

REPORT OF THE NEW YORK STATE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE FOR 2006

The New York State Avian Records Committee (hereafter “NYSARC” or the “Committee”) reviewed 113 reports from 2006, involving 73 separate sightings, and an additional three reports from previous years. Reports were received from all over the state, with 33 of the 62 counties represented. The number of reports accompanied by photographs remains high. The Committee wishes to remind readers that reports submitted to eBird, listserves, local bird clubs, rare bird alerts (RBAs) and *Kingbird* Regional Editors are not necessarily forwarded to NYSARC, and doing so remains the responsibility of the observer. The growing use of the internet and mobile phones has had a very positive impact on the timely dissemination of rare bird sightings and has made it easier for birders to locate birds found by others. The Committee has always held that receipt of multiple independent reports provides a much fuller documentation of the sighting and can in some cases increase the likelihood of acceptance. We therefore urge ALL observers, not just the finder, to submit written reports and/or photographs. The names of the 91 contributors that submitted materials (written reports, photographs and sketches) are listed alongside accepted reports and again at the end of this document. Where possible, the name(s) of the original finder(s) is (are) included in the narratives. Production of this Annual Report is a team effort involving a large number of people. In addition to the contributors mentioned above, several *Kingbird* Regional Editors have made valued efforts in cajoling reluctant observers into preparing and submitting documentation. The review process has also been aided by thoughtful commentaries from a number of experts in bird identification and distribution, including Louis Bevier, Alvaro Jaramillo, Kevin McGowan, Steve Mlodinow, and Peter Pyle. On behalf of the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA), we thank this army of willing volunteers for help in documenting the rare birds of New York State (NYS).

HOW TO SUBMIT REPORTS

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

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

Here, a list of species requested for review by NYSARC (The Review List) is provided along with illustrated copies of previous annual reports. The Committee is very grateful to Carena Pooth (NYSOA Vice President and website administrator) for updating and continuously improving the NYSARC web site. An on-line reporting form allows observers to compose a written report and attach up to five digital image files. Documentation (written reports

and photographs) and any other correspondence for the Committee can also be sent via email or regular mail to:

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COMMITTEE NEWS

Voting on the majority of the 2006 reports was finalized at the NYSARC Annual Meeting held at the Greene County Accelerator facility in Coxsackie on 13 September 2008. Once again, we are indebted to Rich Guthrie, who very kindly made the arrangements for us to use this comfortable and convenient venue, and we extend our warm thanks to him. One discussion topic at the meeting was the changing potential of Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*) to occur as a wild vagrant in NYS. Individuals are reported almost every year, and although there are rarely questions about the identification, the Committee has wrestled with the possibility that some might be escapes or deliberate releases from captivity rather than true wild birds that have reached North America unaided. Like many other state and provincial records committees, NYSARC has taken a relatively conservative stance on this difficult question, accepting most reports of Barnacle Geese under the qualifier “origins uncertain.” As discussed below, recent increases in wild populations of Barnacle Geese wintering in Western Europe and concordant increases in the numbers of sightings across northeastern North America, combined with a recent band recovery from Ontario, have prompted the Committee to reappraise this issue.

HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights of the 2006 Annual Report include an adult **Western Gull** (*Larus occidentalis*) encountered during an organized pelagic voyage off Long Island and male **Broad-billed Hummingbirds** (*Cynanthus latirostris*) in both Wayne and Tioga Counties. Both the gull and hummingbirds represent new additions to the New York State Avian Checklist, which now stands at 470 species. Other highlights of this report are the second state record of **Hammond's Flycatcher** (*Empidonax hammondi*) from Westchester Co. and an accommodating trio of **Fulvous Whistling-Ducks** (*Dendrocygna bicolor*) at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge in Queens Co., the first accepted occurrence in the state since 1991.

2006 Reports Accepted

Fulvous Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna bicolor*)

2006-16-A/G Three, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, **Queens**, 28-29 May, 4 Jun (Joseph O'Connell, Sr., Alan W. Wells, Rex & Birgit Stanford, Ed Coyle, Elliotte Rusty Harold, Shaibal S. Mitra, Yolanda Garcia; ph J. O'Connell, Sr., A. Wells (Fig. F, p. 54), R. Stanford, E. Coyle, E. Harold; sketch Y. Garcia)

These three Fulvous Whistling-Ducks were discovered by Joseph O'Connell, Sr. on 28 May and frequented the weedy margins of the refuge's West Pond until 5 Jun, during which time they were seen by a large number of observers. This is the first accepted record for NYS since 1991 and comes 41 years after three birds spent a remarkably similar period (29 May-4 Jun 1965) at Jamaica Bay. Fulvous Whistling-Ducks breed on the gulf coastal plain of Texas and Louisiana and at scattered localities in southern California and Florida. In general they are resident or make only short-distance migrations but, like other whistling-ducks, are also prone to irruptions in which small flocks appear well beyond their normal range. A photograph by Scott Elowitz has been published in *North American Birds* 2006 60(3): 355.

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

2006-8-A One, Great Swamp Conservancy Overlook, Canastota, Town of Lenox, **Madison**, 9 Mar (Brenda Best; ph B. Best)

2006-15-A One, Tilly Foster Farm Conservation Area, **Putnam**, 30 Dec and 2, 16 Jan 2007 (Douglas Gochfeld; ph D. Gochfeld)

The status of Barnacle Goose in NYS has long been a topic of uncertainty, if not controversy, due to difficulties in distinguishing natural vagrants from formerly captive birds. Even though there is good reason to think that a handful of wild Barnacle Geese winter every year in the northeast, the species remains fairly common in captivity and there are occasional reports of escapes or deliberate releases of unwanted captive-reared birds. The Committee has therefore taken a conservative approach, accepting the identification but considering the origins to be uncertain. Acceptance of both 2006 reports without this qualifier reflects a significant shift in thinking. As outlined in a published article by Committee member Dominic Sherony, there has been a steady increase in the number of sightings of Barnacle Geese in the northeast during the past 10-15 years (Sherony 2008). This parallels a quite substantial increase in the Barnacle Goose populations that winter in Western Europe, beneficiaries of extensive conservation efforts in several European countries and the dramatic effects of recent climate change on the available nesting habitat in the arctic. The population nesting in northeastern Greenland—the one perhaps most likely to reach NYS—increased from 38,400 in 1993 to 56,386 in 2003 and may have grown even further in the interim (Owen 1997, Worden *et al.* 2004). Canada Geese (*B. canadensis*) have also continued to expand their range northwards along the west coast of Greenland, and these might serve as a “carrier species” that brings small numbers of Barnacles with them on their southward journey to wintering grounds in the mid-Atlantic states. More solid support for the occurrence of wild Barnacles in North America comes from two banding

recoveries: a bird shot in Newfoundland in 1981 that had been banded in Svalbard, Norway in July 1977 (although note that this is a separate population from the Greenland birds) and another that was shot on the Ottawa River, Ontario, in 2005 that had been banded the year before on Islay, a mountainous island off the west coast of Scotland. Renowned for its malt whiskies, the snow-free agricultural fields of Islay provide an important wintering site for Greenland-nesting Barnacle Geese (ca. 35,000) and Greater White-fronted Geese (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) (ca. 15,000), and Islay is also a premier spot for vagrant North American geese, hinting at regular exchange across the Atlantic. The recovery of an Islay-banded Barnacle Goose so close to the NY border provides a particularly compelling link and, when combined with the recent upturn in Barnacle reports, suggests a greater percentage of natural vagrants than in the past. It is hoped that birders will continue to fully document all Barnacle Goose sightings in NYS irrespective of the location or season. This information will allow us to better understand the status and movements of these attractive geese in our area. Attention should be paid to the presence or absence of leg bands (many wild birds are so marked) and to the other types of geese or waterfowl that they consort with. While Barnacle Geese are most often seen with Canada Geese, the flocks may also contain Cackling Geese (*B. hutchinsii*), Snow Geese (*Chen caerulescens*) or Greater White-fronted Geese, and this information should be included with reports.

Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*)

2006-42-A Three, Hamlin Beach SP, **Monroe**, 30 Oct (Dominic Sherony; ph D. Sherony) This trio of "Richardson's" Cackling Geese, originally discovered by Robert G. Spahn, was studied and photographed with a flock of 200 Canada Geese (*B. canadensis*). Their significantly smaller size, diminutive bill, frostier plumage and hint of neck collar are typical of this population of Cackling Geese. A photograph showing one of these birds has been published (*North American Birds* 2007 61(1): 42). Many "Richardson's" Cackling Geese follow the Mississippi flyway between their wintering grounds on the plains of west Texas and Oklahoma and their nesting grounds in the central Canadian arctic. Small numbers are found across NYS every winter, especially in western NY, where small flocks are not unusual. The frequency is such that NYSARC has agreed to drop Cackling Goose from the review list (NYSARC 2007 meeting), although the Committee would welcome documentation of any subspecies other than nominate *hutchinsii* (Richardson's).

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)

2006-4-A/D One, Cayuga Lake, Sheldrake Point Park, Sheldrake, **Seneca**, 28 Jan-11 Feb (Anne Marie Johnson, Mark Dettling, Bernie Carr, Michael J. Andersen; ph A. Johnson, Timothy A. Johnson, Matt Victoria (Fig. G, p. 55))

This basic-plumaged Pacific Loon was discovered by Anne Marie Johnson and Timothy Johnson and subsequently reported by many other observers during its two-week stay. The Pacific Loon was occasionally seen alongside Common Loons (*G. immer*), offering valuable comparison. The detailed written descriptions were complemented by an outstanding collection of photographs. *The Kingbird* 2009 March; 59 (1)

The very similar Arctic Loon (*G. arctica*) was firmly ruled out by the absence of white flank feathers above the waterline and the presence of a well-defined black "chinstrap."

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)

2006-65-A One, Lake Champlain off Port Kent, **Essex**, 25 Dec (Dana C. Rohleder; ph D. Rohleder)

2006-67-A One, on the St. Lawrence River at Morristown, **St. Lawrence**, 25 Sep (Robert E. Long; sketch R. Long)

There were credible reports of a Western Grebe in the Port Kent area of Lake Champlain on 29 and 30 Oct but the bird was not photographed until 25 Dec. Although grainy, the four digiscoped images that accompanied the report clearly show an *Aechmophorus* grebe. Although the question of Clarke's Grebe (*A. clarkii*) was not explicitly addressed in the narrative, the images gave no hint of this species, and the Committee concurred with the identification as a Western based on the written details. The St. Lawrence grebe was first noted close to the New York bank but flew further out, where it remained for 30 minutes before drifting downstream and out of sight.

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)

2006-10-A Four, Dunkirk Harbor, **Chautauqua**, 14 Apr (William W. Watson; ph J. Pawlicki)

These four American White Pelicans were observed loafing on the water and on the breakwater wall of the harbor at Dunkirk. Recognizing the sustained increase in the number of American White Pelican sightings from western and central NY, the Committee no longer solicits reports except for the marine region, where the species remains very uncommon (NYSARC 2006).

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

2006-28-A One, private residence, Waterloo, **Seneca**, late Mar to end Jun (Kim Maines; ph K. Maines)

2006-32-A One, Perch River WMA, **Jefferson**, 12 Jul (Jeff Bolsinger)

Although a written description was not provided of the Waterloo bird, the two color photographs clearly identify this as an adult Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. This species has appeared with increasing frequency in western and central NYS, though it is uncommon for one to stay in an area for such an extended period. The well-described adult at Perch River was studied as it walked around on a large expanse of mud created by the draining of Stones Mill Pond to allow for repairs to a water control facility.

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*)

2006-12-A/B One, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, **Queens**, 27, 29 Apr (Sean Sime, Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Sime)

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge remains the most reliable site in the state for White-faced Ibis; this is a reflection of the numbers of Glossy Ibis (*P. falcinellus*) that use the extensive tidal marshes throughout the summer months and the fact that ibis can be scrutinized at relatively close range when they visit

the fresh and brackish ponds to bathe and drink.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

2006-60-A One, sub-adult, Great Gull Island, Suffolk, 19 Jun (Joseph DiCostanzo)

When first glimpsed, the kite was being pursued by an irate mob of a thousand or so Common (*Sterna hirundo*) and Roseate (*S. dougallii*) Terns, which proceeded to chase the unfortunate raptor from one end of the 17-acre island to the other! Several additional researchers working in the tern colony independently noticed the kite and its cloud of pursuers. Great Gull Island is situated between Plum and Fishers Islands, and together these form a loose island chain connecting the North Fork of Long Island to the mainland near the Connecticut/Rhode Island border. Interestingly, this is the third record of Mississippi Kite from Great Gull Island, the first being on 25 May 1991 (NYSARC 1991-41-A) and the second on 26 Jul 1999 (NYSARC 1999-26-A).

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*)

2006-7-A One, adult, East Road, Savannah Mucklands, Seneca, 4 Feb (Michael J. Andersen; ph Brian L. Sullivan, Christopher L. Wood)

This impressive Gyr Falcon was studied by a group of birders as it perched in a tree on the edge of the Savannah Mucklands. The significant size and bulk of the falcon were made more evident by comparison to a Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) and a Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) sitting in the same tree. The falcon was also studied in flight and on the ground alongside the same harrier. Photos of the extended legs confirm the absence of falconer's jesses or bands. During the winter, the farmland surrounding Cayuga Lake attracts large numbers of migrant waterfowl, including many thousands of Snow Geese (*Chen caerulescens*). A similar gray-phase adult Gyr Falcon was observed on the other side of the lake in the previous winter, and the 2006 bird is conceivably the same returning bird.

Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*)

2006-53-A One, in a field near Ellicottville, Cattaraugus, 10 Sep (Frank Voelker)

This diminutive rail was flushed from a grass and wild flower meadow whilst it was being mowed with a tractor. The bird rose an estimated 12-14 feet and traveled 25 feet before dropping back into the vegetation. Described as a dark starling-sized bird, the observer Frank Voelker also noted its extended neck and dangling legs. His interest piqued, Voelker dismounted his tractor and re-spotted the bird walking through the vegetation, where he was able to note the white fringes to the otherwise dark feathers. Approaching to within five feet, he could see buff below the tail, a valuable field mark that is not described in field guides. Black Rail has become extremely rare in western NY, coinciding with a general severe decline in the inland population over the past 50 years. Nowadays, the species is generally thought of as a rare to uncommon inhabitant of coastal saltmarshes (Eddelman *et al.* 1994). However, Black Rails are found quite regularly in several mid-western states during the late summer, when they are presumably in the process of migrating to coastal areas for the winter.

King Rail (*Rallus elegans*)

2006-11-A/B One, JFK Wildlife Sanctuary, Tobay Beach, **Nassau**, 17 Apr (Rex & Birgit Stanford, Sean Sime; ph R. Stanford, S. Sime)

2006-66-A One, Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside, **Nassau**, 8 Jun to mid-Aug (Michael A. Farina; ph M. Farina)

The Tobay King Rail, first spotted by Dave Klauber on 16 Apr, pleased many birders as it often paraded around in the open along the pond outflow to at least 3 May. Mike Farina first noticed the Oceanside King Rail on 8 June in a tidal saltmarsh on the south shore of Long Island. At this point the rail seemed to have already paired with a Clapper Rail (*R. longirostris*) and was observed defending a nest containing 10 eggs a few days later. Subsequently the adults were seen tending to three chicks into mid-August, when the King Rail was last sighted. King Rail remains rare in NYS. Although King Rail is more inclined to use freshwater marshes, other mixed pairings at coastal sites have been documented. For more details and spectacular color photographs of the mixed pair, see Farina (2006).

American Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*)

2006-57-A One, Great Kills Park, Gateway National Recreation Area, Staten Island, **Richmond**, 6-8 Dec (David Jordet; ph D. Jordet)

The early winter date of this juvenile American Golden-Plover is notable. American Golden-Plover, like its Pacific (*P. fulva*) counterpart, is a long-distance migrant, with most individuals spending the boreal winter on the southern expanses of South America. However, a few do not travel that far and will winter in Florida or Central America. This excellent report carefully described the plumage and structure of the bird, ruling out all other *Pluvialis* plovers. The reasons for its delayed departure are unclear but might reflect some underlying pathology. The observer noted that the plover ran without difficulty, flew strongly, and was seen eating an earthworm.

Wilson's Plover (*Charadrius wilsonia*)

2006-20-A One, Robert Moses SP, **Suffolk**, 27 Apr (Annie McIntyre)

2006-22-A/B One, Pike's Beach, Westhampton Dunes, **Suffolk**, 17 Jun (John Fritz, Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra, Gail Benson)

The Pike's Beach individual was discovered by John Fritz and seen by a number of fortunate observers working the Moriches Inlet area that day. The two written descriptions and photographs by Shai Mitra and Gail Benson clearly indicate that this was an adult male. Other similar *Charadrius* plovers were duly considered and ruled out. In May 1999, this same sandy stretch on the bayside of the narrow barrier beach hosted another Wilson's Plover (NYSARC 1999-82-A). The Robert Moses SP bird was noticed by workers setting up protective fencing around a nesting colony of Piping Plovers (*C. melodus*), and again this bird proved to be a one-day wonder. The timing of both reports fits with the emerging trend for Wilson's Plover sightings in which lone individuals (often but not always males) wander north onto Long Island in the late spring and early summer, often appearing briefly in or near Piping Plover colonies.

“Western” Willet (*Tringa semipalmata inornatus*)

2006-21-A One, Cupsogue County Park, **Suffolk**, 18 Jun (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

This well described *inornatus* Willet from the sand flats near the Moriches Inlet is appreciably earlier than the expected mid July arrival on the coast and raises the intriguing question of whether some *inornatus* arrive in NYS in the spring and remain all summer, paralleling the non-breeding Short-billed Dowitchers (*Limnodromus griseus*) and various other shorebirds that also linger through the summer. Remarkably, there is no prior documented record of *inornatus* from Long Island during spring. In the past few years, our knowledge of the criteria for distinguishing “Eastern” (*T. s. semipalmatus*) and “Western” Willets (*T. s. inornatus*) in the field has advanced significantly, prompting astute observers to re-evaluate the temporal and geographic distribution of the two subspecies in the state. Their observations suggest that larger and paler *inornatus*, which breeds in the prairie states and provinces, is the expected taxon inland and during winter and is a common southbound migrant along the coast, arriving when locally breeding *semipalmatus* are abundant (Lindsay and Mitra 2007). By early fall (Sep), *inornatus* often outnumber *semipalmatus* (Mitra 2005), which are thought to migrate to the Caribbean and South America at the close of the nesting season. Even so, the status of “Western” Willets during spring and the timing of their southbound arrival on the coast are worthy of careful attention and reporting to Regional Editors. Similarly, the identity of inland and winter sightings is worthy of careful scrutiny at the Regional level.

Sabine’s Gull (*Xema sabini*)

2006-31-A One juvenile, Democrat Point, Fire Island, **Suffolk**, 3 Sep (Shaibal S. Mitra)

2006-35-A One juvenile, Lake Champlain at Mullen Bay, Moriah, **Essex**, 23 Sep (Ted Murin)

The Fire Island Sabine’s Gull was spotted by Shai Mitra and Patricia Lindsay as they watched for seabirds pushed inshore by the passage of tropical storm *Ernesto*. After crossing Cuba, the storm skimmed the southern tip of Florida and then, after a brief sojourn over the Atlantic Ocean, made landfall again in North Carolina and proceeded inland (Davis *et al.* 2007). Another juvenile Sabine’s Gull was observed in Ithaca on 3 Sep. The Lake Champlain Sabine’s Gull, another juvenile, was observed by Ted Murin, JoAnn Lafayette, Bob Budliger and Heidi Rich as it flew over the middle of Lake Champlain, crossing the VT/NY state line in Mullen Bay. It is likely that small numbers of Sabine’s Gulls make their way through the Great Lakes en route to the Atlantic Ocean from their arctic breeding grounds and may follow natural water courses such as the St. Lawrence Seaway, Lake Champlain and the Hudson River.

Western Gull (*Larus occidentalis*)

2006-68-A/B One adult, at sea [39° 52' 52" N, 72° 38' 43" W], approx. 60 nautical miles from Jones Inlet, **Nassau**, 11 Feb (Paul A. Guris, Angus Wilson; ph P. Guris, A. Wilson, Andy Guthrie (Fig. G, p. 55), Ed Coyle, Martin Lofgren)

With no accepted records east of Chicago, and with various potentially similar-looking hybrid combinations being equally or more plausible than the real thing, it would take an extraordinarily well-documented Western Gull to have any

chance of being accepted for any state in the northeast. Even then, the bird would likely have to be a “classic example,” perfect in nearly every respect, to garner the comfort level necessary to accept such a record. Remarkably, this gull, discovered off the coast of Long Island during a pelagic trip organized by Paul Guris and See Life Paulagics, was just such a bird! Found by one of the trip leaders, Frank Gallo, this white-headed adult was first noticed as it sat on the water with a group of Great Black-backed (*L. marinus*) and Herring (*L. argentatus smithsonianus*) Gulls, offering direct comparison. The area is a well known fishing spot and the water depth was 30 fathoms (approx. 180 feet). Although first called out as a probable Lesser Black-back Gull (*L. fuscus*), the observers very quickly realized that this was not correct. The structure seemed wrong, and the pink rather than yellow or yellowish leg color did not fit with the alternate or near-alternate plumage. Chum was used to bring the bird very close to the boat, at times within 10-15 yards, allowing close study of the bright yellow/orange bill and photo-documentation of the yellow orbital ring. During the 15-20 minute encounter, the gull was seen well by everyone onboard, including several members of this Committee, and it was extensively photographed. After returning to shore, a preliminary analysis by Shai Mitra and comments from several observers were posted on Angus Wilson’s OceanWanderers web site, prompting an in-depth discussion on the ID-Frontiers listserve by gull enthusiasts from all over North America. Understandably, most commentators were incredulous that this could be a Western Gull given the seemingly unlikely locality, but most agreed that this west coast species appeared to be the best fit for the gull under study.

The first-round deliberations by the Committee brought up no concerns with the identification. However, recognizing the extreme variability of large gulls and the possibility of hybrids, the Committee opted to send the documentation to several west coast birders who know the species extremely well. Of these, Alvaro Jaramillo, Steve Mlodinow and Peter Pyle were gracious enough to look over all of the documentation and to provide written comments, which the committee then considered in its final vote. Past Committee member Kevin McGowan kindly agreed to serve as a seventh voter, as Angus Wilson opted not to vote on his own submission. None of the three west coast reviewers had any concerns with the identification of this bird as a Western Gull and, as it must for a first state record, the Committee voted unanimously in favor of acceptance. The photographs and comments gathered during the internet discussions are now archived with NYSARC. Paul Guris also submitted a collection of photographs together with an extensive written analysis of the identification. In preparing the report, he visited the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, where he studied and photographed several skins. Photographs by Martin Lofgren have been published in *North American Birds* (2006 60(2)), including on the cover, and in *The Kingbird* (2006 56(2):186).

There are two subspecies of Western Gull, nominate *occidentalis*, which breeds from southern Washington to central California, and the more southerly *wymani*, which breeds from central California south into the Baja California peninsula of western Mexico. The west coast reviewers offered no

recommendation as to which subspecies might have been involved with the New York bird. Non-breeding and winter adult Western Gulls are found further north into British Columbia, further south to the tip of Baja California, and slightly further east to the northern end of the Gulf of California (Howell and Dunn 2007). A coastal specialist, Western Gulls are routinely found well offshore, especially in areas of active fishing, and the species tends not to stray far from saltwater and occurs rarely far inland. The most easterly records prior to the New York bird are from southern Lake Michigan (Wright and Komarek 1928) and southeastern Texas (Howell and Dunn 2007). A long-lived bird that ranged from Alabama to Florida, 1977-1990, was thought by some to be a Western Gull, but many believed it may have been a hybrid (Duncan 1982; Stevenson and Anderson 1994; Howell and Dunn 2007).

California Gull (*Larus californicus*)

2006-50-A/C One, adult, Niagara River, Town of Lewiston, **Niagara**, 18 Nov & 31 Dec (William W. Watson, Willie D'Anna, Curtis A. Marantz; ph Sean Sime)

For the past several winters the churning waters below the Adam Beck Power Dam on the Niagara River have hosted at least one if not more California Gulls. These reports describe adult birds in basic plumage seen in the same area of the river on a variety of days. Although not proven, it is likely that the reports pertain to the same wintering individual.

Sooty Tern (*Onychoprion fuscatus*)

2006-30-A One, Democrat Point, Fire Island, **Suffolk**, 3 Sep (Shaibal S. Mitra)

This juvenile Sooty Tern was spotted by Shai Mitra, Patricia Lindsay and John Fritz as it entered the Fire Island Inlet. As discussed above in relation to the Sabine's Gull report, the remnants of tropical storm *Ernesto* passed to the west of New York on 2 Sep and were responsible for a large displacement of seabirds throughout the mid-Atlantic region. In excess of one hundred Sooty Terns were reported from across a large swath stretching from North Carolina to Connecticut. On 2 Sep, multiple Sooty Terns were found in Pennsylvania, 11 were counted flying past Cape May, NJ, and a juvenile was found in Stamford, CT (Davis *et al.* 2007).

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

2006-26-A/B One, 1st summer (1S), Cupsogue CP, near Moriches Inlet, **Suffolk**, 2 Jul (Shane Blodgett, Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Blodgett)

2006-70-A One, adult, Cupsogue CP, **Suffolk**, 29 May (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

2006-71-A One, 2nd summer (2S), Cupsogue CP, **Suffolk**, 29 May (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

2006-72-A One, 2S, Cupsogue CP, **Suffolk**, 9 Jul (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

2006-73-A One, 1S, Cupsogue CP, **Suffolk**, 9 Jul (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

2006-74-A One, 1S, Cupsogue CP, **Suffolk**, 8, 9 & 16 Jul (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

2006-75-A One, 1S, Cupsogue CP, **Suffolk**, 9 Jul (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

2006-76-A One, 1S, Cupsogue CP, **Suffolk**, 9 Jul (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

Regular study by Shai Mitra and others of terns roosting on exposed sand flats at Cupsogue County Park, on the bayside just east of Moriches Inlet, has revealed the regular occurrence of non-breeding Arctic Terns, a species that breeds as *The Kingbird* 2009 March; 59 (1)

close to NYS as Massachusetts but for which there had only been three proven records in NYS prior to 1975. This excellent series of reports documents a number of individuals, all of which were extensively photographed; most of these were determined to be sub-adult birds in either their second (1st summer) or third (2nd summer) calendar year. By carefully noting plumage differences it became clear that multiple birds were visiting this one spot on successive days rather than there being a recurring individual or two. Awareness of the regular occurrence of non-breeding Arctic Terns around Long Island's ocean inlets has grown in several stages, beginning with P. A. Buckley's observations around Shinnecock and Sagaponack inlets in the early 1980s (Cooper 1998), followed by a series of records from Fire Island Inlet 1999-2000, and continuing with the recent series of reports from Moriches Inlet and occasionally elsewhere. Analysis of the historical, geographical, seasonal, and age/plumage trends in Arctic Tern records south of Massachusetts suggests that improved detection has been a major factor in the increasing frequency of records (see pp. 2-11), but it is also possible that we are witnessing a real jump in the frequency of occurrence, as was observed on Monomoy Island, MA, in the summers between 1975 and 1980 (Veit and Petersen 1993).

Common Murre (*Uria aalge*)

2006-46-A 20, at sea, various spots southwest of Jones Inlet, Nassau, 11 Feb (Paul A. Guris; ph Angus Wilson)

Scattered groups of Common Murres in various plumages were found during an organized pelagic trip aboard the *Capt. Lou VII* out of Freeport, Long Island, along with a Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia*) (see below) and nine birds identified only as "murre species." The first Common Murre was found approximately 7.9 miles from Jones Inlet [40° 28' 36" N, 73° 31' 14" W] and the last at 35.5 miles [40° 07' 53" N, 73° 15' 23" W]. The first 14 birds were all seen in relatively shallow water (12-18 fathoms, 70-110 feet) and the remainder in slightly deeper water (20-22 fathoms, 120-130 feet). The water temperature was 42°-43°F. Recent observations from shore and at sea hint at profound changes in the winter distribution of several alcid species off the New England and Mid-Atlantic states (Veit and Guris 2008). A marked increase in the numbers of Razorbills (*Alca torda*) wintering in the waters around Long Island since about 1990 has been amply documented by land-based observers, and a growing body of data from Long Island, New Jersey and Rhode Island reveals a similar increase in the numbers of Common Murres offshore (Schiff and Wollin 1995; Lindsay and Mitra 2006). Interestingly, this is balanced by an apparent decline in the numbers of Thick-billed Murres, formerly the more numerous of the two murres in the region. The 20 or more Common Murres recorded on the 11 Feb pelagic represent a single day maximum for NYS.

Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia*)

2006-45-A One, at sea [40° 30' 01" N, 73° 32' 07" W], ca. 6.1 miles southwest of Jones Inlet, Nassau, 11 Feb (Paul A. Guris)

This Thick-billed Murre was found at the beginning of an organized pelagic excursion to the Hudson Shelf Valley and only a relatively short distance from

Jones Inlet, in approximately 10 fathoms (60 feet) of water. The surface temperature was 42-43°F (5.6-6.1°C), and the area was obviously quite attractive to murres, as indicated by the record-breaking number of Common Murres (*Uria aalge*) seen over the next few miles (see above).

Razorbill (*Alca torda*)

2006-47-A/E One, mouth of Niagara River at Lake Ontario, **Niagara**, 19-28 Nov (William W. Watson, Jeanne Skelly, Gerald S. Lazarczyk, Dominic Sherony, Willie D'Anna; ph G. Lazarczyk, D. Sherony (Fig. G, p. 55), Jean Iron)

This basic-plumaged Razorbill, most likely a first-year bird, was discovered on 19 Nov by Norma Platt during a Rochester Birding Association field trip, as it fished in the outflow of the Niagara River. News spread quickly, and the bird was viewed from both the Canadian and US sides of the river mouth by birders in touch with each other by mobile phone. Written descriptions were supported by convincing digiscoped photographs showing the distinctive bill shape, black upper parts and relatively long tail. Although Razorbills are regular along the Atlantic coast of Long Island during the winter, this species is extremely rare on freshwater, including the Great Lakes, even after major storm events.

Atlantic Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*)

2006-44-A One, at sea [39° 54' 58" N, 72° 41' 50" W], ca. 65.3 miles southwest of Jones Inlet, **Nassau**, 11 Feb (Paul A. Guris; ph Angus Wilson, Martin Lofgren)

This first-basic Atlantic Puffin marked the fifth alcid species of the day during the extremely successful 11 Feb Hudson Shelf Valley pelagic organized by See Life Paulagics aboard the *Capt. Lou VII* out of Freeport, Long Island. The water depth was approximately 30 fathoms (ca. 180 feet) and had a surface temperature of 46°F (7.7°C). The bird was viewed by everyone aboard ship and extensively photographed. It is likely that puffins are fairly regular during the winter months on the continental shelf, especially in areas of appropriate water temperature, but remain extremely rare close to shore. The Committee strongly encourages proper documentation of sightings from land or unusual numbers encountered offshore.

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*)

2006-13-A One, Jones Beach West End, **Nassau**, 5 May (Shaibal S. Mitra)

2006-18-A One, Clinton, Town of Kirkland, **Oneida**, 5-6 Jun (Ian Rosenstein)

The Jones Beach dove was found by Anthony J. Lauro and provided decent views for a few lucky birders during its brief stay there. The Kirkland dove visited feeders in a private yard for two days and was observed alongside several Mourning Doves (*Zenaida macroura*) at close range. The detailed description of the plumage included an apparent minor bill deformity.

Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*)

2006-25-A Two, near entrance to Stewart International Airport, New Windsor, **Orange**, 27- 29 Jun, 1 Jul (Kenneth M. McDermott; ph Ken Kijewski, Jeff Goulding)

Two Monk Parakeets were observed and photographed at a feeder and later on a telephone pole on the side of a busy road, where they were attempting to build a

typical stick nest. It is not known what caused them to give up the nesting attempt and move on. Monk Parakeets have nested in the New York City area since 1971, notably in Brooklyn, Staten Island, and suburban Westchester, Nassau, and southwestern Suffolk counties, but the size and stability of these non-native populations have remained poorly known for a variety of reasons, including intermittent efforts at eradication, secrecy on the part of observers opposed to eradication, and inattention by many birders during periods when the species was not recognized on official checklists (Mitra 2008). Certainly, the species is quite rare away from the New York City region, and records such as this from outside the traditional areas are important because they may foreshadow expansions of the population into new areas.

Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*)

2006-51-A Two, near Point Peninsula, Town of Lyme, **Jefferson**, 10 Jun (Irene Mazzocchi, Edgar “Rusty” Walker; ph Mike Sicley)

On 10 Jun Edgar “Rusty” Walker noticed two Snowy Owls perched on a telephone pole along North Shore Road and then watched the birds fly north across a field and disappear. Two days later, whilst driving to work, Walker found one of the owls injured by the side of County Route 57, less than three miles away. He was able to capture the bird and deliver it into the care of wildlife rehabilitator Jackie Cooper. Irene Mazzocchi, who provided the report, identified the Snowy Owl as an immature male, presumably based on reduced dark spotting on the upperparts. After recuperating, the owl was eventually released back into the wild. Although Snowy Owls are regular in winter, these summer sightings are unusual as the species nests on the arctic tundra, several hundred miles north of our region.

Northern Hawk Owl (*Surnia ulula*)

2006-1-A/G One, agricultural field off Rte. 63, near Lyndonville, Town of Yates, **Orleans**, 7-9 Jan, 4 Feb, 26 Feb (William W. Watson, Jeanne Skelly, Gerry Rising, Michael F. Galas, Gerald S. Lazarczyk, Robert Dekoff, Willie D’Anna; ph J. Skelly, R. Dekoff, W. D’Anna)

This cooperative first-year Northern Hawk Owl was discovered on 7 Jan when it was caught by Paul Schnell, Anne Terninko and Mike Crane during a hawk banding session. Local residents indicated that the bird had been in the area for at least two weeks prior to this. Despite its close encounter with humans, the owl remained in the area until 9 Mar, during which time it was seen and photographed by a large number of observers. This is the 4th record of Northern Hawk Owl for Region 1 and the first since 1963. A photograph by Willie D’Anna has been published in *North American Birds* 2006 60(3):354.

Broad-billed Hummingbird (*Cynanthus latirostris*)

2006-23-A One, private residence, North Rose, **Wayne**, 23-24 Jun (Dorothy Legg, Harold Legg; ph D. & H. Legg (Fig. F, p. 54))

2006-29-A One, private residence, Owego, **Tioga**, 9-27 Aug (Jim Ballard; ph J. Ballard, Sue Ballard)

In the northeast, hummingbird enthusiasts are generally content with a single

species, but every once in a while the status quo is shattered by the arrival of an unexpected visitor from afar. On the morning of 23 Jun Dorothy and Harold Legg noticed an unfamiliar hummingbird at their sugar feeders and were able to take some photographs of it. The bird reappeared the following morning but not thereafter. Three images were submitted to the Committee along with a report, and these clearly show a male Broad-billed Hummingbird by virtue of the prominent red base of the long, slightly down-curved bill, iridescent green plumage, darker green flanks and diffuse white edge of the ear coverts. In combination, these features rule out all other species, including Salvin's Hummingbird, a known hybrid between Broad-billed and Violet-crowned (*Amazilia violiceps*). Two months later another male Broad-billed Hummingbird was spotted visiting a feeder at the Ballard residence in Owego. Again, photographs were taken and shown to local birders Marie Petuh and Sara Kinch, who quite naturally visited the feeders forthwith but were, it seems, too late. The photos were forwarded to Dorothy Crumb and Kevin McGowan, who confirmed the identification and spread the news over the internet. This sighting comes two months after the disappearance of the male in Wayne Co. some 87 miles away. Although the chronology and relatively short distance make it possible that the two sightings involved the same wandering male, this has not been proven. A color photograph by Jim & Sue Ballard of the Toiga County bird has been published (*Kingbird* 2007 57(1):49).

Broad-billed Hummingbird is essentially endemic to the arid scrub deserts of Mexico, with a short extension north of the border into Arizona and New Mexico. On face value, vagrancy to NYS might seem unlikely because Broad-billed Hummingbirds are short- rather than long-distance migrants, typically retreating from the northern part of their range during the colder months (Oct-Feb). However, a persistent and expanding pattern of vagrancy has been established, with regular sightings in California and Texas and accepted records from Wisconsin (Oct 2000), Illinois (Nov 1996), Michigan (Jun 1996, Jul 2000), Ontario (Oct 1989), New Brunswick (Oct 1999, possibly from Sep), and North Carolina (Oct 2001). Although most of these vagrants have occurred in the mid-to-late fall, both of the Michigan records were during the summer, and in May 2006, a Broad-billed Hummingbird was documented in Halifax, Nova Scotia. More recently there are additional well-documented sightings from Massachusetts (Aug-Nov 2008) and Connecticut (Aug 2008). Interestingly, a Green Violetear (*Colibri thalassinus*), also from Mexico, was discovered in Monmouth Co., New Jersey on 23-24 Aug 2006 (Barnes 2006, Barnes *et al.* 2006).

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)

2006-49-A/B One, Lenoire Nature Preserve, Yonkers, **Westchester**, 23-30 Nov (Barry Freed, Michael Bochnik; ph B. Freed, M. Bochnik, Steve Walter (Fig. F, p. 54))

2006-59-A One, private residence, Northport, **Suffolk**, 2, 9, 10 Dec (Ed Coyle; ph E. Coyle)

The Lenoire hummingbird was discovered by Ed Higgins on Thanksgiving Day morning, and he promptly alerted Michael Bochnik, who provided a very comprehensive report. Careful study in the field, combined with a superb *The Kingbird* 2009 March; 59 (1)

photograph by Steve Walter showing the spread tail, firmly established the identification as an immature female Rufous rather than the extremely similar Allen's Hummingbird (*S. sasin*). The rectrices were broad and round tipped, and the absence of rufous on R1 is indicative of a female. The bird was seen regularly until 30 Nov. Remarkably, this is the third Rufous/Allen's hummingbird to have been observed at the Lenoire Nature Preserve in only six years. Presumably the abundance of late-flowering plants (notably pineapple sage, *Salvia elegans*) in the well-maintained Beverly E. Smith Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden, combined with its prominent location overlooking the lower reaches of the Hudson River, help to make this delightful preserve a premier location in the region for vagrant hummingbirds. The Northport hummingbird was identified as a first-year female and was watched and photographed as it visited sugar feeders and flowering pineapple sage provided by very gracious host Norm Klein. Valuable photographs of the spread tail were obtained when the bird perched on a twig to preen and stretch; this confirmed that the outer tail feathers were rounded, with distinct emarginations on R2. The bird stayed at these friendly confines from 26 Nov to 29 Jan 2007.

Hammond's Flycatcher (*Empidonax hammondi*)

2006-52-A One, Marshlands Conservancy, Rye, **Westchester**, 19 Nov (Thomas W. Burke; ph Gail Benson)

This Hammond's Flycatcher was found and identified by Tom Burke in an overgrown former garden and was photographed by Gail Benson. Although extremely elusive at times, the flycatcher was seen and heard in the same area by a number of birders during the following few days. Identification of fall *Empidonax* can be very difficult, and in this case it was essential to rule out two major contenders, Least (*E. minimus*) and Dusky (*E. oberholseri*) Flycatchers. In addition to a suite of plumage and structural characters, the distinctive call notes were captured on video, although a copy of the video was not submitted to the archive. A color photograph by Gail Benson has been published (*Kingbird* 2007 57(1):49 and *North American Birds* 2007 61(1):43). This is the second record of Hammond's Flycatcher for NYS and first for Westchester County. The prior record (26-27 Nov 2001, Jones Beach, Nassau Co., NYSARC 2001-44-A/C) was also in the late fall.

Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*)

2006-33-A/E One, Robert Moses State Park, **Suffolk**, 24-25 Sep (James F. C. Osterlund, Angus Wilson, Lloyd Spitalnik, Shaibal S. Mitra, John Gluth; ph J. Osterlund, A. Wilson, L. Spitalnik, S. Mitra, J. Gluth)

This well-documented Say's Phoebe was discovered by Shai Mitra on an otherwise mediocre day for fall migrants along the outer barrier beach of Long Island. The flycatcher frequented the western end of Parking Field 5, often alighting on prominent perches such as signs and fence posts. This set of reports is notable for the exemplary written descriptions, including a thorough analysis of the identification, and the sheer number of outstanding supporting photographs.

Boreal Chickadee (*Poecile hudsonica*)

2006-3-A One, private residence, Palenville, Town of Catskill, **Greene**, 16 Jan & 2 Feb (Larry Federman; ph L. Federman)

This Boreal Chickadee was studied and photographed alongside other feeder visitors including several Black-capped Chickadees (*P. atricapillus*), providing direct comparison. Features noted included the brown cap and extensive rusty flanks. Although generally true to their name, Boreal Chickadees occasionally wander away from boreal habitat into central NYS or down the Hudson River watershed.

Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

2006-39-A/E One, Batavia Water Treatment Plant, Batavia, **Genesee**, 21-23 Oct (Jeanne Skelly, Gerald S. Lazarczyk, Dominic Sherony, Michael Morgante, Willie D'Anna; ph G. Lazarczyk, D. Sherony, W. D'Anna)

This first-basic Northern Wheatear was discovered by Mike Morgante and seen by numerous local birders during its three-day stay. The wheatear favored the rocky ground surrounding the sewage impoundments, often perching on rocks, fence posts and other prominent objects before sallying forth to snatch insects. This is the third record for Region 1, with the previous records being from the end of Sep 1965 and 1967. The fall of 2006 was noted for the number of Northern Wheatear reports in southeastern Canada and the eastern United States (Smith 2007; Schmoker and Leukering 2007). Color photographs by Willie D'Anna and Dominic Sherony have been published previously (*Kingbird* 2007 57(1): 49 and *North American Birds* 2007 61(1): 44).

Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*)

2006-9-A One, Taylor Road, Hamburg, **Erie**, 1 Jan (Michael Zebehazy)

This thrush was studied briefly in the late afternoon as it perched high in a deciduous tree overlooking the road. Unfortunately, it took flight before the observer and his companion could get a scope on to it for better views, and it was not subsequently relocated.

Townsend's Warbler (*Dendroica townsendi*)

2006-56-A/B One, private residence off Duck Pond Road, Matinecock, **Nassau**, 22 Dec (Thomas W. Burke, Mary Normandia; ph Sean Sime (Fig. F, p. 54), Sam Crosby)

Carol Johnston noticed this first-basic male Townsend's Warbler on 11 Dec when it visited her suet feeder. It was sighted regularly at the feeder until 4 Feb 2007, which coincided with a particularly cold spell. Written descriptions were supported by 10 color photographs. There have been fewer than 20 prior records of this attractive western warbler.

Swainson's Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*)

2006-19-A One, Mohonk Preserve, New Paltz, **Ulster**, 11 Jun (Jim Marks)

This Swainson's Warbler was studied for about five minutes as it walked about on the trail in front of observers Jim Marks, Jim Spears, Alita Marks and Liz Hester until disappearing into the side brush. The description made mention of the large bill, unmarked creamy underparts and rufous cap. This secretive

southern warbler breeds in appropriate habitat in the Gulf Coast and Mid-Atlantic States, including West Virginia, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina, but remains rare in NYS. The early June date is fairly typical for records north of the core range. The Mohonk Preserve is located on the edge of the Shawangunk Ridge, an extension of the Appalachians, raising the strong possibility that this individual is from the Appalachian (laurel forest) rather than coastal population.

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*)

2006-48-A/B One, private residence, Lake Road, Wilson, **Niagara**, 13-16 Nov (William W. Watson, Willie D'Anna; ph W. D'Anna)

Betsy Potter first noticed this Summer Tanager when it perched briefly on the deck railing of the Potter/D'Anna residence. A quick phone call brought her partner Willie D'Anna rushing home and, after an anxious 45 minute wait, the bird finally reappeared. The tanager visited the yard several times during the following week through 21 Nov, often remaining high in some deciduous trees, where it appeared to be catching flying insects. It was also seen eating berries and sunflower seeds, and during its stay many visiting birders were able to view the bird. Summer Tanagers are far more typical of the spring, and this record is notable as only the second fall occurrence in Region 1.

Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*)

2006-55-A/D One first-basic, private residence on Upland Street, Irondequoit, **Monroe**, 3 Jan-6 May (Dominic Sherony, Jeanne Skelly, William W. Watson, Curtis A. Marantz; ph D. Sherony)

Homeowner Gerhard Leubner first noticed this Harris's Sparrow in his yard on 2 Dec 2005, and although sometimes elusive, it was seen on most days up to 6 May, when presumably it began its journey back to central Canada. Remarkably, this was the second Harris's Sparrow to visit Mr. Leubner's yard—the first occurring 35 years earlier on 27 Apr 1971. A photograph by Richard Ashworth was published in the *Kingbird* (2007 57(2):146).

LeConte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*)

2006-41-A One, along Haven Road, Bashakill, Town of Mamakating, **Sullivan**, 22 Oct (John H. Haas; ph J. Haas)

This LeConte's Sparrow was found mid-morning by John Haas in some weedy grass at the side of Haven Road and was viewed by several other birders during the day, only to have vanished by the next morning. Initially it was presumed to be a Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*A. nelsoni*), a more likely *Ammodramus* at this inland site, but with better study the key field marks began to fall into place and are clearly evident in the photographs that accompanied the report. These include the white median crown stripe, unmarked buffy breast and pronounced black streaks on the flanks and upperparts.

Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*)

2006-37-A One, along Noyac Path, Watermill, **Suffolk**, 15 Oct (Hugh McGuinness)

This Painted Bunting was studied briefly when it joined a mixed flock of migrant passerines along the weedy edge of a road separating oak woodland from some fields. Unfortunately, the bird could not be relocated after this initial sighting.

Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*)

2006-62-A One female, Pennsylvania Avenue Landfill, Brooklyn, **Kings**, 14-22 Jun (Andrew Bernick; ph A. Bernick)

2006-63-A One male, Fountain Avenue Landfill, Brooklyn, **Kings**, 14 Aug-1 Sep (Andrew Bernick; ph A. Bernick)

These former city refuse dumps are situated on the northern shore of Jamaica Bay and are currently closed to the public during the final phase of a project to convert them to parkland. Whilst conducting survey work for the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, Kristen Schaumburg and Andrew Bernick noticed a female Yellow-headed Blackbird among a flock Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*) foraging on the Pennsylvania Avenue site. The blackbird ranged over the straw-covered slopes of the newly capped pile and, at low-tide, moved onto the exposed mudflats of the Fresh Creek Basin. Later in the summer, Andrew Bernick found an immature male at the nearby Fountain Avenue site. This individual also ranged widely over the former landfill and adjacent shoreline. Yellow-headed Blackbirds are quite rare on Long Island, and the discovery of two individuals within a few miles of each other in a single season is remarkable.

2006 Reports Accepted Origins Uncertain or Unnatural

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*)

2006-27-A One subadult, near Tupper Lake, Moody, **Franklin**, 21, 26, 29 Mar (Tom Dudones; ph T. Dudones, Alan McFadden)

2006-54-A One adult, Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, **Seneca**, 29 Jul (Brendan Fogarty; ph B. Fogarty)

The Tupper Lake swan was studied and photographed alongside Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*), Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and other waterfowl and is likely an offspring of one of several nesting pairs in the region, the closest being at Perch River WMA to the northeast. Trumpeter Swans are not native to NYS, and most are descended from an introduction program in southern Ontario that began in 1982. Over time, the species may establish a self-sustaining breeding population in NYS, supplemented in winter by visitors from Ontario. See Sherony and Boslinger (2007) for a more detailed consideration of the current status of Trumpeter Swan in the state.

2006 Reports Accepted in Revised Form

Shearwater sp. (*Puffinus* species)

2006-40-A One, on Lake Ontario, Derby Hill, Town of Mexico, **Oswego**, 23 Oct (Bill Purcell)

This black-and-white shearwater was watched for less than a minute as it flew in a westerly direction along the lakeshore during a storm. A description and thoughtful analysis of the identification were submitted by one of the two observers, naming the bird as a Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*). Although it was battling into a strong wind, the bird alternated between periods of flapping and gliding on stiff wings in typical shearwater style. The Committee agrees that Manx would fit the details provided but felt that under these difficult observation conditions, it was not possible to fully eliminate the very similar Audubon's Shearwater (*P. lherminieri*). Given that any shearwater on the lake is a remarkable find, the Committee felt it necessary to be very cautious about identifying the bird to species.

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

2006-34-A One, private residence, Lake Delaware shore, Delhi, **Delaware**, 17-28 Sep (Ruth Pedersen; ph Joanne Lowe)

2006-43-A One, private residence, Patchogue, **Suffolk**, 1 Nov (James F. C. Osterlund; ph J. Osterlund)

Both hummingbirds were submitted as Rufous Hummingbirds (*Selasphorus rufus*). The Lake Delaware hummingbird frequented Ruth Pedersen's sugar feeders and was also seen catching flies from the top of some *viburnum* bushes. Photographs by Joanne Lowe indicated an adult female rather than immature male based on the extent of green feathering, presence of a dark smudge on the throat, and the rather worn plumage. Unfortunately, the very similar Allen's Hummingbird (*S. sasin*) could not be ruled out from the description or photos. This hummingbird was last seen 21 Dec. The Patchogue bird was judged to be an immature male and regularly visited a sugar feeder during the first few days of November, disappearing on 6 Nov. Appreciating the identification challenge, the observer tried to obtain photographs of the spread tail with the goal of distinguishing between Rufous and Allen's but was not successful.

1996 Report Accepted

Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*)

1996-95-A One, side of Route 189, Lorraine, **Jefferson**, 9 Sep (Robert C. Walker; ph R. Walker, Gerald A. Smith)

This dark-mantled tern was found by Jay and Kristin Matteson on the side of the road following the passage of Hurricane *Fran*. The identification as a Sooty Tern was established by Robert Walker, the submitter of this report, as well as June Walker, Gerry Smith and wildlife rehabilitator David Plante. Although alive, the tern was emaciated and died 48 hours later. Four photographs were provided along with a clipping from the *Watertown Daily Times*, and the

specimen was subsequently given to Cornell University. Even though a decade has past, the Committee very much appreciates receiving the report and accompanying documentation.

1993 Report Accepted

Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

1993-75-A One, Vanderbilt Island, Jefferson, 24 Sep (Robert C. Walker; ph & sketch R. Walker)

This Northern Wheatear was studied for two periods totaling 10 minutes on 24 Sep but was first discovered by the landowners, Mr. and Mrs. George Houghton, on the 21st, remaining until at least 25 Sep. Photographs were obtained by Bob Walker. Vanderbilt Island is a tiny islet in the St. Lawrence River equipped with a boat house and area of exposed rock favored by the wheatear. The late Sep date is fairly typical of this attractive Old World species, which nests in Greenland and occasionally migrates south through North America rather than returning to continental Europe and its normal wintering grounds in sub-Saharan Africa.

1968 Report Accepted

Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*)

1968-1-A One male, along railroad tracks near Rhinecliff, Dutchess, 5 Nov (submitted by Barbara Butler)

This basic-plumaged male Chestnut-collared Longspur was studied for one and a half hours as it fed in a patch of foxtail grass. The report included original notes by Helen Manson, who was accompanied by Alice Jones, and was brought to the Committee's attention by Barbara Butler, Records Chairman of the Ralph T. Waterman Bird Club, who provided contextual notes and a letter from a *Kingbird* Regional Editor explaining why the sighting would not be included in the regional report. At that time, there were only four prior records, all from Long Island. The Committee felt that the description, while brief, was fully consistent with Chestnut-collared Longspur and provided convincing descriptions of multiple characters, including vocalizations, the distinctive tail pattern, and hints of the black breast and belly feathering typical of alternate plumage. The species was listed as "hypothetical" in *The Birds of Dutchess County* (DeOrsey and Butler 2006) on the basis of this report; it should now be considered the first county record.

REPORTS NOT ACCEPTED

Reports are not accepted for various reasons. The most frequent is that the material submitted to the Committee was considered insufficient or too vague to

properly document the occurrence and/or eliminate similar species. Reports that simply state the species and location of the bird(s) but provide no description to support the identification are rarely accepted. Likewise, simply stating that it looked just like the illustration in the field guide is not 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 will take a conservative stance, preferring not to accept a good record over validating a bad one. 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. Descriptions prepared from memory months or years after a sighting are seldom voted on favorably. The Committee cannot overstate the importance of taking field notes 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 actual 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 feature did you see or hear that clinched the identification for you?*** This is a vital aspect of any rare bird report and is all too frequently omitted. Providing a detailed answer to this basic question will greatly enhance the report and further improve your birding skills.

2006 Reports Not Accepted

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)

2006-65-A/D One first-winter, Spearman Road, Cumberland Head, Plattsburg, Clinton, 27 & 28 Nov

The committee was concerned that aspects of the plumage description, 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, did not adequately eliminate Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*). Likewise, the sketch provided could not be clearly assigned to Red-necked or Western Grebe. Also troubling was the fact that the observers made no mention of or comparison to the Western Grebe seen in the same general location almost four weeks earlier.

Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*)

2006-24-A One, Central Park reservoir, New York City, New York, 30 Jun

When first spotted, this all dark waterbird was circling low over the center of the reservoir at a distance of 300 yards or so from the observer, who studied the bird carefully with binoculars and made field notes which were provided in the report. The bird gained some altitude before turning to the north-east but unfortunately did not give a clear view of the upperparts, and the presence of

whitish wing coverts (a definitive plumage character for this species versus a cormorant) was not noticed. There are far more reports of Anhinga than there are accepted records, and firmly ruling out the various plumages of Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) is a challenge, including when the latter is observed soaring and providing an unexpected silhouette for a cormorant.

Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*)

2006-5-A One, over Fishkill, Dutchess, 5 Feb

This long-winged and long-tailed bird was viewed by naked eye as it drifted high over the observer in a southeasterly direction. Although frigatebirds are fairly distinctive, the Committee felt that the generalized description and mid-winter date left too much uncertainty for acceptance, even as a frigatebird species.

Harris's Hawk (*Parabuteo unicinctus*)

2006-36-A One, at the Orange County Environmental Facility, New Hampton, Orange, summer and fall 2006

This hawk was described as rusty brown with a white rump patch. While suggestive of Harris's Hawk, a species not yet recorded in NYS, the same details also fit a female or juvenile Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*).

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*)

2006-6-A One immature, Fairhaven SP, Cayuga, 27 Jan

This bulky falcon was seen in flight and then perched in a cottonwood tree, allowing a few minutes of study through a telescope. Although the details were strongly suggestive of Gyr Falcon, the tail and wing tips were obscured by a branch and could thus not be evaluated. In addition to Peregrine Falcon (*F. peregrinus*), observers should keep in mind the possibility of more exotic species as well as hybrids that are used by falconers.

Razorbill (*Alca torda*)

2006-38-A One, on Lake Ontario, Derby Hill, Oswego, 21 Oct

This black and white bird was observed for only a few seconds as it flew along the lake shore at an estimated distance of 200m from the observer, who was using a telescope. He felt it was slightly smaller than a scoter and roughly football shaped. The upperparts were black and contrasted with white underparts. The very rapid wing beats were suggestive of an alcid. The Committee deliberated over this record but ultimately came to the conclusion that the detail reported was not sufficient to confirm this identification and rule out other alternatives, including other species of alcids.

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*)

2006-2-A One, Main Street, Clarence, Erie, 13 Jan

The description indicates that this was a domesticated dove.

Black-chinned Hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*)

2006-69-A One female-type, private residence, Fredonia, **Chautaugua**, May-Aug 2006 & 2007

This distinctive female hummingbird took up residence in a private yard during the summers (May-Aug) of 2006 and 2007. The observer believed it to be paired with a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*A. colubris*) based on their shared flight path to the sugar feeders. Two photographs of marginal quality were provided, together with a slight enlargement of one of the images. The field identification of female *Archilochus* hummingbirds is notoriously difficult and requires a very high level of documentation (see Howell 2002 for details). Although the Committee agreed that this was indeed a distinctive individual, it felt that neither the photographs nor the written description provided enough detail to establish this as a Black-chinned, a species not yet recorded in NYS. Moreover, some of the features cited as evidence against it being a Ruby-throated are not established in the literature.

Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*)

2006-17-A One, Old Furnace Road, Paradox, **Essex**, 25 May

This Robin-sized bird was viewed for only 15 seconds or so, during which time the observer noticed a dark band running across its orange breast. Although suggestive of Varied Thrush, the Committee felt that there was simply not enough detail to positively rule out other species.

Bicknell's Thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*)

2006-14-A One, private residence, Fort Greene, Brooklyn, **Kings**, 26 May

This thrush was heard but was not seen as it sang from the underbrush of a private yard. Although the observer has been involved in Bicknell's Thrush studies in Vermont, and thus presumably knows the song well, no rendition of the song was provided in the report nor was there any discussion as to how the song differed from other *Catharus* thrushes, notably Gray-checked Thrush (*C. minimus*).

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