

REPORT OF THE NEW YORK STATE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE FOR 2002

Over the past year, the New York State Avian Records Committee (hereafter NYSARC or the Committee) deliberated on a total of 161 reports. The reports involved 91 separate sightings from 2002 and an additional 7 reports from previous years. A total of 95 observers provided written descriptions and/or photographs, with one or more sightings reported from 26 out of the 62 counties in the state. Counties with the most reports were Monroe (50), Nassau (15) and Niagara (13). In all, 145 reports (90%) were accepted, and this impressive statistic testifies to the high quality of the majority of the submissions. The remaining 16 were not accepted because of insufficient documentation or because the descriptions were judged as inconsistent with known identification criteria. Multiple reports were received for 30 of the sightings, with 28 diligent individuals sending in two or more reports. Sightings for which there are multiple submissions are invariably stronger than those supported by a single submission. 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 not reported at all.

All records are sight records unless otherwise indicated. For accepted reports, the names of observers submitting documentation are given in parentheses; 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, but our emphasis is on crediting contributors. The records in this report are arranged taxonomically following the American Ornithologists' Union's Check-List of North American Birds, Seventh edition (AOU 1998) and all Supplements through the 45th (Banks et al. 2004). 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 excellent examples of documentation often 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 should 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. 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 for a second round of review. 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 round of review.

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 NYSARC pages within the NYSOA web site:

<http://www.nybirds.org/NYSARC/NYSARCHome.htm>

The site now includes a special on-line version of the reporting form, allowing observers to compose a complete report and attach up to five digital image files electronically. The site also includes a 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 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:

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Churchville, NY 14428
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NYSARC ACTIVITIES

At the end of December 2003 Dr. Kevin McGowan completed his current term as voting member and rotated off the Committee. We miss Kevin's expertise in the field and museum and wish him success as NYSOA President. The vacated position has been filled by Steve Kelling, another respected figure from the Ithaca/Cayuga Basin birding community. Steve is Director of Information Technologies at the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology and has served as Region 3 editor for *The Kingbird* and as regional editor for *North American Birds*. Lastly, the Committee wishes to thank Manny Levine for his guidance in the production of past annual reports and his many efforts to promote the work of this committee. We wish him well in his retirement as Editor of *The Kingbird*. On 6 November 2004, NYSARC met at the Laboratory of Ornithology for its annual meeting. Many items of business were discussed during the six and a half hour meeting, including a number of changes to the review list and regional designations. These will be summarized in a separate article.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2002 REPORT

The highlights of 2002 included the first accepted record for NYS of **Eurasian Collared-Dove** (*Streptopelia decaocto*), second records of **Slaty-backed Gull** (*Larus schistisagus*), **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** (*Calidris acuminata*), and

Calliope Hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*), and fifth record of **Ross's Gull** (*Rhodostethia rosea*). A most interesting and challenging record was provided by a *Dendroica* warbler that closely resembled a Hermit Warbler (*D. occidentalis*) but was felt by the majority of the Committee to more likely represent a hybrid Hermit x Townsend's Warbler (*D. occidentalis* x *D. townsendi*)—see discussion below. The AOU (Banks et al. 2004) has recently split the Canada Goose into two species, separating out the smaller forms into Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*). Consequently, New York, by reason of having accepted reports of 'Richardson's' Canada Goose in the past, now has a new species on its list. With the additions of Eurasian Collared-Dove and Cackling Goose, the official state list rises to 462 species.

2002 REPORTS ACCEPTED

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

2002-70-A One, Irondequoit Bay south, Penfield, **Monroe**, 18 Sep (Kurt Fox).

2002-81-A/B One adult, Zach's Bay, Jones Beach, **Nassau**, 11-15 Nov (Seymour Schiff, Sandy Spitalnik).

The Irondequoit Bay sighting is likely a record early date for Ross's Goose in the state. The report was very thorough and completely allayed any concerns about a possible hybrid Snow x Ross's Goose. Excellent photos of the Zach's Bay bird by Seymour Schiff and by Seth Ausubel establish the identification and rule out the possibility of a hybrid. Both Ross's Geese were associating with Canada Geese though they are typically found with Snow Geese. Since the first accepted record for the state in 1983 (Griffith 1998, pp. 143-144), Ross's Geese have increased dramatically in the East, and multiple birds are now seen annually in New York. Observers should identify this species with an eye toward ruling out the possibility of a hybrid Snow x Ross's Goose, as these hybrids are not infrequent (see Roberson 1993 for further discussion). Although NYSARC plans to remove this species from the statewide review list, descriptions should still be included with all reports to Regional Editors.

Brant (*Branta bernicla*)

'Black' Brant (*B. b. nigricans*)

2002-45-A One, New Baltimore, **Greene**, 25 Oct (Richard Guthrie, photos by R. Guthrie). This record, documented with excellent photographs, is very unusual in two respects: among the small sample of Black Brant recorded in NYS, this is apparently the first juvenile and only the third recorded away from Long Island.

Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*)

2002-13-A Eight individuals, Cayuga Pool, Iroquois NWR, **Genesee**, 9 Mar (Michael Morgante).

2002-46-A Five individuals, Ring-necked Marsh, Iroquois NWR, **Genesee**, 2 Nov (Michael Morgante).

These reports were submitted and accepted prior to the AOU Check-List Committee's decision to split the white-cheeked geese into two species: Cackling

Goose and Canada Goose (*Auk*: 121: 985-995). The 'Richardson's' form (subspecies *hutchinsii*) of what is now called Cackling Goose has proven a regular visitor to western NYS and LI, and these well-documented reports of small flocks are a welcome contribution to our evolving understanding of the local status of this newly elevated species.

Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*)

Eurasian race (*A. c. crecca*)

2002-12-A/B One male, Church Rd., Hamlin, **Monroe**, 18 Apr (Kurt Fox, Robert Spahn). This 'Common Teal' was found with 'American' Green-winged Teal (*A. c. carolinensis*) on a seasonal pool that had formed in a farm field and allowed careful study at relatively close range. These detailed reports carefully established the identification and, importantly, ruled out the possibility of a *crecca* x *carolinensis* hybrid. Although reported annually from the marine portion of NY, this subspecies is very rare elsewhere.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)

2002-58-A One adult male, Lake Champlain, Crown Point, **Essex**, 30 Dec (David Hoag). This duck was studied actively swimming and diving within a raft of 250 scaup just on the New York side of the state line. Interestingly, a more sizeable scaup flock containing two adult male Tufted Ducks had been reported from Vermont waters a few days earlier. The observer provided a detailed and convincing description of an adult male, with no evidence of hybridization. Ageing is based on the long, thick head plumes and solid white flanks.

King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*)

2002-64-A One adult male, Cumberland Head, **Clinton**, 6 Oct (David Hoag). Observed throughout the day feeding, loafing and occasionally flying with a raft of White-winged Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*). Although the three photographs taken by the observer provided little supplementary information, they hinted at the distinctive sail-like scapulars described in the written report. Although not considered a formal review species, eiders of any species are sufficiently rare on Lake Champlain to merit review.

Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*)

2002-79-A One female, Lake Ontario, Webster, **Monroe**, 5 Nov (Robert Spahn). This female eider was studied carefully as it flew along the lakeshore with three female King Eiders (*S. spectabilis*). The Committee appreciated that only a limited amount of detail can be gathered during such fly-by observations and felt the difference in shape and darker brown coloration was sufficient to establish the identification.

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)

2002-52-A/B One, Lake Ontario, **Wayne**, 30-31 Oct (William Watson, Robert Spahn).

2002-63-A/B One, Montauk Point, **Suffolk**, 14 & 24 Dec (Patrick Santinello, Thomas W. Burke, photos by Gail Benson).

The Wayne Co. bird was observed on multiple dates at various distances off the

beach, with Common Loon (*G. immer*) and Horned Grebes (*Podiceps auritus*) providing useful comparisons. The Suffolk Co. bird was discovered by Tom Burke on 14 Dec during the Montauk Christmas Bird Count and seen by a number of birders over the following weeks including Patrick Santinello, with the last reported sighting on 27 Dec. The Pacific Loon was studied alongside Red-throated (*G. stellata*) and Common (*G. immer*) Loons. At both locations, the observers noted the absence of white markings on the black back implying these were adult birds and carefully described the crisp border between black and white plumage, thin pointed bill, rounded head and dark smudgy line running from side to side under the chin. Size and posture were also indicative of Pacific Loon. The latter feature and absence of a white flank ruled out Arctic Loon (*G. arctica*). By holding her single lens reflex camera to the eyepiece of a telescope, Gail Benson was able to photograph the rather distant Suffolk Co. bird. Although the images were very small, these provided useful confirmatory information for the written reports, showing the sharp color contrast and diffuse chin strap.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)

2002-51-A/B One, off Wolfe's Pond Park, Staten Island, **Richmond**, 1-8 Apr (Seth Ausubel, Angus Wilson).

Initially discovered by Lauren and Chris Nuzzi, the grebe remained in the tidal waters offshore until the 9th, during which time the bird was seen by many observers from NY and neighboring NJ. Both reports provided written descriptions supported by photographs by the authors.

Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*)

2002-65-A One immature, Hamlin Beach SP, **Monroe**, 23 Nov (Jessie Barry).

2002-71-A One immature, Irondequoit Bay north, **Monroe**, 5 Jan. (Kevin Griffith).

Reports of this species on Lake Ontario are regular in the fall, with most occurring in November and December. Only a fraction of the actual sightings make it to the Committee for review. Still, there have been 31 accepted records from inland parts of the State since 1979, and, with many from Lake Ontario accepted by the Ontario Bird Records Committee, the NYSARC is considering removing this species from the review list. The report from Hamlin Beach was accompanied by detailed field sketches by Jessie Barry. The Irondequoit Bay sighting established a new record late date for Lake Ontario in New York.

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)

2002-21-A/C Three birds, mouth of Sandy Creek, Town of Hamlin, **Monroe**,

6 May (Kurt Fox, Robert Spahn), and Niagara Falls, Niagara River, **Niagara**, 14 May (Willie D'Anna, photo by W. D'Anna).

2002-43-A Two birds, Myers Point, Lansing, **Tompkins**, 3 Oct (Mary Walters, photos by Mary Walters).

Reports 2002-21-A/C pertain to a group of three birds seen at two widely separated locations eight days apart. There were other reports on the Buffalo Rare Bird Alert at intermediate locations and dates suggesting that all sightings involved the same birds. Although most sightings of White Pelican in the state have involved single birds, there have been occasional reports of multiples over

the years (Lauro 1998a). While birders need to be aware that escapes of exotic species of white-plumaged pelicans do occur, the photos and descriptions accompanying both of these reports indicated that our native species was involved.

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)

2002-32-A/C One, Sodus Point, **Wayne**, 21 Jul-8 Aug (Kurt Fox, Robert Spahn, Doug Daniels, photo by Ray Ovelman).

2002-47-A/C One, Sandy Pond, **Oswego**, 27 Jul-1 Aug (Bernie Carr, Brenda Best, Gerard Phillips).

2002-48-A One, Lake Ontario, City of Oswego, **Oswego**, 22 Oct (Barbara Herrgesell).

2002-56-A/B One Oswego Harbor, Oswego, **Oswego**, 24-25 Nov (Antony Shrimpton, Gregg Dashnau, photo by Kevin McGann).

2002-87-A Two immatures, Lower NY Harbor, Staten Island, **Richmond**, 3 Jul (Andrew Bernick).

During the summer of 2002, there was a great movement of Brown Pelicans into inland regions of Eastern North America (*North American Birds* 2002). A detailed review of these sightings by Alan Wormington (Wormington 2002) indicated that at least eight individuals appeared around the Great Lakes, including three in New York. The pelican at Sandy Pond and Sodus Point clearly pertained to the same individual. Unfortunately, the documentation that the Committee received for the Oswego Harbor bird was insufficient to determine if there were two different individuals seen a month apart or even if they were different than the individual seen at Sandy Pond and Sodus Point. Fortunately, a photograph of the Oswego bird in *North American Birds* (Kelling et al. 2002), taken by Jay McGowan (incorrectly attributed to Willie D'Anna) clearly indicates a different individual, lacking a white head patch that the Sandy Pond/Sodus Point bird showed. Wormington considered the Brown Pelican reported on Cayuga Lake to be a third individual but unfortunately, the Committee received no reports of this bird. Although this species is apparently now regular along New York's coast, the two birds seen at New York Harbor are among very few documented sightings submitted to NYSARC.

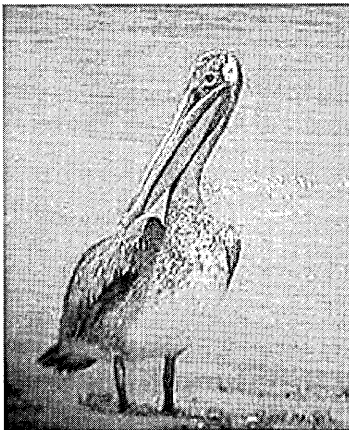


Figure 1. Brown Pelican,
Sandy Pond, Oswego Co.,
28 Jul 2002. © Gerard Phillips.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*)

2002-14-A One adult, Barnes Road, Walworth, Wayne, 30 Apr

(Tracie Shultz, photo by T. Shultz).

This adult Yellow-crowned Night-Heron spent a day at a pond near the observer's home. Written details were supplemented with a color photograph (one of twenty) taken by the observer, who also mentioned taking videotape. The date suggests a northward migrant that had overshot its normal summer range.

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*)

2002-82-A One, Cow Meadow Park, Freeport, Nassau, 6 Jul (Angus Wilson, photo by Wilson).

2002-83-A One, Jamaica Bay WR, Queens, 6 & 14 Jul (Angus Wilson, photo by Wilson).

Both ibis were encountered briefly as they visited freshwater ponds to drink and bathe in the company of Glossy Ibis (*P. falcinellus*). The Nassau Co. bird was tentatively aged as a second-year, or possibly retarded third-year, on the basis of partial winter-type feathering on the head and the presence of a number of maroon lesser coverts. The Queens Co. bird, first found on the same day as the observations of the Nassau Co bird, was thought to be at least three-years old progressing rapidly towards winter-type plumage. In all three sightings, the White-faced Ibis was only present for a few minutes before taking flight and presumably flying back out to feed in the extensive saltwater marshes surrounding both sites. The written submissions were supplemented by a copy of an article, authored by Wilson, Andy Guthrie and Peter Pyle, on ageing of sub-adult White-faced Ibis (Wilson et al. 2002).

Figure 2. White-faced Ibis,
Cow Meadow Park, Freeport,
Nassau Co.,
6 Jul 2002. © Angus Wilson.



Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

2002-20-A/D One sub-adult, Town of Ripley, Chautauqua, 5 May (Leonard DeFrancisco, Melvin Freeborough, Sally Freeborough, David Feliciano).

2002-68-A One, Braddock Bay Park, Monroe, 30 May (Jason Guerard).

At spring hawk watches on the Great Lakes, this species is looked for in late May/early June. The bird at Ripley on 5 May was quite early but solidly documented by four descriptions. The Braddock Bay bird was seen migrating at a great distance, making plumage observation and age determination difficult.

Committee concerns were eventually allayed by the thorough description of the shape and flight-style, along with appropriate consideration of all similar species.

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)

2002-19-A One adult light morph. Town of Westfield, **Chautauqua**, 18 Apr (Leonard DeFrancisco).

2002-77-A One adult light morph. Lake Ontario Parkway, Town of Parma, **Monroe**, 12 Apr (Robert Spahn).

The Chautauqua Co. bird was spotted as it glided in to join a mixed-species kettle of 130 hawks that was forming over Parker Road. The bird spent several minutes rising in the thermal, allowing careful study by DeFrancisco, an experienced hawk watcher. This Swainson's Hawk and the one observed six days earlier further east in Monroe Co. by the Spahns were both light phase adults. Key identification features presented in the descriptions were whitish bodies, underwing coverts and axillaries, dark flight feathers and solid dark breasts. The long, pointed wings further distinguished these birds from Red-tailed (*B. jamaicensis*) and Rough-legged Hawks (*B. lagopus*). Records of Swainson's Hawk have become more frequent in New York and eastern North America, due perhaps to range expansion and/or increased vigilance on the part of field observers. Spring hawk watches along the eastern shores of Lake Erie and southern shore of Lake Ontario remain the most likely places in the state to encounter this western prairie (and open farmland) specialist.

Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*)

2002-39-A One, East Quogue, Southampton, **Suffolk**, 15 Oct (Eric Salzman).

This small, short-billed rail was flushed twice from the salt marsh bordering Weesuck Creek on the northern shore of Shinnecock Bay. During each short flight, the rail revealed squarish white patches on the secondaries, contrasting with the darker wings. Immature Sora (*Porzana carolina*) was considered but has white trailing edges rather than the square patches described and illustrated in the sketches supplied with the written report. The observer described a descending cackling-like call heard at least twice—quite different from the more familiar clicking call of Yellow Rail. However, several literature sources were presented that describe a similar descending cackle from captive Yellow Rails.

King Rail (*Rallus elegans*)

2002-22-A One heard only, Hamlin-Parma Townline Road, Hamlin, **Monroe**,

23 & 26 May (Kurt Fox).

Two rails were heard calling in the early hours of the morning from within the cattail marsh on Brush Creek, close to the Lake Ontario shoreline. On both nights, at least one King Rail responded vigorously to tape recordings of its own species as well as other marsh birds. The descriptions of the calls seemed to rule out Virginia Rail (*R. limicola*), which was also present in the marsh, and the freshwater habitat made Clapper Rail (*R. longirostris*) highly unlikely.

Purple Gallinule (*Porphyryla martinica*)

2002-37-A/D One immature, Montezuma NWR, **Seneca**, 23 Sep-12 Oct (Bard Prentiss, William Watson, Willie D'Anna, Kevin & Jay McGowan).

2002-40-A One immature, Town of Peru, **Clinton**, 24 Sep, (William E. Krueger).

2002-41-A One immature, Bashakill WMA, **Sullivan**, 17-23 Oct (John H. Haas).

The third week of September witnessed a mini-invasion of juvenile Purple Gallinules into NYS, and one has to wonder if the Sullivan Co. bird had been present in the area for several weeks prior to its discovery. Indeed the finder, Haas, speculated that a considerable rise in water levels following five days of heavy rains may have brought the bird into sight. The Clinton Co. gallinule was first noticed by Glen Drapeau as he attempted to photograph a Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*), and then independently the next day by Charles Mitchell and William Krueger. This individual constitutes the northernmost occurrence in NYS, (see Drapeau et al 2002 for more details). The Seneca Co. bird was discovered by Montezuma refuge staff and subsequently enjoyed by many birders. As evidence of the season's 'gallinule fever', Haas estimated that well over a hundred observed the Bashakill bird during its stay. All three gallinules were extensively photographed or video taped, and convincing color photos of the Montezuma bird were submitted by Willie D'Anna, Jay McGowan and Kevin McGowan.

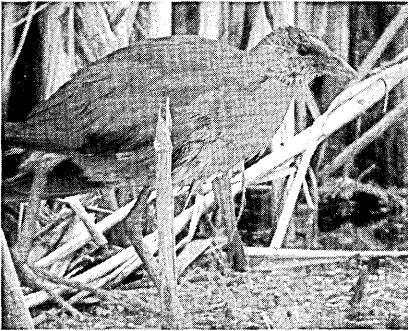


Figure 3. Purple Gallinule,
Montezuma NWR, Seneca Co.,
12 Oct 2002
© Kevin and Jay McGowan.

Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*)

2002-16-A Two, Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside, **Nassau**, 11 May

(Michael A. Farina, William N. Overton, photo by M. Farina).

These stilts remained until 25 May. The written description was supported by a color photo. Another Black-necked Stilt was reported at nearby Cow Meadow Preserve in Freeport 12-27 May but documentation was not submitted. It is possible this represents a third bird.

American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*)

2002-36-A Three, May's Point Pool, Montezuma NWR, **Seneca**, 15 Aug

(Bernie Carr).

2002-75-A One, Sodus Point, Sodus, **Wayne**, 11 Aug (Doug Daniels,

photo by D. Daniels).

Undocumented reports of this species have occurred annually in recent summers in Chautauqua County (Morgante 2003) and, even excluding Chautauqua County, it appears to be annual in inland New York. Considering this, as well as the distinctiveness of the species, NYSARC plans to remove American Avocet from the review list.

Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*)

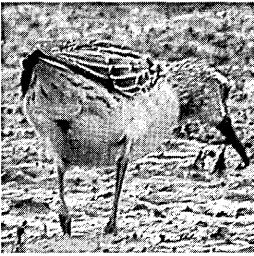
2002-67-A One, Braddock Bay SP, **Monroe**, 15 May (William Symonds).

This brief description managed to hit all of the key fieldmarks including the long, slightly upturned bill, cinnamon underwings and absence of white uppertail coverts. From these details, other godwits (*Limosa sp.*), Willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*) and the superficially similar Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*) could be adequately ruled out.

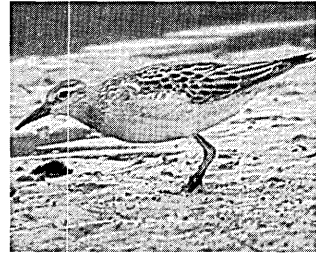
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (*Calidris acuminata*)

2002-38-A/E One juvenile, s. end Irondequoit Bay, Penfield, **Monroe**, 10-13 Oct (Dominic Sherony, Kevin McGowan, Jay McGowan, Willie D'Anna, Bernie Carr, William Watson).

Discovered by Dominic Sherony on the mud flats at the south end of Irondequoit Bay feeding with a group of up to 50 juvenile Pectoral Sandpipers (*C. melanotos*). Excellent color photos detailing the critical field marks were provided by Willie D'Anna, Jay McGowan and Kevin McGowan. The only previous accepted NYS record was of an adult at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge on 18-24 July 1981 (Burke 1998). Full details of the sighting are given by Sherony (2002).



Figures 4 & 5.
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper,
Irondequoit Bay,
Monroe Co.
12 Oct 2002.
© Kevin and
Jay McGowan.



Great Skua (*Stercorarius skua*)

2002-61-A/F One (or possibly two) Montauk Point and Hither Hills SP, **Suffolk**, 13-14 Dec (Diana Teta, Shai Mitra, Joe Giunta, Betsy McCully, Brian Kane, Hugh McGuinness).

This remarkable record of a beached bird, discovered at Hither Hills SP by Joe Giunta and Betsy McCully and studied by many participants in the Montauk Christmas Bird Count, occurred just one day after a skua was observed briefly as it passed the Montauk Lighthouse. Collectively, these reports were very challenging for reviewers, not only because of the well-known identification difficulties posed by the skuas, but also because observers who saw both birds concluded that two different individuals were involved. In view of the extraordinary rarity of inshore skuas in NYS, reviewers eventually concluded that the descriptions were not adequate to resolve the question of whether a second individual was in fact involved. In particular, the observation from Montauk Point on 13 Dec involved brief views by two observers of a bird in flight. The identification of this bird as a Great Skua was based mostly on observers' impressions of its large size; the interpretation that it was a different individual

than the one seen the following day was based at least partly on observers' impressions that it lacked the pale dorsal markings evident on the bird of 14 Dec (markings which constitute one of the most consistent distinctions between Great and South Polar Skua). Given these ambiguities, reviewers concluded that the individual and specific identity of the skua seen on 13 Dec could not be resolved with confidence. Descriptions of the bird observed on 14 Dec were adequate to exclude South Polar Skua, but several reviewers raised the question of whether this bird ought to be regarded automatically as an example of the boreal, nominate Great Skua. In view of recent evidence that austral 'Brown' Skuas (still regarded by the AOU as conspecific with boreal breeders) might occur in the North Atlantic (Votier et al. 2004; Hess 2004), several reviewers pointed to weaknesses in the documentation for this record: lack of photographs, uncertainty regarding the bird's age (its fully black bill suggested it was not a juvenile), and dorsal splotching less extensive than that expected for adults of the nominate form. It is entirely possible that austral 'Brown' Skuas will ultimately be proven to occur with some regularity in the North Atlantic, and that the AOU will come to recognize these as specifically distinct from boreal Great Skuas. Thus the Committee is unanimous in encouraging observers to document all observations of skuas as thoroughly as possible.

Pomarine Jaeger (*Stercorarius pomarinus*)

2002-86-A One juvenile intermediate or dark-intermediate type. Lake Ontario, off Fort Niagara SP, Youngstown, **Niagara**, 30 Mar (Willie D'Anna).

This March sighting of a juvenile suggests that the bird may have over-wintered on Lake Ontario, an almost unheard-of occurrence on the Great Lakes. The jaeger was observed for ten minutes chasing and being chased by first-winter Herring Gulls. The similar Parasitic Jaeger was ruled out by the observation of white at the bases of the greater primary underwing coverts as well as at the bases of the primaries and whitish uppertail coverts in combination with overall fairly dark plumage. Although many birders typically identify jaegers mainly by jizz (size, shape, and flight style), David Sibley cautions, "The temptation to use shape and flight style for identification is almost overwhelming, but I am convinced that birders would be better off ignoring them entirely" (Sherony and Brock 1997).

California Gull (*Larus californicus*)

2002-7-A/B One in adult basic plumage, Niagara River, **Niagara**, 5, 13, 20, 26 Jan & 2, 18 Feb (Brendan Klick, Willie D'Anna).

2002-66-A/D One adult basic, one third-basic plumage, Niagara River, **Niagara**, 23 Nov-8 Dec (Willie D'Anna, Michael Morgante, William Watson, photos by Willie D'Anna).

The adult seen in January and February may have been a continuing bird that was documented in December 2001 (NYSARC 2003). It was last reported on 18 Feb, establishing a record late date for the Niagara River. The reports from November and December 2002 document an adult seen on 23 Nov and a third basic seen on several dates from 23 Nov to 8 Dec. This species has been reported every year on the Niagara River since its initial occurrence in 1992. Most sightings are at or near the power plants, where these individuals were seen. However, sightings upriver around Niagara Falls are increasing, though most are only seen on the Canadian side of the river at that location.

Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*)

2002-10-A/C One adult, Neversink Reservoir, **Sullivan**, 20 Feb (Valerie M. Freer, Marge Gorton, Renee Davis, John Fritz, Shai Mitra; video stills by John Haas).

2002-92-A One adult, Seneca Meadows landfill, Seneca Falls, **Seneca**, 23 Feb (Jay and Kevin McGowan; video still by Jay and Kevin McGowan and photo by Steve Kelling). These well-documented records possibly refer to the same individual, in which case they would collectively constitute just the second record of this species for NYS. For more details of these sightings see Freer et al. (2002) and McGowan and McGowan (2002).

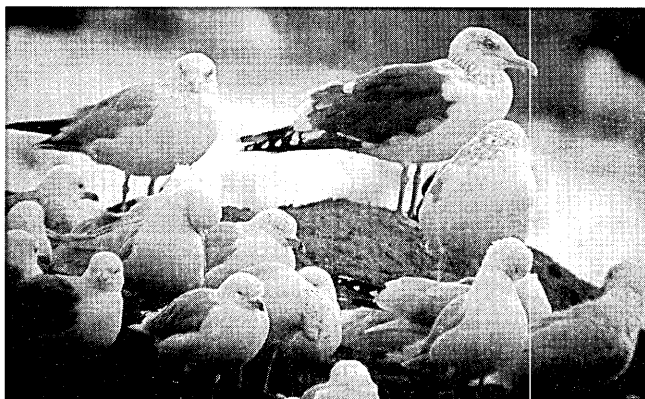


Figure 6. Slaty-backed Gull, Seneca Meadows Landfill, Seneca Co., 23 Feb 2002. © Steve Kelling.

Ross's Gull (*Rhodostethia rosea*)

2002-89-A One in adult basic plumage, base of Horseshoe Falls, Niagara Falls, **Niagara**, 2 Dec (Willie D'Anna).

This bird was viewed in the gorge against the backdrop of Niagara Falls, marking the second record for this gull on the Niagara River and fifth record for NYS. Unlike the Niagara River's first, which was seen off and on for over a month, this individual disappointed many birders by staying only one day.

Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*)

2002-34-A/B One adult, Woodlawn Beach SP., SW of Buffalo, **Erie**, 18 Aug (Gerry Rising, William Watson).

Although Least Tern is not on the review list, it is exceptionally rare on the Great Lakes, as well as at most inland locations in New York. The Committee appreciates reports of certain locally very rare species that are not on the review list. Apparently, this tern had been ill, judging by its lethargic behavior, and some Ontario birders reported finding it dead on 19 Aug (Dave Mudd, personal communication to W. D'Anna). Unfortunately, the specimen was not recovered, and subsequent searches were unsuccessful at finding it.

Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia*)

2002-60-A One, Gerritsen Creek, Brooklyn, **Kings**, 21 Dec (Eric Salzman).

This Thick-billed Murre in basic plumage, seen at close range and for an extended

time period during the Brooklyn Christmas Bird Count, was very well described. The details of the bill, face, neck, the overall shape, and other field marks ruled out both Common Murre and immature Razorbill. The species has occurred recently off Montauk Point Suffolk Co. but is much more unusual anywhere else in the state.

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

2002-26-A/F One, Walker-Lake Ontario Rd, Hamlin, **Monroe**, 9 Jun-11 Jul (William Watson, Kurt Fox, Richard Guthrie, Kevin & Jay McGowan, Willie D'Anna, Robert Spahn, photos by K. McGowan and W. D'Anna).

The photos, description and calls leave no doubt that the bird found by Brett and Sheryl Ewald was a Eurasian Collared-Dove and not a Ringed Turtle-Dove (*Kingbird* 53: 99-102). The Ewalds found this dove while searching for the White-winged Dove (2002-27-A/E) discovered on the same day (8 Jun) by Mike Davids. Eurasian Collared-Doves have been reported in the state before, and the question of origin always remains an issue to be debated and studied. This bird had no obvious evidence of prior captivity, although its simultaneous arrival with a White-winged Dove and the lengthy stay of the Eurasian Collared-Dove raised concerns among some Committee members. This species is commonly kept by pigeon breeders, and there have been releases of caged birds in many parts of North America. That said, the remarkable range expansion of this species in the past weighed heavily on the Committee's acceptance of this sighting as a vagrant for the first fully acceptable state record (see Romagosa and McEneaney 1999).

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*)

2002-27-A/E One, Walker-Lake Ontario Rd, Hamlin, **Monroe**, 8-13 Jun (William Watson, Kurt Fox, Willie D'Anna, Jeanne Skelly, Robert Spahn, photos by W. D'Anna and J. Skelly).

Mike Davids found this dove in a predominantly agricultural area of western New York on 8 Jun (*Kingbird* 53:100). This bird was also observed around a farmhouse by many people and was well documented with descriptions and photos. It was last reported on 18 Jun. Its occurrence is consistent with the increase in sightings of this species in the state in the past decade and constitutes the first record for Region 2. The concurrent appearance of White-winged Dove and Eurasian Collared-Dove in the same yard raised some concerns within the Committee, but neither were banded and no captive source for the birds in the area could be found.

Calliope Hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*)

2002-44-A/B One immature male, Robert Wagner Park, **New York**, 19-24 Nov (Arie Gilbert, Karen Fung, photos by K. Fung).

Female and juvenile hummingbirds are very difficult to identify. The long wings protruding beyond the tail of the sitting bird described by Arie Gilbert, and well photographed by Karen Fung, plus other features, left no questions concerning the identification. Discovered by Ben Cacace, this is only the second NYS record of this species, which was added to the NYS list in 2001, following the acceptance

of two immature males found together in early December at Fort Tryon Park, Manhattan, New York Co. (*Kingbird* 53:291).

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)

2002-88-A One female, Lenoir Nature Preserve, Yonkers, **Westchester**, 28 Oct-29 Nov (Michael Bochnik, photos by M. Bochnik).

The identification of female and juvenile *Selasphorus* hummingbirds is always problematic, and the fact that Allen's has not been recorded in NYS does not make it any easier because it has been found as a vagrant along the east coast. This bird was observed for a period of one month. The excellent photographs of the bird combined with a thorough description of the tail feathers ruled out Allen's Hummingbird.

Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*)

2002-8-A One, Camp Dudley Rd., **Essex**, 24 Feb (Jim Wilkinson).

This grayish flycatcher with a peach colored lower breast and black tail was found on a late winter afternoon. The Committee accepted the record based on the quality of the description and sketch made at the time of the observation. This report is even more unusual in that it is later than the previous late date for this species of 9 Feb.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*)

2002-54-A One, Breezy Point, **Queens**, 25 Nov (David Klauber).

2002-59-A One, Jones Beach SP, **Nassau**, 21 Nov (John Fritz).

Late November is typical timing for this rare flycatcher. These two reports were similar in their descriptions and could possibly refer to the same bird. The second report was accompanied by an excellent photo by Al Wollin, showing a very pale breast, an all dark bill, and the overall shape of an Ash-throated Flycatcher. The undertail was also studied and indicated Ash-throated.

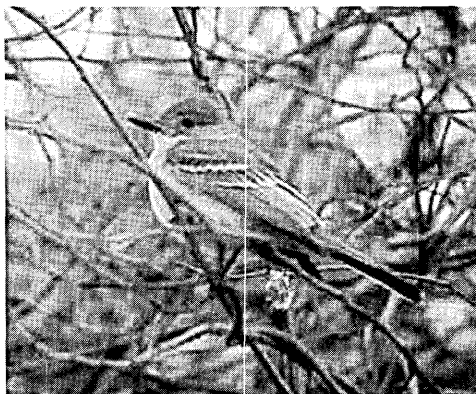
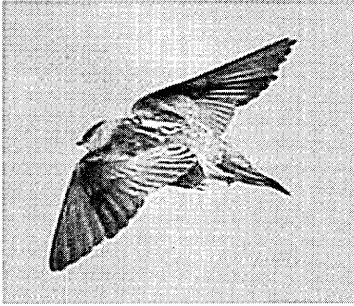


Figure 7. Ash-throated Flycatcher,
Jones Beach, Nassau Co.,
Nov 2002. © Al Wollin.

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

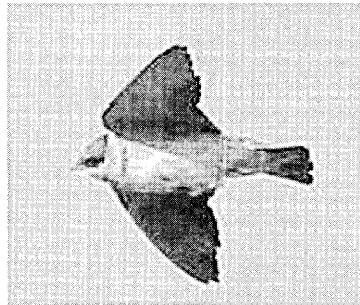
2002-84-A One, Grumman Airport, **Suffolk**, 15 Aug (Guy Tudor).

Discovered by Guy Tudor and Brian Cassie whilst searching for orchids and dragonflies on Grumman Boulevard where it borders the airfield. The shrike was studied as it perched on the fence line and flew out into the surrounding grassland in search of food. Remaining in the area until 18 Aug, this rarity was enjoyed by many local birders. The description touched on the smallish size, darker gray back, stubbier all black bill, and fairly wide mask. Although there are no late summer records of Northern Shrike in the state, all shrikes should be scrutinized with care. Loggerhead Shrike has become extremely rare on Long Island (last regional record in 1994), and the Committee was disappointed that only one report was received for this well-watched bird.



Figures 8 & 9.

Cave Swallow, Breezy Pt., Queens Co.,
24 Nov 2002. © Angus Wilson.



Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*)

2002-49-A/C One, Niagara River at Goat Island, **Niagara**, 16-17 Nov (Michael Morgante, William Watson, Willie D'Anna).

2002-50-A One, Breezy Point, **Queens**, 24 Nov (Angus Wilson, photos by A. Wilson).

Since the early 1990's Cave Swallows have been annual late fall visitors to Cape May, NJ, and, in more recent years, to New York as well. The bird found at Goat Island by Willie D'Anna was a first for the Niagara River and was present until 21 Nov, when it was reportedly seen on the Canadian side of the river. The three submitted descriptions were thorough and, with accompanying photographs by Willie D'Anna of the bird perched, leave no doubt as to the identification. The bird associated with a flock of over 100 late Northern Rough-winged Swallows and a couple of Tree Swallows. The Cave Swallow found at Breezy Point by Angus Wilson was accompanied by a single Tree Swallow and lingered for only one day. The description was accompanied by several diagnostic photographs of the bird in flight. Cave Swallows staged a major incursion into the Northeast during the fall of 2002, with some 100 birds in Connecticut alone on the day

before the Breezy Point sighting. Despite these impressive numbers, there were only two other coastal New York reports the same weekend, neither submitted to NYSARC. Another was reported at Hamlin Beach S.P. on Lake Ontario. Although it is presumed that most late fall Cave Swallows belong to the Mexican race, *P. f. pallida*, subspecific identification in the field is very difficult (Curry and McLaughlin 2000; McNair and Post 2001).

Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*)

Audubon's race (*D. c. auduboni*)

2002-25-A One male, Goat Island, Niagara Falls, **Niagara**, 27 Apr

(Willie D'Anna, Betsy Potter, video stills by Betsy Potter).

This singing bird was accompanied by over one hundred "Myrtle" Yellow-rumped Warblers on Goat Island. The description and video stills indicate a male in breeding plumage. This represents the second record of this western form for Region 1 (Lauro 1998b).

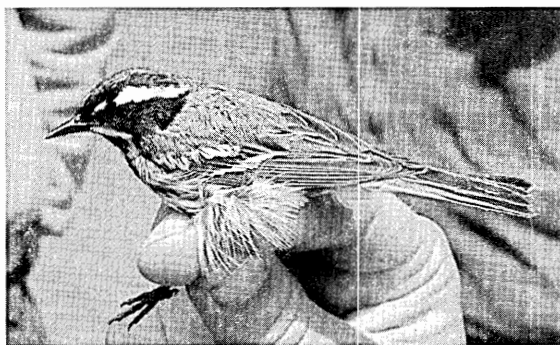
Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*)

2002-15-A/B One male, Kaiser-Manitou Banding Station, **Monroe**,

30 Apr & 1 May (Betsy Brooks, Charlie Eiseman, photos by Martha Zettel).

Superb digital color photos taken of the bird in the hand after being banded allowed for easy acceptance by the Committee. The photos even show the tiny spot of yellow above the lores. This warbler was trapped on three separate occasions (twice on May 1) and aged as second-year (i.e., about ten months old) by bander Charlie Eiseman. Most NYS records for this bird are from fall.

Figure 10
Black-throated
Gray Warbler,
Kaiser-Manitou
Banding Station,
Monroe Co.,
30 Apr 2002.
© Martha Zettel.



Townsend's Warbler (*Dendroica townsendi*)

2002-11-A/C One male, Massapequa Preserve, Massapequa, **Nassau**, 14-18 Apr

(Andrew Guthrie, Rex & Birgit Stanford, Sean Sime, photos by A. Guthrie, R. Stanford and S. Sime).

2002-72-A One female, West Spit of Braddock Bay, Hilton, **Monroe**, 13 Apr (Brett Ewald).

The Massapequa bird was discovered by Pat Jones, remained until 19 Apr, and was seen by many additional observers during this time. Plumage characters were

consistent with a male in breeding plumage. Andy Guthrie's detailed notes carefully excluded Black-throated Green Warbler (*D. virens*) and Golden-cheeked Warbler (*D. chrysoparia*). Even Hermit x Townsend's hybrid (*D. occidentalis* x *townsendi*) was considered and rejected, because no obvious indication of Hermit ancestry was discernible. Written documentation was further strengthened by excellent color photographs from Andy Guthrie, Rex and Birgit Stanford and Sean Sime. The Monroe Co. bird was studied carefully for about 10 minutes as it moved through a stand of deciduous trees and vines at the western edge of the marsh at Braddock Bay. The relatively dark olive back, more solid face mask and yellowish wash to the flanks and underparts were consistent with a female Townsend's Warbler rather than a dull female Black-throated Green Warbler. Although tentatively aged as an immature (i.e., second-year), several members of the Committee felt that good photographs or more extended study would be necessary for reliable ageing. Townsend's Warbler is less than annual in NYS and the discovery of two individuals within a day of each other is notable.

Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*)

2002-30-A One, N Quaker Hill Rd., Pawling, **Dutchess**, 11 May (Sibyll Gilbert).

2002-74-A One, Ellicott Rd., **Chautauqua**, 16 Nov (James Berry, Robert Sundell).

The description of the Dutchess Co. bird included details of the throat, white belly, heavy black streaks on side of face and down sides of belly, prominent white wing bars, and grayish upperparts and was deemed sufficient for acceptance after two rounds of review. The more complete description of the Chautauqua bird was convincing to the Committee, and the observation of an "entirely white supraloral stripe" suggests the interior subspecies, *albilora*. Yellow-throated Warbler has established a pattern of late fall occurrences in the northern USA and Canada, into which this bird fit nicely. Since first found nesting in New York in 1984 (Baird 1984; Andrie and Carroll 1988, p. 384), Yellow-throated Warbler has occurred irregularly in the summer months along the Delaware River and at Allegany S.P. and somewhat regularly elsewhere in spring and late fall.

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*)

2002-29-A One male, Kaiser-Manitou Banding Station, Hilton, **Monroe**, 23 May

(Betsy Brooks, photo by Betsy Brooks).

This bird was captured, banded, and photographed at the Braddock Bay Bird Observatory. Plumage and measurements ruled out Hepatic (*P. flava*) and Scarlet Tanagers (*P. olivacea*).

Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*)

2002-57-A One, Village of Atlantic Beach, **Nassau**, 14-15 Dec (Seth Ausubel).

The description clearly indicates a Clay-colored Sparrow, probably hatching year. The description of the markings on the face and breast and the presence of a median crown-stripe distinguish this sparrow from the principal contender, hatching year Chipping Sparrow (*S. passerina*). The buffy supercilium and the crown stripe separate this bird from the extremely rare Brewer's Sparrow (*S. breweri*). The late date is noteworthy as there are only two previous December records for NYS.

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

2002-28-A One, Carncross Rd., Savannah, **Wayne**, 7 Jun (Kurt Fox).

2002-33-A/B One, Town of Champlain, **Clinton**, 30 Jul-1 Aug (Charles Mitchell, William Krueger, photos by Suzy Johnson).

2002-90-A One hatching-year bird, Kaiser-Manitou Banding Station, Hilton, **Monroe**, 10 Oct (Betsy Brooks, photos by B. Brooks).

The Monroe Co. bird was caught, banded, and photographed by staff of the Braddock Bay Bird Observatory. The Clinton Co. reports document a fascinating and extremely significant event—the first evidence of breeding behavior for this species in NYS. The initial reports were very brief and came close to going unaccepted. Fortunately, follow-up information was obtained which offered impeccable details concerning a persistently singing male observed along a portion of the Lake Champlain shore on seven dates, 30 Jul through 24 Aug (though silent after 9 Aug). Documentation includes descriptions of plumage and song by observers familiar with both species of sharp-tailed sparrows, and useful photographs by Suzy Johnson. The bird's songs were compared directly in the field with recordings of both species of sharp-tailed sparrows as well as LeConte's Sparrow. Prior to the Clinton Co. reports, this Committee was unaware of any breeding records of the Acadian race *subvirgatus* away from estuarine settings, with the exception of some freshwater marshes close to the coast or lower St. Lawrence Valley. Thus, we were stunned to learn that this taxon presently breeds on Ile aux Fermiers, in the St Lawrence River, just 40 miles from the location of the present bird (Krueger 2002). These facts are significant not only on their own merits, but also in view of the new perspective they lend to the analysis of records of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows in upstate New York. Heretofore, drab specimens of this species from upstate New York were almost automatically assigned to the race breeding on the Hudson Bay plain (*alterus*) on the (evidently erroneous) assumption that *subvirgatus* was completely unexpected in the interior. Assignment of the drabest specimens to *alterus* has always been problematic because most sources describe that race as closely resembling nominate *nelsoni* from the northern Great Plains (e.g., Rising and Beadle 1996); now the possibility that *subvirgatus* might occur regularly in the interior, at least in the Hudson and Champlain Valleys, must be considered very seriously.

Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*)

2002-23-A/E One female or immature male, home of Chris Gates, Greece, **Monroe**, 11-15 May (Kurt Fox, Willie D'Anna, Dominic Sherony, Robert Spahn, Jeanne Skelly).

These thorough reports, supplemented with photographs by Willie D'Anna, provided convincing evidence for the identification. Painted Bunting is extremely rare in the western part of the state.

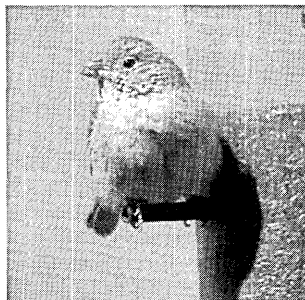


Figure 11.
Painted Bunting, Greece, Monroe Co.,
15 May 2002. © Willie D'Anna.

Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)

2002-69-A/B One male, Townline Road at Moul Rd. Hamlin, **Monroe**, 8 Apr (Dominic Sherony, Robert Spahn).

This male Brewer's Blackbird was discovered by Steve Taylor near a cattle pen at a location where this species has been occasionally reported over the past few years. The descriptions ruled out Rusty Blackbird (*E. carolinus*) and Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*). Given the rarity of this species in the state and potential confusion with other icterids, the Committee would like to encourage observers to photograph these birds whenever possible.

Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni*)

2002-9-A One, Webster, **Monroe**, 17 Feb (Don Traver).

This bird was part of a group of 50 or so redpolls that frequented the observer's feeding station for a few days. The Hoary was identified by its overall paleness, just a few thin wispy flank streaks, a buffy wash on the head, completely unstreaked undertail coverts, and a "flat" face with a smaller bill than shown by the Commons.

2002 REPORTS ACCEPTED IN REVISED FORM

This represents a new category of acceptance to accommodate reports that were submitted as a particular species but, after deliberation by the Committee, could only be accepted under a broader banner.

Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus/sasin*)

2002-85-A One, Central Park, **New York**, 13 Nov (Sandy Spitalnik).

The vast majority of vagrant hummingbirds designated as 'Rufous/Allen's' in eastern North America are individuals suspected to be Rufous (*S. rufus*), but for which the level of documentation is deemed insufficient to rule out Allen's (*S. sasin*). In contrast, this record pertains to an individual that was suggestive of Allen's Hummingbird: its photographed rectrices appeared in some instances to be rather narrow and prompted an experienced hummingbird bander from the Southwest to favor Allen's. Even so, the bird was not measured, and the available details were otherwise judged insufficient to fully document a first record of Allen's for NYS. For additional discussion of hummingbird vagrancy in NYS see Mitra and Bochnik (2001).

Shrike species (*Lanius* species)

2002-80-A One, Braddock Bay SP, **Monroe**, 7 May (Jason Guerard).

Originally submitted as a late occurrence of Northern Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*), the Committee felt that the description of this bird, viewed only at a good distance, lacked sufficient detail to adequately rule out other shrike species, in particular Loggerhead Shrike (*L. ludovicianus*), a distinct possibility at this date.

Hermit Warbler/Hermit x Townsend's Warbler
(*Dendroica occidentalis/occidentalis* x *townsendi*)

2002-42-A/G One hatching year male, Jones Beach SP, Nassau, 28 Nov-1 Dec
(Andrew Block, Arie Gilbert, Richard Guthrie, Rex Stanford, John Moyle, Seth Ausubel, Sy Schiff, photos by R. Stanford and S. Ausubel).

Studied by scores of birders, copiously documented, and hotly debated, this Thanksgiving rarity discovered by Andrew Block will long be remembered by birders in New York State and beyond. The bird closely resembled a hatching-year male Hermit Warbler, but the presence of some yellow on the breast below the black bib raised the possibility of Townsend's Warbler ancestry. In the days and weeks that followed, many questions about the identification were raised on internet and elsewhere. DiCostanzo (2003) summarized some of these early discussions, and the Committee wishes to express its thanks to the many individuals who provided information, analysis, and other kinds of assistance during the evaluation of these reports. Block and Connor (2003) provide a description of the bird and an account of its discovery.

In evaluating these reports, NYSARC considered issues such as the definition and characterization of hybrids, the limits of variation among typical ('pure') Hermit Warblers, and the evaluation of the plumage characters of the Jones Beach bird in relation to both of these. Of the several characters of the Jones Beach bird that were invoked at one time or another as evidence of hybrid ancestry (dorsal hue, crown pattern, flank streaking, ventral yellow), only the last proved, after careful analysis, to be really unusual among hatching-year male Hermit Warblers. The question became a probabilistic one, weighing the likelihood of hybrid ancestry against a natural variation away from typical plumage as explanations for this individual's appearance.

Studies of hybridization between Hermit and Townsend's Warblers, such as conducted by Rohwer and Wood (1998), have demonstrated that birds showing various combinations of plumage features of the two species occur frequently in three hybrid zones in Washington and Oregon. Eckert (2001) presents a series of excellent photos of such birds. To the best of our knowledge, first generation hybrids probably show a combination of face and head pattern like Hermit, and breast and flank pattern like Townsend's. This is the plumage that Sibley (2000) attributes to 'typical hybrids;' it is a combination described as frequent by Dunn and Garrett (1997) and by Eckert (2001); and it is consistent with an intermediate score on Rohwer and Wood's (1998) quantitative hybrid index. But some individuals show just the opposite combination (face and head like Townsend's, breast and flanks like Hermit), and others show just about every other conceivable permutation. We simply do not know how each combination corresponds with a particular kind of ancestry (e.g., first generation hybrids, later generation hybrids, and backcrosses between any of these and each parental form). Although the Jones Beach bird differed from the birds described and depicted as 'typical hybrids,' the possibility remains that its plumage might be consistent with some degree of Townsend's ancestry. This situation is similar in many ways to the hybridization of Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers that occurs in NYS and elsewhere in the Northeast, which produces a variety of plumage

combinations that are impossible to attribute uniquely to particular parental combinations (Parkes 1951).

Another important question is whether 'pure' Hermit Warblers can show variation toward the appearance of Townsend's Warbler. Rohwer and Wood (1998) collected reference samples for both species, consisting of breeding individuals from the core of each species' range, away from the zones of hybridization. They found that 3% of these Hermit Warblers showed plumage features such that they would have been regarded as hybrids had they been collected near the contact zones. Analysis of study skins by NYSARC members revealed the following: only one specimen (a hatching year male collected in California on 21 Aug 1896) among ca. 250 Hermit Warblers of all ages at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City showed as much or more yellow on the breast as the Jones Beach bird (this specimen also showed some fairly dusky, broad streaks along the flanks, a further suggestion of mixed ancestry); two of ca. 35 hatching-year Hermit Warblers at the Field Museum of Natural History (FMNH) in Chicago showed yellow feathers on the breast in the same location as the Jones Beach bird (although far less extensive); and one adult male out of ca. 45 adult Hermit Warblers at FMNH showed more yellow on the breast below the black bib than the Jones Beach bird, but less yellow than is shown for adult male first-generation hybrids in Dunn and Garrett (1997). This last bird closely resembled a Hermit Warbler in all other respects.

On the basis of Rohwer and Wood's research and our own museum work, it seems that birds resembling the Jones Beach bird might occur among Hermit Warblers, but the possibility of hybrid origins in these variants cannot be ruled out, a situation reminiscent of the Spotted Towhee vs. Spotted x Eastern Towhee hybrid discussed in last year's Annual Report. In conclusion, although the Jones Beach warbler could possibly have been an unusual variant Hermit Warbler, the Committee concluded that a hybrid origin was more likely and certainly could not be ruled out, and thus acceptance of this bird as NYS' first Hermit Warbler proved impossible. This uncertainty does not diminish the significance of the record, which remains one of just a handful of documented occurrences of Hermit Warblers and Hermit-like hybrids in the East.

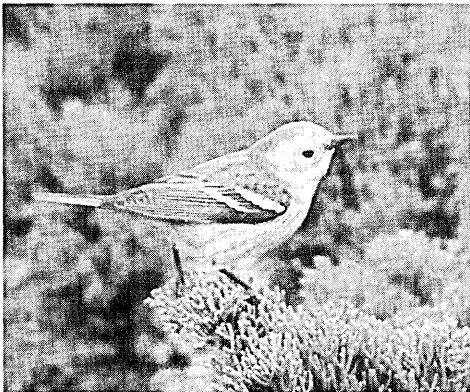


Figure 12
Hermit/Hermit x
Townsend's Warbler,
Jones Beach, Nassau Co.,
30 Nov 2002.
© Rex Stanford.

2002 REPORTS ACCEPTED BUT ORIGINS UNCERTAIN

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*)

2002-3-A Two adults, three immatures, Little Sodus Bay, Fair Haven, Cayuga.
18 Feb (Bill Purcell).

The Committee accepted identification of these five birds (two adults, three immatures) as Trumpeters but believe they are the result of introduction efforts in Ontario and New York. Typically, though not always, birds from Ontario are banded and wing-tagged and are most frequently seen in Western New York. Unmarked birds, such as these five, are more likely in Central New York. See Carroll and Swift (2000) for a discussion about these introduction efforts.

Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*)

Small mainland Alaskan race (*B. h. minima*)

2002-6-A One, Waryas Riverfront Park, Poughkeepsie, Dutchess.
28 Jan (Chester Vincent).

Although Cackling Geese of the nominate form (*hutchinsii*) occur regularly in NYS, there are very few documented reports of *minima* from the Northeast. This sighting was supported by excellent photographs documenting the goose's tiny size, strikingly tiny bill, and generally very dark plumage. Thus, the Committee regarded the identification as well-substantiated. Nesting on the outer coast of western Alaska, principally the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, the majority of *minima* winter in California's Central Valley. Small numbers have wintered in western Oregon in the last few years. *Minima* are fairly common in captivity. In the absence of an established pattern of vagrancy of this form to eastern North America, the Committee felt that the possibility of captive origin could not be excluded with confidence.

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

2002-1-A One, Marratooka Lake, Suffolk, 25 Jan (Paul H. Gillen, Jr.).

2002-1-B One, Grumman Pond, Suffolk, 1 Jan (Michael R. Wasilco).

These reports, which probably pertained to the same individual, received some support within the Committee for outright acceptance as naturally occurring vagrants. The status of this species in the Northeast remains very contentious, however, and several reviewers concluded that the possibility of captive origin could not be excluded with confidence. Barnacle Geese were also reported from Iroquois NWR (Region 1) and multiple locations in Kings and Queens Counties (Region 10) in early March, but no reports were submitted to NYSARC.

2001 REPORTS ACCEPTED

Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*)

2001-81-A One immature, Lake Ontario, west of Irondequoit Bay outlet, Irondequoit, Monroe, 25 Dec. (Robert Spahn).

Immature Northern Gannets are seen annually on Lake Ontario during late spring and early winter from Hamlin Beach SP and occasionally from other locations

along the lake as far west as the Niagara River. The observer provided a reasonable description of this immature Northern Gannet resting on the water.

Northern Parula (*Parula americana*)

2001-80-A One, Ellenville, **Ulster**, 3 Jan (Renee Davis).

The observer provided a thorough description of a Northern Parula, probably an immature female. The absence of any red feathering on the center of the breast argues against a male, and the eye arcs and limit of the yellow on the belly rule out Tropical Parula (*P. pitiayumi*). The date exceeds the previous latest date (23 Dec) for NYS. The Committee wondered if recent mild early winters have led to increased numbers of lingering Neotropical migrants.

Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni*)

2001-84-A One Hamlin Beach SP, Town of Hamlin, **Monroe**, 12 Dec (Dominic Sherony).

The bird was part of a large flock of redpolls that reportedly fed for a few weeks on the beach of this Lake Ontario park. It was first found by Dave Tetlow. The complete description ruled out the possibility that this was a pale Common Redpoll (*C. flammea*).

2000 REPORTS ACCEPTED

Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*)

2000-32-C One adult, Pike's Beach, **Suffolk**, 16 Jul (David Klauber).

Two previous reports on this bird were accepted by NYSARC, and for some reason this report was not evaluated at that time. The NYSARC extends its apologies to the observer and thanks him for bringing the omission to our attention. The combination of dark legs, reddish face, and white chin; the details of the spotting on the flanks and upper breast; the coloration of the back and scapulars; and the bright white braces on the back—all indicate that this was an adult Little Stint. The observer's description clearly eliminated potential confusion species, notably Red-necked Stint (*C. ruficollis*) and Sanderling (*C. alba*). A Red-necked Stint was present at the same locality the day before, and Sanderling is frequently confused with both stints during fall migration.

Ivory Gull (*Pagophila eburnea*)

2000-84-A One, Energy Information Center, Lake Ontario, Town of Scriba, **Oswego**, 29 Dec (Kevin McGann).

This belated report involved an immature seen by only one person but whose vivid recollection was convincing to the Committee. There were three other sightings on Lake Ontario that same winter, all in Ontario (Roy 2002). One of the Ontario birds collided with power transmission lines, died, and the specimen was preserved at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. Another was observed in a very weakened condition and was assumed to perish as well. Ivory Gulls usually do not stray far from the pack ice. In colder winters a few may venture to southern Canada and northern US. There is evidence that climate change is having a significant negative effect on the breeding success of Ivory Gulls in the Canadian arctic (Gilchrist and Mallory 2004).

1987 REPORT ACCEPTED

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*)

1987-1-A One, Mashomack Preserve, Pine Plains, **Dutchess**, 12 Jan (Barbara Butler). During the winter of 1987, a Gyr Falcon spent several weeks in northern Dutchess Co., and was observed by many people. Two written descriptions were submitted to NYSARC, but unfortunately these lacked sufficient detail to support the identification to species and were not accepted. While researching a book on the birds of Dutchess Co., Barbara Butler discovered a photograph of the Gyr Falcon taken by Jeff Kirk on 20 Jan 1987. This was submitted together with a newsletter account written by Mary Key that provides more details of the bird. Taken as a whole, the reports adequately describe an adult light-phase Gyr Falcon.

REPORTS NOT ACCEPTED

Several 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, 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 on uncommon or rare birds. If it is at all possible, these notes should be taken while the bird is under study or, if not, then immediately afterwards. It is very helpful to include a photocopy of your field notes along with the 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 with your report 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 or a parking ticket!

Advice on report preparation is available on the NYSARC web site, and in several published articles. We recommend the article by Willie D'Anna (2003), as well as the benchmark article by Dittmann 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 (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 type of analytical information, you invariably build upon the basic description and thus 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 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. Always keep in mind that these reports form part of an archive of data that will be visited by birders and researchers years from now.

It is relatively uncommon for records to be rejected because the bird was clearly mis-identified; more often reports simply fail to provide enough information to exclude other possibilities. 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. We do not reject records because the observer is unfamiliar to us or has had records rejected in the past. 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.

2002 REPORTS NOT ACCEPTED

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*)

2002-5-A Fifty-five individuals, Oneida Lake, Oswego, 12 Mar.

In recent years individuals and small groups of Trumpeter Swans have been seen in the western half of the State, the result of various introduction efforts in Ontario and, to a lesser extent, in New York. The species is successfully breeding in the wild in Ontario and New York, but a flock of 55 birds would be a record count several times over the previous high. At the same time, the locality where these swans were seen is east of where the similar Tundra Swan (*C. columbianus*) occurs in large numbers. At the time that these swans were found, internet reports identified them first as Trumpeter Swans, but later reports stated that they were Tundras. In the end, the Committee decided that this report did not clearly rule out Tundra Swan and was therefore insufficient to support such an extraordinary number of Trumpeters.

Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*)

2002-78-A One female, Hamlin Beach SP, Monroe, 8 Oct.

Three observers studied this duck for several seconds as it flew westwards along the lake at a distance of 300 yards or more. The identification as a Common rather than King Eider (*S. spectabilis*) was based largely on the tapered profile of the head with little supportive information. Several members felt that the description was not adequate to separate the two expected species of eiders and the discussion of other possible duck species had insufficient details.

Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*)

2002-4-A One, Jamaica Bay, **Queens**, 11 May.

Observed briefly without optics as it flew past the observer. The Committee felt that the description did not adequately eliminate immature Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*), which can show a similar whitish throat and neck.

Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*)

2002-17-A/B One, Ripley Hawkwatch #2, **Chautauqua**, 11 Apr.

This buteo was observed flying past the Ripley hawk watch, accompanied by four Turkey Vultures (*Cathartes aura*), three Red-tailed Hawks (*B. jamaicensis*), two Sharp-shinned Hawks (*Accipiter striatus*), and two American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*). Documentation was provided by a very experienced hawk watcher and one other of the four observers present. Apparently, no photographs or video were obtained. The bird was described as an immature, larger than a nearby Red-tailed Hawk, with a white head, body, throat, belly, and unbanded tail and dark commas near the "wrists" of the wings. The upperwings had whitish "windows" across the primaries, white spots on the wings and back, and a white "U" visible at the base of the tail. The second observer noted dark bands and pinkish in the tail. The discrepancy in the tail descriptions was a concern to Committee members, and pinkish in the tail suggested the possibility that this was a Krider's Red-tailed Hawk (*B. jamaicensis kriderii*), a rare but regular migrant at Great Lakes hawk watches. Though the Committee thought the detail in these reports admirable, they decided that such an exceptional record needed even stronger documentation. Ferruginous Hawk has never been recorded before in New York, and it is extremely rare in the East. Wheeler (2003, pp. 300-301) lists sightings from only the following Eastern states and provinces: Alabama, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ontario, and Wisconsin.

Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*)

2002-55-A One, Lake Edwards, Perinton, **Monroe**, 9-10 Dec.

2002-93-A One, Lake Edwards, Perinton, **Monroe**, 13 Dec.

2002-73-A One, Landfill near Fairport, **Monroe**, 6 Feb.

Identification of Thayer's Gulls is a unique challenge to birders in eastern North America. The main problem is distinguishing true Thayer's from the dark end of the Kumlien's (Iceland) Gull spectrum. After considerable debate, the Committee felt that none of these reports provided sufficiently detailed descriptions to firmly rule out Kumlien's. Several members of the Committee feel that high quality photographs are essential to adequately document both adult and sub-adult Thayer's Gulls out-of-range. The Committee appreciates that this is very difficult at top gull sites such as the Niagara River.

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

2002-62-A Two, Hamlin Beach SP, **Monroe**, 5 May.

These two *Sterna* terns were observed flying westward along the lakeshore and consequently allowed only brief study. The identification was based in part on the observer's perception of a more compact structure than expected for Common

Tern (*S. hirundo*). However, the Committee members felt that critical details of the wing tip pattern were not sufficiently well described to establish the identity.

Great Gray Owl (*Strix nebulosa*)

2002-18-A One, Lakeview Wildlife Management Area, **Jefferson**, 23 Feb.

This bird was seen for only a few seconds and without optics as it flew in front of the observer into a stand of conifers. The bird's head was not seen well, and the identification was based in large part on the shape and color of the wings. Consequently, the Committee felt that other birds of prey could not be ruled out given these limited details.

Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*)

2002-31-A One male, Attica, **Wyoming**, 13 Jun.

This bird appeared at the observers' oriole feeders. It was described as a male bird that appeared quite different than the Baltimore Orioles (*I. galbula*) which usually frequented the feeders. A prominent black eye-stripe was noted, but there was no mention of a black throat patch nor more white in the wings than on a Baltimore. The bird was said to be more red-orange on the throat and breast than a Baltimore, but the Committee felt that this was not a helpful distinction, since there is variability in Baltimore in this feature. When studying a possible Bullock's Oriole in New York, birders must consider the great variability of Baltimore Oriole. Lee and Birch (1998) discuss the field identification of these two orioles. The possibility of hybrid Bullock's x Baltimore Orioles also complicates identification.

Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*)

2002-35-A One, Binghamton, **Broome**, 4 Sep.

Although some of the details were consistent with an immature or possibly female Blue Grosbeak, Committee members were concerned that Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) could not be ruled out from the information provided.

Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*)

2002-76-A One, Ellison Park, **Monroe**, 11 Jul.

Although Yellow-headed Blackbird is not on the review list, the Committee appreciates reports of unseasonable occurrences of less than common species such as this. This sighting is especially intriguing since Yellow-headed Blackbird has never been recorded breeding in New York. Unfortunately, this bird was heard only and the call only described as "raspy" and "whining". Although the description is consistent with the call of this species, it also does not rule out other species. For example, Red-winged Blackbirds occasionally make calls that could be described similarly. The observers were paddling a canoe through a cattail marsh at the time, and despite some effort, were unable to see the bird. There was no mention of any follow-up visits, which might have proved fruitful had the bird been on a territory. Yellow-headed Blackbirds are regular breeders in Ontario within 200 miles of New York (James 1991).

Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni*)

2002-2-A One, Hamlin Beach SP, Town of Hamlin, **Monroe**, 5 Jan.

2002-24-A One Westport, **Essex**, Jan.-Mar.

Although a Hoary Redpoll was documented at Hamlin Beach on 12 Dec 2001 (see 2001-84-A, above) and reported several times after that date, the Committee was not convinced that the present report referred to a Hoary Redpoll. The report was brief and the statement that “the bird was not very light” was not indicative of a Hoary Redpoll. The Westport bird was one of a group of redpolls that frequented the observer’s feeding station for much of the winter. Photos supplied with the report were unconvincing, and some Committee members believed that the bird was actually a pale Common Redpoll (*C. flammea*). Birders need to be aware that some Common Redpolls are paler and will stand out in a flock. Thorough study and the observation of several field marks are usually needed to identify a Hoary Redpoll.

1954 REPORT NOT ACCEPTED

European Goldfinch (*Carduelis Carduelis*)

1954-3-A One Prospect Park, Brooklyn, **Kings**, spring (possibly April).

This 48 year-old report included very few specific details. Although an introduced population of European Goldfinches thrived on LI for several decades, the population was almost extirpated by the time of this observation. Furthermore, this report does not pertain to the area inhabited by the last survivors of the LI population (southeastern Nassau/southwestern Suffolk Counties), but rather to urban NYC—which to this day still hosts individuals of this species that have escaped from captivity. Given these various obstacles, there was limited support within the Committee for acceptance of this report.

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