

REPORT OF THE NYSARC COMMITTEE FOR 2001

Over the past year, the New York State Avian Records Committee (hereafter NYSARC or the Committee) deliberated on a total of 177 reports covering 93 separate species, an all-time high for the Committee. The reports involved 78 separate sightings from 2001, an additional 16 reports from previous years, 9 second-round and 6 third-round reviews from 2000, and one second round from 1996. The increase in contributions is gratifying and marks a steady upward trend in reporting. Ultimately this means that the birding community is working together to create a more comprehensive account of the New York State avifauna. Part of the increase reflects the growing use of the Internet as a means to exchange birding information. The Committee has made good use of this new medium to (i) highlight the reporting procedure, (ii) provide a simple mechanism for submitting written reports and other forms of documentation and (iii) remind birders of the species requiring review that have been reported across the state.

Written descriptions and photographs were provided by 100 separate observers, and one or more sightings were reported from 30 out of the 62 counties in the state. Counties with the most reports were Suffolk (24), Nassau (22) and Oswego (18), a notable shift from the previous few years. In all, 158 reports (89%) were accepted and testifies to the high quality of the majority of the submissions. 17 were not accepted because of insufficient documentation or because the descriptions were inconsistent with known identification criteria. Multiple reports were received for 37% of the sightings, with 35 diligent individuals sending in two or more reports. Sightings for which there are multiple submissions are invariably stronger than those from a single person. Details in one account help fill in the gaps in another, and where the descriptions overlap they provide confirmation of the specific details. Too often observers assume that someone else will submit a detailed report and forego the responsibility. As a result, well-watched birds may be poorly documented or missed altogether.

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 that accompanies each species entry. The records in this report are arranged taxonomically following the 44th supplement to the *AOU Check-List of North American Birds* (Banks et al. 2003). Those contributing photographs, video or sketches are given special mention in the narrative. With the rapid advances in affordable camera equipment, we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of rare species documented by still photography or video. It is hard to overstate the value of photographs both as tools to identification and as a permanent record of the sighting. Photographs do not need to be 'magazine quality' and a simple 'snap' taken with an instamatic camera can often capture critical information. This year we saw clear examples of documentation using unsophisticated camera equipment. The taking of photographs by holding a camera to the eyepiece of a telescope - a technique known as 'digiscoping' - can be remarkably effective. Inexpensive digital cameras are particularly good for this but the approach also works with conventional single lens reflex (SLR) cameras. There are many web

sites that offer advice on digiscoping and we encourage readers to read the article by Rex Stanford in an earlier issue of this journal (Stanford 2002). Digital images, imported directly from the camera or from scanning of slides or prints can be sent to the committee via e-mail. We will also accept copies of video or audiotapes. Please note that all forms of multimedia documentation must be accompanied by a written report.

All of the records reviewed by NYSARC (including written descriptions, photographs, videotapes, and audio recordings), irrespective of acceptance, are archived at Cornell University in Ithaca and are accessible to the public upon request. The Committee may choose to revisit reports in the light of new information.

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. We often receive minimal reports that presume that co-observers will provide the missing details. Sadly, in some cases the more comprehensive reports have not materialized and the abbreviated reports are not complete enough to stand on their own. Submission of multiple independent reports provides a more compelling and detailed account of the sighting, increasing the likelihood of acceptance. Concern of over burdening the committee is not a tenable excuse.

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 detailed 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 (see McGowan and Burke 2000). If no consensus is reached, the reports are sent out again along with the seven review sheets (so-called 'second round'). 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 ('third round').

Another common concern is the length of time it takes for a report to be reviewed and for NYSARC to publish its decision. First, as indicated above, NYSARC receives a large number of reports and these take a considerable amount of time for the secretary to compile, duplicate and distribute and for each committee member to review carefully. For a fraction of the 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 keep the lag to a minimum. The continued cooperation of bird clubs and Regional editors in coordinating or encouraging 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://nybirds.org/NYSARC/NYSARChome.htm>

The site also includes a regularly updated list of species reviewed by NYSARC, information on the composition of the Committee, a gallery of rare or unusual birds photographed in the state, and perhaps most importantly, copies of previous annual reports. NYSARC encourages observers to submit documentation for all species on the review list, as well as species previously unrecorded in New York State. We also encourage observers to read the article by committee member Willie D'Anna on the documentation and reporting process (D'Anna 2003). The Committee is grateful to Carena Pooth and Barbara Butler for redesigning and regularly updating the NYSARC web site. Documentation (written and photographic) or correspondence for the Committee should be sent to:

Jeanne Skelly, Secretary for NYSARC
420 Chili-Scottsville Road, Churchville, NY 14428
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NYSARC Activities

At the end of December 2002 Dr. Robert Andrlé completed his current term and rotated off the Committee. As regular readers of this report will know, Bob Andrlé has served on the Committee since its inception in 1977. He was appointed as the Chair in 1988, replacing Fritz G. Scheider. After more than a decade at the helm, Dr. Andrlé stepped down as Chair in 1999 but remained as a voting member until the beginning of this year. We thank him for his many years of service to the Committee. Dominic Sherony of Rochester replaces Dr. Andrlé as one of the seven voting members of the Committee.

Highlights of the 2001 Report

The highlights of 2001 were the additions of **Black-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa limosa*), **Calliope Hummingbird** (*Stellula calliope*) and **Hammond's Flycatcher** (*Empidonax hammondi*) to the New York State Checklist. With these three new species, the official state list rises to **460** species.

2001 Reports Accepted

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis hutchinsii*)

2001-36-A Two individuals, Rt 77, Town of Alabama, Genesee Co., 1 Apr (Willie D'Anna); 2001-46-A One, Point au Roche State Park, Buckmantown, Clinton Co., 30 Oct, (David Hoag). Various known as Hutchins's or Richardson's Goose, this 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 their occurrence in New York State.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

2001-8-A One, in a flock of ~2000 Snow Geese, on Six Corners Rd., Seneca Co., 21 Mar (Matthew J. Williams); 2001-11-A/B One adult, near the Village of Lyons, Wayne Co., 31 Mar -1 Apr, (Willie D'Anna, Kurt Fox); 2001-51-A/B One on Hutton Rd., Oakfield, Genesee Co., 1 - 8 Apr, (William Watson, Willie D'Anna); 2001-61-A One, Marratooka Lake, Mattituck, Suffolk Co., 13 Dec, (Paul H. Gillen, Jr.); 2001-74-A One, Smith Road, Town of Veteran, Chemung Co., 17 Mar (David Russell); 2001-76-A One, Oakfield, Genesee Co., 31 Mar (Brendan Klick). 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. Observers are still cautioned to consider Ross's x Snow Goose hybrids in their identification and pay special attention to documenting the bill shape, size and detail.

Black Brant (*Branta bernicla nigricans*)

2001-24-A One, Jamaica Bay WR, Kings Co., 20 May, (Rex Stanford, Birgit Stanford). This adult Black Brant was initially discovered by Angus Wilson and Andy Guthrie on 19 May as it loafed with other Atlantic Brant (*Branta bernicla hrota*) on the spit at Terrapin Point near the refuge's West Pond. The bird was still present the next day when it was studied and photographed by Rex and Birgit Stanford who submitted an excellent report. The very dark upper and underparts, extensive necklace and large bulky physique all suggest this was an adult male - and support identification as a (Pacific) Black Brant, as opposed to a hybrid, intergrade, or other form of brant. The status of Black Brant in New York has been reviewed in Wilson and Guthrie (1999).

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)

2001-5-A/F One male, Oswego Harbor, Oswego Co., 4 Feb to 6 Mar, (Bill Purcell, Barbara Herrgesell, Kurt Fox, Dana Rohleder, Mary Alice Koeneke, Tim Capone). This adult male was discovered by Jon Glase on 4 Feb 2001 and continued to 6 Mar. It frequented the inner section of Oswego Harbor along with Lesser and Greater scaup, Long-tailed Duck, Redhead and Common Goldeneye. The immaculate white flanks, solid dark mantle, absence of vermiculations,

purple gloss on the head, yellow iris and long crest hanging from rear of crown were fully consistent with an adult male Tufted Duck. Four excellent color photographs taken by Mary Alice Koeneke supplemented the details provided in the written descriptions.

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)

2001-72-A/B One, off Seatuck Creek, Eastport, Suffolk Co, 22-27 Dec, (Steve Biasetti, Douglas J. Futuyma). It frequented the relatively calm water of Moriches Bay and was seen by many local observers during its stay to 27 Dec and perhaps beyond. Quite remarkably, considering the date, it was in near-alternate plumage, making the identification as a Pacific rather than Common or Red-throated relatively straightforward. More complicated perhaps is separation from Arctic Loon, primarily a Palearctic species that has not been recorded in New York. The absence of a white flank patch at the waterline, very pale crown and nape and very thin bill indicated a Pacific Loon. The status of Pacific Loon in New York has recently been summarized in Dyer 2003.

White-faced Storm-Petrel (*Pelagodroma marina*)

2001-29-A One, pelagic 60 miles SSE of Shinnecock Inlet [coordinates 39° 28.919' - 72° 12.255' to 39° 29.138' - 72° 14.443'], 23 Sep, (Orhan Birol); 2001-54-A One, on Hudson Canyon, 4 Sep (Paul A. Guris). This was another banner year for White-faced Storm-Petrels off New York. Both reports were accompanied by convincing descriptions and the Hudson Canyon bird was supported by a video by Paul Guris (2001-54-A). This species breeds on remote islets in the eastern North Atlantic (principally the Azores and Cape Verde Islands) as well as in the southern oceans.

Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*)

2001-64-A/B One, Cayuga Lake, Ithaca, Tompkins Co., 19-20 Dec, (William Watson, Michael Anderson); 2001-71-A One immature, over Lake Ontario from Krull Park, Town of Newfane, Niagara Co., 3 Dec, (Brendan Klick). The Cayuga Lake gannet was well described and supported by clear photos by Peter Hosner. Brown Booby, the most plausible confusion species was clearly eliminated and other boobies were also discussed. Presumably this inexperienced first-year bird made its way down the St. Lawrence Seaway into Lake Ontario and then across land to the top of Cayuga Lake?

Great White Heron (*Ardea [herodias] occidentalis*)

2001-13-A One, Wolfe's Pond Park, Richmond Co., 2 Sep - 4 Nov, (Christopher Nuzzi); 2001-40-A One, Gilgo Beach, Town of Babylon, Suffolk Co., 8 - 23 Oct., (John Fritz). Since the 1950's the Great White Heron has been treated as a distinctive subspecies of the widespread Great Blue Heron rather than a full species in its own right. They occur most commonly in central and southern Florida as well as Cuba, the Isle of Pines, coastal Yucatan and Quintana Roo and in Venezuela (AOU 1998). After breeding, both adults and young disperse across the Florida peninsula and states bordering the Gulf of Mexico. Occasionally Great White Herons wander into the Northeast and there are two or three previous

reports for New York. An article by Shai Mitra and John Fritz reviews the previous records from New York and elsewhere (Mitra and Fritz 2002).

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)

2001-58-A One, west of Skaneateles Lake, Onondaga Co., 11 Dec (Margaret Rusk). This very late Cattle Egret was studied as it walked and flew behind some cattle in a pasture. Fortunately the cows were curious about the observer and came over to say hello, bringing the attendant egret closer. Identification of non-breeding egrets, such as this individual, is always more problematic, but the description was fully compatible with Cattle Egret and its association with cows clinched the identification! The egret was reported by Dr. Ben Burtt on the Onondaga Audubon Society Bird Box and had been present from 3 Dec.

Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*)

2001-28-A/I Maximum of 16 individuals, at the home of Jeff & Sue Dapolito and surrounding area, Clyde, Wayne Co., 15 Aug to 1 Sep, (Fay Sedore, Sandra Sharp, Kayo Roy, Charles Spagnoli, Mary Alice Koenek, Robert Spahn, Leona Lauster, Kurt Fox, William Watson). This was an unprecedented gathering of sixteen Wood Storks, all in their 2nd calendar year. Although details were not submitted to NYSARC, three Wood Storks were observed on Cranberry Pond near Braddock Bay on 28-29 Aug. This is 35 miles from Clyde and it is tempting to speculate that these were some of the same birds. When they departed at 9:30 AM on the 29th, the storks headed east. The reasons for the incursion are unknown but possibly relate to the extended drought in several southern states, although it is possible these could have come from as far away as Mexico. For more discussion see Sherony 2001.

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)

2001-78-A One, Salmon River, Richland, Oswego Co., 28-29 Dec (Donald Coogan). This Osprey was seen fishing over a stretch of open water in the partly frozen Salmon River. Primarily a summer visitor, lingering individuals do occasionally occur in coastal areas but to find one in central NY at the end of December is most unusual.

Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*)

2001-10-A One, Weaver Rd., West Sayville, Suffolk Co., 13 Mar, (Robert Edwards). This stunning raptor was first spotted by 12-year old Scott Edwards who quickly alerted his father Robert. It was perched in a maple tree and was being actively scolded by American Crows. As the Edwards family, together with their neighbors the Walsh family, studied the bird with binoculars, nine-year old Nick Walsh took some very useful photos, which were submitted with the report. These clearly show the bird's puffed up white breast and belly feathering and very long black forked tail and primary tips. The white head appeared tiny compared to the body and very long tail. Although Swallow-tailed Kites wander into the Northeast during the spring and summer, it's hard to explain the occurrence of a bird on Long Island so early in the season. The first reports from the Gulf Coast were around the same time, making this a rather unique record. This species

seems unlikely to be held in captivity and the committee considered the chances of an escape as low. More details on this sighting are given in Edwards (2001).

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

2001-45-A One, Sands Point Preserve, Nassau Co., 28 Oct, (Glenn Quinn). The observer studied this soaring hawk for 15 minutes and gave an excellent description consistent with that of a sub-adult Mississippi Kite. In the full fifteen minutes of observation, the bird was seen to flap its wings only once. This long, slim-winged hawk had banding on the tail consistent with the kite. Although soaring Peregrine Falcons have a similar shape, the plumage details and overall structure provided sufficient assurances that this was, indeed, a Mississippi Kite.

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)

2001-37-A/B One, dark morph, Braddock Bay State Park, Monroe Co., 8 Apr (Michael Tetlow, Dominic Sherony); 2001-79-A One, dark morph, Derby Hill, Oswego Co., 8 Apr (Gerard Phillips). Although treated separately here, it seems possible that these two sightings of a dark-morph Swainson's Hawk relate to the same bird. The first (2001-37-A) passed over Braddock Bay near Rochester at 2:00 PM and the second (2001-79-A) over Derby Hill, some 80 miles to the east at 4:00 PM on the same afternoon. At Derby Hill, the observatory's first dark morph Swainson's was seen soaring in a kettle of twenty-five Turkey Vultures. Interestingly, more than 1,300 Turkey Vultures were recorded that day, an observatory record. Records of Swainson's Hawk are becoming increasingly frequent in New York and eastern North America as a whole (Dodge and Nicoletti, 1998; England et al. 1997). Whether the increase in reports is due to a range expansion, increased vigilance (such as more hawkwatches or improved knowledge on the part of field observers) is unclear.

Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*)

2001-21-A One, light morph, Palmer Rd., Gansevoort, Saratoga Co., 10 Jul, (Barbara Putnam). The Rough-legged Hawk was studied with binoculars for 10 minutes as it circled directly over the road then out over a field where it hovered briefly. Key points supporting the identification were the dark wrist patches, very dark belly and predominantly white tail with one large dark terminal band. Although familiar during the winter months, Rough-legged Hawks are very rare in NY during the summer, and reports during that season probably mostly relate to juvenile Red-tailed Hawks.

Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*)

2001-3-A/H One, Little Sodus Bay, Cayuga Co., 4 Feb through to 10 Mar, (Mary Alice Koeneke, Barbara Herrgesell, Bill Purcell, Charles C. Spagnoli, Tim Capone, Alison Van Keuren, Bernie Carr, Willie D'Anna). This immature Gyrfalcon was studied by a number of observers during the morning of its discovery as it perched in trees overlooking the partly frozen bay and then when the bird was out on the ice. The falcon tried to carry away a partly frozen waterfowl carcass that was embedded in the ice but was unsuccessful. Instead, it consumed a large part of it *in situ*. This large and powerful falcon even defended

the carcass from an immature Bald Eagle. Sketches from Mary Alice Koenke, Alison Van Keuren and Willie D'Anna and two rather distant color photographs by Mary Alice Koenke accompanied the written reports. The Gyrfalcon was resighted on a number of other occasions during the rest of the month to 10 Mar 2001.

Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*)

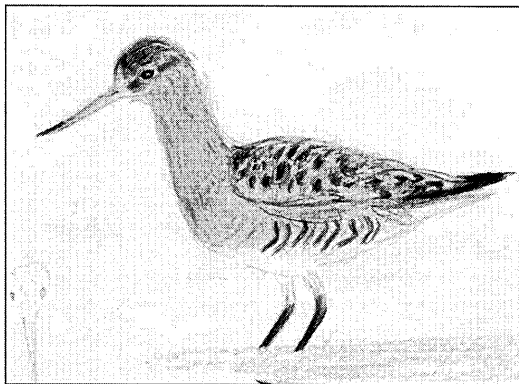
2001-27-A/C One, Sandy Pond, Town of Sandy Pond, Oswego Co., 10-11 Aug, (Barbara Herrgesell, Margaret Rusk, Bill Purcell). This Piping Plover was studied with five Semipalmated Plovers, providing a perfect opportunity to compare size and upper-part coloration. Interestingly, in 1984 a pair bred at this same locality and this was the last inland breeding record for the state. The inland breeding population of Piping Plover nests on beaches from eastern Alberta to the shores of Lake Ontario, and this species is designated as "Endangered". Because Piping Plovers occur more frequently on Lake Erie than Lake Ontario, it is generally assumed, but not proven, that these records involve birds from the inland rather than coastal population.

American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*)

2001-43-A One, Village pier in Piermont, Rockland Co., 7 Oct (Carol Weiss). This avocet was seen feeding with its characteristic side-to-side sweeping action on a patch of exposed mud along the shore of the Hudson River. It remained until 27 Oct and was seen by many observers.

Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

2001-12-A/G One, breeding-plumaged male, Seatuck Creek, Eastport, Suffolk Co., 5-14 Apr, (Paul H. Gillen, Jr., Michael Higgiston, Jennifer Hanson, Arie Gilbert, Yolanda Garcia, Rex & Brigit Stanford, Willie D'Anna). While checking a small muddy creek that often holds migrant shorebirds, Paul H. Gillen Jr. happened upon a large and brightly colored shorebird, which he quickly identified as a near-alternate plumaged adult Black-tailed Godwit. He contacted Tony Lauro, who quickly spread the news through the local birding community and then rushed down to see the godwit himself, and confirm the identification. A major 'twitch' ensued, with hundreds of birders from all over the Northeast and beyond traveling to Eastport to enjoy this spectacular wader. Color photographs were quickly posted on the web. The seven reports we received provided



Black-tailed Godwit (2001-12 A/G)
Eastport, Suffolk Co.
Sketched by Yolanda Garcia

an excellent documentation of this wonderful bird. There are three subspecies of Black-tailed Godwit and these can often be distinguished in the field. In this case, the very strongly red rather than orange tones and boldly marked tertials fit the Icelandic breeding form (*islandica*) perfectly. The nominate form (*limosa*) which breeds primarily in continental Europe tends to be paler and lankier. The Siberian Black-tailed Godwit (*melanuiroides*) is similar to *islandica* in redness but has darker upper parts and is appreciably shorter legged. Many are also shorter billed. With the exception of occasional spring overshoots to western Alaska, Black-tailed Godwits have been recorded fewer than 50 times in North America. They are most frequent in the maritime provinces of Canada in the spring, and most likely represent Icelandic birds that have been displaced on their return from wintering grounds in the British Isles. Some birds seem to be disorientated and continue down the Atlantic seaboard and there are records from a number of eastern states including Florida and more recently, Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean. Whether the Eastport bird was a northbound migrant that had already spent the winter in the Americas or a very early migrant that had overshoot Iceland and traveled south remains an open question. This is the first record for New York. More information is provided in Gillen (2001).

Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*)

2001-16-A/C One, mouth of Great Chazy River, Town of Champlain, Clinton Co., 6-8 May, (Charles W. Mitchell, William Krueger, Judith & Roger Heintz). These carefully written and convincing reports described a Marbled Godwit that accompanied some Greater and Lesser yellowlegs in a pasture. The godwit was identified by virtue of its larger size, marbled upperparts, cinnamon axillaries and underwing coverts, and long bicolored and slightly upturned bill. In flight, the dark legs extended beyond the tail.

Pomarine Jaeger (*Stercorarius pomarinus*)

2001-73-A One, Lake Champlain off Pt. au Roche, Clinton Co., 13 Jul, (David Hoag). The only jaeger species routinely found in the lower forty-eight states during summer is Pomarine and there has been at least one other summer record for this species in New York State. This light phase adult was seen in lumbering flight between New York and Vermont over Lake Champlain. The overall description clearly identified this bird as a jaeger. The flight style, physical size, and plumage characteristics were sufficient for the committee to accept the observer's conclusions that it was a Pomarine rather than a Parasitic or Long-tailed. Two other jaeger sightings, possibly Pominaries, were mentioned but not described in enough detail to be identified with confidence.

Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*)

2001-38-A One, Hamlin Beach State Park, Monroe Co., 29 Aug, (Dominic Shernoy); 2001-39-A One, seen from a ferry crossing Long Island Sound, Suffolk Co., 27 Aug, (Dennis Mildner); 2001-55-A One juvenile, on an organized pelagic, (Paul A. Guris). The sighting from Lake Ontario (2001-38-A) was made by two people for a very brief time as a fly-by. Long-tailed Jaegers are rarely

reported on Lake Ontario, but there have been more reports in recent years, mostly because observers are watching the lake earlier in the fall. This species usually occurs in late August. This bird's grayish head contrasting with the darker body was an important feature that weighed heavily with the committee's decision to accept this submission. The sighting on Long Island Sound (2001-39-A) was of an adult with the extended central tail feathers. Although this report was brief, the committee accepted it on the basis of the plumage description. The third report was very detailed. The pale gray head of this immature bird was a convincing field characteristic and the plumage of this bird was also well- described.

Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*)

2001-50-A Seven adults, Lock #7, Mohawk River, Schenectady Co., 28 Jul, (Robert P. Yunick). This group of seven adult Laughing Gulls was observed floating on the barge canal of the Mohawk River and in the company of Ring-billed Gulls. The well-defined black heads, dark mantle and black wing tips ruled out other possibilities. Laughing Gulls are uncommon away from the coast and this is a particularly impressive number of birds.

Black-tailed Gull (*Larus crassirostris*)

2001-2-A/B One, Jones Beach, Nassau Co., 1 Jan, (Thomas W. Burke, Douglas J. Futuyma). Scanning the marshes north of Jones Beach State Park, Tom Burke and Gail Benson spotted a small dark-mantled gull some distance (1/4 mile) across a marine channel. Suspecting it was a Black-tailed Gull on the basis of its relatively small size and long-winged appearance, the observers kept watch on the bird, which came closer (500 ft) as it fed in the channel. The description provided critical details needed to secure the identification, such as the sharply defined subterminal tail band and the strong white trailing edge of the secondaries and inner primaries. Unfortunately the fading afternoon light hampered efforts to determine bill and leg color. Important alternatives (Lesser Black-backed, Laughing, Olrog's and Band-tailed) were discussed and can be ruled out. Interestingly, another group of birders reported a Black-tailed Gull - most likely the same individual - from nearby Point Lookout but failed to submit a report. This is the second record for NY State.

California Gull (*Larus californicus*)

2001-65-A/B One, basic, Robert Moses Power Plant, Niagara River, Niagara Co., 11 Nov, 1,2,8,9 Dec, (Willie D'Anna). Adult California Gulls are now being seen annually on the Niagara River. The two reports received discuss one adult seen on several dates and two adults seen on 2 Dec .The descriptions provided discussed the size, mantle color, bill markings, leg color, iris color, and wing pattern and leave little doubt about the identification.

Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia*)

2001-66-A/B Two, Montauk Point, Suffolk Co., 4-11 Feb, (Andrew Guthrie, Angus Wilson). Discovered by Bob Kurtz, these murrelets were seen on the ocean by many observers to the west or south of the lighthouse. The detailed

descriptions carefully ruled out the most likely confusion species, Common Murre and Razorbill, and hit on all the key points, notably the diagnostic pale tomium stripe, stout bill shape, and shape of divide between dark neck and white breast.

Long-billed Murrelet (*Brachyramphus perdix*)

2001-56-A/D One, south end of Cayuga Lake, Ithaca, Tompkins Co., 17-18 Dec, (Kevin & Jay McGowan, Kurt Fox, Curtis Marantz, Matthew J. Williams). Steve and Taylor Kelling discovered a small alcid on 17 Dec 2001. Suspecting they had found a murrelet, the Kellings promptly alerted the local birding community, but it was not until noon that the murrelet was refound and, only then, seen well enough to be positively identified as a Long-billed. The bird remained until 20 Dec and was seen by many local and visiting birders during its stay. The observers listed above are to be commended for providing a particularly detailed set of written descriptions, supported by equally informative digiscoped images taken by Jay and Kevin McGowan under less than ideal conditions. For a detailed account by the discoverers see Kelling and Kelling (2002). Until recently, the AOU lumped Long-billed and Marbled as a single species. Good arguments were made to split the two on the basis of phylogenetic, evolutionary and biological criteria (Patten 1997; Friesen et al. 1996). The pattern of the head and neck provides the best clue that the Cayuga Lake bird was a Long-billed Murrelet. The dark feathering follows a continuous line from the bill through the eye and down the neck. The corresponding line on a Marbled Murrelet would be expected to bulge backward on the side of the neck and forward on the side of the breast. The longish bill and white eye-arcs, which are clearly evident in the photographs, also support the identification. For discussion of the identification and vagrancy of Long-billed and Marbled murrelets see the excellent article by Steven Mlodinow (1997). There are about 50 North American records, and this is the 2nd for New York.

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*)

2001-23-A/B One, East Lake Rd., Oswego, Oswego Co., 9 May, (David Cowell, Gerard Phillips); 2001-68-A One, at feeder in Cedarhurst, Nassau Co., 13 Oct, (Cindy Wodinsky). The dove on 9 May (2001-23-A/B) was described well by voice and plumage. It was found during the late evening at Region 5's lamented Niagara Mohawk Energy Information Center. This migrant hot spot was noted locally for superb fall outs of passerines, but is now off limits to the public. The dove, last of a growing list of rarities recorded at this location, was not relocated the following day. For more details of the Nassau Co. dove (2001-68-A) see Wodinsky (2002).

Northern Hawk Owl (*Surnia ulula*)

2001-4-A/E One, Bloomingdale Bog, Franklin Co., 1-27 Jan, (Kurt Fox, Alison Van Keuren, Jay McGowan, Willie D'Anna, Angus Wilson); 2001-17-A/C One, Plattsburg, Clinton Co., 21Jan.-3 Mar, (Judith & Roger Heintz, Nancy Olsen, Charles W. Mitchell). The winter of 2000-2001 was a good one for birders seeking this enigmatic visitor from the north. Both Northern Hawk Owls were discovered

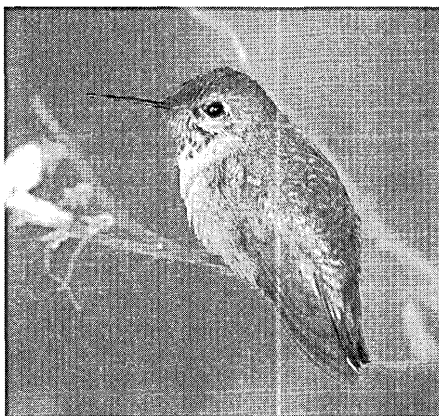
within a two week period (30 Dec for the Franklin Co. bird and 13 Jan for the Clinton Co. bird) and perhaps encouraged by handouts in the form of domestic mice, remained for several weeks. The Bloomingdale Bog bird (2001-4-A/E) was especially cooperative, frequenting an abandoned but accessible railway grade and was enjoyed by many visiting birders during its month long stay.

Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*)

2001-22-A/D One, Tifft Nature Preserve, Buffalo, Erie Co., 5-6 May, (Robert Andrle, Willie D'Anna, William Watson, Brendan Klick); 2001-33-A/C One, Manitou Rd., Town of Greece, Monroe Co., 27 Mar, (Robert Spahn, Carolyn Cass, Kurt Fox). The Erie Co. owl was found by Robert Andrle and immediately shown to Brendan Klick who happened to be leading a field trip to the preserve. After some study, the bird was identified as a Boreal Owl rather than a Saw-whet. Clearly identifiable color photos submitted by Robert Andrle and Doug Happ supplemented these well-written and convincing reports. Many birders also saw the Monroe Co. owl. Although no photographs were submitted, the detailed reports described its larger size compared to a nearby Saw-whet Owl, the broken border to the facial disk, presence of white speckles on forehead and the pale bill.

Calliope Hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*)

2001-49-A/E Two individuals, Fort Tryon Park, Manhattan, New York Co., 2-8 Dec (Douglas J. Futuyma, Arie Gilbert, Sean Sime, Paul Lehman, Jennifer Hanson). Two hummingbirds frequenting the late-blooming *Salvia* at Fort Tryon in upper Manhattan from at least 21 Nov were looked at more critically on the afternoon of 1 Dec and found not to be Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. As a result, several birders gathered at the site on 2 Dec, were treated to wonderful views of the hummingbirds, and determined that they were two Calliope Hummingbirds, both immature males. One or both hummingbirds continued to frequent the gardens, to the delight of many visiting birders, up to 25 Dec, with the last sighting of one apparently on 27 Dec. Excellent photos by Sean Sime and video by Paul Lehman accompanied these reports, as did sketches by Douglas Futuyma and Jennifer Hanson. Among the key points of identification for these two small, compact hummingbirds were the wings extending somewhat beyond the tail at rest, and a notable rufous tinge along the flanks and some rufous at the base of the tail feathers, though in neither case was the rufous as extensive or intense as on a Rufous/Allen's *Selasphorus* hummingbird. One of these males was also distinguished by one exceptionally long gorget feather of

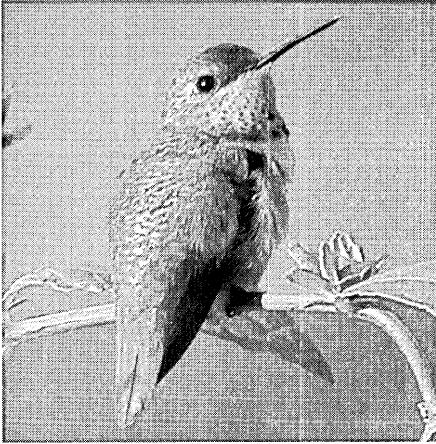


Calliope Hummingbird (2001-49-A/E)
Fort Tryon Park, Manhattan, New York Co.
©Sean Sime

the type displayed by adult males, which at certain angles showed the purplish-red color shown by Calliopes. This is a first record for New York State, and more detail appears in Mitra and Bochnik (2001).

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)

2001-67-A/B One, Lenoir Nature Preserve, Westchester Co., 17 Nov to 5 Jan 2002, (Michael Bochnik, Kevin & Jay McGowan). This long staying and very well-studied *Selasphorus* hummingbird frequented the late-blooming *Lobelia* flowers of the butterfly garden at Lenoir Nature Preserve. After an absence over New Year, what is presumed to be the same bird made a brief re-appearance at a nearby feeder. The central issue is separation of Rufous Hummingbird from the



Rufous Hummingbird (2001-67-A/B)
Lenoir Preserve, Westchester Co.
©Kevin & Jay McGowan

very similar Allen's. Both reports provided multiple photographs, some of which are of outstanding quality. The scattering of iridescent feathers on the throat and mixture of rufous and green feathering on the back suggest this was a first-fall male. Photographs provided with both reports managed to show the spread tail including the critical rectrix 5. To facilitate the review, the McGowan report included a very useful set of reference photos showing spread tails of specimens of both species. The difference in the width of R5 is very evident in the specimens, and it is clear from this comparison that the Yonkers bird was an excellent match to the Rufous specimens.

Lewis's Woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*)

2001-15-A/B One, adult, Fort Drum Military Base, Jefferson Co., 1-2 May, (Nick Leone, Jeffrey S. Bolsinger). The Lewis's Woodpecker was discovered during an organized survey of Red-headed Woodpeckers on the Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield at Fort Drum . It perched at the top of a tree in a small open area. Typical for this western species, it performed numerous towering flights to catch insects, but was also seen gleaning insects from dead wood in more traditional fashion. The bird was seen by a number of local birders during the day as well as the following morning but sadly not located thereafter. These excellent reports provided detailed descriptions of the plumage including the pink belly; wedge-shaped tail, gray upper breast, and crow-like appearance in flight. This is the fourth record for New York State.

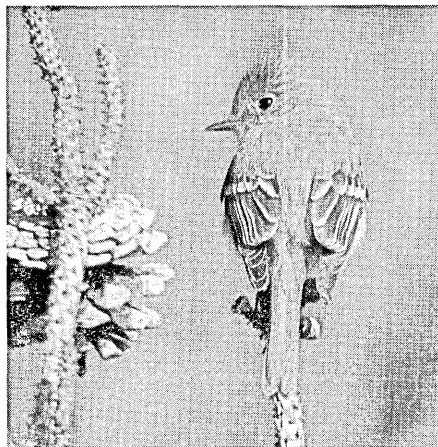
Black-backed Woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*)

2001-69-A One, at a feeder in Plymouth Reservoir, Chenango Co., last week Aug for 3-4 days., (Francis Hailey). Black-backed Woodpeckers are known to wander more during the winter in search of better food sources though they are rarely

recorded. It is therefore not altogether surprising that one might show up somewhere in the state outside of the Adirondacks. This bird was seen for several days and observed for extended periods on each encounter. The black back and barred flanks as well as size were described.

Hammond's Flycatcher
(*Empidonax hammondi*)

2001-44-A/C One, Jones Beach State Park, Nassau Co., 26 & 27 Nov, (John Fritz, Douglas J. Futuyma, Angus Wilson). Identification of *Empidonax* flycatchers in the fall is notoriously difficult and should always be approached with caution. Within hours of the sightings on the second day, photographs were posted on the web and elicited expert commentary from observers intimately familiar with Western, Least, Hammond's and Dusky flycatchers. Field observations and photographs confirmed that the lower mandible was pale, consistent with a first-year rather than adult. The small size and prominent eye-ring



Hammond's Flycatcher (2001-44-A/C)
Jones Beach State Park, Nassau Co.
©Angus Wilson

ruled out Acadian and Willow/Alder. The shape of the eye ring was not correct for Western Flycatcher and the throat lacked the appropriate yellow wash. Least Flycatcher presented a significant concern but the long primary projection and smaller, straight-edged bill argued against this. Lastly the plumage appeared freshly molted, consistent with pre-migration molt of Hammond's Flycatcher (Pyle 1997). There was precedent for vagrancy of this species into the Northeast and this is a classic time of year for western vagrants. This is the first record for New York State, and is described more fully in Fritz and Futuyma (2002).

Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*)

2001-77-A One, Democrat Point, Fire Island, Suffolk Co., 25 - 26 May, (Shaibal S. Mitra, Patricia Lindsay). This rare but regular straggler was well-observed flying and perched at Democrat Point near Fire Island Inlet. Most sightings of this species are in fall; Bull's Birds of NYS (Levine 1998) lists six spring sightings. The bird was seen well and other *Tyrannus* kingbirds were eliminated by structural and plumage characteristics. Several people again observed this bird the following day

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

2001-34-A/C One, Stillwater Rd., Town of Carlton, Orleans Co., 19 May, (Robert Spahn, Willie D'Anna, Michael Morgante). This Loggerhead Shrike was documented by a set of excellent reports, which clearly ruled out the more regular Northern Shrike. The critical identification points were the relatively wide mask

that fully surrounded the eye, little if any white between upper border of mask and gray cap, and a comparatively stubby black bill. These experienced observers also considered the upperparts darker gray than expected for Northern Shrike. Sadly, the Loggerhead Shrike continues to decline in the Northeast and, although once a breeding species, has become quite rare in New York.

Gray Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*)

2001-75-A One, near Pane Lake, Antwerp, Jefferson Co., 18 & 21 Nov, (Nick Leone). This report provided a good description of an adult or perhaps first-winter Gray Jay. Although the location is not too far from the boreal forests of the Adirondacks, it is not inconceivable that this bird wandered down from the core range in Canada.

Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*)

2001-47-A/D One, Jones Beach State Park, Nassau Co., 11 Nov, (Diana Teta, Steven D'Amato, Seymour Schiff, Kevin O'Leary); 2001-60-A/C Two individuals, Round Pond, Town of Greece, Monroe Co., 8-9 Oct. (Kurt Fox, Jeanne Skelly, Dominic Sherony). The reports, drawings and descriptions of both sightings provided strong support for the identifications and carefully eliminated Cliff Swallow, the most likely confusion species. The two individuals in the Town of Greece (2001-60-A/B/C) were found on Round Pond, just south of Lake Ontario, by David Tetlow, and were seen by numerous observers, with one bird remaining for a second day. The bird at Jones Beach West End (2001-47-A/D) was only seen for a few passes over a period of a couple of hours. The overall descriptions did not allow separation by race (a more difficult endeavor than most field guides let on), but left no doubt about the species identification.

Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

2001-42-A One, Smith Point County Park, Suffolk Co., 17 Sep, (Daniel Stoebel). Paul Maldonado originally reported this Northern Wheatear at Smith Point County Park on 16 Sep, and it was relocated and studied by Daniel Stoebel the following day. A particularly cooperative bird, the wheatear provided nice views while remaining in the area at least until 22 Sep, during which time it was seen and photographed by many additional birders. The details of the plumage were well described. According to Bull's Birds of New York State (Levine 1998), sixty-five percent of all Northern Wheatear sightings from NYS occur in the month of September.

Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*)

2001-57-A/H Bond Lake County Park, Lewiston, Niagara Co., 23 Dec to 18 Jan 2002, (Willie D'Anna, Michael Morgante, Gerry Rising, Kurt Fox, Curtis Marantz, Brendan Klick, Kevin McGann). Dave Muller found the bird on 5 Dec, but it was five days before he could firmly identify it as a Townsend's Solitaire. After an interval of almost three weeks, Willie D'Anna relocated the solitaire on 23 Dec and it remained until 23 Feb 2002. Key features supporting the identification were the bold white eye- ring, pale buff patch at base of primaries, thin white wing bar on the greater coverts and the white outer tail feathers most

evident in flight. During its protracted stay, the solitaire was often observed perched on the tops of trees and fruiting bushes and was seen eating grapes and berries. On some occasions it was heard singing, suggesting it might have been a male. Convincing color photographs contributed by Willie D'Anna and Kevin McGann supported the well-prepared descriptions.

Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*)

2001-59-A One, Montgomery, Orange Co., 13 Dec, (John Tramontano). Wood Thrushes are Neotropical migrants wintering outside North America and reports for the late fall and winter warrant review. This thrush was observed on two occasions, once with a Hermit Thrush, offering useful comparison. The superficially similar Brown Thrasher can be ruled out on several counts and the more exotic possibility of a Fieldfare, something to be considered in winter, could be eliminated by the color of the head.

Bohemian Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrulus*)

2001-41-A One, Hamlin Beach State Park, Monroe Co., 22 Sep, (Robert Spahn). This Bohemian Waxwing was heard, then seen flying over the observers with several Cedar Waxwings. This is a very early date for this uncommon winter visitor.

Tennessee Warbler (*Vermivora peregrina*)

2001-62-A One, Park Station, Chemung Co., 2 Dec, (David Russell). The combination of grayish cap, whitish underparts and white supercilium supported the identification of this warbler as an adult Tennessee rather than Orange-crowned Warbler. There are very few winter records for NY.

Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*)

2001-26-A One male, Central Park, New York Co., 20 Jun, (Todd Olson). First heard singing and then studied with binoculars. The detailed description was consistent with an adult male. The late-spring/early-summer date is unexpected and suggests a bird that might have wintered in the southeast.

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)

2001-18-A One, Miner Rd, Town of Scriba, Oswego Co., 14 Apr, (Mary Alice Koeneke). Five excellent color photographs nicely complemented the observer's written description. The distinctive head pattern, discrete breast spot and white outer edges to the tail including 'tear drop' marks at the tip firmly ruled out other sparrows and larks. The rich chestnut on the head and lack of streaking indicates adult plumage, which is to be expected in spring.

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

2001-52-A/D Two, Cayuga Pool, Iroquois NWR, Genesee Co., 8-10 Oct, (Willie D'Anna, Kurt Fox, William Watson, Brendan Klick). An excellent set of reports in which at least 2 (possibly 4) adults studied in great detail. Enough details were provided in the descriptions to firmly eliminate *subvirgatus*, which is duller with less prominent white stripes on back but not to separate nominate *nelsoni* from

alterus. The observers took care to set out the key points of separation from Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow, specifically the less-defined streaks extending along the flanks and the comparatively smaller bill.

Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*)

2001-1-A/B One, Jones Beach State Park, Nassau Co., 5 Jan, (Thomas W. Burke, John Fritz); 2001-7-A/B One, Jones Beach State Park, Nassau Co., 18 & 20 Feb, (Alvin Wollin, Seymour Schiff). The first (2001-1-A/B) of these two sighting was made under difficult conditions just before dusk. Initially there was some uncertainty and the identification was only clinched by careful review of the literature and museum specimens. After a significant interlude a similar bird (2001-7-A/B) was seen with Lapland Longspurs near the site of the first sighting. It seems likely but is not proven that these two reports refer to the same bird. These reports constitute the sixth, and possibly seventh, record for New York.

2001 Reports Accepted but Origins Uncertain

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*)

2001-32-A One, Town of Somerset, Niagara Co., 15 Jul, (William Watson). Although the detailed description was good for a Gyr Falcon, the extraordinary date rang alarm bells within the committee. This concern turned out to be warranted when Willie D'Anna reported in a follow-up message that analysis of his video of the bird revealed a small non-Fish & Wildlife Service band on one leg. From this, the committee concluded that this was most likely an escaped falconry bird. In recent years, at least one captive Gyr Falcon has been reported lost in the state, however, there is no reason to assume this highly mobile species could not wander in from elsewhere.

2000 Reports Accepted

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

2000-9-A One, Biddelcum Pond, Town of Schroeppe, Oswego Co., 11 Mar, (Bill Purcell). This report went for three rounds of review due in large part to the wording of the relative size comparisons, which implied that the bird was on the large side for a pure Ross's. In addition, there was no description of the shape of line of demarcation between the base of the bill and the face. Both factors justifiably prompted concern whether the bird could perhaps have been a Ross's x Snow Goose hybrid. Given the now regular occurrence of pure Ross's in the state and very few reports of hybrids, it was felt in the end that the identification was more than likely correct.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)

2000-4-B One male, St. Lawrence River, Jefferson Co., 26 Feb, (Charles Spagnoli). This was a late report of a bird that was previously accepted by the Committee. The Tufted Duck was discovered and photographed by Nick Leone on 29 Jan, 2000. The current report established that this was likely the same bird and extended the dates of occurrence to 26 Feb.

Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*).

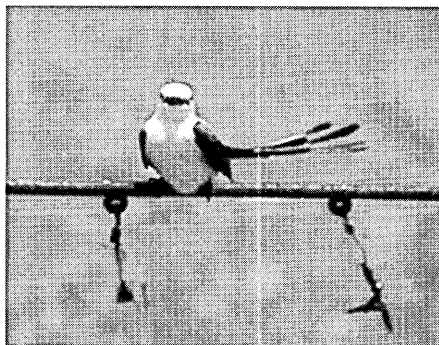
2000-76-A 30+ birds, Fishkill, Dutchess Co., 31 Dec, (Edmond Spaeth). The unusually warm December may have been a factor in the late occurrence of this extraordinary flock. Though there has since been a January sighting in Chautauqua County (Morgante 2002), the Fishkill birds unquestionably involve a record number of Sandhill Cranes in New York.

Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*)

2000-83-A One adult, Democrat Point, Suffolk Co., 14 Jun, (Shaibal S. Mitra). Although this report was written well after the fact, field notes from the day of observation were convincing. The Long-tailed was accompanied by an adult dark morph Parasitic Jaeger. The paler grayer mantle with contrasting darker flight feathers, neat black cap, and absence of a dark breast-band on the Long-tailed, as well as smaller size, were all observed.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*)

2000-82-A/B One adult, Conesus, Livingston Co., 2 Aug, (Mark Deprez, Kurt Fox). Mark Deprez first discovered this flycatcher and also submitted color photographs. The bird was actually identified later by Jim Kimball. Kurt Fox forwarded additional photographs to the committee. The images clearly show an adult Scissor-tailed Flycatcher as indicated by the red-pink underwing and flanks. Unfortunately, no other details of the sighting were provided.



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (2000-82-A/B)
near Conesus, Livingston Co.
©Mark Deprez

1999 Reports Accepted

Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla arenacea*)

1999-78-A One, Tobay Beach, Nassau Co., 24 Oct, (Shaibal S. Mitra, Patricia Lindsay). These reports from two experienced observers described a Field Sparrow that showed characters of the subspecies *arenacea*, the race that breeds in the Great Plains. The bird appeared pale overall, especially on the underparts, with a uniformly gray face lacking discernable rusty patterning on the cheeks. The crown appeared unstreaked and less rusty than on typical eastern birds (*S. p. pusilla*) at this time of year. Unfortunately, the literature on field identification of the two Field Sparrow subspecies is limited. Byers et al. (1995), Rising (1996) and Beadle and Rising (2001) mention that in *arenacea* the wings and tail are longer and the plumage is grayer, lacking much of the rusty tones seen in typical *pusilla*. These sources also mention intergradation between the two forms, but provide little detailed information regarding the abruptness of the boundary zone. As the observers acknowledge, David Sibley in his field guide (Sibley 2000)

makes the unqualified statement that gray birds occur in *pusilla* (i.e. east of where the two forms are known to intergrade in Oklahoma). Given the uncertainties in the true extent of plumage variation within eastern populations, one committee member expressed general concerns regarding the ability to distinguish variability within *pusilla* from a true *arenacea* without the benefit of measurements. However, the committee in general felt that the details provided were sufficient to document the first occurrence of the subspecies *arenacea* in New York. The observers are to be commended for bringing the occurrence of this poorly known subspecies to public attention and the committee looks forward to additional reports of possible *arenacea*, preferably with supportive measurements and/or photographs.

1998 Reports Accepted

Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*)

1998-90-A One, Fire Island Lighthouse, Suffolk Co., 19 Jun, (Shaibal S. Mitra). Other *Tyrannus* were satisfactory excluded. A total of 16 sightings of Western Kingbirds were reported in the east during May and June of 1998, indicating an unprecedented seasonal incursion.

Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni*)

1998-89-A Four individuals, Bethel Corners, Oswego Co., 22 Jan - 10 Feb, (Gerard Phillips). This excellent report documents at least four *exilipes* Hoary Redpolls that were studied in the company of 300 or more Common Redpolls. The written details were accompanied by color photographs, which supported the identification, showing the barely streaked undertail coverts and general frosty looking appearance, along with other appropriate field marks

1995 Reports Accepted

Le Conte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*)

1995-53-A/B One, Zach's Bay, Jones Beach, Nassau Co., 15 Nov, (David Klauber, Howard Boltson). These belated reports describe a migrant sparrow studied at close range in late fall together with a Grasshopper Sparrow. The observers noted the bright orange face, gray/brown ear patch, white stripe extending through the middle of the otherwise black crown, unique pinkish nape striping, and presence of distinct streaks on the flanks. In addition the tips of the tail feathers differed in shape from those of the accompanying Grasshopper Sparrow. These details are consistent with a LeConte's Sparrow and rule out other possibilities including the sharp-tailed sparrows.

1983 Reports Accepted

Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*)

1983-41-A One, Montauk Point, Suffolk Co., 9 Dec, (Paul H. Gillen, Jr.). This submission came in response to a call for records from any year. The description was a good fit for a first-winter male. The bird was bright yellowish with a hint of red feathering at the base of the bill. Although the color of the wings was not

discussed, they showed two obvious wing bars. Despite some missing details, the committee felt the report provided enough to firmly identify this distinctive species. Furthermore, the time of year and location would not be inappropriate for this western vagrant.

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 too vague to properly document the occurrence and/or eliminate similar species. For example, written documentation or descriptions prepared entirely from memory (sometimes 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 notes 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 your notes with the formal typed or neatly written report. This helps the committee to know what was seen at the time of the observation, before field guides or other sources of information were consulted. If you feel your handwriting is illegible, especially with the excitement of finding a good bird, it is a good idea to add a key that explains or decodes your notes. Crude field sketches are often very useful in illustrating what you saw and should always be submitted as part of the report, even if they are drawn on a napkin!

Advice on report preparation is available on our web site (see above), and in several published articles. We recommend the article by Willie D'Anna (2003), as well as the benchmark article by Dittman and Lasley (1992). The key elements to a good report are (i) the description of the bird with as much detail as possible, (ii) the names and contact details of the observers, (iii) location and date of the sighting and lastly (iv) 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, audiotapes 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 can resemble North American species.

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.

2001 Reports Not Accepted

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*)

2001-48-A Two adults with two immatures, Fair Haven, Cayuga Co., 12 Nov, It was decided that one had to read too much between the lines in order accept this report. The report included a brave but eccentrically stylized sketch, depicting detail of the bill where it meets the forehead. Unfortunately, this outline did not match any particular swan species. No attempt was made to describe the two immature birds.

Band-rumped Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma castro*)

2001-20-A Two birds, Bottcher Farms, Big Flats, Chemung Co., 7 Mar, This was a particularly puzzling record for the Committee. The observer described two birds flying rapidly in side-by-side formation over an area of farmland. The brief account described them as black 'petrel shaped' birds with a 'white-banded rump and shallow forked tail'. Given the unusual circumstances and brevity of the report, the Committee was not even convinced these were identifiable as storm-petrels, let alone as a particular species.

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)

2001-9-A One, light morph adult, along Rt 34B, Tompkins Co., 11 Mar, The bird was seen briefly from a passing car with the naked eye. The identification was primarily based on jizz and one or two suggestive field marks. However, given the brevity of details, the Committee felt there was reasonable doubt as to whether the bird was seen long or well enough to conclusively eliminate other raptor species.

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

2001-19-A One, Derby Hill Hawkwatch, Oswego Co., 15 May, It was believed that this sighting pertained to a Eurasian Collared-Dove. Certain plumage details initially prompted concern whether Ringed Turtle-Dove was sufficiently ruled out. However, a solid description of the vocalization was included which helped resolve this issue. In the end, it was decided that for a first state record, seen only by a single observer, photographic evidence was needed. Furthermore, the legs had not been seen and therefore were not checked for bands. Although feral origin was perhaps unlikely in this case, the omission was nonetheless influential in the final decision not to accept this potential first state record.

American Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides dorsalis*)

2001-70-A One, at a feeder in Garden City, Nassau Co., 19 Dec. This brief report described a bird that had black bars on the front, white stripes on the black wings, and a yellow mark on the head. The shape of the bird was not described nor the type of feeder. Thus the committee could not even be certain that this was a woodpecker. What was also needed was some discussion as to why this was not a Black-backed Woodpecker. Either species would be an excellent sighting that far outside the Adirondacks.

shrike, sp. (*Lanius* sp.)

2001-63-A Two birds, Long Lake, Hamilton Co., 21 Jul, This was an intriguing report. Two shrikes of any species seen together in mid-summer would be highly significant since it would suggest nesting. Northern Shrike has never been recorded breeding in NY, and Loggerhead Shrike has long vanished as a nesting species. The description was not particularly detailed and provided no discussion of the identification. In particular, no mention was made of a hooked bill, the hallmark of a shrike, and in this context it is essential that the observer rule out (or even mention) such potentially confusing species as Northern Mockingbird and Gray Jay.

Virginia's Warbler (*Vermivora virginiae*)

2001-31-A/B One, Prospect Park, Brooklyn, Kings Co., 6 Sep. This small Nashville-like warbler was studied rather briefly as it foraged actively in the leaves of a maple tree as part of a moving flock of migrant passerines that included Nashville Warbler. The upperparts of the bird in question were described as ash or light gray and the underparts as off-white with a pale yellow spot (or patch) at the center of the breast. Other notable features included a bold white eye-ring, 'smoky gray' wings, an absence of color at the bases of underwings and a rounded head shape. Unfortunately, the tail, rump and undertail coverts were not seen during this brief encounter and no vocalizations were heard. The primary observer (2001-31-A) provided a candid report, making it clear what was not seen as well as what was. The observer also took pains to express caution regarding several aspects of the sighting, for example, taking into account the shading effect of leaves. A color sketch prepared a few days later supplemented the description, and the extensive discussion of the identification reviewed a host of alternative possibilities, from outside candidates such as gnatcatchers and Colima Warbler to more relevant possibilities such as a dull Nashville Warbler or Northern Parula. The western *ridgwayi* subspecies of Nashville Warbler was considered and judged by the observers to be excluded. This form is generally grayer than its eastern counterpart and closely resembles Virginia's Warbler. The second report (2001-31-B) provided confirmatory details but offered a less overt case for the specific identification. After careful reflection the committee felt that this sighting was simply too brief for a first state record of a relatively cryptic species, noting that several key features were not seen and the bird was not photographically documented or captured.

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*)

2001-30-A One male, Poughkeepsie, Dutchess Co., 31 Jul, A frequent spring overshoot into New York State, this species occurs annually in small numbers on Long Island and the NYC metropolitan area but is decidedly less common elsewhere. Although this red bird lacked the peaked crown of a Northern Cardinal, its occurrence at a feeder in mid-summer raised alarm bells for the committee. Some members felt that more detail was needed to rule out a Cardinal molting its crown feathers. The report failed to pass in the second round of review.

Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*)

2001-14-A/B One, Tanner Springs area, Central Park, New York Co., 22 Apr. On 22 Apr two New York City birders discovered a heavily spotted towhee near Tanner Springs in Central Park. They alerted other birders who not only managed to see it, but also obtained some excellent photographs. Regrettably the bird vanished shortly after and was never relocated. The strong white spotting on the upperparts suggested a Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*), most likely the widespread and partly migratory subspecies *arcticus*. However, the bird also displayed an extensive area of white at the base of the primaries, a feature normally attributed to Eastern Towhee (*P. erythrophthalmus*). Details of this fascinating sighting were submitted in the form of a published article that appeared in the *Kingbird* (2001-14-B, Stubblefield and Rising 2002) and a more conventional but brief report to NYSARC (2001-14-A) from two additional observers. The record underwent two rounds of review and elicited substantial discussion among the voting members. The committee appreciated the substantial original research that went into the analysis of this problematic bird. Ultimately the decision hinged on the question of ancestry and the frequency with which Spotted Towhees show obvious white bases to the primaries. As the authors of the article openly admit, this individual differs obviously from the great majority of *arcticus* specimens they examined. Even so, they document moderate to extensive white primary patches on no fewer than 8 specimens of *arcticus* collected far to the west of the contact zone (Fort Union, Montana and Walsh, Alberta). The Committee was divided in its interpretation of these and other Spotted Towhee specimens showing white primary patches. Noting the generally low frequency of such patches among Spotted Towhees, and the generally smaller size of these patches (compared to the Central Park bird), the committee agreed this was indeed not simply an 'odd' Eastern Towhee, but in the end, decided that the possibility of a hybrid origin could not be fully excluded.

Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*)

2001-35-A One adult male, Manitou Rd., Town of Greece, Monroe Co., 1 Apr. The committee did not accept this record because the description would not allow complete separation with immature male Baltimore Orioles. The color of the supercilium and details of the face, bib, and back were inadequate to give a clear indication of the species. The bird was viewed from a long distance with minimal study time and it is not surprising that the observer had left some unanswered questions.

2000 Reports Not Accepted

Canada Goose (*B. c. minima*)

2000-41-A One, possibly two, Point au Roche State Park beach, Clinton Co., 12 Oct. Committee members cited the complexity of Canada Goose taxonomy and the lack of prior documented occurrences of this form in the East as reasons for turning it down. The photographs provided show a very small Canada Goose among Snow Geese. The committee disagreed whether this was sufficient to identify the bird as this form and voted to not accept it in the third round.

albatross, sp.

2000-28-A One, 18 miles off shore from Fire Island, 18 Jun. This was a distant view of a seabird without the aid of any optics. The size and field marks do not eliminate Northern Gannet, a pelagic bird much more common in these waters. Although the observer did describe the flight characteristics, the lack of plumage details did not allow the committee to have a high degree of certainty concerning a possible albatross.

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

2000-17-A One, Niagara Mohawk Visitors Center, Town of Scriba, 4 May, Oswego Co. Observed by multiple observers on 4 May and apparently also on 6 May, this report was the only one received. Several factors combined to work against acceptance of this report. The date is exceptionally early for this species since inland spring migrants usually occur in late May or early June. Second, a Grasshopper Sparrow was reported at the same location around the same time. Although the committee felt that the description was perhaps more consistent with a Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, in light of the above, the fact that Grasshopper Sparrow was not considered in the report was an important reason why it was not accepted.

Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)

2000-70-A One at a feeder, Fredonia, Chautauqua Co., 10 & 25 Dec. This candid report by an experienced observer included a carefully made colored pencil drawing. The bird was apparently in active molt and was more advanced in plumage on the second date. The observer quickly narrowed the choices down to a Rusty or Brewer's Blackbird on the first date and, noting the dark eyes on the second date, identified it as a female Brewer's. In essence this report was not accepted after three rounds because the committee felt that it might have been a Brown-headed Cowbird. The sketch showed a buff-cream throat unlike any known plumage of Brewer's Blackbird and the back was described as black with no mention of gray or brown tones. Molt weighed heavily in our decision since Brewer's Blackbirds are known to molt before their fall migration and so would not be expected to be actively molting in the state. Much of the sketch and description was consistent with a male Brown-headed Cowbird in post-juvenal molt. Although this report was not accepted in the end, the refreshingly honest description along with a sketch done before consulting field guides serves as an example of how reports should be submitted.

1996 Reports Not Accepted

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus intermedius*)

1996-55-A One, molting 2nd summer to 3rd winter, Democrat Point, Suffolk Co., 7 Jul. Although the committee was in complete agreement over the identification of this dark mantled gull as a Lesser Black-backed Gull, several members disagreed over the identification to subspecies. The overwhelming majority of Lesser Black-backed Gulls recorded in North America are thought to be of the subspecies *graellsii*, which breeds in Iceland and the British Isles. A small number

of darker-mantled birds have been observed in North America and it has been proposed, but not proven, that these correspond to the continental European subspecies, which is known as *intermedius*. Although photos accompanied the report, the Suffolk Co. bird was a subadult and it was not observed with other Lesser Black-backs. Immaturity is a known obstacle to the reliable assessment of mantle shade in gulls, particularly in the absence of direct comparison. Given these issues, and the existence of intermediates between *intermedius* and *graellsii* in Europe, the Committee felt that identification as *intermedius* was not adequately supported.

Reports Not Reviewed

As it stands the official NYSARC pelagic boundary between New York and New Jersey follows a straight line from an inshore point at 40° 30' 36", 73° 58' 12" to a far offshore point at 37° 50' 24", 70° 35' 00". Following this rule, two offshore reports were deemed as lying outside of New York waters and not formally reviewed. These reports will be archived and would be revisited if the New York/New Jersey boundary were to be changed.

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*)

2001-25-A One, 16 miles south of Breezy Point, Long Island, 28 May.

Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia*)

2001-53-A One, seen in the New York Bite (coordinates 39° 58.270' - 73° 22.582') on 4 Sep.

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