

REPORT OF THE NEW YORK STATE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE FOR 2009

The New York State Avian Records Committee (hereafter “NYSARC” or the “Committee”) reviewed 159 reports from 2009, involving 91 separate sightings, and an additional two reports from previous years. Reports were received from all over the state, with 31 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 Regional Editors of *The Kingbird* 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 98 contributors who submitted materials (written reports, photographs, or sketches) are listed alongside accepted reports and again at the end of this document. Where possible, the names of the original finders are included in the narratives. Production of this Annual Report is a team effort. In addition to the contributors mentioned above, several of *The Kingbird’s* Regional Editors have helped observers to prepare and submit documentation. The Committee also thanks Mike Morgante and David Suggs for forwarding important documentation.

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 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

Discussions at the Committee's Annual Meeting on 4 September 2010 in Coxsackie, New York, led to three changes in the NYSARC Review List. In recognition of its significant rarity away from marine habitat, sightings of Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*) from upstate will now be reviewed and archived. Reports from Regions 9 and 10, where the tern is common in summer, are not required. Upstate sightings of Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*) and Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*) will be removed from the review process. Although uncommon, both species have shown regular patterns of occurrence upstate. Specimens and sight reports clearly document the regular occurrence of the Nelson's Sparrow subspecies *alterus* in central and western New York State. This population nests in Canada from James Bay, Quebec, north to Churchill, Manitoba, and winters in coastal areas of the Mid-Atlantic States. The subspecies *subvirgatus* breeds in the upper reaches of the St. Lawrence Estuary in New Brunswick and Quebec and accounts for increasingly regular sightings in northern New York, especially near the north end of Lake Champlain. Leach's Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*) was also discussed, but it was agreed to leave the species on the statewide review list. During the summers of 2009 and 2010, birders/fishermen venturing into deep water in the southeast quadrant of the New York State pelagic zone made counts that far exceed previous totals. Although surveys are limited, there is no evidence that birds were present in similar numbers in the past. Whether this will represent a sustained phenomenon or just a temporary quirk of the changing marine ecosystems is unknown, and the Committee agreed to continue to carefully monitor this species.

HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights of the 2009 Annual Report include the first record of the high-arctic *mandtii* subspecies of Black Guillemot (*Cepphus grylle mandtii*) and the fourth record of Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*), both from Long Island. This was also an excellent year for gulls, with three different Mew Gulls (*Larus canus*), including individuals attributable to both the nominate and North American (*brachyrhynchus*) subspecies, as well as at least two different California Gulls (*L. californicus*) and two first-cycle Thayer's Gulls (*L. thayeri*). The last are among New York's most thoroughly documented records of this imperfectly understood taxon. Sightings of Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) have increased in recent years, and in 2009 individuals were recorded in Richmond, Suffolk, Rockland, and Essex Counties.

2009 Reports Accepted

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

2009-72-A/B One, Sunken Meadow State Park and environs, **Suffolk**, 8 & 15 Nov (Thomas B. Johnson, Thomas W. Burke; ph T. Johnson, Gail Benson)

This marks the third consecutive winter a Pink-footed Goose has appeared on Long Island. The first Pink-footed Goose accepted to the state list related to the bird staying in Montauk from November 2007 to March 2008. Also in 2008, a second one appeared on Long Island at Stony Brook in February, and then the following winter a single bird visited Flushing, Queens from December 2008 until January 2009. The current record represents a bird found by Ken and Sue Feustel on 3 Nov at Sunken Meadow State Park and reported there, and also at nearby Kings Park High School, into December 2009. Based on plumage and bill characteristics, none of these sightings were determined to involve duplicate birds. Given that this species is rarely kept in aviaries, that vagrancy from Greenland has become increasingly likely, and that there has been a growing number of sightings on the east coast in recent years, plus other important factors associated with the reports received, the Committee has accepted this evidence as supportive of vagrancy. The photographs of this individual from Tom Johnson and Gail Benson, taken at Sunken Meadow State Park and the nearby Kings Park High School ball fields, respectively, and those published by S. Mitra (*The Kingbird* 60(1): 42) are sufficient to establish the identification.

‘Black’ Brant (*Branta bernicla nigricans*)

2009-22-A One, Wolfe’s Pond Park, Staten Island, **Richmond**, 25 Mar (Angus Wilson; ph A. Wilson)

One or two ‘Black’ Brant are seen annually on the south shore of Staten Island, particularly in the late winter or early spring when ‘Atlantic’ Brant (*B. b. hrota*) seem to disperse from their winter feeding sites. During the preceding winter a ‘Black’ Brant was seen regularly in South Amboy, NJ, less than five miles across Raritan Bay.

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

2009-9-A One, Neelytown Road, Town of Montgomery, **Orange**, 27 Feb (Betsy Carswell)

2009-71-A One, Sunken Meadow State Park, **Suffolk**, 8 Nov (Thomas B. Johnson; ph T. Johnson)

The Committee has in recent years accepted records of Barnacle Geese based on their pattern of geographic appearance and their general behavior. In addition to a wintering bird that frequented the Farmingdale area (see 2008-87-C), two additional reports were accepted this year from the southeastern section of the state. The first was seen by Betsy Carswell in Montgomery, Orange County, on 27 Feb, foraging in a harvested cornfield with likely migratory Canada Geese. The second was found by Patricia Lindsay and Shai Mitra on 3 Nov, at Sunken Meadow State Park on Long Island, as they followed up the discovery earlier that day of the Pink-footed Goose described above. Like the Pink-footed Goose, this Barnacle Goose was observed at Sunken Meadow State Park, and also at

nearby Kings Park High School, at least into late November 2009. A photo by Shai Mitra was published in *The Kingbird* 60(1): 42.

‘Eurasian’ Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca crecca*)

2009-19-A/B One adult male, Milburn Pond, Baldwin, **Nassau**, 3-4, 24 Jan (Shaibal S. Mitra, Steve Walter; ph. S. Mitra, S. Walter)

This male was found during the Southern Nassau County Christmas Bird Count by Patricia Lindsay. Careful scrutiny revealed no evidence of hybridization with ‘American’ Green-winged Teal (*A. c. carolinensis*). This form is actively searched for by participants on this count, with 13 previous sightings plus some additional hybrids. A photograph by Steve Walter was published in *The Kingbird* 59(2): 168.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)

2009-21-A/G One adult male, Hudson River off Esopus Meadows Lighthouse Park, **Ulster**, 22, 24-26 Mar (Mark DeDea, Jim Dugan, Larry Federman, Richard Guthrie, Chester Vincent, Kenneth M. McDermott, Valerie Freer; ph Kyla Haber, Curt McDermott)

2009-78-A One adult male, Port Kent ferry dock, **Essex**, 12-13 Feb (Dana C. Rohleder) Both of these adult males spent time in mixed rafts of Ring-necked Ducks (*A. collaris*) and Lesser Scaup (*A. affinis*). Tufted Ducks have become less frequent in the past decade, with more sightings occurring in central and northern New York rather than traditional coastal areas; the reasons for this change remain unexplained.

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)

2009-76-A One, Hamlin Beach State Park, Lake Ontario, Hamlin, **Monroe**, 24-25 Oct. (Willie D’Anna)

Andy Guthrie discovered this loon on Lake Ontario, feeding and resting among Common (*G. immer*) and Red-throated (*G. stellata*) Loons, on 24 Oct. Contacted by cell phone, Willie D’Anna was able to bring a field trip he was leading to the location and successfully relocate the Pacific Loon a little further east. This bird was present the following day as well.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)

2009-11-A One, Atlantic Ocean, off Atlantic Ave., Amagansett, **Suffolk**, 10 Jan (Shaibal S. Mitra)

2009-12-A/B One, Raritan Bay off Lemon Creek Park, **Richmond**, 4 Jan (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

2009-73-A/D One, Piermont Pier, Piermont, **Rockland**, 10-13 Nov (Alan W. Wells, Maha Katnani, Carol A. Weiss, Gerald S. Lazarczyk; ph A. Wells, M. Katnani, C. Weiss)

2009-79-A One, Port Douglas boat launch, near Keensville, **Essex**, 5 Dec (Dayna Lalonde)

The frequency of Western Grebe winter sightings in New York has continued to increase. Bull (1974) considered it hypothetical, with no specimens or photographs before 1974; the first NYSARC accepted report occurred subsequently in 1978, and the species has been reported annually since 2002. This year reports of an unprecedented four sightings in the state were received,

with one from Lake Champlain, one on the Hudson River and two along the southern coast. Birders have become more aware of the need to separate Clark's and Western Grebes, and that has been reflected in the reports received. The first Western for 2009 was seen and digiscoped by Shai Mitra off Staten Island on 4 Jan and located again in late March. Five days later another was found by Jorn Ake on 9 Jan in the Atlantic Ocean off Amagansett and was re-found the next day. Later, in mid November, one appeared at Piermont; excellent photos by Alan Wells show that this bird was entangled in fishing line but seemed free to move about. And finally, Dayna Lalonde found one on Lake Champlain on 5 Dec near Keensville.

Northern Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*)

2009-66-A One, Main Beach, East Hampton, **Suffolk**, 27 Sep (Angus Wilson)

2009-80-A One, Cottage Point, Ditch Plains, **Suffolk**, 24 Oct (Angus Wilson)

Both of these land-based sightings were from the South Fork of eastern Long Island and associated with strong southerly onshore winds. There is evidence that Northern Fulmars occur with regularity offshore during the fall through to spring but sightings from land are relatively rare.

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

2009-47-A One, at sea (39°55.454N, -71°43.473W), 79 nmi SSE of Shinnecock Inlet, 16 Aug (John Shemilt; ph J. Shemilt)

2009-48-A One, at sea (39°50.656N, -71°17.016W), 81 nmi SSE of Shinnecock Inlet, 16 Aug (John Shemilt; ph J. Shemilt)

2009-49-A One, at sea (39°45.132N, -71°56.175W), 70 nmi S of Shinnecock Inlet, 17 Aug (John Shemilt; ph J. Shemilt)

On 16 Aug John Shemilt and party were fishing out at the edge of the Continental Shelf on a flat calm sea—ideal conditions for storm-petrel viewing. They encountered the first White-faced Storm-Petrel at 9:29 am in water of moderate depth at approximately 250 fathoms (1,500 ft) deep. The second bird was found further east over Block Canyon at 9:50 am in water that was approximately 400 fathoms (2,400 ft) deep and 'Gulf Stream blue' (76°F). Whether these were the same or different individuals is hard to determine, but it seems likely that under appropriate conditions multiple individuals might exploit similar feeding opportunities. The next day they found another individual feeding along a line of Sargasso weed in 88 fathoms (525 ft) of blue-green (75°F) water. A photograph by John Shemilt of the second 16 Aug bird was published in the *The Kingbird* 59(4): 353.

Leach's Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*)

2009-51-A Seven plus, at sea (40°33.217N, -72°14.783W; 40°13.717N, -71°58.950W; 40°06.767, -71°53.533W), 43-74 nmi SSE of Shinnecock Inlet, 11 Jul (John Shemilt; ph J. Shemilt)

2009-52-A Twenty-five plus, area from the Dip to the Middle Grounds, (39°53.500N, -71°43.00W to -39°55.260N, 71°29.00W), 65-78 nmi SSE of Shinnecock Inlet, 15 Aug (John Shemilt; ph J. Shemilt)

2009-53-A Twenty plus, between Block Canyon and the Middle Grounds, (39°46.720N, -71°16.00W and 30°48.690N, 71°30.00W) 79-82 nmi SSE of Shinnecock, 16 Aug (John

Shemilt; ph J. Shemilt)

2009-54-A Ten plus, mostly singles, the Dip (39°52.833N, -71°44.200W) and 8 nmi south in The Claw, 27 June (John Shemilt; ph J. Shemilt)

On fishing trips during late June and mid-August, John Shemilt observed and photographed Leach's Storm-Petrels at multiple locations in water that was anywhere from 600 to 3,000 feet deep and with a surface temperature ranging from 62° to 76°F. A photograph by John Shemilt from 16 Aug was published in *The Kingbird* 59(4): 353.

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)

2009-43-A One, Hudson River at foot of Canal St., Port Ewen, **Ulster**, 10 July (Kenneth M. McDermott)

American White Pelican has recently established a regular pattern of vagrancy to the Northeast, with most records in New York State in spring or fall but with fewer in July. This bird, initially seen on 9 July by a few birders off Canal Street in Port Ewen on the Hudson River, was re-found the next morning and reported by Ken McDermott, who watched the pelican for forty minutes before it took flight and disappeared.

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)

2009-42-A/B One adult, outer breakwall, Dunkirk Harbor, **Chautauqua**, 7 Jul (William W. Watson, Gerald S. Lazarczyk; ph W. Watson, G. Lazarczyk)

2009-46-A/B One, Fourth Lake, between Inlet and Old Forge, **Herkimer**, 19-20 Aug (Barbara Putnam, Carolyn Belknap; ph Christy Snow, C. Belknap)

Both individuals appeared to be adults or subadults. Brown Pelican is not a species one expects to encounter on a breakwater along Lake Ontario, never mind on a lake in the Adirondack Mountains, and the Fourth Lake bird, seen in both Herkimer and Hamilton Counties, was new for Region 7 and made a front page splash on *The Weekly Adirondack* newspaper. By 22 Aug this pelican had moved to Low's Lake in St. Lawrence County, Region 6, where it was observed begging for food and was eventually captured and taken to a wildlife rehabilitator. Unfortunately, the pelican died on 29 Aug, and a necropsy found that it had ingested Styrofoam bait containers and other items that likely led to its death. The bird, a male, carried a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service band that was originally placed on it in Maryland in July 2001. On 14 Jul, a citizen recovered the carcass of a Brown Pelican on Wide Beach in Erie County. The carcass was delivered to the Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History in Jamestown. It is believed to be the bird seen a week earlier in Dunkirk Harbor only 13 miles southwest.

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

2009-37-A One, near Peter Scott Swamp, off County Route 12, **Oswego**, 17 May (Robert Fisk)

2009-91-A One, near Mays Point Pool, Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, **Seneca**, 19 Apr (Christopher L. Wood; ph C. Wood)

This night-heron reaches its northern boundary in southern New York, though a few individuals do wander farther north, especially in the spring.

White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*)

2009-61-A/F One, Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area, **Niagara**, 20-26 Sep, 22 Oct, (William W. Watson, Gerald S. Lazarczyk, Dominic F. Sherony, Willie D'Anna, Mark A. Pearce; ph D. Sherony, W. D'Anna, Joe Mitchell)

This first-year bird was discovered by Mark Pearce on 20 Sep in a prominent egret roost. The bird was generally seen only at the roost, and it was never found feeding anywhere in the extensive state and federal wetlands in the vicinity. Most records of White Ibis are from the coastal region. Thus, this first inland record since 1980 is especially significant. This ibis was seen regularly up through 29 Sep but then not seen again until 21 Oct and was last reported on 22 Oct. In the interim, a juvenile White Ibis was reported briefly from two locations along the north shore of Lake Ontario in Ontario; given the extreme rarity of this species inland, it seems very plausible that only one individual was involved. Watson (2009) detailed these occurrences.

Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*)

2009-31-A/B One, Irving Road, **Greene**, 17 May (Danika M. Raup, William J. Raup)

The observers were stopped on the side of the road in an area of mixed hardwood forest and wet meadow when this highly distinctive kite flew over the trees at the top of the next rise, circled and headed back in the direction it had come from. It made several stiff swallow-like turns in the breeze and then flew more directly when harassed by American Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*). A careful search of the area failed to relocate the bird. The bulk of the thirty or so previous records have been from the spring.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

2009-35-A/H Two, Mapletown Rd, Town of Root, **Montgomery**, 1 Jun-19 Jul (Stephanie Restuccia, Brenda Best, Kevin McGann, Kimberly Sucky, Richard Guthrie, William W. Watson, Brendan Fogarty, ph Michael Restuccia, B. Best, K. Sucky, R. Guthrie, B. Fogarty)

Stephanie Restuccia discovered a Mississippi Kite on 1 Jun in the Town of Root that her husband Michael was able to photograph. There were no further sightings until 27 Jun when she again spotted a single bird at the same location. The following day Rich Guthrie and Kevin McGann searched the area and saw two kites simultaneously. From then through late Jul, one or two birds were seen regularly, with the last report coming on 3 Aug. These sightings come in the context of an apparent northward range expansion in recent years, including first breeding records in New Hampshire and Connecticut. The presence of two birds at this location, one an adult male and the other a female type, led to speculation that they could breed here as well, but no evidence of breeding was found. NYSARC has accepted 21 records of Mississippi Kite, including three in 2008. Most of these have been flyby birds seen only briefly by a small number of individuals. The kites at Root were easily the most accessible in New York State history, and both were seen by dozens of observers over the course of the summer. A photograph of one of the Root kites taken by Courtney Moore was published in *The Kingbird* 59(4): 351.

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)

2009-28-A One, Derby Hill Bird Observatory, Mexico, **Oswego**, 24 Apr (Kyle Wright)

2009-63-A/F One juv., Route 9W near Cocksackie, **Greene**, 3, 9-12 Oct (Richard Guthrie, Alan W. Wells, William W. Watson, Angus Wilson, Gerald S. Lazarczyk, Willie D'Anna; ph R. Guthrie, A. Wells, W. Watson, A. Wilson, G. Lazarczyk, W. D'Anna)

2009-90-A One, Ontario Beach, **Monroe**, 29 Aug (Christopher L. Wood; ph Tom Johnson)

This was a banner year for Swainson's Hawk, a long-distance migrant that is most often recorded from spring hawk watches on the southern shore of Lake Ontario. On 3 Oct, Rich Guthrie was stopped at the traffic light on the New York State Thruway entrance in New Baltimore/Cocksackie when he noticed a large sooty brown bird foraging on the side of the busy road. To his surprise it was a hawk and was apparently feasting on grasshoppers. Guthrie had the foresight to pull over and take some photos. Subsequent study and consultation over the Internet with his son, Andy Guthrie, indicated a juvenile Swainson's Hawk. Remarkably, the bird was in the same place the next morning and, as perhaps the first of its kind to remain in an accessible spot long enough to be chased, the bird entertained many birders from around the state and beyond. Despite climbing to great altitude on several occasions as if to depart, the Swainson's remained faithful to the area and was last seen in the afternoon on 14 Oct. It marks the first record for Region 8 and only one of a handful of accepted records away from the shore of Lake Ontario. See Guthrie (2010) for a full account. Photos of the New Baltimore bird by Andrew Baksh were published in *The Kingbird* 60(1): 44.

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*)

2009-77-A/B One, West End of Jones Beach State Park, **Nassau**, 25 Oct (John Gluth, Thomas W. Burke; ph J. Gluth, Gail Benson)

This immature Gyr Falcon was initially identified as a Peregrine Falcon (*F. peregrinus*) as it fed on a Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) and made brief flights around the dune scrub at Jones Beach West End. The true identification came to light after Luke Ormand posted images of the bird to a photography website and several commenters raised the possibility that it was a Gyr Falcon. The reports and photographs submitted to NYSARC confirmed this identification and showed no evidence of hybrid or captive origins. This represents the third earliest fall record accepted by NYSARC, and the earliest coastal record. Photos by Luke Ormand were published in *The Kingbird* 60(1): 41.

Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*)

2009-65-A One, Goethius Preserve, Flatiron Road, Town of Caroline, **Tompkins**, 17 Oct (John L. Confer)

This Yellow Rail was picked up by the observer's dog, Belle Flower, whilst they were walking through an extensive hay meadow. As the observer took what he assumed would be a corpse from the dog's mouth it unexpectedly sprung to life and flew about 10 m before disappearing out of sight. Although Yellow Rails nest in Quebec and Ontario, they remain a very scarcely detected migrant

throughout New York, predominantly in the fall. There have been at least two winter sightings from undisturbed coastal marshes on Long Island, suggesting a few birds might winter, but, unfortunately, documentation to support these reports has not been submitted for review.

King Rail (*Rallus elegans*)

2009-36-A/C Two, near the intersection of Peter Scott Road and Rt. 12 (Phoenix-Caughdenoy Rd), Town of Schroepel, **Oswego**, 16-18 May (Charles C. Spagnoli, Mickey Scilingo, Brad Carlson)

Two (possibly three) birds were heard calling repeatedly from a freshwater swamp that also contained Virginia Rail (*R. limicola*). The birds were first encountered by Mickey Scilingo, who made an audio recording.

Purple Gallinule (*Porphyrio martinica*)

2009-64-A/B One juv., South end of Quaker Pond, Mendon Ponds Park, **Monroe**, 11 & 13 Oct (Brad Carlson, Patricia Martin; ph B. Carlson)

Pat Martin spotted this immature Purple Gallinule on 11 Oct as it walked along the edge of the Quaker Pond Trail. Visiting the site on the 13th, Brad Carlson came upon the bird's carcass at the water's edge; it appeared to be freshly dead (warm, no rigor mortis and clear eyes). The specimen was subsequently deposited in the Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology collection.

Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*)

2009-27-A/B One, Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside and Cow Meadow Park, Freeport, **Nassau**, 10, 12 May (Eileen Schwinn, Karen Fung; ph K. Fung)

This Black-necked Stilt was discovered on 8 May at the Marine Nature Study Area in Oceanside by Rich Carlson and Pat Eagan. From then until the last report on 17 May, it was seen sporadically at that location and also at least once at Cow Meadow Park in Freeport, about two miles away.

Mew Gull (*Larus canus*)

2009-3-A/C One, Lake Ontario at Olcott Harbor, Town of Olcott, **Niagara**, 15 Feb (William W. Watson, Jim Pawlicki, Willie D'Anna; ph David Gordon, W. D'Anna, W. Watson)

2009-4-A/B One, Eight Mile Creek, Olcott Harbor, **Niagara**, 22 Feb (James Pawlicki, Willie D'Anna; ph J. Pawlicki)

2009-88-A/B One, Gravesend Bay, Brooklyn, **Kings**, 26 Dec and 10 Jan, 2010 (Shane Blodgett, Elliotte Harold; ph S. Blodgett, E. Harold)

The first New York record of Mew Gull occurred in 1986. There have now been ten accepted records, including a remarkable three birds in 2009. The two Olcott birds were found a week apart by Jim Pawlicki; both were one-day wonders. The first was an adult of the North American subspecies, *brachyrhynchus*. A photograph of this bird, taken by David Gordon, appeared in *North American Birds* 63(2): 234. The second, also an adult, was obviously a different individual and may have been of the nominate European subspecies, but the observers and the Committee both felt that the view of the all-important wing pattern was insufficient to confirm this. The Brooklyn bird, found by Shane Blodgett, was

also an adult. It was reported on the email lists at least until 5 Mar 2010, although reports were received only for 26 Dec and 10 Jan 2010. The excellent documentation confirmed that this individual belonged to the nominate subspecies.

California Gull (*Larus californicus*)

2009-7-A One, Hamlin Beach, **Monroe**, 1 Jan (Christopher L. Wood; ph. C. Wood)

2009-62-A/B One, Niagara River, Goat Island and ¼ mi upstream of the power plants, **Niagara**, 7 Oct, 21 Nov (William W. Watson, Willie D'Anna; ph J. Pawlicki)

California Gull in 2009 continued its recent trend of annual appearances in western New York. The Hamlin Beach bird, seen only in flight, was tentatively aged based on visible plumage as a retarded second-cycle or an advanced first-cycle. The two Niagara River reports likely pertain to the same 3rd-basic individual.

Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*)

2009-69-A One, first cycle, Stevenson Rd, Dryden, **Tompkins**, 17-19 Feb (Thomas B. Johnson; ph T. Johnson)

2009-70-A One, first cycle, Sheldrake Point, Cayuga Lake, **Seneca** and the Ithaca area, **Tompkins**, 7-10 Nov (Thomas B. Johnson; ph T. Johnson)

These two well-documented first-cycle Thayer's Gulls were found in the Cayuga Basin. The first was found by Tom Johnson and Shawn Billerman at the productive compost piles at Stevenson Road in Dryden and was seen there over the next two days. The second bird was initially found by Tom Johnson at Sheldrake Point on the west side of Cayuga Lake on 6 Nov, and then was seen for several days at the south end of the lake, at Stewart Park and on the docks at Allen H. Treman State Marine Park, as well as in Dryden. Both gulls allowed close study and photography, resulting in two of the most fully documented reports of the species in New York State. Although there are multiple reports in the State each year, primarily from the Niagara River, very few are adequately documented in part because of the distances the geography of the river imposes between the observers and the birds. Given the complexities in identifying Thayer's Gull, particularly in separating all ages from the highly variable 'Kumlien's' Iceland Gull (*L. glaucoides kumlieni*), NYSARC has taken a conservative approach in reviewing reports of this species. See further comments on this issue in the NYSARC Annual Reports for 1999 (*The Kingbird* 52(1): 8-26) and 2000 (*The Kingbird* 52(4): 291-319).

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

2009-33-A One second summer type, Cupsogue County Park, near Moriches Inlet, **Suffolk**, 13 & 21 Jun (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

2009-34-A One near adult, Democrat Point, Fire Island Inlet, **Suffolk**, 19 Jun (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

2009-38-A One near adult, Cupsogue County Park, near Moriches Inlet, **Suffolk**, 10 Jul (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

2009-39-A One of two first summer types, Cupsogue County Park, near Moriches Inlet, **Suffolk**, 4 Jul (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

2009-40-A Second of two first summer types, Cupsogue County Park, near Moriches

Inlet, **Suffolk**, 4 Jul (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

The Committee obtained another series of excellent reports and accompanying photographs from Shai Mitra, carefully documenting multiple Arctic Terns from the sand flats just east of the Moriches Inlet, as well as one on the western tip of Fire Island. The tern described in report 2009-38-A was discovered by Shane Blodgett and Doug Gochfeld earlier in the day, and Patricia Lindsay was the co-finder, with Mitra, of the birds documented by reports 2009-33, 39 and 40.

Sandwich Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*)

2009-41-A One, adult or near adult, Cupsogue County Park, near Moriches Inlet, **Suffolk**, 4 Jul (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

Sandwich Tern has become a nearly annual visitor to coastal New York and, as with this example, sightings are not always associated with tropical storms. This individual was found with several other tern species, including two Arctic Terns (reports 2009-39 and 40).

Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia*)

2009-14-A/B One, Ditch Plains, **Suffolk**, 28 Feb & 1 Mar (Angus Wilson, Shaibal S. Mitra; ph A. Wilson, S. Mitra)

2009-15-A/D One, Hempstead Lake State Park, **Nassau**, 8-9 Jan (Shaibal S. Mitra, Steve Walter, Seymour Schiff, Brendan Fogarty; ph S. Mitra, S. Walter, S. Schiff, B. Fogarty)

2009-16-A One, Block Island Sound off Montauk State Park, **Suffolk**, 18 Jan (Shaibal S. Mitra)

2009-17-A One off Culloden Point, Montauk, **Suffolk**, 18 Jan (Shaibal S. Mitra)

In New York State, Thick-billed Murre is an occasionally-seen alcid, most often encountered in the vicinity of Montauk Point or eastern Long Island inlets such as Shinnecock, but every once in a while one will appear in a bizarre location—such was the case in early January, when one was discovered by Steve Schellenger at Hempstead Lake State Park, where it survived for two days on a partially frozen set of ponds; on the morning of 10 Jan the murre, having succumbed to the elements overnight, was retrieved off the pond ice and subsequently presented to the American Museum of Natural History. The other sightings later that winter included a Thick-billed first spotted by Hugh McGuinness and Angus Wilson off Montauk Point on 18 Jan and then seen a short time later by Shai Mitra and Doug Futuyma from the bluffs above Turtle Cove as it flew back around the Point. Twenty minute later Shai Mitra and Doug Futuyma observed a Thick-billed Murre from Culloden Point that was flying east. Although it is possible a single bird was involved, the distances and timing would suggest the presence of two individuals. Later that month, Angus Wilson found the same or another on 28 Feb on the other side of the peninsula at Ditch Plains, where it remained for at least two days competing for good waves with the local surfers.

Black Guillemot (*Cepphus grylle mandtii*)

2009-86-A/C One, Sebonac Inlet, Sebonac Inlet Road, Southampton, **Suffolk**, 19, 24 & 26 Dec (Jay D. Kuhlman, Thomas W. Burke, Angus Wilson; ph J Kuhlman, Gail Benson, T. Burke, Lloyd Spitalnik, A. Wilson)

This distinctive High Arctic subspecies of Black Guillemot was found on 19 Dec by Jay Kuhlman and Rich Sautkulis during the Quogue/Watermill Christmas Bird Count. After the passing of a major snow storm hampered access to the site, the guillemot was re-found and seen by many on a daily basis until 1 Jan 2010. Subzero conditions and strong winds then filled the inlet with ice, forcing the guillemot and other waterfowl elsewhere. Black Guillemots belonging to the more southerly *atlantis* subspecies group breed south to the Isles of Shoals, off the New Hampshire coast, and winter regularly in modest numbers as close to Long Island as Block Island, Rhode Island. Although scarcer on Long Island, guillemots are sighted there annually, most often along the rocky shores near Montauk Point. The Sebonac Inlet bird is highly significant, both as the first example for New York State of the *mandtii* (High Arctic or 'snowy') subspecies group, a point first raised in public by Shai Mitra, and as one of very few documented examples of this taxon from the lower-48 states. The whereabouts of an historical specimen from Massachusetts attributed to *mandtii* is unknown (Ridgway 1919; Jeremiah Trimble, pers. com.). Although the taxonomy of the different populations of Black Guillemot remains poorly resolved, all authorities draw a firm distinction between the High and Low Arctic breeders. The taxon *ultimus* (described from the eastern Canadian Arctic) is often included within *mandtii* and may not be distinct (Butler and Buckley 2002). Excellent photographs submitted with these reports clearly document the white bases of the greater wing-coverts, extensively white remiges, and broad white tips to black-based dorsal feathers, all of which contribute to a much whiter overall appearance. The photographs also show that the tips of the secondaries were white, forming a distinctive white trailing edge, and the bill was relatively short, features indicative of *mandtii*. Photos by Andrew Baksh, Luke Ormand, and Shai Mitra were published in *The Kingbird* 60(2): 136.

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

2009-45-A Two, Church Rd, near Greenwell Farm, Parma, **Monroe**, 18 Jul (Kimberly Sucky)

Since the first accepted record in 2002 (2002-26-A/F) there have been reports of one, two or occasionally even three Eurasian Collared-Doves in the Parma-Hamlin area, generally along this same road. The behavior is suggestive of a mated pair, but to date no evidence of nesting has been presented. Although Eurasian Collared-Dove has become an increasingly familiar sight across much of the US, the expansion into the Northeast seems to have slowed.

Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*)

2009-23-A One, Wilson-Tuscarora State Park, Town of Wilson, **Niagara**, 27 Mar (Willie D'Anna, Betsy Potter; ph W. D'Anna)

Betsy Potter spotted this partly obscured owl as it roosted in a spruce tree. A glimpse of the pale rather than dark bill told her it was a Boreal, rather than the more familiar Northern Saw-whet (*A. acadicus*). Better views were obtained from a distance using a telescope, and Willie D'Anna managed to take diagnostic photographs with a digital camera.

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)

2009-82-A/C One, Hillside Avenue, Staten Island, **Richmond**, 10 Oct-17 Dec (Richard Veit, Seth Wollney, Howard Fischer; ph S. Wollney)

This bird, visiting Howie Fischer's feeders, was identified as a hatching-year male on the basis of the reddish feathers scattered across the throat and a greenish rather than rufous back. Photos of the spread tail (especially the shapes of R2 and R5) seemed to rule out the extremely similar Allen's Hummingbird (*Selasphorus sasin*). This was confirmed when it was trapped on 2 Nov and measurements of R5 firmly established the identification.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*)

2009-75-A/H One, abandoned lot corner of N. Conduit Avenue and Cohancy Street, **Queens**, 22-23, 29 Nov, 2, 6 Dec (Rudy Badia, Heydi Lopes, Thomas Fiore, Karen Fung, Corey Finger, Seymour Schiff, Joseph Giunta, Gerald S. Lazarczyk; ph R. Badia, H. Lopes, K. Fung, C. Finger)

This Ash-throated Flycatcher was found by Rudy Badia on 22 Nov in a weedy lot opposite the Aquaduct North Conduit station of the A subway line (see Badia et al. 2010). Collectively these represent an outstanding set of reports, not only including many definitive photographs but also detailed plumage descriptions and analysis of the identification. Two photos by Andrew Baksh were published in *The Kingbird* 60(1): 44.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*)

2009-68-A/B One, Van Dyne Spoor Rd, Savannah, **Wayne**, 24-25 Oct (Douglas Racine, Thomas B. Johnson; ph D. Racine, T. Johnson)

Fall reports of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers in New York State are far fewer than those from spring and early summer, and most individuals are only seen during one day. Thus, this bird discovered at the northern Montezuma wetlands complex is especially unusual. During its two-day stay, it was viewed with Sandhill Cranes present in the back of the same field. Excellent photographs of this hatching year bird were submitted by Doug Racine, the original finder, and Tom Johnson. One of Tom Johnson's photos was published in *The Kingbird* 60(1): 43.

Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

2009-74-A One, Powley Place, Town of Arietta, **Hamilton**, 3 Nov (Larry F. Hall)

This wheatear was observed in a large clearing in a remote area known as Ferris Lake Wild Forest, where it used campfire stones as a vantage point from which to hunt. Although the late date—the second latest accepted by NYSARC—and location are unusual, the detailed description of the bird and its behavior led to unanimous acceptance by the Committee on the first round of review. Interestingly, although historically Northern Wheatear records have been skewed overwhelmingly to coastal locations, of the 14 records accepted by NYSARC since 1979, half have been outside of coastal Region 10.

Veery (*Catharus fuscescens*)

2009-89-A One, Alvord Dock Road, Stockport Township, **Columbia**, 19 Dec (William E. Cook; ph Jeff Novick)

Studied by Bill Cook, Jon Boulette and Jeff Novick during the Chatham Christmas Bird Count, this bird was first spotted feeding on the fruit of a Virginia Creeper about 10 feet above the road; it then dropped to the ground, where it was studied and photographed by holding a mobile phone to the eyepiece of a telescope. This species winters in southern Brazil (Remsen 2001), and the early-winter date is well outside the established window of southbound migration, which peaks in late Aug and early Sep (Bevier et al. 2005).

Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*)

2009-6-A One, Sands Point, **Nassau**, 30 Jan, 5 & 24 Mar (Douglas L. Kurz; ph D. Kurz)

What was likely the same male Varied Thrush made three brief appearances between January and March on the lawn of the observer's home. Presumably it had wintered in the nearby area. Luckily, on the third visit Doug Kurz managed to digiscope some diagnostic photos.

'Audubon's' Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Dendroica coronata auduboni*)

2009-5-A/D One, Tobay, **Nassau**, 4, 10 Jan (Brent E. Bomkamp, Sy Schiff, Steve Walter, Shaibal S. Mitra; ph B. Bomkamp, S. Walter, S. Mitra)

This western counterpart of 'Myrtle' Yellow-rumped Warbler (*D. c. coronata*) was discovered by Tom Burke and Gail Benson on 3 Jan during the Southern Nassau County Christmas Bird Count. It was seen by many count participants that day and then by others subsequently. Located on the bayside of the Tobay barrier beach, this extensive area of myrtle bushes and other shrubs provides an important resource for migrant and wintering Yellow-rumped Warblers. This is the fourth record of 'Audubon's' from Tobay and 14th for New York State. A photograph by Steve Walter was published in *The Kingbird* 59(2): 168.

Townsend's Warbler (*Dendroica townsendi*)

2009-25-A One, Prospect Park, Brooklyn, **Kings**, 25 Apr (Seth Ausubel; ph Doug Gochfeld)

This male was discovered by Seth Ausubel during an early spring push of migrants into the region. Ausubel and several other observers studied the bird for about 30 minutes as it fed in a flowering box elder tree before taking flight and disappearing. Seventeen species of warblers were recorded in the park that day, and it seems likely the Townsend's traveled northwards with these migrants. Appropriately, the report carefully considered the possibility of a hybrid with Hermit Warbler (*D. occidentalis*).

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)

2009-85-A/B One, corner of Irwin and Felton Rds, Peru, **Clinton**, 30 Dec-1 Jan 2010 (Elizabeth Fitts, William E. Krueger; ph E. Fitts)

A harbinger of the New Year in the north country, this Lark Sparrow joined a flock of American Tree Sparrows (*Spizella arborea*) at a feeder maintained by Liz and Holland Fitts on 30 Dec and made periodic appearances until 1 Jan

2010, just long enough for a few more local birders to see it.

Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)

2009-67-A One, Southlands Horse Farm, Rhinebeck, **Dutchess**, 17 Oct (Peter Schoenberger; ph P. Schoenberger)

This sparrow was discovered in cattails and grasses along a drainage ditch. Features evident in the excellent photographs indicated the subspecies *alterus*, which nests around Hudson Bay, rather than the nominate and brighter *nelsoni* that nests in prairie grasslands of the northern Great Plains (Greenlaw and Woolfenden 2007).

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*)

2009-81-A/C One, adult female, at a feeder on Colby Rd, Spencerport, **Monroe**, 10 Dec (Dominic F. Sherony, Gerald S. Lazarczyk, Christopher L. Wood; ph D. Sherony, C. Wood)

Although a regular spring migrant downstate, upstate reports are decidedly fewer and thus the reason for the inclusion of this species on the review list for upstate only. Summer Tanager is much rarer in fall, with this sighting constituting only the third upstate fall record to be accepted by NYSARC. The Spencerport tanager appeared at the home of Fran and David Colby. Fran Colby stated to Dominic Sherony that the bird had been present for three weeks prior to his 10 Dec sighting, putting the arrival around 19 Nov. It was reported at least until 30 Dec (Dave Tetlow, pers. comm. to Chris Wood). A photograph by Dominic Sherony was published in *The Kingbird* 60(2): 138.

Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*)

2009-56-A One male, Broadway, Rockville Centre, **Nassau**, 6 Sep (Ruth Bernstein Hyman)

This male Western Tanager was studied by Ruth Hyman as it perched in a deciduous tree beside a small artificial pond with running water. The observer had noticed its unfamiliar call before seeing the bird. The description noted the red head, bright yellow plumage and black wings replete with two wing bars.

Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*)

2009-32-A One, Lincoln Circle, east side of Goodyear Lake, Town of Milford, **Otsego**, 1-2 May (Linda Pearce)

This bird was seen at Linda Pearce's bird feeder over a two-day period. The details provided are consistent with an adult female Blue Grosbeak.

Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*)

2009-2-A One, first winter male, Old French Road, Honeoye Falls, **Monroe**, 20-29 Jan (Brad Carlson)

Brad Carlson spotted this young male Yellow-headed Blackbird at his platform feeder in the company of Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*) and European Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*). Many observers were able to see the bird over its nine-day stay, and an excellent photo accompanied the report.

Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)

2009-84-A One, farm on Burns Road near Oak Orchard WMA, Town of Shelby, Orleans, 27 Dec (Kurt A. Fox)

Kurt Fox carefully observed this blackbird for 10 minutes, noting several aspects of plumage and structure that indicated Brewer's Blackbird rather than the very similar Rusty Blackbird (*E. carolinus*).

Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*)

2009-8-A/C One male, Fairview Drive, Copake, Columbia, 16, 18 Jan (Hope Batcheller, Richard Guthrie, William J. Raup; ph H. Batcheller, R. Guthrie, W. Raup)

This splendid male Bullock's Oriole visited private feeders over a two week period and was enjoyed by many visiting birders. It was first spotted by local homeowner Barbara Carr on 11 Jan and last reported on 28 Jan. A number of excellent photographs accompanied these reports.

**2009 Reports Accepted
But Origins Unknown or Unnatural**

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

2009-60-A One, Olcott piers, Olcott, Niagara, 24 Sep (William W. Watson)

This would be an odd time of year for a vagrant Barnacle Goose, and this concern and the presence of a leg band rightly led the observer to question the bird's origin. The follow-up detail clearly indicates that this bird had escaped from the Gooseneck Hill Wildlife Sanctuary, a private aviary in Delevan, New York, about 60 miles south of Olcott. This report highlights the need to look for evidence of captivity in potentially escaped waterfowl.

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*)

2009-1-A Twenty-six, Cayuga Lake Outlet, Cayuga, 16 Jan (Dominic F. Sherony)

2009-13-A/B Two, Upper Lake, Yaphank, Suffolk, (Shaibal S. Mitra, Steve Walter; ph S. Mitra, S. Walter)

2009-18-A One, Conesus Lake Inlet, Livingston, 16 Feb-3 Mar (David Prill)

2009-20-A One, found dead, Dale Beaver's farm, Town of Conewango, Cattaraugus, 10 Feb (Patrick Morton, Jim Berry; ph J. Berry)

2009-83-A One, Oak Orchard River, Waterport, Orleans, 17 Dec (William W. Watson)

Trumpeter Swan numbers in New York State continue to grow, and these reports include a notable congregation of twenty-six unmarked birds at the outlet of Cayuga Lake. The Conesus Lake bird sported a wing tag (# 127), establishing it as a mature female banded on 14 Mar 2007 at LaSalle Park, Hamilton, Ontario. Likewise, the Conewango specimen had a similar tag (# 075), establishing it as a female wild-hatched and banded at Wye Marsh, Ontario on 2 Nov 2006. NYSARC is taking a conservative approach to accepting records of birds from introduction programs in Ontario and the Midwestern United States. Introductions of this long-lived species in Ontario continued until as recently as 2006, and wintering populations have been partially sustained by feeding programs. The Committee has previously outlined its criteria for including introduced species on the Checklist (see NYSARC 2007). NYSARC will

continue to monitor the status of the species in New York and surrounding areas to evaluate the long-term viability of the populations. As such, the Committee still requests reports of this species, although only reports of large aggregations need be submitted from the core breeding areas in the vicinity of Montezuma NWR and Perch River WMA. Any tagged swans, no matter where they are seen, should be submitted, as it is possible to determine the origins of these birds. The Yaphank birds were found by Anthony Graves and represent one of very few sightings from Long Island. The bird on the Oak Orchard River was a juvenile.

Chukar (*Alectoris chukar*)

2009-24-A One, Abbey Lane, Levittown, **Nassau**, 16-24 Mar (Sue Bruckbauer; ph. S. Bruckbauer)

This colorful partridge visited a suburban yard looking for handouts. A native of eastern Europe and central Asia, Chukars have been successfully introduced into arid regions of western North America. There are no established populations in the northeast and long-distance vagrancy is unlikely. However, the species is very popular with hunting clubs. Oddly, individuals are sighted with increasing frequency in urban and suburban settings; the assumption is that these are escapes from breeders.

Saffron Finch (*Sicalis flaveola*)

2009-59-A One, Croton River, **Westchester**, 21 Sep (Brien Hindman; ph. B. Hindman)

This bright yellow finch-like bird was watched and photographed as it fed amongst a flock of House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*). The greenish wash on the wings, flanks and tail combined with the orange spot on the forecrown are indicative of this South American species, which is actually now considered a tanager and not a true finch. Males are notoriously aggressive towards each other, and unfortunately some are kept as “fighting birds,” which of course is illegal. In July 2009 police in nearby Shelton, Connecticut, seized 150 birds, predominantly this species, and charged 19 people with a combination of animal cruelty and illegal gambling.

2008 Report Accepted

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

2008-87-C One, Pinelawn Memorial Park, Pinelawn, **Suffolk**, 2 Feb (Douglas L. Kurz)

This is an additional report of a Barnacle Goose that was sighted on a number of occasions in Pinelawn Memorial Park, and at nearby St. Charles Cemetery and Belmont Lake SP, on Long Island, between 29 Nov 2008 and 15 Feb 2009.

2004 Report Accepted

Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*)

2004-90-A One, North Spring Pond, Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, **Seneca**, 8 May (Joseph Brin; ph. J. Brin)

Submitted six years after the fact, this southern wader was nicely photographed,

which cinched the acceptance. Remarkably, the Tricolored Heron was accompanied by a Snowy Egret (*E. thula*), a species only slightly less rare so far inland. Joe Brin's photo shows both species side by side. This record fits the pattern for this species, with most non-coastal sightings in the spring and early summer, attributed to spring overshoots and post-breeding wanderers.

1970 Report Accepted

Dovekie (*Alle alle*)

1970-2-A One, Shinnecock Bay, **Suffolk**, 3 Nov 1970 (Paul H. Gillen, Jr.)

This Dovekie was observed by Paul Gillen and his son whilst they were out fishing on the bay. Its drooped wings and absence of a flight response suggested it might be sick, so they attempted to catch it with a boat net, but the bird managed to evade their efforts. They then observed the Dovekie swimming away under water.

2009 Reports Not Accepted

Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*)

2009-44-A One, Mott Road, Gansevoort, **Saratoga**, 31 May

This report briefly discussed a sighting of a large black bird but failed to provide enough detail to solidly document an extremely rare inland report of Magnificent Frigatebird. Though frigatebirds are the sort of bird that can show up nearly anytime, anywhere as vagrants, a certain level of description is still required to support the identification. There was not enough of a description here to accept this record even to *Fregata* sp., which is a conservative position often taken by bird records committees given the scattered records of truly vagrant species such as Great (*F. minor*) and Lesser (*F. ariel*) Frigatebirds in North America.

Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*)

2009-58-A One, East River parallel to E 79th Street, Manhattan, **New York**, 18 Oct

This waterbird was studied as it fished in the East River, an extension of Long Island Sound. The sleek head and neck profile, otherwise submerged body and absence of a visible hook on the bill suggested an Anhinga; however, the Committee felt that a Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) could not be excluded. The latter species often swims with only the head and neck above the surface and the plumage held flat, giving a very slim appearance. Moreover, the marine habitat and absence of vegetation seemed atypical habitat for an Anhinga, an extremely rare visitor to the Northeast.

'Great White Heron' (*Ardea herodias occidentalis*)

2009-55-A One, retention pond alongside Rt. 390 N, Greece, **Monroe**, 1 Sep

The description of this individual was insufficient to confirm the white-plumaged subspecies of Great Blue Heron, which is extremely rare in New York. 'Great White Heron' does have a pattern of vagrancy away from its

limited distribution in southern Florida and the Caribbean (Mitra and Fritz 2002), and identification is fairly straightforward given a reasonable view of overall size and bare parts coloration. This description lacked an adequate discussion of pertinent field characters. Additionally, a Great Egret (*A. alba*) was known to be present at the exact site mentioned on the same date, and Committee members felt that this was likely the species in question.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

2009-50-A north of Post Road, Larchmont, **Westchester**, 30 Aug

This report was one of a few raptor descriptions that were simply too brief or vague to adequately support the identification or occurrence of the bird in question. Though Mississippi Kite is expanding into New York State, as evidenced by successful breeding in 2010, this naked-eye report did not contain enough solid detail to convince the Committee of the identification. In these sorts of cases, with distant flying birds seen in circumstances without a camera handy, field sketching is HIGHLY recommended by the Committee.

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)

2009-29-A One, Derby Hill Bird Observatory, Mexico, **Oswego**, 6 May

Though very possibly correct, the identification of this bird seen migrating past a spring hawk watch relied almost exclusively on difficult to document features of flight style and shape. Due to the circumstances of the observation, almost no details of the plumage were described. Since the sighting is from a long-running hawk watch and with several experienced observers present, it seems likely that this report did in fact represent a Swainson's Hawk, but one that couldn't be described in enough detail to warrant acceptance. NYSARC is keenly aware of the difficulty of documenting sight records from hawk watches and similar situations such as ocean and lake watches, but feels that it is important to maintain a high threshold of documentation for acceptance even under these difficult circumstances. A suggestion that all regular hawk watches have a camera handy to document unusual sightings seemed an appropriate solution to the Committee. Even poor photographs, or in the absence of a camera, field sketches, can often convey enough information in conjunction with a written description to support a sighting.

Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*)

2009-87-A/B One, Lake Erie shore, W Lake Road, Dunkirk, **Chautauqua**, 3-5 Sep

A potential first New York State record, the Committee felt this sight-only report contained too little detail for acceptance. Ferruginous Hawk is occasionally reported in eastern North America but is rarely documented. From the descriptions provided, the Committee felt that it was likely that another more common species, perhaps Red-tailed Hawk (*B. jamaicensis*), was involved. Apparently there were good opportunities to photograph this bird, but unfortunately no pictures were taken.

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*)

2009-26-A One, Elm Street, Batavia, **Genesee**, 3 May

This report dealt with a fairly recognizable species reported with somewhat incomplete details. The Committee struggled to decide if the report adequately described a White-winged Dove, and although certain features seemed to fit this species well, others were missing or conveyed only vaguely. It is always important, when writing a description of a bird that is suspected or known to be a rarity, to be sure to include the basics—overall color, size, shape, and the color and appearance of all potentially relevant body parts and feather tracts. Because of some missing and unclear elements, the Committee felt the overall report was insufficient for acceptance.

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)

2009-57-A One, West 49th St between 8th & 9th Aves, Manhattan, **New York**, 16 Sep

This report of a hummingbird briefly visiting some flower boxes at a fourth floor New York City apartment unfortunately did not provide enough of a description for the Committee to even determine that this was anything other than the expected Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*). A vagrant hummingbird in New York requires a high level of detail to confirm its specific identity, generally necessitating a very thorough study and/or a series of good photographs for evaluation.

Eastern x Western Meadowlark hybrid (*Sturnella magna* x *neglecta*)

2009-30-A One, Derby Hill Bird Observatory, Mexico, **Oswego**, 24 Apr

A group of observers studied this meadowlark for five minutes as it perched in a tree on the edge of a grassy field near the hawk watch. The Committee felt that none of the perceived differences were beyond the range of variation in Eastern Meadowlark (*S. magna*) and that views of the tail especially would be vital to declare this a hybrid with any confidence.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Submitted on behalf of the New York State Avian Records Committee:

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

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**Photos from the New York State Avian Records Committee's
Annual Report for 2009**



Thayer's Gull, Sheldrake Point, *Seneca*, 7 Nov 2009, © Tom Brodie Johnson. Although identification issues limit our understanding of the status of Thayer's Gull in NYS, recent advances in digital photography have made it easier to document candidates. Few individuals are as clear-cut as this classic first-cycle bird. Salient field marks include the complete tail band, solid brown centers on the tertials, pale edges and inner vanes on the primaries, all-dark bill and dark eye mask.



Purple Gallinule, Mendon Ponds Park, *Monroe*, 13 Oct 2009, © Brad Carlson. This juvenile was discovered by Pat Martin on 11 Oct at the southern end of Quaker Pond but, sadly, was found dead two days later.



Trumpeter Swan, Upper Lake, Yaphank, *Suffolk*, 14 Feb 2009, © Shai Mitra. An increasingly familiar sight in upstate NY, this species was essentially unheard of on Long Island until this pair took up residence on a small suburban pond, much to the indignation of the local Mute Swans.



Rufous Hummingbird, Grymes Hill, Staten Island, *Richmond*, 11 Oct 2009, © Seth Wollney. This immature male visited Howie Fischer's feeder for close to 3 months, during which time it was captured to confirm the identification.



Yellow-headed Blackbird, Honeoye Falls, *Monroe*, 20 Jan 2009, © Brad Carlson. This first-basic male added a splash of color to a flock of Brown-headed Cowbirds and European Starlings visiting a winter feeder. The well-mannered blackbird avoided seed on the ground, preferring to feed at the hopper, and frequently sipped water after dining.
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California Gull, Three Sisters Islands, Niagara River, *Niagara*, 7 Oct 2009, © Jim Pawlicki. The Niagara River has provided the majority of NYS records, with one or two birds present in recent winters. This third-cycle bird shows a noticeably darker mantle compared to the Ring-billed Gull in the foreground, brownish mottling on the sides of the lower neck and a hint of the red gonydeal spot.



Black Guillemot, Sebonac Inlet, Southampton, *Suffolk*, 26 Dec 2009, © Angus Wilson. Few examples of the High Arctic subspecies *mandtii* have been documented in the lower-48, and this is the first for NYS. In addition to the overall whiteness of the head and upperparts, juveniles have white tipped secondaries, forming a narrow trailing edge. The white, rather than gray, underwing rules out Pigeon Guillemot.