

REPORT OF THE THE NEW YORK STATE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE FOR 2011

The New York State Avian Records Committee (hereafter “NYSARC” or the “Committee”) reviewed 141 reports from 2011 involving 201 separate sightings and 12 reports from previous years involving 14 sightings. Under the Accelerated Review policy the Committee also chose to review 10 reports from 2012 concerning 3 potential first state records. Reports were received from 30 of the 62 counties in New York State, and a high percentage of reports came with helpful photographs. The Committee must remind readers that reports submitted to eBird, listserves, local bird clubs, rare bird alerts (RBAs) and even the *Kingbird* Regional Editors are generally not passed along to NYSARC. Doing so, therefore, remains the responsibility of the observer(s). When possible, the submission of multiple independent reports from co-observers is encouraged, as this provides a much fuller documentation of the sighting and can increase the likelihood of acceptance. ALL observers, not just the finder, are urged to submit written reports and/or photographs. The names of the 103 people who contributed 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. In addition to the contributors referenced above, several *Kingbird* Regional Editors have helped observers to prepare and submit documentation. We wish to extend special thanks to Paul Baicich, Shai Mitra (*Kingbird* Editor), Mike Morgante (*Kingbird* Region 1 Editor), Jim Pawlicki, and Will Yandik for forwarding important documentation or providing valuable background research that aided the Committee in its work. The Committee also wishes to thank Peggy Snyder and Richard Guthrie for once again enabling the daylong NYSARC Annual Meeting held on 22 Sep 2012 at the Green County Accelerator in Coxsackie.

HOW TO SUBMIT REPORTS

Advice on report preparation and submission is provided on the NYSOA web site: <http://nybirds.org/NYSARC/index.htm>

Here, a list of species requested for review by NYSARC (The Review List) is provided along with illustrated copies of previous annual reports. Readers are reminded that, when possible, reports of potential new species are now reviewed ahead of the main body of reports so that a decision can be rendered and made public as soon as possible. This new Accelerated Review policy (NYSARC 2009, *The Kingbird* 59(3):235) benefits everyone but relies on timely receipt of the documentation. To ensure the continued success of this endeavor, the Committee encourages observers to provide materials, especially those concerning major rarities, as quickly and as thoroughly as possible. The Committee is grateful to Carena Pooth (NYSOA Web Master) for regularly updating and 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:

Gary Chapin
125 Pine Springs Drive, Ticonderoga, NY 12883
E-mail: nysarc3@nybirds.org

HIGHLIGHTS

Without doubt 2011 will go down as a banner year for New York State birding. Not only were a number of major rarities found and superbly documented, but *Tropical Storm Irene* brought a deluge of rarely seen seabirds under conditions that proved relatively benign for those observers who could get to a nearby coast. Coverage in terms of submitted reports was excellent but not complete, and a trickle of additional reports is expected. In reviewing 2011 sightings, the Committee voted to accept three new species to the New York State Checklist: **Trumpeter Swan** (*Cygnus buccinator*), **Gray-hooded Gull** (*Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus*), and **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch** (*Leucosticte tephrocotis*). Other notables are the first photo-documented **Band-rumped Storm-Petrel** (*Oceanodroma castro*) and, as a direct result of *TS Irene*, not one, but six **White-tailed Tropicbirds** (*Phaethon lepturus*). Additionally, the Committee accepted 2012 sightings of **Fea's/Zino's Petrel** (*Pterodroma feae/madeira*) and **Grace's Warbler** (*Setophaga graciae*) through Accelerated Review, both new for the state; these will be presented in the 2012 Annual Report. With these five additions from 2011 and 2012 the NYS Checklist now stands at **484** species or unique species pairs.

COMMITTEE NEWS

Few species have prompted more public discussion regarding NYS Checklist status than Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*), and for several years now the Committee has been acutely aware of the uncomfortable disconnect between what people are seeing in the field and what the checklist says. The history behind this question is both interesting and complicated. There is slim evidence that Trumpeter Swans ever occurred as a significant natural population in NYS, even in pre-colonial times, but over the last 10-15 years birders have witnessed a steady self-colonization of wetlands in western, central and northern parts of NYS. Most, if not all, of the Trumpeter Swans occurring in the state originate directly or indirectly from a series of intensive reintroduction programs based in southern Ontario and a handful of mid-western states, supplemented by a few escapes/releases from private collections within NYS. Galvanized by careful documentation of Trumpeter Swans submitted each year by diligent field observers, especially of reports of marked birds whose origins could be traced, the Committee formulated a set of detailed guidelines for when this species, or for that matter any introduced species, might be safely considered to have established a sustainable population and warrant admission to the NYS Checklist. The situation has been assessed by NYSARC every year, and at the 2012 Annual Meeting Dominic Sherony presented the findings of the newly released US Fish and Wildlife Service survey of the North American Trumpeter Swan population together with correspondence with various organizations directly involved in the reintroductions. Based on this new and detailed information, the Committee agreed that the pre-determined benchmarks had finally been met and that the population wintering in NYS would likely continue for the foreseeable future without continued human assistance. The viability of the NYS nesting population, however, remains questionable and needs to be monitored closely. Henceforth Trumpeter Swan will be included on the New York Checklist, placed between Mute Swan (*C. olor*) and Tundra Swan (*C. columbianus*). Reflecting the gradual progression towards this somewhat arbitrary point, no individual report could be singled out as the "first state record." Sightings from Downstate New York remain very rare and warrant NYSARC review.

The NYSARC Review List is evaluated every year, and changes are made to reflect current knowledge and documented shifts in the status of individual species. Formulation of the Review List is more about balancing the practical aspects of reporting and reviewing than a rigorous scientific assessment of abundance. Some species are included because they are considered challenging to identify in the field, an extrinsic factor that potentially masks the species' true abundance or frequency. A prime example of this category is Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*). Formerly considered a major rarity even on the coast of eastern Long Island, careful studies of terns roosting on the tidal sand flats flanking the Moriches Inlet on Long Island have found the species to be a more frequent visitor than previously thought. This may reflect both a change in local abundance and better awareness of the field characteristics, especially of 1st and 2nd summer plumages, coupled with better means for photo-documentation. Based on these advances and a steady stream of acceptable reports, the Committee voted to remove Arctic Tern from the Review List for downstate NY, including pelagic waters where the species is likely to be a regular migrant, especially in spring. The Committee will continue to review any sightings from non-coastal areas.

There has been a strong impetus emanating from several quarters to modify the definition of NYS pelagic waters in order to extend the range to include the areas of deep water upwelling that are now the preferred destination of many offshore birding trips and to make the boundary lines with neighboring states easier to calculate. This subject was last visited in 1978 (DeBenedictis 1978). Prior to the 2012 Annual Meeting, Angus Wilson supplied the Committee with a detailed overview of the boundary situation coauthored with John Shemilt, a frequent visitor to NYS offshore waters. Using a series of custom-drawn maps, the document systematically compared current boundary definitions with various alternatives and also summarized the boundaries defined by other bird record committees and national organizations. After discussion, the Committee voted to (1) extend the offshore boundary from the 1000 fathom line to a linear distance of 200 nautical miles from land and (2) accept the nearest point of land (NPoL) method for calculating the boundary. This has a relatively minor impact on the existing boundary close to shore but widens the coverage far offshore. Importantly, this brings NYS in line with a number of other US states and the American Birding Association and exactly mirrors the boundaries used by eBird. In concert with this new definition, the Committee agreed to adopt a new "pelagic" zone or region beginning 3 miles from shore and extending to the 200 nautical mile mark. This zone will be treated in the Annual Report write ups as if it were a county and, in time, may be used to redefine the review status of problematic review species such as Northern Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*) and Atlantic Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*) that are relatively common offshore but only very rarely seen from land. A detailed explanation for the rationale and consequences of these changes will be published at a later date.

Last but most certainly not least, the Committee extends a heartfelt thank you and congratulations to Jeanne Skelly for her years of invaluable service. After a long search Jeanne succeeded in finding a suitable replacement for herself in Gary Chapin, the new Secretary of NYSARC. Turning in her last spreadsheet, she is now able to enjoy more hours pursuing real birds in the field but keeps in regular contact to help with the archive, which she spent many tens of hours overhauling and cataloging. We welcome Gary, who successfully combined a very busy reporting year with moving to a new job and place of residence.

2011 Reports Accepted

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*)

2011-15-A/C Five, Wallkill River NWR, Pine Island, **Orange**, 23-26 Mar (Kenneth M. McDermott, Angus Wilson, Jim Schlickenrieder; ph Curt McDermott, Dave Baker, A. Wilson)

2011-42-A/D One, Conewango Swamp WMA, Randolph, **Cattaraugus**, 25-26 Aug (Dominic Sherony, Gerald S. Lazarczyk, Kayo J. Roy, William W. Watson; ph D. Sherony)

2011-148-A One, Stow, **Chautauqua**, 19-25 Sept (Jim Berry; ph Brant Gamma)

Added to the NYS list in 2010, the Committee accepted three more reports for Black-bellied Whistling-Duck from 2011, the first being a flock of five discovered by Rob Stone at the Wallkill River NWR. The fact that these were a free flying group, lacked leg bands or other signs of captivity and remained for only a few days in a natural migratory corridor seemed fully consistent with wild birds. The next occurrence was of a single individual found by Matt King of the DEC during a duck banding session at Conewango Swamp WMA. Although not captured, it was seen over a period of several days and documented by a number of area birders. A month later a Black-bellied Whistling-Duck was found by Brant Gamma consorting with Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) at the south end of Chautauqua Lake. This is 23 miles west of Conewango Swamp, suggesting the same individual was involved, but this could not be established.

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

2011-103-A One, Schutt Road, Middletown, **Orange**, 15 Nov (Kenneth M. McDermott; ph Curt McDermott, Deborah Tracy-Kral)

Debbie Powell found this first example of a Pink-footed Goose away from the immediate southern coast of NY. Ken McDermott provided written details, supported by photographs taken by his son Curt McDermott and by Deborah Tracy-Kral. Other confusion species such as Taiga Bean-Goose (*A. fabalis*) and Tundra Bean-Goose (*A. serrirostris*) were firmly ruled out. The legs were not banded, a detail that the committee very much appreciates, this consistent with a genuine vagrant. There were a number of reports of Pink-footed Goose in eastern North America in the winter of 2011/12. The marked increase in sightings of both Pink-footed and Barnacle (*Branta leucopsis*) Geese support the notion that many refer to natural vagrants. Accordingly, the Committee has been more inclined to accept reports.

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

2011-8-A One, Glenwood Road, Pine Island, **Orange**, 4 Mar (Kenneth M. McDermott; ph Curt McDermott)

This Barnacle Goose provides another example of a rarity found by the diligent goose watchers of Orange County. The date is consistent with the spring migration of geese in the east. Although coastal records are more frequent, there have been other March sightings of this species from inland NYS. Given the timing, location and absence of any signs of captivity, the Committee accepted the sighting as of a natural vagrant.

“Eurasian” Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca crecca*)

2011-123-A Two males, Shorts Pond, Bridgehampton, **Suffolk**, 6 & 13 Mar (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

Two male “Eurasian” Green-winged Teal were found among a larger group of “American” Green-winged Teal (*A. c. carolinensis*). Each showed the bold white horizontal scapular stripes on both sides of the body and lacked any visible hint of a vertical white breast bar on either side. Asymmetry in the plumage is often a tipoff to an intergrade between the Eurasian and American subspecies, and it’s important to study candidates from both sides. A photograph of one of these two birds was included.

Black-capped Petrel (*Pterodroma hasitata*)

2011-58-A One, Mecox Bay, Watermill, **Suffolk**, 28 Aug (Angus Wilson; ph A. Wilson, John Shemilt)

After an intense day of chasing storm birds, Angus Wilson and John Shemilt were hunkered down on each side of Mecox Inlet, scanning the stormy bay for any remaining seabirds. A group of roosting Bridled Terns (*Onychoprion anaethetus*) was nestled into the vegetation in front of Shemilt's vehicle, and a Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea*) was making repeated circuits of the confined bay, pausing at the now closed inlet before retreating back into its relative shelter. Suddenly Wilson noted a second shearwater-sized bird further back in the bay, which he recognized as a Black-capped Petrel. Via cell phone he was able to direct Shemilt onto it, and together they were able to secure photographs to document the sighting, ironically the first from coastal NYS. Alerted by phone, other birders arrived minutes later, just in time to see the bird before darkness fell. Among other features, the well-defined white collar separating the black cap from the dark mantle firmly excluded Bermuda Petrel (*P. cahow*). The photographs were also sufficient to identify this bird as a dark-morph, referring to the extent of the dark mask encompassing the eye. Observations from the Gulf Stream off North Carolina have recognized light, dark and more rarely occurring intermediate forms (Howell et al. 2008). These forms detected in the field are substantiated by review of museum specimens, which also reveal reproducible differences in size and mitochondrial DNA sequence consistent with reproductively isolated populations or taxa (Howell et al. 2008, Manley et al. 2013).

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

2011-43-A One, Fishtails of Block Canyon, **pelagic**, 19 Aug (John Shemilt; ph J. Shemilt)

2011-86-A One, Hudson Canyon, **pelagic**, 3 Sep (Angus Wilson; ph A. Wilson)

Two White-faced Storm-Petrels were seen and photographed by John Shemilt and companions whilst fishing over the continental shelf edge. The first was encountered in the upper reaches of Block Canyon, whereas the second was found at the Hudson Canyon, initially spotted by Keegan Corcoran. In both cases, the identification was straightforward and amply documented by photographs. This species is likely present in small numbers along the shelf break and outer canyons every summer but can be difficult to detect, shying away from boats and often remaining hidden among the wave troughs.

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

2011-52-A Thirty, **pelagic**, 6 Aug (Lynne Hertzog; ph John Shemilt)

2011-64-A One, Jones Beach SP Field 10, **Nassau**, 28 Aug (Ken Feustel; ph K. Feustel)

2011-76-A/B One, Jones Beach SP West End, **Nassau**, 28 Aug (Douglas J. Futuyma, Shaibal S. Mitra)

NYSARC accepted three reports of Leach's Storm-Petrel for 2011, one from an offshore excursion and two associated with *TS Irene*. Lynne Hertzog and three others came upon a flock of 30 Leach's Storm-Petrels while on John Shemilt's boat on 6 Aug south of the Shinnecock Inlet. Although little description was provided, Shemilt's excellent close photographs of a few birds in flight clearly eliminate other storm-petrels. Recent summers have witnessed a marked increase in sightings of this species from deeper waters off eastern Long Island. It is still difficult to say if this reflects a sustained distributional change or simply observer effort. The two accepted reports from *TS Irene* came from Jones Beach SP. Ken Feustel and two others observed and photographed a Leach's Storm-Petrel from Jones Beach Parking Field 10, while a mile or two further west Doug Futuyma, Shai Mitra and others studied a Leach's circling in the inner portion

of Jones Inlet. These birds were among several reported from shore that day, and the Committee hopes to receive additional reports in time.

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

2011-44-A One, possibly two, 75 nm SSE of Shinnecock Inlet, **pelagic**, 6 Aug (John Shemilt; ph J. Shemilt)

While chumming for pelagic birds some 75 nautical miles SSE of Shinnecock Inlet, John Shemilt and three companions noticed a different storm-petrel among the 30 Wilson's Storm-Petrels (*Oceanites oceanicus*) and 12 Leach's Storm-Petrels (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*) they had attracted. Wisely, Shemilt managed to secure some close photographs of the bird, allowing further study, and these firmly supported the identification. This is only the 2nd NYS record accepted by NYSARC (see NYSARC 1997-74-A) and the first to be photographed. Securing photographs is especially important because of the distinct possibility that the AOU and other bodies will split the North Atlantic populations into multiple species at some future date. The at-sea identification criteria are a work in progress but currently consider molt timing as a major indicator (see Bolton et al. 2008, Robb et al. 2008, Howell et al. 2010).

White-tailed Tropicbird (*Phaethon lepturus*)

2011-54-A One, Point Lookout, **Nassau**, 28 Aug (Steve Walter; ph S. Walter)

2011-65-A One specimen, East Marion, **Suffolk**, 29 Aug (Paul Sweet)

2011-66-A One specimen, Beach 48th Street, Rockaway Beach, **Queens**, 29 Aug (Paul Sweet)

2011-69-A/B Two specimens, Presbyterian Hill Road, Stephentown and Township of Petersburg, **Rensselaer**, 29 Aug (Jesse W. Jaycox, Jeremy J. Kirchman; ph J. Jaycox, J. Kirchman)

2011-89-A One, Pier at west end of 24th Street, Manhattan, **New York**, 28 Aug (Sam Stuart; ph S. Stuart)

TS Irene will be known as the storm that brought White-tailed Tropicbird to NYS, doubling the tally of previous records, which were all hurricane related, with the last in 1954 (Askildsen 1998), in the space of two days. Sadly, two of the tropicbirds were found dead, the Rockaway Beach bird by Sergeant Marisa Miller of the Urban Park Rangers and the East Marion bird by Robert S. DeLuca. The Stephentown and Petersburg birds had travelled far up the Hudson River and were found alive and taken into care, but both died shortly thereafter; these two, both adult males, are now at the New York State Museum in Albany, the Stephentown bird a skin specimen number 11229 and the Petersburg bird a skeleton specimen number 11230. Fortunately, two additional birds were seen very much alive, and both were nicely photographed. All of the 2011 birds were adults.

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)

2011-104-A One, Edith G. Read Wildlife Sanctuary, Rye, **Westchester**, 13 Nov (Benjamin Van Doren; ph B. Van Doren)

Although Brown Pelican is not a review species for coastal NYS, it is quite rare on Long Island Sound where this bird was found. Benjamin Van Doren observed this bird with finder Tom Burke and obtained a good photograph.

Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*)

2011-53-A One, Hudson River off South Bay, Hudson, **Columbia**, 28 Aug (Timothy O'Connor)

Timothy O'Connor provided a convincing description of a frigatebird passing overhead in the aftermath of *TS Irene*. Some committee members were concerned that other species such as Great Frigatebird (*F. minor*) could not be ruled out by the description. However, it was agreed that Magnificent Frigatebird was much more likely in these circumstances, the storm having tracked up through the Caribbean, where this species is very common.

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

2011-37-A One adult, Tift Nature Preserve, Buffalo, **Erie**, 26 Apr (Alec Humann)

Alec Humann provided a solid description of an adult Yellow-crowned Night-Heron seen at a nature preserve near Lake Erie in Buffalo. The species is relatively common in coastal NYS during the summer months, where it nests in a number of locations, and there has been a steady increase in the number of Upstate reports. Adults are quite distinctive, and area birders have become more adept at safely separating immatures from the much more common Black-crowned Night-Heron (*N. nycticorax*). After discussion, the Committee decided to remove Yellow-crowned from the Review List statewide.

White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*)

2011-11-A One adult, Mt. Loretto Unique Area, Staten Island, **Richmond**, 25 Apr (Seth Wollney; ph S. Wollney)

2011-26-A/C One immature, Wallkill River NWR, Pine Island, **Orange**, 15-17 Jul & 10 Aug (Kenneth M. McDermott, Jim Schlickerrieder, Angus Wilson; ph John H. Haas)

2011-32-A One immature, Haven Road, Bashakill WMA, **Sullivan**, 28 Jul (John H. Haas; ph J. Haas)

2011-72-A/B One immature, Bridge Lane, Sagaponack, **Suffolk**, 2-3 Sep (Karen Rubinstein, Eileen Schwinn; ph E. Schwinn)

The summer of 2011 was a banner season for White Ibis in the northeast, with sightings spread across NYS and neighboring New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. NYSARC accepted four records, unusual for any year, although in 1977 eleven immature White Ibis were reported around the state. The striking adult on Staten Island found by Jeff Stetson in April is of particular interest. The reports from the Wallkill River and Bashakill may pertain to the same bird, as these locations are only about 15 miles apart. Based on the dates, that would mean that the bird first occurred at Wallkill, moved to Bashakill, and then eventually returned to Wallkill. However, without more concrete evidence this is purely speculation, and the Committee decided to treat the birds at each location separately. The Wallkill River ibis was first seen by Rob Stone, and Jim Ash found the Sagaponack bird.

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*)

2011-12-A/B One, High Acres Waste Management Area, Fairport, **Monroe**, 19-20 May (Jeanne Skelly, Brad Carlson; ph J. Skelly, B. Carlson)

Once very rare, this species is now found annually in coastal NY, principally at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; however, sightings from Upstate also seem to be slowly increasing. This adult was found at High Acres Nature Area in Monroe County by Bruce and Mary Ann Cady and seen by many during its five-day stay, mostly in the mornings. It frequented one particular pond among many and was not seen elsewhere. Jeanne Skelly and Brad Carlson provided excellent photographs showing the white feathering surrounding the pink facial skin and red eyes, typical of an adult in alternate plumage.

Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*)

2011-34-A/C Four, over Route 394 near Chautauqua Golf Course, **Chautauqua**, 3 Aug (Gil Randell, Jann Randell, Ron Preston)

2011-100-A One, Hamlin Beach State Park, **Monroe**, 28 Oct (Brad Carlson; ph B. Carlson)

On 3 Aug, Gil and Jann Randell were driving along Route 394 when they noticed four large white birds circling overhead. Stopping to observe, they witnessed four Wood Storks circle and then fly over to a nearby wood. The storks landed in the treetops, alighting for 30 seconds or so, before taking flight again and disappearing to the southwest. At around the same time, Ron Preston saw what were presumably the same birds flying over the nearby State Fish Hatchery. It's remarkable, considering that this quartet was not seen anywhere else in the state, that they should be spotted

simultaneously by two independent sets of observers. The second accepted report was from Hamlin Beach SP in late October. Mike Tetlow spotted a single Wood Stork moving roughly parallel to and just inland from the Lake Ontario shoreline. Brad Carlson and Andy Guthrie were also able to see the bird, and Carlson took photos of it soaring over the beach area. Wood Stork remains a less than annual vagrant to NYS, but reports of small flocks such as those in Chautauqua County are not unprecedented, the maximum being a flock of 16 in Wayne County in Aug 2001 (NYSARC 2001-28-A/I).

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)

2011-35-A One light morph, Beebe Road, Wilson, **Niagara**, 27 Apr (Willie D'Anna)

2011-38-A One light morph, Derby Hill Bird Observatory, Mexico, **Oswego**, 22 Apr (Bill Purcell)

2011-39-A One, Derby Hill Bird Observatory, Mexico, **Oswego**, 22 May (Bill Purcell; ph Tom Carrolan)

2011-91-A/D One first year bird, Lake Ontario Parkway, **Monroe**, 1-2 Oct (William W. Watson, Jeanne Skelly, Dominic Sherony, Brad Carlson; ph J. Skelly, D. Sherony, B. Carlson)

One or two Swainson's Hawks are now annual during the peak of spring hawk migration along the south shore of Lake Ontario, with three documented sightings for 2011. Bill Purcell provided convincing details of two light-phase birds moving east past Derby Hill one month apart. The 22 May bird was photographed. Further west along the lake, Willie D'Anna found a light morph in a kettle of soaring Broad-winged Hawks (*Buteo platypterus*) on 27 Apr. What ultimately happens to these eastward bound spring adults is unknown. Swainson's Hawks are rarer in fall, but when they occur, are more likely to linger. On 1 Oct Jessie Barry discovered a juvenile Swainson's Hawk on the shoulder of the Lake Ontario Parkway in Hamlin, just west of Rochester. After posting her sighting to the Internet birding lists, a number of people saw the bird and commented on its fearless approach to the road traffic, sometimes swooping between speeding vehicles. It continued in the same location until 5 Oct, when it was hit by a car and killed; a sad, yet seemingly inevitable outcome witnessed by Mike Zebehazy. The corpse was collected and deposited in the collection at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

"Western" Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis calurus*)

2011-36-A One adult, Gaines Basin Road, Gaines, **Orleans**, 2 Apr (Willie D'Anna, ph W. D'Anna)

Dave Tetlow discovered this dark morph Red-tailed Hawk on 1 Apr near the Village of Albion in Orleans County. Willie D'Anna was able to find it the next day and obtained photographs as it perched in a tree. Although reports of dark Red-tailed Hawks in the east have always been attributed to the western subspecies, *B. j. calurus*, this is based on the belief that dark color morphs do not occur in the eastern breeding populations, and the validity of this assumption was questioned during the review of the Orleans bird. This was prompted in part by a proposal from Jean Iron that the poorly known boreal "Eastern" Red-tail subspecies *abieticolus* might include some dark morph individuals (Iron 2012). Unfortunately the literature on distribution of dark Red-tailed Hawks and validity of this subspecies is limited and confusing. First named by Todd in the 1950's as a subspecies occupying the immense spruce-fir belt of North America stretching from central Alaska to Nova Scotia, many authorities still do not recognize *abieticolus*. Museum collections are not as helpful because relatively few specimens of breeding birds have been collected from boreal woodlands within the proposed range of *abieticolus*. After reviewing the available information, the Committee decided to accept this record as a *calurus* based on current information, with the possibility of revisiting the identification in the future. The chief questions are whether "Eastern" Red-tailed Hawks, regardless of the *borealis/abieticolus* issue, ever exhibit similar dark-morphs, and if so, how frequently. The Committee welcomes thorough photo-documentation of all candidates, as this might well shed fresh light on an interesting problem.

Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*)

2011-93-A One, Caumsett SP, **Suffolk**, 5 Oct (Derek Rogers)

Derek Rogers, a Nature Conservancy preserve manager, flushed this Yellow Rail three times in a freshly mowed meadow in the early morning of 5 Oct at Caumsett SP on the north shore of Long Island. Each time, it flew a short distance just a few feet above the grass before dropping out of sight. Rogers had views of the back, tail and wings, including the obvious white secondaries, which are characteristic of this species. The principal confusion would be a young Sora (*Porzana carolina*), which does show some white along the trailing edge of the secondaries. However, the Committee appreciated this observer's prior experience rails and the extent of the white as noted in the carefully written report. Rough grassland seems to be the preferred habitat for this species during migration, rather than fresh or saltwater marshes.

Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*)

2011-18-A/B Two, north end of Sebonac Inlet Road, Southampton, **Suffolk**, 29 May (Michael Higginson, Eileen Schwinn; ph E. Schwinn)

2011-50-A One, Old GM plant, Sleepy Hollow, **Westchester**, 28 Aug (Jacob Drucker)

NYSARC received two reports of Black-necked Stilt for 2011. The first involved a pair seen by Eileen Schwinn and others at the mouth of a tidal channel on eastern Long Island. Somewhat typical of the species, they did not linger in that area very long. The majority of stilt records are from salt or brackish habitat on Long Island in spring through to July, and the lone individual found in Sleepy Hollow on 28 Aug, documented by Jacob Drucker, is a noteworthy exception.

Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*)

2011-13-A/B One, Martin Road, Hamlin, **Monroe**, 20 May (Jeanne Skelly, Brad Carlson; ph J. Skelly, B. Carlson)

2011-45-A One, Ellisburg, **Jefferson**, 4 Jun (Jeff Bolsinger; ph Tony Shrimpton)

Inland sightings of Marbled Godwit seem to be holding steady if not increasing and in 2011 we received two reports, both from spring. Andy Guthrie found the first in a flooded field off Martin Road in Hamlin, Monroe County. The bird was seen later by Jeanne Skelly and Brad Carlson, who documented their sightings with reports and photographs. The second was found and photographed by Tony Shrimpton on 3 Jun in a flooded cornfield along Route 193 in the Town of Ellisburg, Jefferson County. The bird was seen over a two-day period and documented on 4 Jun by Jeff Bolsinger.

Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*)

2011-127-A One, juvenile plumage, Kumpf Marsh, Iroquois NWR, Alabama, **Genesee**, 14 Sep (Willie D'Anna)

This juvenile Western Sandpiper was found 13 Sep by Joe Mitchell and documented by Willie D'Anna the next day. Although still rare Upstate, there is a growing suspicion that they are annual, especially in fall migration, and just under recorded for various reasons. Until the status is better known, the committee encourages documentation of all Upstate sightings.

Gray-hooded Gull (*Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus*)

2011-30-A/J One alternate plumage adult, Coney Island Beach, **Kings**, 24 Jul-3 Aug (Sara Burch, Jacob McCartney, Ed Coyle, Elliotte Rusty Harold, Jeff Hopkins, Angus Wilson, Thomas W. Burke, Mark S. Szantyr, Shawn Billerman, Steve Walter; ph S. Burch, E. Coyle, E. Harold, Richard B. Cech, M. Szantyr, S. Billerman, S. Walter)

This smart-looking gull was discovered on 24 Jul 2011 by Sara Burch and Jacob McCartney during a walk along the ocean boardwalk at Coney Island, Brooklyn. On the

basis of the red bill and legs and partial hood the observers concluded that this was likely a Black-headed Gull (*C. ridibundus*), a noteworthy species especially in mid-summer, and secured some photographs. These were shared with eBird reviewer Doug Gochfeld, who immediately re-identified the bird as a Gray-hooded Gull, a species not illustrated in any North American field guide. Hundreds of birders came from all over the country to view the gull during its 12-day stay, and the presence of this avian rarity, just steps from the famous Coney Island boardwalk and amusement park, attracted the attention of the news media including the *New York Times*. The Coney Island gull was beautifully documented in the form of nine detailed reports, the majority accompanied by convincing color photographs, some of quite remarkable quality.

In assessing the record, the Committee careful considered the possibility of an escape or some other mode of human-assistance but could not find any evidence for this. Gray-hooded Gulls are known to wander north along the coast of Brazil on a regular basis, where they come into contact with wintering Laughing Gulls (*Leucophaeus atricilla*). Testifying to the natural affinity between these two species, there is a record of a vagrant Laughing Gull nesting with Gray-hooded Gull in Senegal on the west coast of Africa (Erard et al. 1984). The Coney Island bird spent much of its time with Laughing Gulls, and the idea that it followed their migration is compelling. Alternatively, the gull could have travelled to the Caribbean from the Pacific coast of South America via the Isthmus of Panama, where there have been multiple records. It is also possible the gull originated in West Africa and crossed the Atlantic to the Caribbean or northern coast of South America before moving northwards. By odd coincidence, this would mirror the proposed route for New York's first and only Western Reef-Heron (*Egretta gularis*) observed less than a mile away from the boardwalk in the Coney Island Creek (NYSARC 2007-34-A/K). A record of Gray-hooded Gull from the Lesser Antillean island of Barbados, a frequent landfall for Old-World vagrants, lends support to a trans-Atlantic route. The Brooklyn bird represents the first record for NYS and, because of the high level of documentation and national importance, was voted on during 2011 under the Accelerated Review policy. This represents only the 2nd record for the US and Canada, the previous record being a one-day bird photographed by a researcher near Apalachicola, Florida on 26 Dec 1998 (McNair 1999).

Franklin's Gull (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*)

2011-116-A One 1st winter, several locations along the Niagara River, Lewiston, **Niagara**, 11 & 26 Nov & 4 Dec (Brad Carlson; ph B. Carlson)

The occurrence of Franklin's Gull on the Niagara River peaked in the late 1960's and 70's but has fallen since then. Today, the species is less than annual, with most records coming from the shores of Lakes Erie and Ontario and, especially, the Niagara River. Willie D'Anna discovered this 1st-winter Franklin's Gull on the Niagara River on 5 Nov at Artpark SP. The bird remained in the area for about a month. Brad Carlson, who provided the only report, observed the gull three times and included excellent photographs.

California Gull (*Larus californicus*)

2011-90-A/B One basic plumage adult, Wright Beach, Dunkirk Harbor, **Chautauqua**, 1 Oct (William W. Watson, James Pawlicki; ph J. Pawlicki)

2011-128-A/B One basic plumage adult, Niagara River, Lewiston, **Niagara**, 13, 20 & 26 Nov (Willie D'Anna, Joe Mitchell)

As with the Franklin's Gull discussed above, the Niagara River is the prime location for California Gull sightings, with one or two present each year in late fall and early winter. However, careful study of gulls at other locations has begun to produce more records. Jim Pawlicki found and photographed an adult at Wright Beach near Dunkirk Harbor on 1

Oct, and a handful of other birders were able to see it that day but not subsequently. This is the second earliest sighting for NYS, the earliest being 20 Sep 1997 near the Niagara River. Pawlicki noted, and it can be seen in his photographs, that the Dunkirk bird was still growing in its outer two primaries (P9 and P10). On the Niagara River an adult was spotted by Betsy Potter on 13 Nov below the falls at the power plants and documented by Willie D'Anna, and subsequently it was seen by Joe Mitchell above the falls roughly five miles upstream. Gulls are known to move between these two locations on a regular basis, and, since both descriptions of this bird were consistent, the Committee agreed to treat both as the same individual and as one record.

Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*)

2011-117-A One basic plumage adult, Devil's Hole SP, Niagara Falls, **Niagara**, 16 Dec (James Pawlicki; ph J. Pawlicki)

2011-118-A One adult, Floyd Bennett Field, **Kings**, 10 Mar (Douglas Gochfeld; ph D. Gochfeld)

Thayer's Gull is an annual winter visitor in small numbers on the Niagara River. As has been noted many times in these Annual Reports, field identification is greatly complicated by the tremendous variation in Kumlien's Iceland Gull (*L. glaucoides kumlieni*) and the possibility of hybrids. These two reports were accompanied by photos of the gulls both perched and in flight and provided sufficient detail to rule out Iceland Gull based on accepted criteria. The bird at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn was found by Shane Blodgett and Doug Gochfeld and is an outstanding find because of the great rarity of Thayer's Gulls along the coast in southern NYS. Gulls on the Niagara River are often difficult to photograph because of the distances involved, but improved equipment and the ability to digiscope (that is, to take photos through a spotting scope) have ameliorated this deficiency somewhat. In the case of the Thayer's Gull at Devil's Hole SP, Jim Pawlicki was able to get good images by walking down to the bottom of the river gorge itself with the express purpose of photographing the gulls, a tactic with quite rewarding results.

Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*)

2011-3-A/B One basic plumage adult, Lewiston Power Reservoir, Lewiston, **Niagara**, 22 Feb (James Pawlicki, Gerald S. Lazarczyk)

2011-9-A One basic plumage adult, Randall Road, Wilson, **Niagara**, 22 Mar (James Pawlicki; ph J. Pawlicki)

2011-110-A One transitioning out of definitive basic plumage, Youngstown-Wilson Road, Porter, **Niagara**, 16 Mar (Willie D'Anna; ph W. D'Anna)

2011-113-A/C One basic plumage adult, Goat Island, Niagara Falls, **Niagara**, 8 Dec (William W. Watson, James Pawlicki, Joe Mitchell; ph J. Pawlicki, J. Mitchell)

2011 marked an unprecedented year for sightings of Slaty-backed Gull with four reports, all of adults and all from Niagara County. The chief point of discussion was the number of individuals involved. Three of the sightings were from a month long interval from late winter to early spring (22 Feb - 22 Mar) and spread over three different sites: Lewiston Power Reservoir adjacent to the Niagara River, then about four miles east of the river in Porter, and lastly about nine miles east of the river in Wilson. Although it is possible, perhaps even likely as some believe, that this reflects one roving bird, the photographs and descriptions could not conclusively demonstrate this point, and the Committee agreed to maintain the three reports as separate.

Sooty Tern (*Onychoprion fuscatus*)

2011-48-A Two, Hudson River flying south from Riverhead Park, **New York**, 28 Aug (Jacob Drucker)

2011-68-A One specimen, Camp Hero Bluffs, Montauk, **Suffolk**, 11 Sep (Angus Wilson; ph A. Wilson)

- 2011-78-A** One, Jones Inlet, Point Lookout, **Nassau**, 28 Aug (Douglas J. Futuyma)
2011-87-A/B One, Jones Beach SP, Ocean Parkway, **Nassau**, 28 Aug (Steven Schellenger, Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Schellenger, S. Mitra)
2011-96-A Four adults, East River, between 51st and 42nd Street, Manhattan, **New York**, 28 Aug (Andrew Farnsworth)
2011-126-A One adult, one juvenile, South end of Gerritsen Ave., mouth of Shellbank Creek, **Kings**, 28 Aug (Douglas Gochfeld)

Tropical terns were a major feature of *TS Irene*, with sightings of this species as well as Bridled (*O. anaethetus*) and Sandwich (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) Terns from a number of different vantage points. Indeed these tallies are under-estimates, because additional credible sightings, often with photographs, have not been submitted yet. Separation of Sooty from Bridled Tern under storm conditions can be more challenging than the field guides would suggest, relying on subjective impressions of the shade of the dark upper parts and the relative “heaviness” of the birds. In addition to the live birds, a corpse, most certainly from *TS Irene*, was salvaged two weeks later by Angus Wilson from a walking trail above the bluffs at Camp Hero, which was closed to the public during and after the storm.

Bridled Tern (*Onychoprion anaethetus*)

- 2011-55-A** Two, Point Lookout, **Nassau**, 28 Aug (Steve Walter; ph S. Walter)
2011-56-A/B One to Three, Jones Beach SP, **Nassau**, 28 Aug (Steve Walter, Douglas J. Futuyma; ph S. Walter)
2011-67-A One specimen, Montauk Boat Basin, **Suffolk**, 4 Sep (Angus Wilson; ph A. Wilson)
2011-80-A Three, Jones Beach SP West End, **Nassau**, 28 Aug (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)
2011-81-A Two, Reynolds Channel near Point Lookout, **Nassau**, 28 Aug (Douglas J. Futuyma)
2011-88-A One, Nickerson Beach, Point Lookout, **Nassau**, 31 Aug (Seymour Schiff)
2011-102-A One, East River, between 51st and 42nd Street, Manhattan, **New York**, 28 Aug (Andrew Farnsworth)
2011-125-A One, Block Canyon, **pelagic**, 20 Aug (Douglas Gochfeld; ph D. Gochfeld)

Five of these reports pertained to birds seen on the day of *TS Irene*, while two others, one a freshly dead juvenile, were from a few days after. Again, many additional sightings were reported to the lists or entered into eBird but not submitted to NYSARC, giving a somewhat incomplete picture of this remarkable event. Bridled Terns frequent warm tropical waters and follow the Gulf Stream northwards in good numbers during the summer months. Pelagic excursions to the continental shelf edge and major canyons may encounter this species, especially when warm water eddies from the Gulf Stream spiral back and collide with the shelf, and the individual photographed by Doug Gochfeld during a pelagic trip to Block Canyon on 20 Aug provides a good example of this.

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

- 2011-28-A/B** One 1st-summer, Cupsogue CP, **Suffolk**, 29 Jun (Seth Ausubel, Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Ausubel, Corey Finger, S. Mitra)
2011-29-A/B One 1st-summer, Cupsogue CP, **Suffolk**, 29 Jun (Seth Ausubel, Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Ausubel, Corey Finger, S. Mitra)
2011-33-A/B One 1st-summer, Cupsogue CP, **Suffolk**, 9 Jul (Jim Schlickenrieder; Shaibal S. Mitra; ph J. Schlickenrieder, S. Mitra)
2011-136-A One 1st-summer, Cupsogue CP, **Suffolk**, 15 Jun (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)
2011-137-A One 1st-summer, Cupsogue CP, **Suffolk**, 3 Jul (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

Shai Mitra and others have firmly demonstrated that non-breeding Arctic Terns occur regularly around Long Island’s ocean inlets in late spring and early summer (Mitra 2009). The Committee appreciates the continued documentation of terns from this key location, receiving five reports from 2011, all of first-summer individuals. As discussed in the introduction, there is now a sufficient enough body of data to drop this species from the review list for coastal NYS, although the Committee will consider special cases at the

request of regional editors. All claims from Upstate, where the species is extremely rare, should still be submitted for review.

Sandwich Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*)

2011-21-A One adult, Mecox Bay Inlet, Watermill, **Suffolk**, 3 Jul (Angus Wilson; ph A. Wilson)

2011-51-A One, Riis Landing, Rockaway Peninsula, **Queens**, 28 Aug (Paul Sweet)

2011-57-A One, Point Lookout, **Nassau**, 29 Aug (Steve Walter; ph S. Walter)

2011-59-A/B One, Cupsogue CP, **Suffolk**, 29 Jun (Seth Ausubel, Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Ausubel, S. Mitra)

2011-70-A One, Hook Pond & Maidstone Golf Course, East Hampton, **Suffolk**, 28 Aug (Angus Wilson; ph A. Wilson)

2011-82-A One adult, Jones Beach SP West End, **Nassau**, 28 Aug (Douglas J. Futuyma)

2011-83-A One adult, Ocean Parkway opposite Tobay Beach, **Nassau**, 28 Aug (Douglas J. Futuyma)

2011-84-A One adult, Jones Beach SP West End, **Nassau**, 29 Aug (Douglas J. Futuyma)

2011-85-A One, Hobart Beach, Eaton's Neck, **Suffolk**, 28 Aug (Brent E. Bomkamp)

2011-130-A One adult, Floyd Bennett Field, **Kings**, 28 Aug (Douglas Gochfeld; ph D. Gochfeld)

2011-139-A One, Cupsogue CP, **Suffolk**, 25 Jun (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

2011-143-A One immature, Jones Inlet, **Nassau**, 28 Aug (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

2011-144-A One adult, Jones Beach SP Field 10, **Nassau**, 28 Aug (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

2011-145-A One adult, Cupsogue CP, **Suffolk**, 3 Sep (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

This was a banner year for Sandwich Terns, with 10 reports referring to birds associated with *TS Irene* scattered along the south shore of Long Island. Unverified reports suggest there were upwards of 30 birds, and hopefully additional documentation will be submitted to permanently document the event. It's possible that some of these individuals were present already and found because so many birders were out actively searching for storm birds. Found along the Atlantic coastline from the Carolinas southwards, Sandwich Terns are susceptible to displacement northward to NYS and beyond by tropical storms. For instance, on 27 Sep 1985 some 25 or more were found along the coast from the Fire Island Inlet to Montauk in the wake of Hurricane Gloria (Cooper 1998). The Committee also accepted reports of three pre-storm sightings from two traditional sites, the sand flats at Cupsogue CP and Mecox Bay, plus a third in early September, again from Cupsogue. The first Sandwich Tern of the 2011 season was found on 25 Jun at Cupsogue by Richard Kasken.

South Polar Skua (*Stercorarius maccormicki*)

2011-22-A One, 86 miles SE of Shinnecock Inlet, **Pelagic**, 29 May (Angus Wilson; ph A. Wilson)

2011-46-A/B One, Field 2, Robert Moses SP, **Suffolk**, 11 Jul (Jeffrey S. Bolsinger, Shaibal S. Mitra)

2011-47-A One, Jones Beach SP West End Field 2, **Nassau**, 28 Aug (Brent E. Bomkamp; ph B. Bomkamp)

The July skua was studied during a productive seawatch from Robert Moses SP at the western end of Fire Island that featured a good number of Cory's Shearwaters (*Calonectris diomedea*) and Northern Gannets (*Morus bassanus*) as well as other seabirds. When Mitra and Bolsinger first spotted the bird, they thought they were watching a jaeger until realizing the much smaller "tern" it was harassing was actually a Parasitic Jaeger (*S. parasiticus*). The Committee concurred that the descriptions were clearly of a subadult skua, rather than a Pomarine Jaeger (*S. pomarinus*) or some other species, but some members were concerned that the viewing conditions were not ideal to unambiguously identify this as a South Polar Skua, considered the default in summer. The chief concern was that a similarly aged Great Skua (*S. skua*) would be extremely similar. Even though adult Great Skuas are generally on or close to their breeding grounds in Iceland and Northern Europe at that time, it is believed that subadults wander more widely and could occur off our coast. After circulating for three rounds of voting, a consensus to accept this as South Polar was reached based on likelihood and absence of

any details suggestive of Great rather than South Polar. Although a few skuas were photographed on the day of *TS Irene*, only one was submitted in time for review. Hopefully this omission will be rectified and details can be included in a future report.

Common Murre (*Uria aalge*)

2011-23-A One specimen, Morgan's Cove, Montauk, **Suffolk**, 26 Feb (Angus Wilson; ph A. Wilson)

2011-121-A One adult, Camp Hero SP, **Suffolk**, 30 Dec (Shawn Billerman)

In recent years there has been a distinct reversal in relative abundance between the two murre species, with Common Murre being found more often than Thick-billed Murre (*U. lomvia*). Although 2011 saw a downtick in the number of reports submitted, it's likely the trend will continue. A partially eaten but still relatively fresh specimen was retrieved and photographed by Angus Wilson from a rocky beach near Montauk Point. Even with the bird in hand the jetblack plumage and relatively stubby bill gave the misleading impression of a Thick-billed; however, measurements by Jeremy Kirchman of the NYS Museum confirmed that it was in fact a Common Murre. The following winter, a live bird was observed from the bluffs at Camp Hero SP a short distant east of the previous location by Shawn Billerman and was thoroughly described.

Razorbill (*Alca torda*)

2011-111-A/F One first basic, mouth of Niagara River from Fort Niagara State Park, **Niagara**, 8 Nov-3 Dec (Willie D'Anna, James Pawlicki, Brad Carlson, Joshua Stiller, William W. Watson, Mike Morgante; ph W. D'Anna, B. Carlson, J. Stiller)

This is the fourth accepted record of Razorbill for Region 1 and, like the others, was found at the outflow of the Niagara River into Lake Ontario. The bird was discovered and identified by duck hunter Josh Stiller, who reported it to Connie Adams of the DEC. She then alerted the birding public. After being seen in the morning of 3 Dec, what was believed to be the carcass of the Razorbill, possibly the victim of duck hunters, was later reported floating past Fort Niagara by Nick Sly.

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

2011-4-A One, private residence, **Orleans** 27 Jan & 2 Feb (Brett M. Ewald; ph B. Ewald)

2011-108-A One, Powell Road, Interlaken, **Seneca**, 21 May (Marty Schlabach)

Both of these Eurasian Collared-Doves were photographed, and the possibility of Ringed Turtle-Dove (*S. risoria*), a common cage bird, was safely ruled out. Both represent first county records, with Brett Ewald finding the Orleans County bird and Marty Schlabach finding the one in Seneca County. In sharp contrast to many other parts of the US where Eurasian Collared-Doves have become commonplace, in NYS the species barely maintains a toehold, with the only consistent population occurring in a small area near Hamlin in Monroe County. Sightings elsewhere have almost invariably involved single birds that did not linger. The Orleans County bird might have originated from the Hamlin population, which is only 15 miles to the east.

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*)

2011-16-A/B One, Jones Beach SP West End, **Nassau**, 15 May (Douglas J. Futuyma, Andrew Baksh; ph A. Baksh)

This White-winged Dove was discovered by Doug Futuyma and Andrew Baksh while birding together at the western end of Jones Beach on Long Island. Baksh was able to take several close range photographs, and several other birders managed to see the bird later in the day, but not afterwards. Despite being restricted to the southern US and Caribbean region, this species has shown a clear propensity to wander, becoming close to annual in NYS.

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)

2011-109-A/C One, Lenoir Preserve, Yonkers, **Westchester**, 6 Nov-18 Dec (Gerry McGee, Michael Bochnik, Robert Yunick; ph G. McGee, M. Bochnik, Dana Fazino, Douglas Gochfeld)

2011-114-A/D One, West 81st Street, Manhattan, **New York**, 14 Dec-3 Jan 2012 (Jacob Drucker, Peter Scully, Angus Wilson, Shawn Billerman; ph J. Drucker, P. Scully, S. Billerman)

2011-131-A One adult female, Cove Hollow Farm, Georgica, **Suffolk**, 27 Nov (Angus Wilson; ph John Shemilt)

NYSARC accepted three records of Rufous Hummingbirds in 2011, each of which was carefully documented, allowing rigorous exclusion of other similar species. The bird at the Lenoir Nature Preserve, where Rufous Hummingbird has occurred late in the year on multiple occasions, was confirmed as an immature female after it was banded and measured by Bob Yunick. The Manhattan bird was seen by tens if not hundreds of birders and well photographed during its extended stay around the flowerbeds flanking the entrance to the Hayden Planetarium and also nearby within Central Park. Photographs showed the broad outermost tail feathers and a hint of emargination on rectrix 2 (R2), both helpful clues in ruling out Allen's Hummingbird (*S. sasin*). Early public discussions also considered Broad-tailed Hummingbird (*S. platycercus*), a species not yet recorded but possible. However, the amount of rufous in the tail and other features pointed to Rufous. Lastly, an adult female visited sugarwater feeders maintained at a private residence near East Hampton and was spectacularly photographed by John Shemilt. One of his photos shows the diagnostic nipple-like shape of R2.

Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*)

2011-132-A One adult male, Piping Rock Club, Matinecock, **Nassau**, 31 Dec (Seth Ausubel; ph S. Ausubel)

Although common in suitable habit across much of the state, Pileated Woodpeckers are extremely rare on Long Island, presumably because this requires a lengthy crossing of both water and highly urban areas, both alien habitat to this denizen of mature woodlands. This male was found and photographed by birders searching for a Painted Bunting (NYSARC 2011-120). Prior recent sightings of Pileated Woodpecker on Long Island are from 1983 by birders working on the first NYS breeding bird atlas and another in 1981. Before these, Pileated Woodpeckers had not been recorded on Long Island since 1947 (Rising 1998).

Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*)

2011-94-A One, Caumsett SP, **Suffolk**, 4 Oct (Ken Feustel; ph K. Feustel)

2011-105-A One, Cocksackie Creek Grasslands, **Greene**, 19 Nov (Richard Guthrie; ph R. Guthrie)

The October Say's Phoebe was found by Annie McIntyre and identified by Sue Feustel at Caumsett SP on the north shore of Long Island where it fed on grasshoppers and an Orange Sulphur (*Colias eurytheme*) butterfly. Another was found about six weeks later at the Cocksackie Creek Grasslands Preserve in Greene County by Rich Guthrie, who was able to take a diagnostic photograph through his binoculars. These two birds follow the trend of the majority of Say's Phoebes, occurring in mid-to-late fall, typical as well of other vagrant western tyrant flycatchers.

Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*)

2010-41-A One, Fort Drum, **Jefferson**, 12 Jul (Gabriel Luongo; ph G. Luongo)

This Western Kingbird was described and photographed at Fort Drum by Gabriel Luongo. It perched atop a barbed wire fence alongside Vesper (*Pooecetes gramineus*) and Grasshopper (*Ammodramus savannarum*) Sparrows. This is the first July record for an inland region and was presumably a wandering adult rather than a juvenile.

Gray Kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*)

2011-98-A/B One, Jones Beach SP West End, **Nassau**, 15 Oct (Richard Ettlinger, Michael R. McBrien; ph R. Ettlinger, M. McBrien)

Richard Ettlinger and Michael McBrien independently found and photographed a Gray Kingbird on 15 Oct near the Jones Beach West End Coast Guard Station. Ettlinger's sighting preceded McBrien's by a mere 30 minutes. One of Ettlinger's three photos shows a Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*) perched, while the other two show a white-bellied non-Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) in flight as viewed from behind. Since no description was provided, this might not have been enough to pass the record on its own, but McBrien's photos firmly establish the identification. Although the great majority of Gray Kingbird records north of Florida occur on or near the coast this had not been the case in New York. Prior to the Jones Beach bird, the last coastal record was in 1989, with four inland records in the interim.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*)

2011-99-A One, Captree SP, **Suffolk**, 22 Oct (Ken Thompson; ph K. Thomson)

This Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was observed by a handful of lucky birders for a few hours on the morning of 22 Oct at Captree SP on Long Island, and Ken Thompson was able to provide a good photograph. Beginning in the late 1990's, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers have occurred almost annually in NYS, although all too often they don't linger for very long.

Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

2011-63-A One, Croton-Harmon Train Station, Croton-on-Hudson, **Westchester**, 6 Sep (Benjamin Van Doren; ph B. Van Doren)

2011-71-A/B One, Theodore Roosevelt CP, Montauk, **Suffolk**, 17-18 Sep (Karen Rubinstein, Angus Wilson; ph Vicki Bustamante, A. Wilson)

2011-95-A One, Wallkill River NWR, Oil City Road, **Orange**, 7 Oct (Kenneth M. McDermott; ph Curt McDermott, John H. Haas)

2011 was a good year for Northern Wheatear with three records, all from the southeastern portion of the state and all from late summer to early fall, as is typical. All three birds appeared to be in first-basic plumage and were consistent with the larger Greenland subspecies (*O. o. leucorhoa*), although field identification to subspecies is difficult due to variation in individual characters. The Westchester bird remained to 8 Sep, while the Suffolk individual was last seen on 20 Sep.

Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*)

2011-133-A One immature female, Hulse Landing Road, Calverton, **Suffolk**, 9 Jan 2012 (Thomas Brodie Johnson; ph T. Johnson)

Lenore Swenson and Diana Teta found this immature female Mountain Bluebird in a large agricultural field near Calverton on 26 Dec. It was subsequently seen and photographed by many birders, often posing along a snow fence close to the road, but documented only by a single report from Tom Johnson. Three excellent in-flight photos support his submission. This is the first occurrence in NYS since 2005, with the bird continuing to at least 14 Jan 2012.

Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*)

2011-7-A One male, private residence, Wurtsboro, **Sullivan**, 3 Jan to 3 Mar, (John H. Haas; ph J. Haas)

One or two Varied Thrush reports are received annually. This adult male Varied Thrush was seen for a two-month period at a back yard feeder. The homeowner, who first spotted this handsome visitor from the forests of the Pacific Northwest on New Year's Day, preferred the news to be kept private but did allow a few visitors to observe and

document the bird. John Haas, who submitted the report and included excellent photos, indicated that the thrush would typically arrive with Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*), perhaps making use of their keen alertness.

Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Setophaga nigrescens*)

2011-106-A/B One, Central Park, **New York**, 23-24 Nov (Peter Scully, Jacob Drucker)

Peter Scully and Jacob Drucker provided convincing descriptions of a 1st-basic female Black-throated Gray Warbler in Manhattan's Central Park on 23 and 24 Nov. There are at least fifteen prior records of this western wood warbler for NYS.

Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*)

2011-2-A One male, Deer Way & Big Reed Path, Montauk, **Suffolk**, 29 Jan (Angus Wilson; ph A. Wilson)

This male Western Tanager was first identified by Vicki Bustamante after she was contacted by a neighbor. She then immediately alerted birders, including Angus Wilson, who among others was able to photograph the bird as it visited various feeders. The tanager had been present for most of January before Bustamante was alerted.

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)

2011-62-A One, West Barrier Beach, Fair Haven, **Cayuga**, 11 Sep (Bill Purcell; ph B. Purcell)

2011-74-A One first winter, Indiana Road, Warwick, **Orange**, 15 Sep (Kenneth M. McDermott)

Two reports of Lark Sparrow from non-coastal NYS were accepted, both from mid-September. The first was found by Dave Wheeler at Fair Haven on 11 Sep and seen by several people, including Bill Purcell, who was able to photograph it. Lark Sparrows are scarce but regular migrants to the coast, especially in the fall, and are not reviewed by NYSARC.

Le Conte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*)

2011-1-A One, Calverton Enterprise Park, Calverton, **Suffolk**, 9 Jan (Angus Wilson; ph A. Wilson)

2011-92-A One, Greig Farms, Rockefeller Lane, Red Hook, **Dutchess**, 9 Oct (Peter Schoenberger; ph P. Schoenberger)

A specialist of wet northern prairies, Le Conte's Sparrow occurs as an occasional vagrant, with roughly equal numbers of sightings from spring-early summer and the fall, when they are on-route to coastal wintering sites in marshes and rice fields. Tom Burke and Gail Benson found the Long Island bird on 8 Jan in the overgrown and snow covered median between runways at the former Grumman Airfield near Riverhead, also known as EPCAL or the Calverton Enterprise Park. A number of birders were able to see it in the same area the next day, including Angus Wilson, who provided documentation for the archive. The species is usually very secretive and hard to find, but fortunately this bird would emerge to sun itself, making viewing possible without disturbing the fragile habitat. This is the first winter record, the previous latest date being from Sullivan County on 22 Oct 2006 (NYSARC 2006-41-A). More typical in terms of date was an immature found by Peter Schoenberger on 9 Oct in an agricultural field at the Greig Farms in Dutchess County. He quickly determined that it was an *Ammodramus* sparrow and obtained some excellent photographs. His initial impression was that it was a Le Conte's Sparrow, but he was unsure if Grasshopper Sparrow (*A. savannarum*) could be safely ruled out. Experienced birders quickly responded to an Internet posting confirming his identification.

Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*)

2011-115-A One, private residence, Fairport, **Monroe**, 23 Nov (Brad Carlson; ph B. Carlson)

Mike Tetlow found this Harris's Sparrow on 23 Nov feeding below his tube feeders, coincident with the arrival of a group of Dark-eyed Juncos (*Junco hyemalis*), and it remained until 26 Nov. Brad Carlson provided photographs with his report. Carlson suggested that this was a lighter colored adult in basic plumage rather than an immature, which it resembled because of the black and white spotting on the head and irregular black spotting on the throat.

Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*)

2011-120-A/B One, Piping Rock Club, Matinecock, **Nassau**, 19 & 31 Dec (Seth Ausubel, Shawn Billerman; ph S. Ausubel, S. Billerman)

Barbara Connolly found this female or possibly immature male Painted Bunting on 17 Dec during the Northern Nassau Christmas Bird Count. It frequented the maintenance area of a private country club and golf course, and permission was granted for a few birders to visit and document the bird. The bunting stayed into Jan 2012.

Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*)

2011-134-A One immature, Robert Moses SP, **Suffolk**, 5 Oct (Shaibal S. Mitra)

2011-135-A One immature, Captree SP, **Suffolk**, 19 Oct (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

Shai Mitra documented two immature Yellow-headed Blackbirds, seen two weeks apart at two relatively close locations. The first was seen briefly on the ground but disappeared shortly thereafter. The second remained for longer and was photographed. A convincing case was made for these being two separate birds. Traditionally Yellow-headed Blackbird has been rare on the coast compared to inland regions, especially in western NYS, but for some reason this seems to have changed in recent years.

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch (*Leucosticte tephrocotis*)

2011-119-A One, near peak of Black Dome Mt., Windham, **Greene**, 22 Dec (David Rankin; ph D. Rankin)

Without doubt one of the most unexpected birds found during the 2011/12 winter was this Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch spotted by David Rankin on the Black Dome Mountain Trail at an altitude of approximately 3,800 feet, just shy of the top of Black Dome Mountain (3,980 ft. elevation). David was hiking the snowy trail with 3 companions when the bird caught their attention. He was able to walk directly under it as it perched in a dead Balsam Fir (*Abies balsamea*) and noted its unmistakable brownish pink hue, gray and black crown, and bright pink of the belly and wings. Rankin took a number of documentation photographs that identify this individual as belonging to the nominate subspecies, *Leucosticte tephrocotis tephrocotis*, which occupies the more northern and eastern part of the range of this species. Although considered restricted to major mountain ranges, a compelling pattern of extralimital vagrancy has emerged over the years, with a number of records in the mid-west (Illinois, Michigan and Ohio) as well as Ontario and Quebec. There is even one from Gorham, Maine in the 1930's. Of more relevance to the NYS sighting, another extralimital Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch was observed at Bear Island Lake, St. Louis Co., Minnesota on 27 Oct 2011, suggestive of a minor irruption. The Black Dome Mountain bird is considered the first state record, although there is also an unverified single observer sighting from the Rochester area on 30 Jan 1923 (Beardslee et al. 1965).

“Greater” Common Redpoll (*Acanthis flammea rostrata*)

2011-122-A Two, private residence, Honeoye Falls, **Monroe**, 25 Feb to 15 Mar (Brad Carlson; ph B. Carlson)

“Greater” Redpolls are occasionally reported in redpoll flight years, but this northern subspecies of Common Redpoll is not well known among birders and rarely reported in NYS. In his thorough survey of specimens, John Bull listed only four specimens for NY, though he suggested that it could occur more frequently (Bull 1976). During the redpoll flight year of 2010-11, Brad Carlson identified two “Greater” Redpolls at his feeder, both present at the same time. They were identified on the basis of their larger size in direct comparison to the many Common Redpolls present, by their heavier flank streaking and by their much darker plumage overall. Three photos were submitted with his written account, and the committee felt that one photo showing both individuals feeding on the ground with Common Redpolls to be particularly compelling. As is usually the case when reviewing subspecies, this record sparked considerable discussion because of the reliance on subjective characters and because the extent of variation within the nominate subspecies of Common Redpoll is not well understood. In the end, the Committee voted to accept both individuals and encourage birders to be on the lookout for this form during future flight years, preferably with camera in hand.

2011 Reports Accepted in Revised Form

***Oceanodroma* sp.**

2011-77-A One, Reynolds Channel, Point Lookout, **Nassau**, 28 Aug (Douglas J. Futuyma)

2011-79-A/B One, Jones Beach SP West End, **Nassau**, 28 Aug (Douglas J. Futuyma, Shaibal S. Mitra)

During the passage of *TS Irene*, most of the birders able to reach the south facing Atlantic shoreline of Long Island were met with high winds, dense salt spray and scouring sand and were forced to turn their gaze inland to the comparatively sheltered waters of the larger bays and inlets. These two sets of reports from the landward side of Jones Inlet came from experienced observers and described long-winged storm-petrels identified as Leach’s (*O. leucorhoa*) and Band-rumped (*O. castro*), respectively. After lengthy discussion and multiple votes, the Committee decided that while these birds clearly belonged to the genus *Oceanodroma*, neither could be confidently assigned to species. The Committee discussions centered mainly on the potential impact of the less-than-optimal viewing conditions on the assessment of subtle details needed for the identification, such as perception of the darkness of the plumage, tail shape, and flight style. The first report (2011-77-A) described a long-winged storm-petrel identified as a Leach’s Storm-Petrel that was seen flying along the relatively narrow Reynold’s Channel just west of where the Loop Parkway terminates on Long Beach Island. The Committee agreed that the description clearly ruled out Wilson’s Storm-Petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*), a familiar species noticeably absent among the seabirds displaced by the storm, and instead pointed toward one of the *Oceanodroma* species. Unfortunately the prominence and extent of the carpal bar on the upperwing and exact shape of the rump patch could not be determined, and, as a consequence, identification as Leach’s hinged largely on the perception of tail shape, which appeared notched. This alone does not preclude Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, which at times can give this impression, and thus it seemed prudent to revise the identification to a generic level. The second pair of reports (2011-79-A/B) concerned three sightings of a long-winged storm-petrel identified as Band-rumped Storm-Petrel based in part on comparisons to a more clear cut Leach’s Storm-Petrel (NYSARC 2011-76-A/B). These observations were made from the eastern side of Jones Inlet, where the observers and a number of other birders found shelter behind a concession building adjacent to the Jones Beach Coast Guard base. Protected

from the wind and rain, this vantage gave a sweeping view of a semi-enclosed expanse of water separating the western end of Jones Beach Island from a row of smaller islands in the bay that carry the Loop Parkway. Two of the three encounters with what is thought to be the same bird were detailed in the two reports, with an earlier and slightly closer encounter described in report 2011-79-A only. Again it was difficult for the Committee to reach a consensus, with differing opinions as to whether the distance and viewing conditions allowed adequate assessment of the critical plumage details and whether differences in flight style could be similarly influenced by the unusual context. No photographs were obtained or even attempted, indicative of the considerable distances involved. To date, there are only two accepted records of Band-rumped Storm-Petrel in NYS (NYSARC 1997-74-A and 2011-44-A), both from deep water beyond the continental shelf edge. The Committee acknowledged that this species would be a strong candidate for displacement by the storm, as demonstrated by a live Band-rumped Storm-Petrel found grounded on Nantucket the following day, but ultimately felt that the documentation of the NY bird just fell short of what was needed for acceptance as a 3rd state record.

Sooty/Bridled Tern (*Onychoprion fuscatus/anaethetus*)

2011-49-A Two, Rye Beach CP, Rye, **Westchester**, 28 Aug (Benjamin Van Doren)

2011-129-A Two, Inner New York Harbor, **Richmond**, 29 Aug (Douglas Gochfeld)

Seen in the aftermath of *TS Irene*, the Committee agreed that these two sightings referred to *Onychoprion* terns but, because of the great distance involved, felt that they could not be confidently assigned to species. The sighting described in 2011-129-A was actually from the day after the storm under better conditions. Four observers were scanning the Narrows portion of New York Harbor from the Veteran's Memorial Pier in Brooklyn, when they spotted two birds, initially identified simply as "terns," flying at a great distance, most likely across the midway point and thus in Richmond County. Continued study convinced the observers that the birds were too dark to be *Sterna* terns, and Gochfeld, who submitted the report, noted that the mantle was paler than the upper wings and there was what appeared to be a break of white between the black cap and the mantle, suggesting Bridled Tern (*O. anaethetus*). He indicated that Sooty Tern (*O. fuscatus*) was easily ruled out by the lack of uniform black upperparts; however, the Committee was concerned that the distance was too great to make a firm assessment. Although a mantle that is paler than the upper wings can be a useful distinction between these two species, this is dependent on lighting and angle of observation and may not be reliable at great distance. The same can be said for the perception of a white collar separating the cap from the mantle. Given these and other concerns, the Committee voted on the second round to accept these as *Onychoprion* terns, species undetermined.

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

2011-107-A One, Mountainville, **Orange**, 17, 19 & 22 Oct (Kenneth M. McDermott; ph Curt McDermott)

Although the likelihood that this was a Rufous Hummingbird (*S. rufus*) seems high, without measurements or a clear indication of the shape of rectrix two (R2), the Committee felt that Allen's Hummingbird (*S. sasin*) could not be safely ruled out. Although Allen's has never been identified in NY, it has occurred in neighboring states and is thus a realistic possibility. At the homeowner's request the bird was not captured, precluding the opportunity for a definitive identification.

2011 Reports Accepted But Origins Unknown or Unnatural

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

2011-97-A One, Fuller Street Park, Alexandria Bay, **Jefferson**, 31 Jul (Michele Neligan; ph M. Neligan)

Although regular vagrancy of this European goose into northeastern North America is becoming fairly well established, Barnacle Geese remain the bane of many records committees because of the difficulty in distinguishing genuine vagrants from occasional escapes and deliberate releases. This informative report concerned an unbanded Barnacle Goose that was observed in mid-summer and nicely illustrates the dilemma. Most of the geese that migrate to northeastern Canada and Greenland have left the state by that time, raising significant concerns about the provenance of this individual.

Indian Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*)

2011-19-A One, Schodack, **Rensselaer**, 5 Jun (Philip Levesque; ph P. Levesque)

Indian Peafowl (known colloquially as Peacocks) originate in Asia and are non-migratory. They are often kept as free-ranging ornamental game birds. No known feral populations exist in the northeast and, as such, the species is not recognized as part of the wild NYS avifauna. Nonetheless, documentation of sightings is useful in case they do become established.

Great Kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*)

2011-73-A One, Spuyten Duyvil at 225th Street, **Bronx**, 11 Sep (Philip Brickner; ph Alice Brickner)

On 11 Sep 2011 a striking and unfamiliar songbird was noticed as it perched on a metal strut visible from the apartment of Alice and Philip Brickner in the West Bronx, a short distance from the Hudson River. Unsure of what it was, they took some photographs through a window shortly before it disappeared, never to be seen again. The photographs clearly show a Great Kiskadee. In the Committee's discussions, no concerns about the identification were voiced, the photographs being sufficient to exclude similar species such as Lesser Kiskadee (*P. lictor*), Boat-billed Flycatcher (*Megarynchus pitangua*) and Social Flycatcher (*Myiozetetes similis*). The likelihood of vagrancy of Great Kiskadee to NYS was discussed at length, and although there is no direct evidence of ship assistance, the circumstantial evidence seems strong given the proximity of the bird to the busy international ports in New York Harbor. In fact the sighting did not come as a complete surprise because the same or another Great Kiskadee had been photographed just a few weeks earlier on the quay side next to the USS Intrepid Air Space Museum, a few miles downstream on the same bank of the Hudson River. Unfortunately, a report on this prior sighting was not submitted to NYSARC for review, despite attempts to secure one. Nonetheless it is tempting to think these sightings are related. Although Great Kiskadees are resident in southern Texas and found throughout much of Central America and parts of the Caribbean, they are not considered migratory, and there are few convincing cases of strays beyond their normal range. Great Kiskadees were deliberately introduced to Bermuda to control *Anolis* lizards that were introduced to control insects. They have become the most abundant terrestrial bird on the island, feasting on pretty much everything but the problematic lizards. Pertinent to this report, cruise ships that visit Bermuda on a weekly basis berth adjacent to the first kiskadee location, suggesting a relatively simple means for a bird to reach New York City from Bermuda. In the end the Committee voted to accept the identification but consider the origins uncertain, lacking firm proof of ship assistance. Therefore the species was not added to the NYS Checklist.

Hooded Crow (*Corvus cornix*)

2011-20-A/F One adult, Great Kills Park, Staten Island, **Richmond**, 22-24 Jun (Angus Wilson, Andrew Block, Morgan Tingley, Michael Higgiston, Eileen Schwinn, Seymour Schiff; ph A. Wilson, M. Tingley, E. Schwinn, S. Schiff)

This handsome Eurasian crow frequented the fisherman's parking lot in Great Kills Park and the adjacent sandy beach, much to the great annoyance of the resident Northern Mockingbirds (*Mimus polyglottos*). Great Kills Park is part of the Gateway National Recreation Area and faces the waters of the Outer New York Harbor. The crow, an adult, appeared to be in good condition and flew strongly, often disappearing for long periods. It did not associate with the local American (*C. brachyrhynchos*) and Fish (*C. ossifragus*) Crows. The legs were free of bands and the flight feathers were intact, although somewhat abraded. While tolerant of humans, the crow was not especially approachable, its behavior being typical of other crows. News of this bird began to circulate on 20 Jun when Seth Wollney sent photographs to Tom Burke seeking a second opinion on the identification. That same day, Mike Shanley photographed the bird and posted the news on the Internet. According to another local birder, park personnel had actually noticed the crow some days or even weeks prior to this but had not known what to make of it. Over the following days, many birders, possibly hundreds, came from all over the northeast, and some from even further, to see the crow, most being successful. As too often happens, the number of reports submitted to NYSARC was not representative of the number of observers.

The identification was well established from the documentation supplied and not questioned by any member of the Committee. Other two-toned corvids such as African Pied Crow (*C. albus*) and House Crow (*C. splendens*) were readily excluded. The former is common in captivity and often used as a prop in television advertisements and the like, whereas the latter shows a strong propensity for self-introduction, having spread from the Indian subcontinent into port cities in Africa, the Middle East and Europe. Hooded Crows are resident and common throughout Eastern Europe and Scandinavia, and their range extends eastward to the Ukraine, Egypt and Iran. They also occur in Ireland, northwest Scotland and the Faeroes, which may be more relevant from a North American perspective. For many years Hooded Crow was considered conspecific with Carrion Crow (*C. corone*), which occupies the remainder of western Europe, with a broad hybridization zone along the boundary of the two populations; however, in 2002 the Taxonomic Sub-Committee of the British Ornithologists Union Records Committee split these two forms together with the Eastern Carrion Crow (*C. orientalis*) of central and eastern Asia into three separate species (Knox et al. 2002). Within Hooded Crow there are at least four subspecies, and these were considered to see if there might be clues to the origins of the Staten Island bird. The ashy (purple) cast to the body feathering seemed consistent with nominate *cornix* of northwestern and central Europe, but *sharpii* of Italy and the eastern Mediterranean through to the Caucasus could not be ruled out. It was concluded that firm determination of subspecies requires sexing and careful measurements.

Public discussion over the origins of the bird began almost immediately, spilling across a number of birding blogs and forums, including the American Birding Association blog 'Peeps,' which raised the question of whether this could be a new species for the ABA Checklist Area. Naturally this chatter increased the number of observers willing to travel to Great Kills to pay homage to the bird as it worked the tide line and the garbage cans. In the subsequent months the Committee received a number of requests as to whether the bird had been accepted or not. As a potential addition to the NYS Checklist with a high standard of documentation, the reports were placed before the voting members ahead of other 2011 reports under the Accelerated Review policy. There have been at least four previous occurrences in North America, none of which has been

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accepted as a natural or even human-assisted vagrant. The first was at the Salton Sea in California (Jan 1973), the second in Chicago, Illinois (2000), the third at New Braunfels, Texas (2002), and the fourth in Whitecourt, Alberta (2006). None of these locations is on the immediate coast, and all seem unlikely for a bird of European origins. In contrast, the Staten Island bird was found feet from the Atlantic Ocean and, more compelling perhaps, a few miles from one of the busiest commercial ports in North America, especially in terms of trans-Atlantic cargo traffic. So the discussion quickly turned to whether this bird might have reached our shores aboard a ship, and, if so, would it have needed active assistance to survive the crossing. Hooded Crows are resident throughout much of their range; however, those from Scandinavia and Russia make seasonal movements over significant distances to escape periods of severe cold, moving, for example, to the Low Countries and across the North Sea to the British Isles. Under these circumstances birds might encounter large commercial shipping capable of a rapid trans-Atlantic crossing, the first stop being New York Harbor. The Committee considered this very carefully, noting that there is already precedent for Hooded Crows reaching Iceland on a regular basis (>80 sightings), the nearest breeding birds being on the Faeroe Islands about 300 miles away. The crossing to New York is ten times further than this but can be achieved in about a week by the faster vessels. Indeed, in Nov 1984 a flock of fifty-two Eurasian Jackdaws (*C. monedula*) were transported by a French merchant ship to Port Cartier, Quebec, having come aboard at sea off the coast of southern England (Yank et al. 1985). Careful research by Kevin McGowan (pers. com.) revealed a surprising pattern of Jackdaw sightings from various islands off the coast of the northern Atlantic states and provinces during the 1980's, with birds arriving under conditions suggestive of genuine vagrants. In considering the Hooded Crow, the Committee felt that although ship-assistance was plausible, the evidence was entirely circumstantial. Although Hooded Crows are not common in captivity, they do occur, as exemplified by the presumed escapees mentioned above and by breeders who advertise on the Internet. Considering the proximity of Great Kills to a huge metropolitan area, there was no way for the Committee to distinguish between escape and ship-assistance. After carefully reviewing these points and other information, the Committee reached a consensus, accepting the identification but ruling that the origins were unknown and possibly unnatural. As such, the species was not added to the New York State Checklist.

There are two interesting addenda to this story. Shortly before it's disappearance from Staten Island, the Hooded Crow was found entangled in discarded line and was freed by some birders visiting from Pennsylvania, who managed to salvage a few feathers that were shed as the bird struggled to free itself. If these feathers are still extant, it might be of interest to perform isotope analysis to determine where these feathers were grown. After disappearing from Great Kills, a Hooded Crow was discovered at the northern end of Long Beach Island, Ocean County, New Jersey, on 17 Jul 2011, remaining until 12 Aug. This is 54 miles due south of Great Kills. The timing and appearance were consistent with this being the same bird. Our colleagues on the New Jersey Bird Records Committee have voted on the record (NJBRC 2012-064) and similarly deemed the provenance "unknown" (Boyle et al. 2013).

European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)

2011-5-A One adult, private residence, **Orange**, 22 & 23 Feb (Kenneth M. McDermott; ph Maryangela Buskey)

The accompanying photographs confirm that this is an adult European Goldfinch, a species that was established as a feral population in the New York City area but which dwindled and disappeared in the late 1950's. Nonetheless, the Committee receives occasional reports and, since this is a common cage bird, takes the position that they are

most likely escapes. Although the species undergoes short-distance migrations in its native Western Europe, usually in response to cold weather, they seem an unlikely trans-Atlantic vagrant. Reports are useful, however, in case a feral population reestablishes itself, which would be very interesting to properly document.

2010 Reports Accepted

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)

2010-100-A One, Sheldrake Point SP, Ovid, **Seneca**, 7 Nov (J. Gary Kohlenberg)

Sightings of Pacific Loon in the northeast have steadily increased over the past decade or so, and examples have been found on Cayuga Lake in the four years preceding this one, suggestive of either a returning individual or a previously unrecognized migratory route from the Great Lakes. Gary Kohlenberg observed this bird feeding on the lake with some seventy Common Loons (*G. immer*), offering ideal comparisons. He included photocopies of his field notes with the report.

Black-capped Petrel (*Pterodroma hasitata*)

2010-98-A One, **Pelagic**, 10 Sep (Nick Bonomo; ph Carlos Pedro)

While on an organized pelagic trip to Block Canyon, Nick Bonomo and others briefly encountered a Black-capped Petrel that passed by at some distance. In addition to its shape and high arcing flight, they were able to note the distinctive white rump and collar, which helped to rule out Bermuda Petrel (*P. cahow*), an even more exciting possibility in these waters. A blurry photo, supplied by Bonomo but taken by Carlos Pedro, supported the written description, showing the typical *Pterodroma* shape and prominent white uppertail coverts. Although the trip departed from Point Judith, RI and visited the eastern wall of the outer Block Canyon, the GPS coordinates for this sighting are just inside NYS pelagic waters.

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*)

2010-103-A One, Jones Beach SP West End, **Nassau**, 2 May (Robert J. Berlingeri)

Robert Berlingeri and Bob Kurtz were birding together at Jones Beach when they received word that Joan Quinlan had found this White-winged Dove nearby. Although no photos were submitted, Berlingeri's description was convincing and also indicated that the bird was in quite worn plumage. Although this might be attributed to a bird that had been in captivity, the coastal location and spring date seemed consistent for a natural vagrant.

Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*)

2010-102-A One, Jones Beach SP West End Field 2, **Nassau**, 24 Nov (Shawn Billerman)

Since the late 1990's, Cave Swallows have occurred in NYS almost every late fall and early winter, at times being seen in large numbers (see Tetlow 2011). With this pattern clearly established, the Committee no longer requests reports for fall sightings but will still review the much rarer spring sightings. This report from Shawn Billerman, received before the change in review status, documents a single Cave Swallow seen with Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*).

"Oregon" Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis oregonus*)

2010-101-A One, private residence, Ellery, **Chautauqua**, 27 Dec – 28 Feb 2011 (LeAnn Childs; ph L. Childs)

Mike Morgante forwarded correspondence and photos of this "Oregon" Junco, which he received via Jim Pawlicki. In an email Pawlicki stated that LeAnn Childs first observed and photographed this bird at her feeding station on 27 Dec. LeAnn photographed it *The Kingbird* 2013 September; 63 (3)

several more times, up to and including 26 Feb 2011, and saw it one last time on 28 Feb. Pawlicki searched for the bird on 1 Mar but did not see it.

2009 Reports Accepted

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*)

2009-98-A One immature, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, **Kings**, 13 Aug (Thomas B. Johnson)

Tom Johnson studied this subadult White-faced Ibis alongside some Glossy Ibis (*P. falcinellus*). Although the bird flew before he could obtain photographs, he noted its dull pink irides, a reddish/pinkish wash to the tarsi, and dull pinkish-gray facial skin. Based on the absence of white feathers bordering the facial skin, Johnson suggested this might be a second year. With its extensive marshes and sizeable colonies of colonial waterbirds, Jamaica Bay remains the premier site in NYS for finding White-faced Ibis.

Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*)

2009-97-A/C One adult pre-basic molt, Hulbert Road, Wilson, **Niagara**, 15-16 Aug (James Pawlicki, Willie D'Anna, Paul F. Hess; ph W. D'Anna)

Checking a flooded field that had held a number of shorebirds in prior days, Jim Pawlicki found this adult Western Sandpiper alongside some Semipalmated Sandpipers (*Calidris pusilla*) for comparison. The bird had begun pre-basic molt and was observed again the following day by Pawlicki, Willie D'Anna and Paul Hess. D'Anna's photograph shows a number of features that support the identification, including the long, slightly decurved bill and extensive rufous bases and black anchor-shaped tips of the retained alternate scapulars.

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*)

2009-96-A One first spring male, Golden Hill SP, Summerset, **Niagara**, 15 May (James Pawlicki)

While birding at Golden Hill SP as part of the Buffalo Ornithological Society (BOS) May Count, Jim Pawlicki came across this singing Summer Tanager. It was aged as a first spring male by virtue of the adult male-like head and breast and otherwise greenish plumage except for a few patches of red. A photograph of the bird, taken by Greg Coniglio on the same day, was published in the BOS newsletter (*The Prothonotary*, June 2009).

2009 Report Accepted But Origins Unknown or Unnatural

European Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*)

2009-95-A One, Calvert-Vaux Park, **Kings**, 6 May (Douglas Gochfeld; ph D. Gochfeld)

Doug Gochfeld's description and photographs establish this as a European Greenfinch, a species found primarily in Western Europe, ruling out similar species such as Oriental Greenfinch (*Chloris sinica*). Although there were no definitive signs of captive origins, the Committee felt this was more likely than true vagrancy. The species is not a long-distance migrant, and there is no precedent for vagrancy to North America. Furthermore, European Greenfinches are often offered for sale in the US and are relatively inexpensive. Recently numbers of free flying individuals have been found around the Great Lakes and are attributed to a Chicago dealer who released a number of them along with other European finches in the early 2000's. On balance, the Committee felt it more likely that the Brooklyn bird was released or had escaped from somewhere in the New York City metropolis than travelled from the mid-west. However, lacking firm evidence

for these and other scenarios, the Committee considered the origins as “unknown or unnatural.”

2008 Report Accepted

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*)

2008-106-A One first spring male, Amherst SP, Williamsville, **Erie**, 27 May (James Pawlicki)

Jim Pawlicki and Richard Salembier found this first spring male Summer Tanager at Amherst SP in Erie County, a locally well-known urban migrant trap. It was mostly orange-red with rosy-red patches and orangey tones across the under-parts. There were three additional accepted reports of Summer Tanager from upstate NY in 2008, as well as more numerous sightings from Regions 9 and 10, where the species does not require NYSARC review.

2006 Report Accepted But Origins Unknown or Unnatural

Whooper Swan (*Cygnus Cygnus*)

2006-80-A One, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, West Pond, **Kings/Queens**, 4 Jul (Douglas Gochfeld; ph D. Gochfeld)

Doug Gochfeld photographed this adult Whooper Swan that summered among the numerous Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*) at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. For such a large bird it was surprisingly aloof at times, favoring a section of the East Pond that was difficult for birders to approach. The extent of yellow on the bill (roughly two-thirds of the bill) and very large size helped rule out Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*), the Eurasian subspecies of Tundra Swan, which can also show extensive yellow skin but appears smaller alongside Mute Swan. Whooper Swans nest across the Eurasian arctic from Iceland and Northern Scotland to eastern Siberia and migrate over relatively large distances to wintering sites across Europe, Central Asia and the Far East. They are regular but rare in western Alaska, where they have nested and winter in small numbers. The species formerly nested in Greenland and still occurs as a scarce migrant. Sightings in the lower-48 are complicated by the likelihood of escapes, as this species is popular with collectors, and feral birds can survive in the wild for years (see McEneaney 2004). Indeed in the 1990's there were several free flying individuals on eastern Long Island that may have also nested. Given the fact that this bird summered and concerns about escapes or deliberate releases, the Committee voted to accept this sighting as “origins unknown or unnatural.”

2011 Reports Not Accepted

Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*)

2011-25-A One, Waryas Park, Poughkeepsie, **Dutchess**, 13 Jun

This report included a brief description of an unfamiliar duck seen on the Hudson River in early summer. Although the details were reminiscent of an adult male Common Eider, it was not clear this wasn't a domestic duck of some kind.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)

2011-17-A One, Sterling Lake, Tuxedo, **Orange**, 19 Apr

The observer described a bird with a long neck, pointed bill and similar to a small goose in size. The plumage was described as black on top of the head and neck, white on the bottom of the head and neck with a gray body. While this is consistent with Western

Grebe, some important details were missing, including the sharpness of the transition from black to white and the bill color. Lacking this additional information, some Committee members felt the description could equally apply to a loon or cormorant.

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)

2011-10-A One, flying north along Taconic State Parkway, near **Dutchess/Columbia** border, 22 Apr

2011-101-A One, Niagara River near Strawberry Island, **Erie**, 9 Jul

Inland sightings of Brown Pelican are always noteworthy and subject to review by NYSARC. The April report concerned a bird thought to be this species, viewed by a driver on the Taconic State Parkway. Besides a huge wingspan, no other details were provided, leaving the Committee concerned about other more likely possibilities given these circumstances and time of year. The July report came from a marina on the Niagara River. Unfortunately, the observer did not describe the bird other than to say that it was large and unmistakable. Apparently others at the marina also saw the bird, lending credence to the identification, but without descriptive details or, at a minimum, an explanation of how other species were ruled out, the Committee was unable to accept the report.

White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*)

2011-14-A Five, field on Westmore Lane, Cortland, **Cortland**, 11 May

This intriguing submission described five all white birds apparently feeding in a recently plowed grassland field. The observer noted black wingtips and long legs trailing behind when in flight. The birds also soared briefly. Unfortunately, the description was incomplete, omitting any mention of the highly distinctive shape and color of the bill and facial skin. There are relatively few spring reports of White Ibis, especially away from the coast. Given the incomplete description and unusual circumstances, the committee voted not to accept. It was noted that Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*) could not be ruled out by the details provided.

California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*)

2011-27-A One, Pleasure Drive, Flanders, **Suffolk**, 11 & 15 Jul

This report contained a minimal description, leaving the Committee unsure of what species was involved. California Condor seems highly unlikely, given that it is non-migratory and limited to a few areas in California and Arizona.

White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*)

2011-24-A One, Route 86, 20 miles NW of Corning, **Steuben**, 26 Jun

While driving along Interstate 86, the observer noticed a bird hovering close to the road. The underside was described as mostly white, with clear black blotches on the shoulders, but the observer was unable to stop and study the bird further. Having seen White-tailed Kite similarly hovering over the median of a highway in California, the observer tentatively identified it as such. Although an interesting report, the committee would need much more detail, with a thorough consideration of other possible species, or a photograph or specimen to accept such a major rarity. There is one prior NYS record of White-tailed Kite (NYSARC 1983-7-A, Hopewell Junction, **Dutchess**, 26-27 Apr 1983), as well as a record from Massachusetts (May 1910) and more recent records from Connecticut (Aug-Oct 2010) and New Jersey (Jun 1998 and Oct-Nov 2010).

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

2011-60-A One, Robert Moses SP, **Suffolk**, 22 May

2011-75-A One breeding plumage adult, Mattituck Inlet, Mattituck, **Suffolk**, 28 Aug

The spring submission concerns a sighting by two birders conducting a seawatch at Robert Moses SP. There were many Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) moving past, and this bird was initially seen moving west to east, then west and then back east again. Features that drove the identification included a short bill, a thin dark line on the trailing edge of the wings, clean underwings, and a longer tail compared to Common Tern. Other useful details such as bill color, shape of the cap and age of the bird (adult vs. first-summer, etc.) were not described. Although careful observations by Shai Mitra and others have established a clear presence of this species along the ocean front of Long Island from late May to mid July, Arctic Terns pose a considerable identification challenge, even under ideal circumstances. Brief sightings of flying birds need to be evaluated with great caution, especially in the absence of confirmatory photographs. Given these concerns, including the gaps in the description, the committee voted against this record in the second round. The late summer sighting was from the day of *TS Irene*, which was as much notable for the species that were not widely affected as those that were. The bird described in the report was viewed on the ground but was flushed by a walker before the observer could obtain photographs. The observer emphasized several useful but subjective distinctions from Common Tern but did not indicate whether Commons were present for side-by-side comparison. After two rounds of review, the report was not accepted. In the wake of the storm many observers actively searched for Arctic Terns among the hundreds, if not thousands, of displaced terns but did not find any. That said, the Committee recognized that an Arctic Tern could still be present independent of the storm, but this report was not judged to be conclusive.

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

2011-31-A One, private residence, Skaneateles, **Onondaga**, 26 Jul

This was a heard-only report by an observer familiar with the reasonably distinctive song of Eurasian Collared-Doves from time spent in other states. Although the description of the song was strongly suggestive, the fact it was only heard twice was problematic. Correctly, the observer did search for the bird but was unable to locate it.

Northern Hawk Owl (*Surnia ulula*)

2011-6-A One, Alcove, **Albany**, 27 Feb

This bird was observed for about five minutes on a winter afternoon. The brief description noted a rounded head, pointed tail, absence of visible ear tufts, and brown and white barred plumage, all of which are suggestive of Hawk Owl but certainly not definitive. Unfortunately, the bird was not photographed and was not seen again.

Black-backed Woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*)

2011-40-A One, Doodletown Road, Stony Point, **Rockland**, 2 Jun

This report describes a bird that was seen for a few seconds as it flew across a hiking trail near the observers. Only a brief description was provided, noting that the upper surface of the bird seemed completely black and that the crown of the head was yellow. The rest of the plumage was not described. The observer stated that it flew like a woodpecker but did not actually describe the flight. The supporting discussion focused on eliminating Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*), which would of course fly in a very different manner, and gave insufficient consideration to a juvenile Hairy Woodpecker (*Picoides villosus*), which can resemble the species claimed. Black-backed Woodpeckers are extremely rare away from boreal habitat associated with the

Adirondack Mountains and Tug Hill Plateau. Convincing sightings outside those areas are generally from the winter months.

“Greater” Common Redpoll (*Acanthis flammea rostrata*)

2011-61-A One, Plattsburgh, **Clinton**, 25 Feb

The winter of 2010/11 saw a sizeable incursion of Redpolls into NYS, offering the perfect opportunity for winter finch enthusiasts to search the flocks for Hoary Redpolls or the decidedly uncommon *rostrata* subspecies of Common Redpoll, which is also known as “Greater” Redpoll. These tend to be larger than Common Redpoll and more heavily streaked, presenting an overall darker appearance. In some individuals, the difference can be quite striking, but in others it can be much more subtle. Considerable variation in size and heaviness of the streaking in both subspecies significantly complicates the identification, and it is important to obtain a number of good photographs of any candidates, preferably in direct comparison to the more common form. This report describes a tantalizing sighting of a possible “Greater” Redpoll at a feeding station with 25-30 Common Redpolls. While the details seemed consistent with *rostrata*, these were very difficult to assess without supporting photographs, and, after two rounds of review, the committee ultimately voted not to accept the report.

“Hornemann’s” Hoary Redpoll (*Acanthis hornemanni hornemanni*)

2011-124-A Three, private residence, Honeoye Falls, **Monroe**, 22 Jan - 12 Mar

As with the “Greater” Common Redpoll discussed above, this report concerns the identification to subspecies rather than species, in this case, whether three Hoary Redpolls visiting feeders along with many Common Redpolls (*A. flammea*) belonged to the nominate form of Hoary Redpoll (“Hornemann’s” Redpoll), which is considered very rare south of Canada. Most Hoary Redpoll sightings in NYS are of the subspecies *exilipes*, and, in fact, there are no prior accepted records of “Hornemann’s” Redpoll (Brinkley 1998). A major strength of this report was the fact that it included a number of photographs. Although several members of the Committee found the details acceptable, others were concerned by the overlap in characters between the subspecies and the fact that there were apparently three different individuals of what is considered an extremely rare form. One committee member felt that the birds in these photos did not look large enough, and another felt that they seemed a little too streaky for this subspecies. The identification and taxonomic status of Hoary Redpoll subspecies is a work in progress, and the extent of variation in key characters such as size and paleness is not well known. Many out-of-range birds are probably best labeled as “showing characters consistent with Hornemann’s Redpoll.” Because of these ambiguities, the Committee was not able to reach a consensus after three rounds of discussion and voting. Regardless, the Committee is grateful to the observer for providing the detailed report and photographs, which can of course be revisited as our knowledge develops. For further discussion on this fascinating topic, see Brinkley et al. 2011.

2006 Report Not Accepted

Northern Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*)

2006-79-A One adult, Fountain Avenue Landfill, Brooklyn, **Kings**, 9 Nov

This submission was written several years after the sighting and unfortunately gave no indication that it was based on field notes or notes made shortly after the sighting. Other observers were present but did not provide their own reports. The brief description stated that the bird was feeding while “flutter flying” along the shoreline, a behavior that seemed distinctly uncharacteristic for this species. The report also indicated that the bird

was slightly oiled but did not describe the location of the soiled plumage further. On-shore sightings of Northern Fulmar are extremely unusual, and the Committee felt that, considering the odd circumstances, there just was not enough detail for acceptance.

Contributors: Robert A. Adamo, Seth Ausubel, Dave Baker, Andrew Baksh, Robert J. Berlingeri, Jim Berry, Shawn Billerman, Andrew Block, Michael Bochnik, Jeffrey S. Bolsinger, Brent E. Bomkamp, Nick Bonomo, Alice Brickner, Philip Brickner, Sara Burch, Ken Burdick, Thomas W. Burke, Maryangela Buskey, Vicki Bustamante, Brad Carlson, Tom Carrolan, Martin Cassese Jr., Richard B. Cech, LeAnn Childs, Ed Coyle, Willie D’Anna, Christopher Diaz, Jacob Drucker, Richard Ettlinger, Brett M. Ewald, Andrew Farnsworth, Dana Fazino, Ken Feustel, Corey Finger, Douglas J. Futuyma, Brant Gamma, Douglas Gochfeld, Richard Guthrie, John H. Haas, Elliotte Rusty Harold, Ken Harris, Lynne Hertzog, Paul F. Hess, Michael Higgiston, Jeff Hopkins, Alec Humann, Jessie W. Jaycox, Thomas B. Johnson, Jeremy J. Kirchman, J. Gary Kohlenberg, William E. Krueger, Gerald S. Lazarczyk, Philip Levesque, Gabriel Luongo, Michael R. McBrien, Jacob McCartney, Curt McDermott, Kenneth M. McDermott, Gerry McGee, Doug Miller, Joe Mitchell, Shaibal S. Mitra, Mike Morgante, Michele Neligan, Timothy O’Connor, James Pawlicki, Carlos Pedro, Ralph Petricone, Ron Preston, Bill Purcell, Gil Randell, Jann Randell, David Rankin, Derek Rogers, Kayo J. Roy, Karen Rubinstein, Steven Schellenger, Seymour Schiff, Marty Schlabach, Jim Schlickenrieder, Peter Schoenberger, Eileen Schwinn, Peter Scully, John Shemilt, Dominic Sherony, Tony Shrimpton, Bonnie Siciliano, Jeanne Skelly, Pamela Stark, Joshua Stiller, Sam Stuart, Paul Sweet, Mark S. Szantyr, Ken Thompson, Morgan Tingley, Deborah Tracy-Kral, Benjamin Van Doren, Steve Walter, William W. Watson, Angus Wilson, Seth Wollney, Ginnie Yerkovich, and Robert P. Yunick.

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

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

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**Photos from the New York State Avian Records Committee's
Annual Report for 2011**



Furnishing a 1st record for New York State and 2nd record for the US and Canada, this adult Gray-hooded Gull, seen here with two Laughing Gulls, spent its summer 2011 vacation on the iconic beach and boardwalk at Coney Island, Brooklyn, *Kings*. Photograph © Mark S. Szantyr.



Discovered on 26 Dec 2011, this immature female Mountain Bluebird frequented a large field in Calverton, *Suffolk*, remaining into early Jan, 2012 to the delight of many local birders able to add it to their 2011 and 2012 year lists. Photograph © Tom B. Johnson.



This Great Kiskadee made a surprise appearance at the window of a Spuyten Duyvil, Bronx, apartment on 11 Sep 2011. Its provenance is unknown but a possibility is that it traveled aboard one of the cruise ships that regularly run between New York City and Bermuda, where the species is an abundant introduction. Photograph © Alice Brickner.



(Left) White-tailed Tropicbird was the signature species of Tropical Storm Irene, and this adult was propelled far up the Hudson River coming to ground in an exhausted and moribund state near Stephentown, Rensselaer, on 29 Aug 2011 Photograph © Bernice Gawron. (Right) A handful of lucky observers were on hand to witness this Wood Stork as it soared over Hamlin Beach SP, Monroe, 28 Oct 2011. Photograph © Brad Carlson.



Five Black-bellied Whistling Ducks flying over Oil City Road, Pine Island, *Orange*, on 26 May 2011. Part of broader influx into the northeast, these birds regularly flew back and forth across the NY-NJ state line. Photograph © Angus Wilson.



On 6 Aug 2011, this Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, the 1st photographed in NYS, briefly joined a mixed feeding flock of Wilson's and Leach's Storm-petrels off Long Island at a chum slick laid out on water 350 fathoms (2100 ft) deep. Photograph © John Shemilt.



Although of uncertain origin, this Hooded Crow caused continent-wide interest. Great Kills Park, Richmond, 24 Jun 2011. Photographs © Angus Wilson & © Morgan Tingley.



Arguably the most familiar raptor in North America, Red-tailed Hawk comprises several subspecies subdivided into three groups: Eastern (*borealis*), Western (*calurus*) and Harlan's (*harlani*), each of which shows considerable plumage variation. In the East, dark morphs are not known as breeding birds and rare examples in NYS are presumed to be vagrants of western origin, nominally *calurus*. This individual was found on Gaines Basin Road near Albion, *Orleans*, on 1-2 Apr 2011. Photographs © Willie D'Anna.



When first discovered on 8 Dec 2011, this adult Slaty-backed Gull was asleep on the rock shelf off Goat Island, *Niagara*, just above the Niagara Falls. After waking it tussled with neighboring Herring Gulls allowing the distinctive wing tip pattern to be studied before flying out towards the middle of the river. Photograph © James Pawlicki.