee is unsure about any particular submission it tends to err on the conservative side, preferring not to accept a good record rather than validate a bad one. All records, whether accepted or not, remain on file and can be re-submitted to the Committee if additional substantive material is presented. In such cases, please contact the Secretary at the address given above.

2000 REPORTS NOT ACCEPTED

Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*)

2000-48-A One, Golden Hill State Park, Niagara Co., 30 Oct. The report describes a large loon studied for fifteen minutes swimming offshore from the lighthouse at a distance of around 500 yards. The bird appeared slightly larger than two Common Loons (*G. immer*) seen in the same telescope view and also seemed to float higher in the water. The most striking feature was its creamy white bill. The back of the head and nape appeared browner than on the Common Loons. Although strongly suggestive of Yellow-billed Loon, the description lacked sufficient detail to firmly exclude a Common Loon. There is considerable variation in bill color and birds with very pale bills are not unheard of. A critical feature in ruling out such birds is the coloration of the outer portion of the upper mandible. Even the palest billed Common Loons will show some dusky markings at the tip, which is unmarked in Yellow-billed Loon. For the Golden Hill bird, no difference in the head shape or the posture and shape of the bill was described. This seems to argue against Yellow-billed Loon, which has a notably heavy bill with a tendency to look slightly upturned.

Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*)

2000-72-A One heard calling at Cranberry Pond, Town of Greece, Monroe Co., Dec. 17. This intriguing report comes from an experienced birder who heard two bursts of a three-note call (*ku-ku-ku*), which he identified as that of Least Bittern. The bird was not seen, no further vocalizations were heard and thin ice precluded closer investigation. A winter record of this species in central New York would be unprecedented. Some reviewers felt that it would be unusual for this species to use the territorial call at this time of the year and would have expected more abrupt calls if the bird was disturbed somehow. Unfortunately, the bird did not respond to a tape and without additional evidence, such as a visual observation or more than just two calls, the committee decided not to accept it.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

2000-2-A One immature, near Rt 89, Oswego Co., 8 Jan. This bird was observed with Canada Geese and Mallards in a creek near Lake Ontario. The very brief report mentions a dirty wash to the head but not a dark eye line that should also be present. A description of the bill and head shape was not included, making it impossible to rule out a hybrid.

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*)

2000-65-A One, Tupper Lake Marsh, Franklin Co., 24 Dec. This report provided a very sparse description of a white bird estimated to be the size of a Herring Gull that flew over a marshy area and perched briefly on the top of a tree. Unfortunately, not enough detail was provided to firmly identify this as a falcon let alone establish its specific identity.

Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*)

2000-59-A One, Woodlawn Beach flying along the shore, Erie Co., 21 Sept. This report describes a jaeger migrating along the Lake Erie shoreline, seen for less than a minute. The observer focused on the central tail feathers, describing them as about an inch long, untapered, and blunt tipped. The bird was slimmer and shorter than nearby Ring-billed Gulls and the body was dark grayish black with some lighter brownish banding in the lower belly. Although a large area of white was noted at the base of the primaries below, the remainder of the wing was not described. The observer did not state what age he thought the jaeger was. Reviewers were concerned by the missing details in the report, in particular no mention of prominent barring on the undertail coverts, and the fact that the report was based so heavily upon a single field mark seen only briefly.

Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*)

2000-56-A One flying over the Niagara River, Niagara Co., 12 Nov.; 2000-57-A Two flying over the Niagara River, Niagara Co., 19 Nov. In New York, Thayer's Gulls are thought to be regular along the Niagara River during the winter, where adults or near-adults predominate. The identification and taxonomy of Thayer's Gull is one of the thorniest topics in North American birding. The reasons are twofold. First, there is intense debate among taxonomists as to whether Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*) and Kumlien's Iceland Gull (*L. glaucoides kumlienii*) belong

to separate species or represent two points on a complex cline (gradient) with nominate Iceland Gull (*L. g. glaucoides*). Second, like all large gull species, both Thayer's and Iceland Gull exhibit a high degree of individual variation and this greatly complicates the identification of out-of-range birds. For example, Garner and McGeehan (1998) have suggested that the phenomenal extent of variation in the wingtip pattern of Kumlien's Gull ("almost no two individuals look the same") compared to the less variable patterns of Thayer's and nominate Iceland, indicates that Kumlien's might be a product of hybridization between Thayer's and nominate Iceland. It is unlikely that this debate will be resolved without extensive analysis of genetic markers in birds studied on the breeding and wintering grounds. From a practical standpoint, the committee will now only accept reports that meticulously document the full suite of all appropriate field characters, preferably with supporting sketches or photographs. We realize that this can be very difficult to achieve in the field and anticipate a sharp decrease in the number of reports submitted. The reports of the Niagara River birds came from experienced and careful observers. Unfortunately the distances involved limit the opportunities to photograph the birds in question and can even limit the amount of detail that can be established by study through telescopes. We appreciate their efforts and hope they understand the difficulties that this special case presents.

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

2000-10-A One, Black Creek Wildlife Management, Town of Guilderland, Albany Co., 20 Mar.; 2000-42-A One, West of Baldwinsville, Onondaga Co., 21 Oct. Both reports provided too little detail of the bird to rule out Northern Shrike (*L. excubitor*). The early spring and mid-fall dates does not exclude this much commoner species.

Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*)

2000-73-A One at Braddock Bay Park, Town of Greece, Monroe Co., 5 Nov. Although the description was sufficient to establish this as a *chaetura* swift, there was not enough to positively identify this bird as a Chimney Swift rather than some exotic species. Setting aside South American species, an important consideration with any out-of-season *chaetura* swift, is the possibility of Vaux's Swift (*C. vauxi*). This western species is very similar to Chimney Swift and is known to occur as a migrant (and possibly regular winter resident) in Florida and Louisiana (Chantler and Driessens, 1995). Field separation of Chimney and Vaux's Swift is extremely difficult, more so than popular field guides suggest, and relies heavily on vocalizations as well as comparative observations. Unfortunately lone swifts rarely call, particular away from nesting areas.

Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*)

2000-16-A/B One, Dryden, Tompkins Co. These reports describe a plain-faced passerine that was studied for two or three minutes in a plowed field before it flew across the road and disappeared. It was not subsequently relocated. A considerable effort went into these submissions and the quality is much higher than the majority we receive. The key points noted by the observers were the pale face with prominent dark eye, small slender bill, pale bill and legs, fine breast streaking on

pale buff, white throat, flanks and belly, and upright posture. A good attempt was made in the discussion to exclude other pipits and larks. After two rounds of review the committee concluded that this record was insufficient to document a first state record. The main concerns stem from the very brief nature of the sighting, the distance from the observers, the fact that it was raining and that the bird was for the most part standing motionless and viewed almost head on. No photographs were obtained and no vocalizations were heard as it flew across the road. Understandably given the difficult circumstances, several important features necessary for the unequivocal identification are missing from the reports. For instance, no details of the back pattern or coloration of tail and wing coverts were noted. Because this is a relatively subtle identification of a species that is extremely rare in the northeast, the committee feels that a detailed analysis of the plumage and structure is essential. Some Committee members voiced concerns over the habitat, which seems atypical for Sprague's Pipit, the delayed reporting of what would be an exceptional rarity and lastly the collaborative nature of the two reports. The latter made it difficult to determine exactly what each observer alone saw. We wish to stress that the level of detail required for a first state record is much higher than for other records and unfortunately this brief sighting did not attain that level. The observers are to be commended, however, for their efforts in documenting this provocative sighting.

Virginia's Warbler (*Vermivora virginiae*)

2000-78-A One, Sterling Forest State Park, Tuxedo, Orange Co., 20 Oct. This is an intriguing report of a species not on the New York Checklist, accompanied by a lovely colored drawing showing two views of the bird in question. Although the Committee felt that the description and drawing were entirely consistent with Virginia's Warbler, they were concerned by the brevity of the sighting (about a minute) and the possibility that this could have been an unusually drab Nashville Warbler (*V. ruficapilla*). In a recent article predicting the next new species for New York, two prognosticators included Virginia's Warbler on their list (Levine 2002), suggesting that an acceptable report may arrive in the near future.

Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*)

2000-58-A One male and female, Dutchess Co., 13 Jul. This report relates to two birds observed in a private yard but presents almost no description at all. The observers stated that these birds were chunkier than Indigo Buntings (*P. cyanea*) with brownish wings but the committee felt that this was inadequate to rule out Indigos, which in certain stages of molt will show brown in the wings.

Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)

2000-12-A One, Town of Dewitt, Onondaga Co., 27 Mar. A rather brief description of a bird accompanied by grackles, cowbirds, and Red-winged Blackbirds and observed without optics. A "glossy blue head" is not normally a character assigned to this species – it was this observation and the brevity of the report that led to it being turned down by the Committee.

1999 REPORTS NOT ACCEPTED

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)

1999-24-A Two, Ithaca, Tompkins Co., 12 July. This report involved rather brief "naked-eye" views of two birds soaring overhead. Although the report included a field sketch, black on the primaries was not shown extending into the secondaries, as is typical of this species, nor was this feature described. After circulating three times through the Committee, the report was narrowly turned down.

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)

1999-72-A One immature, Webster, Monroe Co., 16 May. This bird was observed on a raptor flyway near Lake Ontario with a Red-tailed Hawk (*B. jamaicensis*), Broad-winged Hawks (*B. platypterus*), and a Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). The observer emphasized the size (intermediate between the Red-tail and Broad-wings), long and relatively pointed wings, and nondescript markings. The committee felt that in the five minutes the bird was observed flying over, additional characters should have been observed. For example, darker flight feathers, heavier markings on the upper breast, pale undertail coverts, and soaring with wings held in a dihedral were not noted. It was also not made clear why this could not have been a larger immature female Broad-winged Hawk.

Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*)

1999-66-A One adult, Hamlin Beach SP, Monroe Co., 29 Aug. This short report described a small jaeger using what the observer described as a 'bouncy tern-like' flight. It was seen to briefly chase a Ring-billed Gull (noticeably larger) before rising in altitude and flying off to the northwest. The underparts were light gray and the wings lacked visible white-wing patches. The central rectrices were described as 'noticeably longer'. The Committee felt that the level of detail fell short for a species of this rarity. A better description of the tail feathers and upper surface of the wings would have helped to rule out Parasitic Jaeger (*S. parasiticus*). Unfortunately no description was received from the co-observer and this may be one instance of where multiple descriptions build on each other to provide a complete account.

Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*)

1999-48-A Two on Niagara River, Town of Lewiston, Niagara Co. 29 Nov; 1999-67-A One first winter, Irondequoit Bay, Monroe Co., 30 Jan.; 1999-68-A One adult, Hamlin Beach SP, Monroe Co., 17 Nov. As described above, Thayer's Gull presents a unique challenge to North American gull watchers. The 'rules of identification' are in a state of flux and acceptable records require an unusually high standard of documentation. Often this is difficult or impossible to achieve even by experienced and determined observers.

Ivory Gull (*Pagophila eburnea*)

1999-05-A One adult, Kenny's Beach, Town of Southold, Suffolk Co. 13 Mar; 1999-64-A One adult, Hamlin Beach SP, Monroe Co., 31 Dec. These reports related to all white gulls studied for a relatively short period of time. The Kenny's

Beach bird was observed standing on a sandy beach with a group of Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*). After three rounds of review, the Committee voted not to accept the record. Two aspects of the report were troubling. Firstly, the description presented an odd mixture of adult and sub-adult characters and secondly, the report provided no evidence that the observers had considered the possibility of a leucistic (abnormally white) variant of another small gull species. The Hamlin Beach bird was studied at some distance (3/8 to 1/2 mile) by two observers as it flew along the lakeshore before landing on the water. The description was limited to its all white plumage, shape and flight style. Important details such as leg and bill color were not visible because of the distance. Again the Committee felt that the level of detail was insufficient to adequately eliminate leucistic variants of commoner species.

Red-crowned Parrot (*Amazona viridigenalis*)

1999-77-A One Hamlin, Monroe Co., 21 Aug. This green and vocal parrot was studied with telescopes as it flew to and from some trees bordering a plowed field. Green overall, the wings showed blue primary tips and large red patches on the trailing edges. The forehead bore a bright red patch. The description clearly rules out Monk Parakeet and suggests an *Amazona*, almost certainly an escaped cage bird. Although submitted as Red-crowned Parrot, the description does not exclude closely related species, such as subadult Lilac-crowned Parrot (*A. finschi*), or the many hybrid combinations that occur in captive birds.

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

1999-29-A One, Town of Van Buren, Onondaga Co., 13 Aug. This report contained a lot of detail about the circumstances of the sighting but very little description of the bird itself. Some of the Committee leaned toward acceptance as the date of the sighting is much more likely for Loggerhead than Northern Shrike (*L. excubitor*). Other reviewers were not even convinced that the minimal description indicated any kind of shrike. After three rounds, it was turned down by a narrow margin.

Carolina Chickadee (*Poecile carolinensis*)

1999-56-A One banded, Braddock Bay, Monroe Co., 16 Oct. During the first two weeks of October, the banding station near Braddock Bay experienced a major movement of chickadees, culminating in the capture of an unusual bird on the 16th. The bird's short wing cord measurement (59 mm) drew the attention of the banding team, comprising David Bonter, David Semple and Sharon Skelly. Alert to the possibility of Carolina Chickadee, the tail (54 mm) and exposed culmen (length of upper mandible from tip to the feathers, 7.0 mm) were measured and confirmed by a second bander. The wing chord and culmen measurements seemed strongly in favor of Carolina Chickadee whereas the tail measurement is just within the published range for the species. The bird was compared in hand to Black-capped Chickadees (*P. atricapillus*) caught at the same time. Three color-photographs were submitted showing the bird in the hand, held at different angles. Regrettably, these photographs proved less useful than one might expect. The lower border of the bib and the patterning of the secondary coverts were not

shown well and were thus difficult to evaluate. Likewise, in the one photograph that shows the tail, it is furled rather than spread.

In addition to the measurements described above, the main points in favor of Carolina Chickadee were (i) the dusky edging to the greater coverts, (ii) the sharp rather than ragged corners and dorsal border of the bib and (iii) the grayish nape, contrasting with the white auriculars. Unfortunately, these positive aspects were tempered by a number of features that seem inconsistent with Carolina Chickadee. The chief concerns were: (i) the ratio of the wing chord and tail measurements (0.915). This troubled several committee members because the value is at the low end for Black-capped Chickadee and greater than known for Carolina Chickadee (Pyle 1997). (ii) The white-edging to the secondaries, visible in one of the photographs, appeared broader than expected based on comparison to Carolina Chickadee specimens. (iii) The outer vein of the outermost tail feather appears to have a white edging, a feature of Black-capped rather than Carolina Chickadee.

Although Carolina Chickadee breeds in neighboring New Jersey and Pennsylvania, the species has not been recorded in New York and there are very few documented examples out-of-range (Harrap and Quinn 1995). In this regard, the location and timing of the capture seems puzzling. Why would a Carolina Chickadee, a non-migratory species occurring several hundred miles to the south of Braddock Bay, be found with [presumed] south-bound Black-capped Chickadees? Given all of these uncertainties, the Committee voted six to one on the second round of review against acceptance. What are the alternatives? One possibility is a hybrid. Black-capped and Carolina Chickadees regularly hybridize along a 5-20 mile corridor where their ranges meet. Although vocalizations and pairing behavior of hybrids has been studied in detail, there is less in the way of published information on the measurements and appearance of hybrids. Thus it is hard to exclude this possibility. Another explanation would be a subspecies of Black-capped Chickadee different from *P. a. atricapillus*, the predominant form in New York. Several are smaller and more than one committee member raised the question of *P. a. praticus*, which breeds in the mountains of Pennsylvania. For many subspecies, the full extent of individual variation has not been studied in detail. The range values cited in Pyle are based on a relatively small sample and it is not inconceivable that some forms show a broader range than described. As will be evident from this analysis, any candidate for Carolina Chickadee should be measured very carefully (preferably more than once) and also photographed extensively with emphasis on documenting the detail of major feather groups. The observers are to be commended on preparing a comprehensive and extremely interesting report. We hope the outcome does not discourage future reporting of similar birds. An appropriately cautious account of this interesting bird has been published in Skelly et al. 2001.

Boreal Chickadee (*Poecile hudsonica*)

1999-57-A Two, Shindagin Hollow State Forest, Ithaca, Tompkins Co., 31 Jan. This brief report did not provide enough detail to firmly exclude Black-capped Chickadee (*P. atricapillus*). In particular, the cap color and vocalizations were not described.

Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)

1999-73-A One or two adult males, Town of Hamlin, Monroe Co., 2 Apr. The description stated that the bird was about Red-winged Blackbird size, with a light eye, and a reddish-purple cast to the head separating it from the black of the back. Reviewers were concerned by the missing details - no body iridescence noted, tail shape, bill shape, and posture were not described. 1999-76-A One female, Town of Oakfield, Genesee Co., 2 Apr. A very brief report of a female accompanied by a large flock of Rusty Blackbirds (*E. carolinus*) with a few Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) and Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*) mixed in. Some concern was raised about this species occurring with and using the same habitat as Rusty Blackbirds. Ultimately, however, it was the lack of shape description, particularly the bill, and the lack of consideration given to the possibility that this was a female Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) that led the Committee to not accept the report.

1998 REPORTS NOT ACCEPTED

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)

1998-75-A One Sackets Harbor, Town of Hounsfield, Jefferson Co., 29 Dec. This report included photographs, although of poor quality, and a thorough description of what the observer considered to be a winter-plumaged Pacific Loon. The description was generally good for Pacific Loon but the photographs were not supportive. Due to the poor quality of the photos some reviewers decided to essentially ignore them and accept the description. Other reviewers, however, believed that the photos strongly indicated that this was a Red-throated Loon (*G. stellata*). A well-known feature of adult Pacific Loons in winter plumage is the chinstrap. Although a chinstrap is evident in the photos, it appears to be too thick and the description confirms that impression. In addition, light crescents were noted on the back. The combination of a chin strap and pale edgings on the back would not normally be shown by a Pacific Loon since the chin strap is a character for an adult and the pale edgings is a mark of an immature. This inconsistency might have been overlooked (as a Pacific Loon in transitional plumage) if the photographs had not indicated several features consistent with Red-throated Loon such as an "upturned" lower mandible, head held at an upward angle, and a pale spot in front of the eye. Another character described in the report is a sharp demarcation between a dark hindneck and a white foreneck, a feature that is typical of a Pacific Loon. However, what is not emphasized in the field guides is that some Red-throated Loons also show this feature. This report illustrates how very subjective the differences between Pacific Loons and Red-throated Loons can be. The observer did a commendable job with this report but, after three rounds of review, it was not accepted by a narrow margin.

Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*)

1998-80-A One, Brockport, Monroe Co., 23 May. Although this sighting was not considered that unusual, this report had so little description that it did not pass muster. A particular weakness was that the size and shape of the bird were not described. Sandhill Cranes are no longer reviewed by the NYSARC except in cases of unusually high numbers.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*)

1998-85-A One immature, Webster, Monroe Co., 20 Dec. Any hummingbird so late in the year deserves careful scrutiny. Although the Committee was convinced that this was indeed a hummingbird, the report provided too few details for identification to species.

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)

1998-84-A One, Hogan Point, Town of Greece, Monroe Co., 12 Oct. The brief description of a bird seen in a weedy field with many other sparrows included no discussion of shape and an incomplete description of the plumage pattern, leaving some reviewers unconvinced with the identification.

1970 REPORTS NOT ACCEPTED

Bicknell's Thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*)

1970-1-A One banded in Pompey, Onondaga Co., 25 Sep. This report consisted of a color photograph of a *Catharus* thrush without description or measurements. There is sufficient detail in the photograph to eliminate Swainson's Thrush (*C. ustulatus*) and Hermit Thrush (*C. guttatus*). The main feature pointing towards Bicknell's Thrush rather than Gray-cheeked Thrush (*C. minimus*) is the extensive area of pale yellow on the lower mandible. At the time of capture, Bicknell's Thrush was treated as a subspecies of Gray-cheeked Thrush and the two were not split until 1995. The Committee felt there was not enough information in the report to firmly establish this difficult identification. The angle of the bird did not show the color of the tail to good effect or allow the extent of the primary projection to be estimated. Mandible color is a variable feature and not definitive in itself (McLaren 1995; Smith 1996; Clement 2000; Lane and Jaramillo 2000). Bicknell's Thrush breeds at altitude in the Adirondack and Catskill Mountains (Atwood et al. 1996), but because of the significant identification difficulties, its status as a migrant remains poorly known. When faced with a candidate, observers are urged to take detailed notes on the plumage and soft part colorations. Every effort should be made to record or document any vocalizations. Banders should carefully measure the length of the primaries and tertials but also take detailed notes on plumage and any vocalizations.

REPORTS FOR WHICH A DECISION IS STILL PENDING

The Committee has not yet reached a consensus on the following reports. All are undergoing a third round of review at the time this annual report went to press. No conclusion should be drawn as to the final outcome. We apologize for the delay and hope to announce the final decisions shortly.

Albatross species

2000-28-A One, 18 miles off shore from Fire Island, Suffolk Co., 18 Jun.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

2000-9-A One at Biddelcum Pond, Town of Schroeppe, Oswego Co. 11 Mar.

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis minima*)

2000-41-A One at Point au Roche State Park, Clinton Co., 12 Oct.

Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*)

2000-76-A 30+ individuals, Dutchess Co., 31Dec.

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)

2000-17-A One, Niagara Mohawk Visitor's Center, Town of Scriba, Oswego Co, 4 May.

Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)

2000-70-A One at feeder in Fredonia, Chautauque Co., 10 Dec..

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