

REPORT OF THE NEW YORK STATE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE FOR 2005

The New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC) reviewed 146 reports from 2005, involving 82 separate sightings, and an additional six reports from 2004 or earlier. Reports were received from all over the state, with 31 of the 62 counties represented. The overall acceptance rate remains high at 86%. The Committee encourages the observers of any rare bird in New York State (NYS) to submit reports, not just the initial finders. By archiving multiple reports we retain a fuller account of the sighting, and the independent viewpoints help to corroborate important details, especially highly subjective features such as size, flight style and vocalizations. Individual rather than collaborative reports are preferred. It is important not to skimp on the details under the (often mistaken) assumption that the missing information will be provided by others. The names of contributors (reports and/or photographs) are listed alongside accepted reports and in a listing at the end of this document. On behalf of the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA), the Committee wishes to thank all of the contributors for their efforts. Where possible, the narrative will include the name(s) of the original finder(s) even if they have not submitted a report to us. Naturally, however, we would very much prefer that all finders actively contribute to the permanent record of their discovery. We also extend our appreciation to the cadre of hard-working Kingbird Regional Editors, who have taken pains to encourage the proper documentation of rare birds. Last but not least, the Committee wishes to thank Betsy Brooks (Braddock Bay Bird Observatory, Rochester, NY), Paul A. Buckley, James Dean (Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C.), Jon Dunn, Dick Forsman, Julian Hough, Jeremy J. Kirchman (New York State Museum, Albany, NY), Blake Mathys (Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ), Killian Mullarney, and Mark Robbins for their expert evaluations and other information that enhanced the review process or added substance to this Annual Report.

HOW TO SUBMIT REPORTS

Advice on how to prepare and submit a report is provided within the NYSARC section of the NYSOA web site:

<http://nybirds.org/NYSARC/NYSARChome.htm>

An on-line reporting form allows observers to compose a written report and attach up to five digital image files. A list of species requested for review by NYSARC ("The Review List") is also provided, along with illustrated copies of all previous Annual Reports. The Committee is very grateful to Carena Pooth (NYSOA Vice-President, Website Administrator and Director of the Young

Birders Club) for updating and continuously improving the NYSARC website. In addition to the online reporting form, observers are welcome to send documentation (written and photographic) via e-mail or regular mail. All reports and other correspondence for the Committee should be sent to:

Jeanne Skelly, Secretary for NYSARC
420 Chili-Scottsville Rd., Churchville, NY 14428
nysarc3@nybirds.org

OTHER COMMITTEE NEWS

Voting on the 2005 reports was finalized at the NYSARC Annual Meeting held at the Greene County Accelerator Building in Coxsackie on 11 Aug 2007. The Committee would like to thank Rich Guthrie for arranging use of this excellent venue. During the day-long session, the Committee finalized the second and third rounds of voting, reviewed potential additions to the New York State Checklist and discussed other items of business. The latter included requests to re-evaluate two past decisions in light of new information. The first concerns New York's only **Azure Gallinule** (*Porphyrio flavirostris*). This unique record for North America has been dogged by questions of origin, and these concerns were deemed sufficient for another prominent checklist Committee to reverse their acceptance of the record. The second follows a request to re-evaluate a 1992 report of a **Black-backed Wagtail** (*Motacilla lugens*) in response to changes in wagtail taxonomy that were announced by the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Checklist Committee (AOU 2005).

The Azure Gallinule (NYSARC 1986-39-A) was found dead in Fort Salonga, Suffolk Co., on 14 Dec 1986, the victim of a domestic cat (see Boyle *et al.* 1987; Spencer and Kolodnicki 1988). To date, this remains the only record for North America, but questions regarding its natural origins have persisted. The identification is not in doubt. After acceptance by NYSARC (NYSARC 1988), the ABA Checklist Committee (ABA-CLC, Gill 1990) and the AOU Checklist Committee (AOU-CLC, AOU 1991), a local ornithologist approached members of the ABA-CLC with information to suggest the bird had escaped from a private bird collection shortly before its discovery. This communication prompted the ABA-CLC to reconsider the record and eventually reverse their previous acceptance, thus removing the species from the ABA Checklist (Dunn 1999). No change has been made by the AOU-CLC (see Pranty 2007). Upon request, the ABA-CLC kindly provided NYSARC with access to the written arguments that led them to this decision, including copies of letters from the aforementioned ornithologist that were sent to J. Van Remsen, Jr. and to Mark Robbins stating that an unnamed aviculturist claimed to have owned and then lost the gallinule in question. During the original first and second round deliberations, the NYSARC members considered the possibility of an escape or human-assisted transport but were unable to find any evidence to support either scenario. As a family, the gallinules have a well-documented propensity for

long-range vagrancy (Remsen and Parker 1990), and this perception contributed in large measure to the original acceptance of the record (NYSARC 1988). In its more recent discussions, the Committee was in contact with the above mentioned ornithologist and made a number of additional inquiries, but was unable to discover the whereabouts or identity of the Long Island aviculturist or uncover any facts that could support the claim of ownership. Due to the lack of any verifiable new information pertinent to this question, the Committee ruled that no action would be taken and that the initial acceptance should stand.

The wagtail report concerns a calling bird that flew over four experienced observers on 21 Dec 1992 as they stood on the shore of Deadhorse Bay, Brooklyn, Kings Co., submitted as a Black-backed Wagtail, *Motacilla lugens* (NYSARC 1992-26-A/B). The bird was seen only in flight, and therefore the identification relied heavily on recollections of its call and limited views by the lead observer. Two reports were submitted outlining the circumstances of the sighting, complete with renditions of the call note and an authoritative analysis of the likely identification. Although some members of the Committee agreed that this may indeed have been a wagtail, the record was not accepted, due in large part to the brevity of the sighting and an inability to definitively determine the species involved. The reasoning behind this decision was not transmitted in the published Committee Annual Report (NYSARC 1995). At the time, the AOU treated Black-backed Wagtail and the very similar White Wagtail (*M. alba*) as two separate species, both of which have occurred in North America (AOU 1982) and could thus present an additional hurdle to acceptance of the record. In 2005, the Black-backed versus White Wagtail question was rendered less critical when the AOU decided to re-lump the two into one species (AOU 2005). With this in mind, the current Committee revisited the original deliberations to determine whether the change in taxonomic status would provide sufficient grounds for a re-evaluation of the record that could potentially arrive at a different outcome. After examining the original reports and the comments made by the Committee at that time, the current members agreed that even without the complication of two black-and-white wagtail species, the limited details provided in the two reports were not likely to be sufficient for acceptance as a first state record. Consequently, the Committee agreed to take no further action.

Members of the public may request a copy of any report submitted to NYSARC regardless of whether it was accepted or not. Individuals may also ask the Committee to revisit a past decision if there is relevant information that was not available to the Committee at the time. As per NYSOA guidelines, requests of either kind must be made in writing, must state the reason for the request, and should be directed to the Secretary at the address given above.

HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights of the 2005 Annual Report include the first state record of **Common Ringed Plover** (*Charadrius hiaticula*), an unprecedented influx of **Cave Swallows** (*Petrochelidon fulva*), and a considerably smaller, but equally

noteworthy, influx of **Swainson's Warblers** (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*). A trio of **Whooping Cranes** (*Grus americana*) in April and a single bird in August were a thrilling new sight for New York but are known to hail from an on-going reintroduction experiment. Vagrant flycatchers were headlined by a **Gray Kingbird** (*Tyrannus dominicensis*), the first in thirteen years.

2005 Reports Accepted

Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*)

2005-2-A/D One, Hempstead Town Park, Lido Beach, **Nassau**, 2-16 Jan (Shaibal S. Mitra, Patricia Lindsay, Angus Wilson, Dick Gershon, Nikolas Haass, ph S. Mitra, A. Wilson, Angel Souto).

2005-9-A One, Further Lane, East Hampton, **Suffolk**, 31 Dec (Shaibal S. Mitra, ph S. Mitra).

2005-11-A Two, Barker Centennial Park, Somerset, **Niagara**, 26 Mar (William W. Watson).

2005-12-A/B One to seven, Rte 18, Town of Yates, **Orleans**, 26 Mar (William W. Watson, Willie D'Anna, ph Dean DiTommaso).

2005-30-A One, Long Point State Park, Cayuga Lake, **Cayuga**, 5 Mar (Curtis Marantz).

2005-54-A One, Bacon Hill, Northumberland, **Saratoga**, 27 Oct (Barbara Putnam, ph B. Putnam).

2005-57-A/B Three, Ring-necked Marsh, Iroquois NWR, **Orleans**, 29 Oct - 12 Nov (William W. Watson, Michael Morgante).

2005-73-A One, Countryside Sand & Gravel Ponds, Dayton, **Cattaraugus**, 30 Oct (Michael Morgante).

Since Cackling Goose was split from Canada Goose (*B. canadensis*) in 2004, birders in NY have looked for and found the nominate form of this newly recognized species with some consistency. Whether this reflects a genuine increase in occurrence or better detection makes for an interesting discussion. All of the 2005 reports pertain to the nominate subspecies *B. h. hutchinsii*, commonly know as "Richardson's" Canada Goose prior to the split. This population nests in the central Canadian Arctic and winters in the central United States and northern Mexico. As with previous years, the majority of reports came from western NY, with smaller numbers from Long Island and elsewhere. In general, only passage migrants are found upstate, with wintering individuals more likely on Long Island. Flocks containing multiple individuals are more likely in Region 1, as shown by the 2005 records of seven birds in Orleans Co., three in Genesee Co., and two in Niagara Co. Cattaraugus had its first county record, though it is conceivable that this form was simply overlooked in the past. Due to the numerous accepted reports of this species, NYSARC removed Cackling Goose from the Review List, though regional documentation is still encouraged. Reports of other less likely races of Cackling Goose, such as the truly diminutive *B. h. minima*, should be thoroughly documented and submitted to NYSARC.

Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*)

2005-62-A/D One, Irondequoit Bay Outlet, **Monroe**, 14-17 Nov (William W. Watson, Dominic Sherony, Gerald S. Lazarczyk, Robert G. Spahn, ph D. Sherony; see p. 357, R. Spahn).

This female Common Eider was seen for at least a week, often at exceptionally close range, and provided an unexpected opportunity for non-coastal birders to study a species that is rare away from saltwater. Based on the excellent photographs accompanying two of the reports, the Committee agreed that this was not *S. m. dresseri*, the subspecies that winters in large numbers along the coast of eastern Long Island. Although some members felt that it most closely resembled the Pacific subspecies, *S. m. v-nigra*, it was not clear that the northern subspecies *S. m. borealis*, which has been collected in NY and regularly ranges south to Massachusetts, could be definitively ruled out (see Spahn 1998). Field identification of Common Eider subspecies is an area of active study, with the differences in female and immature plumages being the least well understood (Knapton 1997).

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)

2005-60-A One, Cumberland Head, Plattsburg, **Clinton**, 2 Nov (William E. Krueger).

Once a great rarity in NYS, Western Grebe has become a more frequent visitor in the past decade, with reports being about equally divided between spring and fall. The description of the pattern of white, black and gray on the face/neck/back, combined with the long, dull yellow bill, was adequate to eliminate Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*) and Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*) that were also present on Lake Champlain. The description of the pattern of black on the face and bill color, plus lack of white on the sides, argued against the less likely Clark's Grebe or a hybrid.

Audubon's Shearwater (*Puffinus lherminieri*)

2005-45-A Three individuals, seen on a pelagic out of Belmar, NJ to waters southeast of New York Harbor, 20 Aug (Paul A. Guris).

Audubon's Shearwater is regularly found on pelagic trips to Hudson Canyon during the mid- to late-summer, and NYSARC has accepted five September sightings since 1978, with a number of credible reports not submitted for review. These three individuals were found during an organized pelagic trip led by Paul Guris and were well described. The first two were found approximately 43 miles east of Belmar, NJ (39° 53' 48" N, 73° 09' 03" W) and the third was 76 miles east of Belmar (39° 39' 34" N, 72° 30' 14" W), in both cases within the NYS pelagic boundaries. The size comparison with Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea*) and the detailed plumage description eliminated Manx Shearwater (*P. puffinus*), which has been noted in NY in almost every month of the year.

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)

2005-23-A/B One, main pool, Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, **Seneca**,

20 May - 2 Jul (William W. Watson, Mark Chao).

2005-39-A One, near exit 19 on the NYS Thruway, Kingston, **Ulster**, 28 Jun (Michael Shanley).

2005-79-A One, White Lake, **Oneida**, 14 Aug (Andrew VanNorstrand).

A signature species of the Great Plains, American White Pelicans have become quite regular in upstate NY, with the wetlands at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge (MNWR) being a favored location in spring and to a lesser extent in summer. The timing of the Montezuma and Kingston sightings maintains this trend. The August bird from the Adirondacks (northeastern Oneida Co.) was more unusual.

Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*)

2005-55-A One male, Bayport, **Suffolk**, 6 Nov (Gail M. Black).

Like many reports of vagrant frigatebirds in the northeast, this record lacked the detail to identify the species with absolute certainty. After some debate, the Committee chose to accept it as a Magnificent Frigatebird because the description was fully consistent with this species, and the individual occurred in the context of a massive displacement of birds by Hurricane Wilma, which crossed southern Florida from the Gulf of Mexico on 24 Oct and moved rapidly northeast on a vector roughly parallel to the Atlantic seaboard. Multiple Magnificent Frigatebirds are known to have been propelled north, with more than 70 on Bermuda and 7-8 reaching Nova Scotia and St. Pierre. One apparently made it as far as the British Isles on 7 Nov. Numerous frigatebird sightings between NY and Georgia in the first week of November are likely to be displaced individuals returning south (Dinsmore and Farnsworth 2006, McLaren and Mills 2006). Even though the circumstances strongly favor a Magnificent Frigatebird originating in the Gulf of Mexico or Caribbean, the Committee notes that other species of this genus have occurred as vagrants in North America, and strongly urges observers to document any frigatebird seen in NY in as much detail as possible. This is underscored by a female Lesser Frigatebird (*F. ariel*) photographed on 11 Sep 2005 by hawkwatchers in Brownstown, Michigan, at the western end of Lake Erie (Brennan and Schultz 2006).

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*)

2005-21-A One subadult, north marsh, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, **Queens**, 14 May (Angus Wilson).

This ibis was viewed briefly from the West Pond walking trail before it disappeared into a tidal creek. The red facial skin and eye were indicative of White-faced rather than Glossy Ibis (*P. falcinellus*). The lack of white feathering around the eye and gape and the adult-like maroon color and iridescence of the plumage suggest an older subadult rather than a first-summer bird. The report raises the valid question of hybridization, but there is nothing in the description that would be inconsistent for a subadult White-faced Ibis. Although the nesting range of this species is concentrated in the marshlands of the Great Basin, with most birds wintering on the central Gulf Coast into Mexico, it is interesting to

note that the majority of NYS records have occurred on Long Island rather than the interior or western part of the state, the exceptions being two historical specimens (1844 and 1908) from Grand Island, Erie Co., and a well-documented bird from Montezuma NWR, Seneca Co., in 2003 (NYSARC 2003-37-A/I).

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*)

2005-3-A/C One, Route 89, Varick, **Seneca**, 27 Feb (Michael Harvey, Jay McGowan, Matthew Medler, ph M. Harvey, J. McGowan, Daniel Lebbin).

This adult gray-morph Gyr Falcon was documented with a nice set of reports and excellent photographs. The observers rightly considered the possibility of an escaped falconry bird and carefully looked for signs of captivity but found none. Harvey's report considered not only other North American raptors but also discussed European species and the possibility of a hybrid. Falconers in North America do keep a variety of European species, including Lanner Falcon (*F. biarmicus*) and the very Gyr Falcon-like Saker Falcon (*F. cherrug*), as well as hybrid falcons, so this cautious approach is well justified. Although some hybrid combinations may be very difficult to separate from a pure Gyr Falcon, it was felt that there was nothing in the description that was incompatible with the identification of Gyr Falcon, an assertion that was supported by the photographs.

Wilson's Plover (*Charadrius wilsonia*)

2005-19-A/B One, Sagaponack Pond, Bridgehampton, **Suffolk**, 6-8 May (Shaibal S. Mitra, Angus Wilson).

This male Wilson's Plover was found by Hugh McGuinness on 6 May and seen again by a number of observers on the following two days and again by McGuinness on 9 May. Interestingly, a female Wilson's Plover was found just south of the NY/NJ border at Sandy Hook on 10 May, remaining until the 19th. At times the plover was difficult to locate, most likely when it moved to the northern shore of the large cove at the southern end of the Pond. The combination of the large black bill, white collar, and the tall pinkish legs eliminated any other species. The rusty tones on the rear crown and cheeks indicated breeding plumage. The location on the south shore of Long Island and the late spring date are typical for reports of Wilson's Plover in NYS, and perhaps reflect pioneering individuals venturing into suitable habitat north of the core breeding range.

Common Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*)

2005-70-A One adult, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, **Queens**, 13 Sep (Martin Lofgren, ph M. Lofgren: see p. 356).

Whilst photographing a confiding Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*) and other shorebirds on the partly-drained East Pond at Jamaica Bay WR, Martin Lofgren took several photographs of a worn *Charadrius* plover, presuming that this was the expected Semipalmated Plover (*C. semipalmatus*). Only later, as he reviewed his images more carefully, did Lofgren realize that this was in fact more likely a Common Ringed Plover, a familiar species from his native Sweden. In submitting the extant photographs to

NYSARC for review, Lofgren readily acknowledged that the potentially diagnostic call was not knowingly heard nor was the presence or absence of partial webbing on the feet looked for. Understandably, other birders present on the East Pond, including members of the Committee, were not alerted to the bird's presence.

During its extensive deliberations, the Committee examined numerous photographs of both Common Ringed and Semipalmated Plovers, looked at similar worn adults in the field, and consulted with several shorebird experts in Europe and North America. There was general agreement that the structure of the bill, positioning of dark feathering above the gape, extent of the black breast band, absence of a yellowish orbital ring and other features were fully consistent with Common Ringed Plover and inconsistent with Semipalmated Plover. This represents the first record for NYS and one of only a handful for North America south of the high arctic breeding sites in the Nunavut Province of Canada (1,000 pairs), Greenland (30-60,000 pairs) and northwestern Alaska (several hundred pairs), all of which migrate to Europe, Africa and Asia for the remainder of the year. South of the arctic, there are accepted records from Newfoundland (24-28 Aug 1980, 14-16 Aug 2001, 20 Aug - 17 Sept 2006), Nova Scotia (7 Oct 1989), Quebec (27-28 Jul 1989, 7 Jul 2000), Prince Edward Island (2 Oct 1989), Maine (26 Aug - 5 Sep 2003), Massachusetts (5 Sep 1990), and Rhode Island (15-22 Sep 1991) (Mills *et al.* 1990, Auchu 2000, Ellison and Martin 2004, Clarke and Brown 2007). There are also records from the Caribbean, including Barbados and Trinidad (Raffaele *et al.* 1998; Kenefick *et al.* 2007). It is conceivable that Common Ringed Plovers occur in the northeast on a more frequent basis but are missed because of their considerable similarity to Semipalmated Plover, especially in juvenile plumage. Careful scrutiny of "ringed plovers" by well-prepared observers may ultimately lead to more sightings, which of course will need to be very extensively documented with written descriptions and preferably accompanied by photographs.

Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*)

2005-20-A/C One, Little Reed Pond, Montauk, **Suffolk**, 6-8 May (Shaibal S. Mitra, Angus Wilson, Rex Stanford, ph A. Wilson, R. Stanford).

2005-38-A/B Three, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, **Kings/Queens**, 19 May (Shaibal S. Mitra, Douglas Gochfeld).

The occurrence of Black-necked Stilt on Long Island has increased slightly in recent years. The Committee received three reports and two photographs of a Black-necked Stilt discovered on 1 May by Vicki Bustamante on Little Reed Pond in Montauk, this elegant shorebird remaining until 10 May. On 19 May, three birds were found together on the West Pond at Jamaica Bay Refuge but were gone the next day.

California Gull (*Larus californicus*)

2005-56-A/B One, Sir Adam Beck Power Station, Niagara River, **Niagara**, 12 Nov (William W. Watson, Willie D'Anna).

The first California Gull found on the Niagara River occurred in 1992, and, amazingly, the species has been recorded there every year since. Most records are from the power plants on the lower river, where the 2005 bird was observed. There are also nearly annual reports from above Niagara Falls, where the river is much wider; however, most of those are on the Canadian side of the river and therefore are generally not submitted to NYSARC. This year's bird is believed to be the same individual that had been present for at least three consecutive prior years, based on its habit of perching at the base of the power dam on the NY side and the barely noticeable red spot on its lower mandible.

Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*)

2005-13-A One first winter, Lake Edward on Perinton Parkway, Perinton, **Monroe**, 7 Dec (Dominic Sherony, ph D. Sherony: see p. 356).

Documentation of Thayer's Gull is problematic because of difficulties in separating first cycle plumages from Kumlien's Iceland Gull (*L. glaucoides kumlieni*) and more advanced plumages from American Herring Gull (*L. argentatus smithsonianus*) (Olsen and Larsson 2004, Howell and Dunn 2007). There are also uncertainties about the taxonomic status, with reason to think that Kumlien's might reflect a stable hybrid population formed by post-glacial contact between Thayer's and nominate Iceland Gulls (*L. g. glaucoides*). Because of these concerns, the Committee requires identifiable photographs or meticulous descriptions for acceptance of Thayer's reports. The Perinton bird was documented by two photographs and the bird was observed on two different days. Comparison photographs of an additional first cycle bird somewhat intermediate between Thayer and Kumlien's were also provided. The Committee considered the first individual characteristic of a Thayer's Gull.

Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*)

2005-46-A Two, Breezy Point, **Queens**, 31 Aug (Shane Blodgett).

Shane Blodgett found these two Sandwich Terns roosting among several thousand Common Terns (*S. hirundo*) and an estimated 1,000 Black Skimmers (*Rynchops niger*) on the open beach and dunes near Breezy Point. One of the two birds had plumage characteristics of a juvenile and repeatedly tried to beg from the other bird. Sandwich Tern remains a rare species in NYS and is easily confused with other *Sterna* terns, especially in late summer and fall when local nesting species transition into basic plumage. The report described both birds in excellent detail, leaving no doubt regarding their identity. The late summer date and proximity to a barrier beach inlet is fairly typical for Sandwich Tern records on Long Island.

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

2005-40-A/C One first summer, Moriches Inlet, Cupsogue County Park, Suffolk, 3-12 Jul (Shaibal S. Mitra, Sean Sime, Shane Blodgett, ph Rob Jett).

This Arctic Tern was found on 3 Jul by Shai Mitra as he and others sorted through a large group of Common (*S. hirundo*), Least (*Sternula antillarum*), and Black (*Chlidonias niger*) Terns near Moriches Inlet on the south shore of Long Island. The close proximity of this bird to Common Terns of various ages allowed for the detailed comparisons necessary to make this difficult identification. Sean Sime, Shane Blodgett, and Rob Jett found a similarly plumaged Arctic Tern at this same location on 12 Jul and also provided excellent written descriptions. Recent reports from Long Island suggest that individual Arctic Terns appear for only brief periods, often just one day, before moving on, and thus these two sets of reports might actually involve different individuals.

Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia*)

2005-7-A Two, Shinnecock Inlet, Suffolk, 29 Jan (Rex and Birgit Stanford, ph R. Stanford).

2005-71-A One, Montauk Point State Park, Suffolk, 27 Dec (Seth Ausubel).

Rex and Birgit Stanford provided an excellent written description and accompanying photographs that clearly document an adult Thick-billed Murre and a first-winter bird at Shinnecock Inlet. After reviewing their photos, they concluded that there might have been two different adults present, totaling three birds, but in the opinion of the Committee, the photo documentation did not support the presence of a second adult. The December murre was originally found on 17 Dec by Tom Burke and the Point South party whilst participating on the Montauk Christmas Bird Count.

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

2005-50-A/C One, Church Road, Hamlin, Monroe, 1-17 June (Robert G. Spahn, Jeanne Skelly, Dominic Sherony, ph R. Spahn).

This Eurasian Collared-Dove was discovered by David Tetlow not far from the location where the first accepted record for the State occurred in 2002 (NYSARC 2002-26-A/B). Although the Committee is aware of the continuous spread of Eurasian Collared-Doves across the southern United States and northeastwards, there are still only three previously accepted records for NY. Considering the location, it is possible that this individual is the same as the 2002 sighting. Analysts have commented on the striking, but as yet unexplained, failure of Eurasian Collared-Dove to expand into the northeast during a time when the species has already reached the prairie states of western Canada. Since this species is occasionally kept in captivity—a known source of some extralimital records—observers are strongly encouraged to look for bands or other signs of recent captive origin. Observers are also reminded to carefully rule out the frequently released form of Ringed Turtle-Dove (*S. risoria*).

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*)

2005-41-A One, Buffalo Street, Silver Creek, **Chautauqua**, 8 May (Marilyn Pecoraro-O'Connell).

This dove was noted at a ground feeder as the observer was getting ready for work. Fortunately, she opted to pause and study the bird carefully because it disappeared as soon as she went to retrieve a camera. Even in the absence of photographic documentation, this complete description was deemed acceptable.

Great Gray Owl (*Strix nebulosa*)

2005-6-A/D One, Gosier Road, Cape Vincent, **Jefferson**, 23 Feb - 24 Mar (Shaibal S. Mitra, Gerry Smith, Rex & Birgit Stanford, Curtis Marantz, ph S. Mitra, R. Stanford: see p. 357, C. Marantz).

2005-28-A One, found injured on Route 3 in Natural Bridge, **Jefferson**, end of Feb (Gerry Smith).

The Cape Vincent Great Gray was found by Gerry Smith on 23 Feb and was documented by three written reports, several photographs and a newspaper article. During its long stay, this wonderfully cooperative owl was watched and photographed by many people and was last noted by Smith on 17 May. The second record, detailed in a newspaper article written by H. Michael Jalili and submitted to the archive by Gerry Smith, describes a Great Gray Owl that was injured after colliding with a car on Route 3 in Natural Bridge in late February. The owl was taken to a rehabilitator and released on 1 Mar in Dexter, Jefferson Co. NYS marked the southern boundary of a substantial incursion during the winter of 2004/2005. Approximately 600 were reported in Quebec by February, but relatively few were recorded south of the St. Lawrence River (Bannon *et al.* 2005). Likewise, several hundred were located in southern Ontario, but these again found sufficient food so that only a minority had to travel south of Lake Ontario (Currie 2005).

Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*)

2005-53-A One, Lake Road, Wilson, **Niagara**, 23, 28, 31 Jan & 10 Mar (Willie D'Anna, ph W. D'Anna).

Marg Partridge found this Boreal Owl on private property, and it was relocated on several more occasions. Digital photographs were obtained using binoculars and leave no doubt about the identification. The winter of 2004/05 will be remembered for its Boreal Owls, of which at least two found in 2004 (2004-61-A/B and 2004-71-A/E) continued into 2005. Lake Road is only a few miles from Wilson-Tuscarora State Park, where a Boreal Owl was found on 18 Dec 2004 (NYSARC 2004-83-A).

Chuck-will's-widow (*Caprimulgus carolinensis*)

2005-26-A/E One, Wheeler & West Roads, West Monroe, **Oswego**, 21 & 29 May (Kevin McGann, Bill Purcell, Charles C. Spagnoli, Jeanne Skelly, Dominic Sherony).

A single Chuck-will's-widow was heard singing over a period of nine days near the Three Mile Bay WMA, a mostly wet, wooded swamp with drier upland

areas favored by this bird. The song descriptions were detailed and convinced the Committee of the identification. Chuck-will's-widow had been recorded in the same general location previously.

Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*)

2005-37-A/B One, Jones Beach West End, **Nassau**, 23 June (Shaibal S. Mitra, Seymour Schiff, ph S. Mitra).

This western tyrant flycatcher was discovered by Max and Nellie Larson near the Coast Guard Station and relocated by several additional observers as it moved east along the barrier beach before reappearing near the original spot. Excellent written details and accompanying photographs convincingly documented this one-day visitor. The mid-summer date is unprecedented, as previous NYS records have occurred in the fall (Sept-Oct) or winter (Dec-Feb), and hints that western vagrants occur more frequently during this period than is generally assumed.

Gray Kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*)

2005-49-A/F One, Manitou Road at Salmon Creek, Greece, **Monroe**, 1-4 Oct (Jeanne Skelly, Dominic Sherony, William W. Watson, Willie D'Anna, Gerry S. Lazarczyk, Robert G. Spahn, ph J. Skelly, D. Sherony, W. D'Anna, R. Spahn).

This cooperative Gray Kingbird was discovered by David Tetlow along Salmon Creek and was watched and photographed over its four day stay by many additional observers. This represents the tenth record for NYS and the first since 1992. Gray Kingbird remains a rare visitor to the northeast as a whole, and the only other reports for fall 2005 were from New Jersey on 19 Oct and another in Maryland on the same day.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*)

2005-32-A/C One, Mt. Loretto Unique Area, Staten Island, **Richmond**, 5 Jun (Seth Wollney, Angus Wilson, Steve Nanz, ph A. Wilson, S. Nanz, sketch S. Wollney).

Rich McGovern found this Scissor-tailed Flycatcher hawking insects over a small pond on 5 Jun but, unfortunately, it had gone by the following day. This bird represents at least the third record for Richmond Co. and was seen by many observers during its brief stay, three of whom provided excellent details and photographs. The early summer date is fairly typical for this southern species.

Purple Martin (*Progne subis*)

2005-76-A One adult female, Golden Hill State Park, Somerset, **Niagara**, 5 Nov (Michael Morgante).

Ordinarily rare after September, the previous late record for Purple Martin was 28 Oct, but there is a single record for February (Crowell 1998). This female martin was well seen from Golden Hill State Park, found over Lake Ontario while observers were watching the incursion of Cave Swallows (*Petrochelidon fulva*) occurring at that time. Other large dark swallows were considered but eliminated as possible alternatives.

Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*)

2005-52-A/C, Three, under Lake Ontario Parkway bridge at Salmon Creek, Greece, **Monroe**, 3-17 Nov (Robert G. Spahn, Gerald S. Lazarczyk, Dominic Sherony, ph R. Spahn).

2005-61-A Four, Derby Hill Bird Observatory, Mexico, **Oswego**, 6 Nov (Bill Purcell).

2005-64-A Three, Fairhaven State Park, **Cayuga**, 16 Nov (Gregg Dashnau, ph G. Dashnau: see p. 356).

2005-75-A Forty-two, Golden Hill State Park, Somerset, **Niagara**, 5 Nov (Michael Morgante).

The late fall of 2005 witnessed a spectacular incursion of Cave Swallows into the northeast, shattering records at many locations. The greatest numbers were recorded on the southern shore of Lake Ontario, with the majority of birds flying west. We received nine reports detailing some 52 birds. In reality there were a great many more than this, perhaps something in the order of a thousand. By far the largest counts were made at Hamlin Beach State Park (Monroe Co.), where the major passage occurred from 3 Nov through to 6 Nov. Strong winds from the southwest were met by an approaching low-pressure system, and a trickle of birds grew into a deluge on 6 Nov when the front passed through. During that one day, observers counted a remarkable 579 Cave Swallows, giving a cumulative total of 761 for the four-day period! A few Cave Swallows lingered as late as 17 Nov, when birds were found roosting under a bridge and were photographed. A specimen was also found at this location on 17 Nov and deposited in the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology collection. It is speculated that subsequent northwesterly winds pushed the surviving birds east and south towards the coast, with multiple sightings in the latter half of November from Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, southern New Jersey, coastal Virginia and North Carolina. For fuller accounts of this spectacular incursion see Spahn and Tetlow (2006) and Sullivan *et al.* (2006).

Clearly this was an unprecedented event and, in reviewing the reports submitted, the Committee concentrated on two concerns: one, that not all of the individuals that were counted were seen well enough to be rigorously identified; and two, that individuals may have been counted two or more times, either as they passed observers spread along the lake front or by circling around one particular area. The latter was of greatest concern in discussion of the extraordinary daily counts from Hamlin Beach, given that comparable numbers were not seen to the west or east. Commentary by members intimately familiar with the circumstances did much to clarify these issues. On the days when large numbers of Cave Swallows were seen, they were typically observed in small groups flying quickly by, and thus it was impossible for an observer to completely study every individual. Apparent size, shape, and flight-style were used to quickly rule out most other swallow species. When it was possible, observers noted plumage characters such as the buffy throat and lack of a very pale forehead patch to rule out Cliff Swallow (*P. pyrrhonota*). Very few other lingering swallow species were found along Lake Ontario during this November

event and, in fact, no Cliff Swallows were reported. Therefore, the Committee felt reasonably assured that almost all of the birds reported as Cave Swallows were correctly identified.

The second concern—double-counting—was considered more likely if these birds had been actively foraging rather than strictly flying west. For example, birds could have been foraging into the wind along the lake edge, where they were counted, and then might have circled back inland with the wind, only to then return to the lake to forage once more. Observers did make an effort to look inland as well as along the lake and very few birds were noted to be flying east. Given these qualifiers, the Committee voted to accept the total number of birds as reported. Cave Swallows have undergone a remarkable change in their frequency of occurrence since the first fall record (and second ever) in November 1998 (1998-59-A). Almost every year the number of sightings has crept upward, predominantly along Lakes Ontario and Erie and, subsequently, Long Island's south shore. The long-term significance for this species and the underlying causes are essentially unknown.

Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*)

2005-8-A/B One, Ellis Hollow, Dryden, **Tompkins**, 6 Mar (Jay McGowan, Curtis Marantz, ph J. & Kevin McGowan).

Brian Sullivan found this Mountain Bluebird on 6 Mar, and it was subsequently seen by many birders. Details of plumage suggest that this was probably a first-year male based on the extent of blue, but the possibility that it was an adult female cannot be entirely ruled out.

Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*)

2005-31-A One, Jones Beach West End, **Nassau**, 29 May (John Heidecker, ph J. Heidecker).

2005-51-A One adult, Wilson, **Niagara**, 12-14 Apr (Willie D'Anna, ph W. D'Anna).

2005-74-A One adult, Kingston, **Ulster**, 12 Nov (Mark Dedea, sketches M. Dedea).

Previous NYS records for Townsend's Solitaire have come from the eastern part of the state. Thus, to have three separate sightings spread across the state over a one year period is notable. The reports of the sightings from Jones Beach and Wilson were accompanied by excellent photographs. The third report from Kingston included a thorough description and excellent sketches. David Gardner discovered the solitaire at Jones Beach.

Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*)

2005-4-A/B One adult male, home of Mr. & Mrs. Arnold Talentino, Cortland, **Cortland**, 7-8 Jan (Kevin McGann, Chris Tessaglia-Hymes, ph K. McGann, C. & Diane Tessaglia-Hymes: see p. 356).

2005-68-A/B One male, Webster Park, Webster, **Monroe**, 1 Dec - Mar 2006 (Jeanne Skelly, Dominic Sherony, ph D. Sherony).

Varied Thrush has been reported with less frequency in the state in recent times

compared to the 1980s, so it was encouraging that we received two reports for 2005. Both of these male Varied Thrushes were photographed, and the observers provided excellent descriptions of these very distinctive birds. The Webster Park thrush, found by Mike Davids and David Tetlow, remained for most of the winter and was seen by many observers, although it could be difficult to locate at times.

Veery (*Catharus fuscescens*)

2005-81-A/B One, Webster Park, **Monroe**, 5-23 Dec (Steven Daniels, Robert G. Spahn).

This Veery was chanced upon in thick brush on 4 Dec by Andy Guthrie whilst searching for the Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) (2005-68-A/B) discovered a few days earlier. This record represents one of few documented winter records of Veery in North America, the vast majority wintering in central and southeastern Brazil (Remsen 2001). Meticulous documentation is obviously necessary for such extraordinary records, and the details associated with these observations were of a very high quality, including notation of vocalizations and flank color, in addition to the distinctive rusty tones to the upperparts.

Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*)

2005-63-A/C One, Forest Park, **Queens**, 13-19 Nov (Seth Ausubel, Arie Gilbert, Curtis Marantz).

This Black-throated Gray Warbler was found by Seth Ausubel on 13 Nov and represents the 14th record for NYS. The warbler, considered an adult female or hatching-year male, was seen by many birders until the last reported sighting on 19 Nov.

Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*)

2005-58-A/B One, private residence, Jamesville, Dewitt, **Onondaga**, 14 Nov (Brenda Best, Dorothy Crumb).

This Yellow-throated Warbler visited the yard of Nancy Strait. The Committee agreed that the two observers gave an excellent and complete description of this distinctive species. The behavior of this individual, picking insects or spiders from a screen porch, is not atypical, and the late date of observation is consistent with previous records.

Swainson's Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*)

2005-14-A/G One, Forest Park, **Queens**, 12-17 Apr (Douglas J. Futuyma, Seymour Schiff, Michael Higgiston, Shaibal S. Mitra, Lloyd Spitalnik, Angus Wilson, Jean Loscalzo, ph L. Spitalnik, A. Wilson, Ed Lam).

2005-18-A One, Hempstead Lake State Park, **Nassau**, 1 May (Shaibal S. Mitra).

2005-33-A One, Great Kills Park, Staten Island, **Richmond**, 27 May (David W. Eib).

These three reports of Swainson's Warbler were part of an extraordinary influx of southeastern landbirds to coastal NY during the spring of 2005 (Mitra and Lindsay 2005; Veit *et al.* 2005). The very confiding Forest Park bird was amply

documented by seven reports, nine photographs, and excellent descriptions. A full account of this record was published by the finder Jean Loscalzo (see Loscalzo 2005). The second bird was found by Matt Bayer and Al Wollin at Hempstead Lake State Park and resighted by a number of birders. The final record from Staten Island was of a bird seen briefly but adequately described by David Eib. These constitute the 12th-14th records for NYS. Additional reports came from Central Park (details not yet submitted) and from eastern Long Island (see 2005-25-A below). All previous accepted records have occurred within a relatively narrow window of time (29 Apr to 20 May), with hints of similar influxes in 1973 (two records) and 1975 (two records).

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

2005-43-A One, Town of Champlain, **Clinton**, 2 July (William E. Krueger).

This species is most commonly found away from the coast during spring and fall migration, and thus a July record from the shores of Lake Champlain in Clinton Co. is quite unexpected. The description of the plumage and song eliminated the two most likely contenders, Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed (*A. caudacutus*) and LeConte's (*A. leconteii*) Sparrows. In 2002, another Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow was reported on 30 Jul from near this same location (NYSARC 2002-23-A/B), raising the exciting possibility that the species might be extending its breeding range into this corner of the state, and further scrutiny of suitable habitat there during late June and July might be rewarding.

Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco (*Junco hyemalis oregonus* or *J. h. montanus* or *J. h. shufeldti*)

2005-35-A One, Lake Road, Wilson, **Niagara**, 31 Jan, 6 & 13 Feb (Willie D'Anna, ph W. D'Anna).

This "Oregon" Junco was digiscoped and a thorough and lengthy description was provided. The discussion isolated the race to three of five possible subspecies in the "Oregon" group of Dark-eyed Juncos. Pink-sided Junco (*H. h. mearnsi*) was ruled out by virtue of the dark contrasting hood present on this bird. Based on the photographs, there does not appear to be any issues concerning a possible hybrid.

Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*)

2005-1-A/D One, Baldwin Harbor Town Park, Baldwin, **Nassau**, 2-16 Jan (Shaibal S. Mitra, Patricia Lindsay, Arie Gilbert, Angus Wilson, Nikolas Haass, ph S. Mitra, A. Wilson, sketch N. Haass).

2005-78-A One, Derby Hill Bird Observatory, Mexico, **Oswego**, 11 May (Gerard Phillips, ph G. Phillips).

Both reports provided thorough documentation. The immature on Long Island was discovered on 2 Jan by Shai Mitra and Patricia Lindsay during the Southern Nassau Christmas Bird Count and was viewed by many observers during the following two weeks. In addition to photographs the sparrow was portrayed with an excellent field sketch by Nikolas Haass. It associated with a flock of White-throated Sparrows that also included single nominate (*Z. leucophrys leucophrys*)

and Gambell's (*Z. l. gambelii*) White-crowned Sparrows. The second report, documenting a bird at Derby Hill, was also accompanied by clear photographs of an adult in alternate plumage. The winter date of the Long Island bird and the spring date of the Lake Ontario bird are consistent with previous records from these general areas.

Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*)

2005-17-A One, Flats Road, Athens, **Greene**, 8 May (Jeremy Taylor).

Jeremy Taylor identified this Blue Grosbeak, which was first observed by his parents at their feeder in Athens the previous day. Although his report was not terribly detailed, the description of a large blue songbird with a heavy bill and chestnut wing bars was fairly straightforward.

2005 Reports Origins Uncertain

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

2005-72-A/B One, Eisenhower Park, **Nassau**, 24 Dec sporadically to 24 Jan 2006 (Angus Wilson, Brendan Fogarty, ph A. Wilson, B. Fogarty).

At this time, the Committee has concerns on the origins of Barnacle Geese due to the fact that they are routinely kept and escapes are well known. There were no questions concerning the identification of this bird, since the reports included two excellent photographs. The fact that the same flock at one point also contained a Greenland Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) was encouraging. However, comments that the bird "seemed tame" created further concern, and the park itself was quite urban in character. The Committee continues to discuss and debate the status of Barnacle Goose in NYS.

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*)

2005-80-A One, Ocean Parkway at Cedar Beach, **Suffolk**, 18 Dec (Ken Feustel).

The Committee struggled over this record with two concerns. First, during the period that this falcon was being observed, information appeared on the NY list that this bird had allegedly been lost recently by a falconer. Various inquiries turned up a report to the NYS agency which monitors falconry of a Gyr Falcon X Peregrine Falcon (*F. peregrinus*) hybrid lost near Massapequa Park, about five miles in a direct line from Cedar Beach where the bird was seen most often. Second, the identity of this hawk was questioned on the basis that it might have been a Gyr Falcon X Peregrine Falcon cross. The coloration of the mantle could support this viewpoint. After much debate, it was believed that the bird was possibly correctly identified but the concerns about origin persisted.

2005 Reports Origins Unnatural

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*)

2005-27-A/B Two, near Carncross Road, Savannah, **Wayne**, 20 May (William W. Watson, Gerald S. Lazarczyk).

2005-69-A Two adults, three young, south side of Atlantic Ave, one mile east of county line, **Wayne**, 4-6 June (Robert G. Spahn, ph R. Spahn).

Trumpeter Swans continue to be found in the lake plains region of the state. Bob Spahn provided photographic evidence of a family group of fledglings and untagged adults in western Wayne Co. This breeding pair is believed to be progeny of birds introduced into western NY or Ontario, Canada. Although this species does not yet meet the NYSARC criteria for a fully established introduced species in NY, it is clearly moving in that direction. Birders are encouraged to continue documenting the occurrence and confirmed breeding of this species.

Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*)

2005-22-A/G Three, Ripley Hawkwatch #2, **Chautauqua**, 6 April (Bill Dietz, R. Gilbert Randell, Jann Randell, Leonard DeFrancisco, Melvin Freeborough, Tom Wasilewski, Robert Sundell, sketches R. Randell, L. DeFrancisco, M. Freeborough).

2005-44-A One, Number Four Road, Lowville, **Lewis**, 12 Aug (Chris Reidy).

The dedicated hawkwatchers gathered at Ripley are quite used to seeing migrant Sandhill Cranes (*G. canadensis*), having logged an impressive 59 in 2004 alone, and were about to add three more for the 2005 count when, at around noon on 6 Apr, three cranes were spotted from watch site #2 flying east about a quarter of a mile away. The five observers, Jann Randell, Gil Randell, Mel Freeborough, Bill Dietz and Tom Wasilewski, immediately realized that these were not Sandhills but in fact Whooping Cranes. Two additional observers, Len DeFrancisco and Bob Sundell, situated at site #4, were contacted by radio and were also able to study the birds, albeit at greater distance. Gil Randell contacted Tim Sullivan of the US Fish & Wildlife Service, and David Stilwell wrote back to provide further information about the birds. The Lewis Co. bird was found along the Black River floodplain, standing in a wet hayfield beside two Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*). All four birds belong to a captive-raised population that has been introduced to the east in hopes of establishing a second migratory population as a hedge against any environmental catastrophe that might afflict the remaining wild population, which migrates between the Gulf Coast of Texas and western Canada. Most of these introduced birds winter in northern Florida and are being trained to migrate to Wisconsin in the summer but can evidently wander off course. The aggregate reports for both submissions adequately address the identification of these spectacular birds and allowed unambiguous confirmation of their origins. Included with the Ripley materials is a letter from the US Fish & Wildlife Service (NYSARC 2005-22-G) confirming that one of the trio (bird "1-03") was fitted with a satellite transmitter and that the resulting telemetry data confirmed the location. The companion birds are believed to be

“9-03” and “18-03”. Two days earlier, the cranes were monitored in a field next to the Chagrin River in Lake Co., Ohio and, after passing Ripley, were recorded again near Holland Center, Grey Co., Ontario, on 13 Apr before heading towards the Quebec border. The Lewis Co. crane sported color leg bands (right leg: green above red and left leg: tan above green) and is identified as #309, a female hatched in 2003. According to the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership, crane #309 began her spring 2005 migration in Jones County, North Carolina on 30 Mar accompanied by two other cranes. They were next spotted east of Lake Huron, Ontario, but on 8 May, #309 was found alone on the northern shore of the St. Lawrence River, northeast of Lake Ontario. It then reappeared in west central Vermont on 9 Jun, where it remained to 30 Jun. The two missing flock mates were captured in Michigan on 30 Jun and transported to Wisconsin. Crane #309 was then reported from Lewis Co., NY on 11 Aug and lingered in the area until 27 Oct. On 12 Dec this crane was resighted in Beaufort Co., North Carolina, having completed a successful round trip migration. There is no historical evidence that Whooping Crane has occurred in NY, but in the 1880s some bred as far east as central Illinois and occasional wintering birds were recorded from New Jersey southwards (Lewis 1995). Because these cranes are part of an experimental population that is not established and will require quite some time to gain that status, they are not yet eligible for addition to the NYS Checklist.

2005 Report Accepted in Revised Form

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

2005-77-A One female, home of Bob & Lorraine Sherman, Glenwood, Town of Concord, Erie, 27 Nov (David F. Suggs, ph Lorraine Sherman).

This Rufous (*S. rufus*) or Allen's (*S. sasin*) Hummingbird was discovered in the first or second week of October and remained until 8 Dec. The observers provided notes, a sketch and photographs. In spite of the careful study and observations, we were unable to determine the exact species. The photos were sufficient to determine the age and sex and eliminated Broad-tailed (*S. platycercus*) and Calliope (*Stellula calliope*) Hummingbirds, but Allen's could not be ruled out in favor of the more likely Rufous.

2005 Report Reviewed - No Decision Rendered

Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) X Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)

2005-16-A One, Lake Ontario, Fairhaven State Park, Cayuga, 12 Mar (Kevin McGann, ph K. McGann).

The proposed parentage seems to offer the most plausible explanation for the unusual appearance of this bird and is consistent with similar examples also thought to be this combination. However, other hybrid combinations might also

look similar, and without stronger evidence, such as seeing both parents attending to the bird as a duckling or DNA testing, the Committee felt the parental lineage could not be determined with true confidence.

2004 Reports Accepted

Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*)

2004-87-A One male, Derby Hill Bird Observatory, **Oswego**, 23 Apr (Gerard Phillips, photo by G. Phillips).

Gerard Phillips photographed this Yellow-throated Warbler that was originally found by a couple visiting from Quebec. The yellow superloral portion of the supercilium is strongly suggestive of the nominate subspecies (*D. d. dominica*), which nests on the eastern coastal plain.

Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva pallida*)

2004-88-A One specimen, Rye, **Westchester**, 16 Dec (Thomas W. Burke, ph Andy Guthrie).

This recently expired Cave Swallow was found lying on the sidewalk under a bridge supporting I-95, where it had presumably roosted and succumbed to the cold during the night. The specimen was deposited in the American Museum of Natural History collection (AMNH 836153) and represents the first record for Westchester Co and Region 9. Based on measurements taken by Peter Capainolo, the bird is very likely of the southwestern subspecies *pallida*, the population comprising the vast majority, if not all, of the late fall incursions to the northeast, but research does continue into the molecular aspects of this issue.

2004 Report Origins Uncertain

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

2004-86-A One, Hoosic River, Schadicoke, **Rensselaer**, 14 Mar (Richard Guthrie).

This Barnacle Goose was discovered and photographed by Rich Guthrie during a Hudson Mohawk Bird Club field trip. The photos leave no issue concerning identification. The Committee continues to view the status of this Eurasian goose as problematic due to the past history of known releases/escapes. However, the Committee also recognizes that at least some of these individuals are very likely to be of wild origin and will continue to carefully monitor the patterns of occurrence. Reports from any time of the year are strongly encouraged.

1994 Report Accepted

Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*)

1994-62-A One, Cuba, Allegany, 13-14 Dec (Winnie Hettinger, ph W. Hettinger).

This first-year bird was found in a parking lot around the time when Lake Erie was beginning to freeze over. It was brought to the Songwings Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Belfast, Allegany Co., kept overnight for observation, then banded and released at a water treatment plant in Olean, Cattaraugus Co., where warm water from the plant keeps the Allegheny River open. This is the first record of Northern Gannet for Allegany Co. and one of very few non-coastal records away from the Great Lakes.

Reports Not Accepted

Reports are not accepted by NYSARC for various reasons. Often, the material submitted to the Committee was considered insufficient or too vague to properly document the occurrence and/or eliminate similar species. Simply stating the species observed and the location is rarely enough for acceptance. Likewise, saying that it "looked just like the illustration in the field guide" is unlikely to be sufficient. Records are never rejected because the observer is unfamiliar to the Committee or has had records rejected in the past. Every effort is made to be as fair and objective as possible, but if the Committee is unsure about a submission, it tends to err on the conservative side, preferring not to accept a good record rather than validate a bad one. Descriptions prepared from memory weeks, months, or even years after a sighting are seldom voted on favorably. The Committee cannot overstate the importance of taking field notes of uncommon or rare birds while the bird is under study or, if this is not possible, immediately afterwards. It is very helpful to include a photocopy of your field notes with the 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. Field sketches, no matter how crude, can be extremely useful in illustrating what you saw. Lastly, when writing a report, it is very important to explain how you settled on the identification. What did you see or hear that clinched the identification for you? This vital aspect of a good report is frequently omitted. Providing a detailed answer to this question will greatly enhance the report and further improve your birding skills. All submissions, whether accepted or not, remain in the archive and can be re-evaluated if additional substantive material is presented. The Secretary or Chair can advise on whether the new information is sufficient to warrant re-evaluation by the Committee.

2005 Reports Not Accepted

Black Brant (*Branta bernicla nigricans*)

2005-67-A One, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, **Queens**, 30 Oct.

The Committee agreed with the observer that the combination of dark belly and relatively extensive white throat pattern indicate something other than a typically plumaged Atlantic Brant (*B. b. hrota*). However, distinguishing Black Brant from other relatively dark-plumaged populations of Brant, and from possible intergrades between these and Atlantic Brant, is complicated and requires more detail than the observer was able to discern during his brief view of the bird as it flew overhead.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)

2005-65-A/D One first winter, Spearman Road, Cumberland Head, Plattsburg, **Clinton**, 27-28 Nov.

The Committee was concerned that the description of this bird, particularly the dirty or dark appearance of some of the neck, and the lack of a good description of the overall shape of the bird, might not adequately eliminate Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*). The sketch provided could not be clearly assigned to Red-necked or Western Grebe. In addition, the observers made no mention of or comparison to the Western Grebe seen in the same general location almost four weeks earlier.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

2005-34-A One adult, William H. Pouch Scout Camp, Staten Island, **Richmond**, 11 Jun.

The Committee thought that although possibly correct, the identification was not supported by definitive field marks. The description of the bird was brief and lacked sufficient information (shape, coloration or tail characteristics) to separate it from other species.

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)

2005-42-A, One, Letsonville Road, Schroon, **Essex**, 6 Jul.

The observer had brief views of this hawk as it perched on top of a telephone pole just before taking flight. Very few details of the appearance of the hawk were provided in the report, and these do not eliminate other possibilities. The timing and location are also decidedly unexpected for this western species; to date NYS records are concentrated in a rather narrow period of migration.

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*)

2005-5-A One, Glens Falls, **Warren**, 21 Jan.

This hawk was observed by naked eye, first as it flew over a car and then as it perched in a tree. The limited description was insufficient to establish the identification as a Gyr Falcon. Unfortunately, the narrative did not articulate how the bird was identified other than stating that it looked like an internet photo which was viewed at some unspecified time after the observation.

Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*)

2005-10-A One third cycle, Van Cleef Lake, **Seneca**, 19 Feb.

Three photographs accompanied this report and were somewhat suggestive of a Thayer's Gull, a challenging identification in this plumage. In carefully reviewing the photographs and description, the Committee felt that as a whole the details were more suggestive of a female American Herring Gull (*L. argentatus smithsonianus*). In particular, the largely black underside to the outer primary and sharply defined white spot are not expected for Thayer's Gull. Although eye color is known to be highly variable, the paleness of the eye was also less than ideal for Thayer's Gull and well within the range of a subadult Herring Gull. The overall structure of the bird and the blackish rather than gray primary tips argued against Kumlien's Iceland Gull (*L. glaucoides kumlieni*).

Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*)

2005-47-A Two, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, **Queens**, 4 Sep.

These two terns were observed bathing in shallow water near the shingle island at the north end of the East Pond at Jamaica Bay WR. A prominent yellow tip to the slender bill and black legs were the only field marks noted in the report. Although possibly correct, the details provided did not sufficiently exclude other species of terns, including adult Common Tern (*S. hirundo*) in transitional plumage with a pale tipped bill. Among the basic important field marks not addressed in the report were the expected larger and paler aspects of a Sandwich Tern and the presence/absence of a crest. The Committee also felt that the East Pond of Jamaica Bay was very atypical habitat for Sandwich Tern, which in NYS at least has shown a very strong preference for ocean beaches and inlets. Even Royal Tern (*S. maxima*), a species that occurs regularly on the nearby barrier beach, is very unusual at this location.

Black Guillemot (*Cephus grylle*)

2005-59-A Fourteen, Lake Champlain, east of Cumberland Head, **Clinton**, 8 Nov.

Using a telescope, this experienced lake-watcher studied a flock of approximately 14 birds flying down Lake Champlain between Cumberland Head, Clinton Co., NY and Grand Isle, Grand Isle Co., Vermont, where the observer was located. For most of the observation period, the flock was thought to be in Vermont waters but then definitely crossed over into NY. The observer estimates that the birds were viewed from a distance of between 1,200 meters (1,312 yards) and 2,400 m (2,625 yds). Ten of the birds appeared brilliant white in the sun and were considered adults, with four duskiest birds at the rear of the flock identified as juveniles. After two rounds of review, the Committee agreed on two general concerns. The first was the sheer number of birds involved. Even for an Atlantic coastal report of Black Guillemots, a flock of this size would be quite exceptional. The species is typically seen in ones or twos rather than in larger flocks, although admittedly this may not hold true in the very high arctic where Black Guillemots can be one of the most numerous birds and will

concentrate into flocks in pursuit of localized prey. Second, the Committee felt that several details in the description were in conflict with the identification. For example, the statement that the legs were dark rather than red and that the wing patches were easier to see when the birds were traveling away from the observer rather than side on were quite contrary to Committee members' expectations and field experience. Given the considerable distance involved, the Committee felt that other possibilities could not be rigorously excluded by the details provided and that at least one important candidate family was not even discussed by the observer. The occurrence of Black Guillemots on freshwater was less of a problem. Although very rare, there is clear precedent for the occurrence of single Black Guillemots on lakes in the northeast, several of which have been well documented. Based on the exceptional number of birds involved, the fact that they were moving across the lake in an uncharacteristic fashion and the above mentioned flaws in the description, the Committee voted not to accept this unique report.

Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*)

2005-24-A One, Van Cortland Park, **Westchester**, 16 Apr.

The extensive database of arrival dates collected and published in *The Kingbird* indicates that the large majority of Willow Flycatchers arrive on their NYS breeding grounds in the later half of May. Thus this report from Van Cortland Park in the outskirts of New York City would be unusually early. The observer provided a sketch of the bird, suggesting that it was indeed an *Empidonax* flycatcher, but the level of detail was insufficient to determine the species.

Bicknell's Thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*)

2005-83-A One, Webster Park, Webster, **Monroe**, 9 Sep.

2005-84-A One, Hamlin Beach State Park, Hamlin, **Monroe**, 19 & 27 Sep.

These two reports relied on the interpretation of daytime calls given by *Catharus* thrushes grounded near the shore of Lake Ontario during fall migration. The birds themselves were not seen. The observer had previously spent time carefully reviewing tapes of nocturnal flight calls and considered these daytime calls inconsistent with those of Gray-cheeked Thrush (*C. minimus*), which were noted separately. Banding studies indicate that Bicknell's Thrush is a rare fall migrant in the western NY regions and approximately only 1% of the "Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's" Thrushes captured in Region 2 appear to be Bicknell's. It is thus conceivable that the identification of these two was correct, however, the Committee was concerned that the reliability of the vocal criteria used to distinguish between the two species is not well-established and that calls are likely to vary, especially if comparing nocturnal flight notes with vocalizations made by landed birds during daylight. The Committee also lamented the absence of documentation in the form of recordings, recognizing that even the ablest ear must have some uncertainty. That said, the observer is to be credited for trying to push the envelope in terms of using call notes as field identification criteria to aid in separating these extremely similar and skulking species. Combining the study of call notes (preferably recorded) with visual inspection and photography

could be of value in understanding the migration patterns of these very closely related thrushes.

Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*)

2005-48-A One, Champlain, **Clinton**, 13 Sep.

This small bird was first noticed when it perched on a fence post alongside a wet pasture on the shore of Lake Champlain. The observer initially suspected an American Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*) but, on viewing the bird by telescope, noted bright yellow undertail coverts. The yellowish underparts became paler towards the breast and on the lower chest the dull wash was overlaid with brownish speckles giving the impression of discontinuous streaks. The flight was described as undulating, typical of wagtails, but no flight call was heard. The crown appeared to be darker than the olive-gray back, with an off-white superciliary stripe that extended well behind the eye. A dark cheek patch, faint malar stripe and pipit-like impression were also noted. The wings were dark with whitish streaks and lacked prominent wingbars. The tail was black but not especially long. After allowing a few seconds of study by telescope, the bird dropped into the weedy vegetation and was not seen again. The observer acknowledged that the report probably lacked sufficient detail and documentation for acceptance as a first state record but correctly felt that it was worth archiving. The Committee felt that although aspects of the description were consistent with a yellow-type wagtail, there were several other species that also needed to be considered, such as “Western” Palm Warbler (*Dendroica palmarum palmarum*).

Swainson’s Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*)

2005-25-A One, New Suffolk Ave, Cutchogue, **Suffolk**, 12 May.

This report comes from a private yard on the North Fork of Long Island and falls within the timeframe of the unprecedented incursion of southeastern land birds to New York City and central Long Island, during which a total of five Swainson’s Warblers were reported (Mitra and Lindsay 2005; Veit et al. 2005). The bird was seen in the open for a few seconds before flying across the street into a hedge and vanishing for good. The Committee agreed that the details noted were generally consistent with Swainson’s Warbler but felt that, considering the great rarity of the species involved, some additional points were needed to firmly rule out Worm-eating Warbler (*Helminthos vermivorum*) and other potential confusion species.

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

2005-15-A One, 6 1/2 Station Road, Goshen, **Orange**, 9 Apr.

The description of this sparrow was suggestive of a sharp-tailed sparrow, but it did not provide enough critical detail and analysis to exclude several other possibilities. The inland location renders Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*A. caudacutus*) very unlikely, but comparison of the bird to this species would have been very helpful. Nelson’s Sharp-tailed Sparrow is a very late migrant in spring, typically passing through NY in late May. Although the marshes in Goshen

might provide suitable habitat for an individual of this species to overwinter, such a record would be extremely unusual.

“Ipswich” Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis princeps*)

2005-82-A One, Stone Ridge, Ulster, 29 Dec.

The distinctive “Ipswich” Sparrow occurs as a regular winter visitor to coastal sections of NY, strongly favoring sandy areas close to the ocean. Inland sightings are decidedly rare and require careful documentation to exclude other subspecies of Savannah Sparrow or even other sparrow species. The Committee felt that this description of a large, pale Savannah Sparrow may have been an “Ipswich” but that the incomplete details provided were not sufficient to safely rule out other possibilities.

Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*)

2005-29-A One male, one female, Stillwater Lake, Fahnestock State Park, Putnam, 20 May.

The observer reported a pair of Black-headed Grosbeaks. Neither bird was adequately described nor were any photos taken. The first bird sighted was described as a female, and the Committee cautions that separation of female and immature Rose-breasted (*P. ludovicianus*) and Black-headed Grosbeaks requires significant study. The scant details provided did not allow an assessment of what species this could have been. Under the behavior section of the report, the observer states that the female was joined by a male, but no description of this second bird was provided.

2004 Report Not Accepted

Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*)

2004-89-A One, Mt. Loretto Unique Area, Staten Island, **Richmond**, 13 Oct.

Although very spare, this report had two important virtues: it was a candid field impression from the time of the observation, and it described several field marks of Yellow Rail. The report, which came to NYSARC as an email sent to a local listserve, is, however, very much lacking in many important details needed to separate this bird from Sora (*Porzana carolina*) or other possible species. Given how rarely Yellow Rail is sighted in this state, the Committee felt that the sketchy details provided were inadequate for acceptance.

1907 Report Not Accepted

Eurasian Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)

1907-1-A One specimen, from specimen collection at Rutgers University, labeled as NY 1907 (Blake Mathys).

Blake Mathys provided the Committee with two photographs, one each of the ventral and dorsal aspects of a Eurasian Kestrel specimen that he had uncovered whilst reorganizing the bird skin collection at Rutgers University. The specimen carried two labels, one a Smithsonian Institution label with the hand-written *The Kingbird* 2008 December; 58 (4)

notation "New York, August 3rd, 1907" with "Sep?" written elsewhere on the tag, and a second label from the private collection of B. S. Bowdish with the penciled notation "*Falco tinnunculus* 64410." Beecher S. Bowdish was a nineteenth and early twentieth century ornithologist who collected specimens, eggs and nests and published a number of ornithological papers. He is known for his studies of Puerto Rican birds, was an early convert to the merits of banding rather than collecting, and was one of the founders of the New Jersey Audubon Society. Although born in Phelps, NY, he resided for most of his life in Demarest, New Jersey, and died on 21 Feb 1963 at the advanced age of 91.

The photographs were forwarded to Dick Forsman, an expert on Eurasian raptors, who confirmed the identification to species and suggested that this was most likely an immature male. The Committee concurred with the identification and turned its attention to the question of whether the specimen was secured in NY or some other location. The Smithsonian was contacted but has no record of this specimen. The fact that the Smithsonian tag lacks an identification number and there is no record of the specimen being transferred to the Rutgers collection is an indication that it probably was never actually part of the Smithsonian collection, even though there are other specimens from Bowdish. Beecher Bowdish's journals are held by the New York State Museum in Albany, but there is no mention of a Eurasian Kestrel specimen in the notes in that timeframe. However the notes do affirm that he was working in the NY and New Jersey areas. Along the same lines, his journals make no reference to the handwritten identification number he apparently assigned to this specimen.

Given the lack of a clear indication as to where the bird was collected, the Committee decided that it could not be assumed to be a wild bird taken in the field in NYS. A likely scenario is that Beecher Bowdish received this specimen from someone else and had added it to his collection. Given his publications and involvement in ornithological research, he would have been aware of the rarity of this species in North America.

CONTRIBUTORS

Seth Ausubel, Brenda Best, Gail M. Black, Shane Blodgett, Thomas W. Burke, Rafael G. Campos-Ramirez, Mark Chao, Ed Coyle, Dorothy Crumb, Steven Daniels, Willie D'Anna, Gregg Dashnau, Mark Dedea, Leonard DeFrancisco, Bill Dietz, Dean DiTommaso, Julie Dowd, David W. Eib, Ken Feustel, Howard Fischer, Brendan Fogarty, Melvin Freeborough, Douglas J. Futuyma, Yolanda Garcia, Dick Gershon, Arie Gilbert, Paul H. Gillen, Jr., Douglas Gochfeld, Paul A. Guris, Andy Guthrie, Richard Guthrie, Nikolas Haass, Michael Harvey, John Heidecker, Roger Heintz, Winnie Hettinger, Michael Higgiston, David Hoag, Rob Jett, William E. Krueger, Ed Lam, Gerald S. Lazarczyk, Daniel Lebbin, Tim Lentz, Patricia Lindsay, Martin Lofgren, Jean Loscalzo, Curtis Marantz, Kevin McGann, Jay McGowan, Kevin McGowan, Matthew Medler, Charles E. Mitchell, Shaibal S. Mitra, Michael Morgante, Steve Nanz, David Nyzio, Marilyn Pecoraro-O'Connell, Gerard Phillips, Bill Purcell, Barbara Putnam,

Jann Randell, R. Gilbert Randell, Chris Reidy, Dana Rohleder, Mason Ryan, Seymour Schiff, Michael Shanley, Lorraine Sherman, Dominic Sherony, Sean Sime, Jeanne Skelly, Gerry Smith, Christine Sousa, Angel Souto, Charles C. Spagnoli, Robert G. Spahn, Lloyd Spitalnik, Birgit Stanford, Rex Stanford, David F. Suggs, Robert Sundell, Jeremy Taylor, Chris Tessaglia-Hymes, Diane Tessaglia-Hymes, Andrew VanNorstrand, Richard R. Veit, Tom Wasilewski, William W. Watson, T. Michael White, Angus Wilson, Seth Wollney.

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE NEW YORK STATE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE:

Angus Wilson (Chair), Jeanne Skelly (Secretary),
Jeffrey S. Bolsinger, Thomas W. Burke, Willie D'Anna, Andrew Guthrie,
Shaibal S. Mitra and Dominic Sherony.

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