

REPORT OF THE NEW YORK STATE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE FOR 2017

The New York State Avian Records Committee (hereafter “NYSARC” or the “Committee”) evaluated 78 submissions involving 59 occurrences of New York State review species from 2017. Additionally, the Committee received one submission of a New York State review species from a previous year. Reports were received from 24 of the 62 counties. However, no reports were received from the pelagic zone. The names of the 58 contributors that submitted materials (written reports, photographs, video and audio recordings, and sketches) are listed alongside accepted reports and again at the end of this document. Where possible, the names of the original finders are included in the narratives. Production of this Annual Report is a team effort. In addition to the contributors referenced above, several people have encouraged and/or helped observers to prepare and submit documentation. We offer sincere gratitude for their assistance to our cause.

HOW TO SUBMIT REPORTS

Advice on how to prepare and submit a report is provided on the NYSARC pages within the NYSOA web site: <http://nybirds.org/NYSARC/index.htm>

On the NYSARC web pages, a list of species requested for review (The Review List) is provided, along with illustrated copies of previous annual reports. The Committee is very grateful to Carena Pooth (NYSOA Web Master) for updating and continuously improving the NYSARC web site. An on-line reporting form allows observers to compose a written report and attach up to three digital image files (maximum size 7 MB per photo). Documentation (written reports and photographs) and any other correspondence for the Committee can also be sent via email to the NYSARC Secretary, Gary Chapin, at: nysarc44@nybirds.org. As a last resort, you can also use regular mail to get your report to:

Gary Chapin, 125 Pine Springs Drive, Ticonderoga, NY 12883

HIGHLIGHTS

2017 saw the addition of two new species to the New York State checklist, Clark’s Grebe at Oswego and Inca Dove near Jamestown. Just as exciting was the first record of a Corn Crake since 1963 that was also the first sight record of a live bird, which occurred along the Ocean Parkway at Cedar Beach on Long Island. Other great records from 2017 were the state’s third Anna’s Hummingbird, a Ross’s Gull in the Adirondacks, a Yellow-nosed Albatross seen from shore off Robert Moses State Park, and the state’s third Hammond’s Flycatcher, a well-watched bird at Central Park in New York City.

COMMITTEE NEWS

The 2017 annual meeting was held via Skype on 8 Sep 2019, seven months after the 2016 annual meeting. Note that the annual meeting year refers to the latest reports reviewed at that meeting. At the 2017 annual meeting there were only two reports of birds seen in 2017 that had not been completed in earlier voting rounds and email discussion. In addition, eight records of the former Mew Gull (Short-billed/Common Gull), were revisited

regarding what was at the time subspecific identification. Following the completion of review and the subsequent split of Short-billed and Common Gulls (Chesser *et. al* 2021), these revisited records are published here in a special section later in this report (note that one 2017 record of Short-billed Gull is included in the main body of the report). Changes to the review list were also discussed, and it was decided that none were needed at this time. The “auto-accept” list for species submitted to eBird and accepted with a clear, identifiable photo under eBird review was discussed and finalized. What this means is that reports of species on this list that are submitted to eBird with a clear identifiable photo can be accepted by NYSARC without formal review. However, anyone on the Committee may request that any eBird record be formally reviewed, even if there is a clear photo.

Note: In the reports accepted, listed below, the range of dates for a record may not be known based only on the documents submitted to NYSARC. Accepted eBird reports may extend the known range of dates and if NYSARC also found these reports acceptable, the eBird range of dates are listed along with those from the NYSARC record submission.

2017 Reports Accepted

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

2017-07-A One, Wallkill, **Ulster**, 6-7 Feb (Kenneth M. McDermott, ph Peter Schoenberger, Bruce Nott, Jr.). eBird 6-7 Feb

2017-16-A One, Kinderhook, **Columbia**, 8 Apr (Naomi Lloyd, ph N. Lloyd)

2017-43-A One, Plattsburgh, **Clinton**, 11 Nov (Michael B. Burgess, ph M. Burgess). eBird 11 Nov

2017-46-A One, Deep Hollow Ranch, **Suffolk**, 28 Oct (Bruce Horwith, ph Paul D’Andrea)

2017-49-A One, Cossackie, **Greene**, 6 Dec (Richard Guthrie). eBird 6 Dec

2017-50-A One, North Babylon, **Suffolk**, 4 Feb (Peter Morris, ph P. Morris). eBird 4, 5, 8, 11 Feb

Records of Pink-footed Goose in New York continue to grow rapidly. They provide evidence of how quickly a species can go from unreported to an expected annual migrant/visitor. The accumulating body of records shows that the majority of records are from Long Island, the goose migration hotspots near the Wallkill River in Orange and Ulster Counties, and Lake Champlain. Combined with a few other records along the Hudson River corridor, they indicate that Long Island and a roughly 50-mile strip of easternmost mainland New York are where this species is most likely to show up. All six of the records in 2017 fit into this pattern. The Wallkill bird was found by Bruce Nott, Jr. The others were all discovered by those listed above, who submitted written documentation to NYSARC.

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

2017-13-A Two, Plattsburgh, **Clinton**, 18 Mar (Gary Chapin, ph Paul Osenbaugh). eBird 18 Mar

Found by Stacy Robinson, these two Barnacle Geese provided a first record for Clinton County. They were only seen on one day.

Clark’s Grebe (*Aechmophorus clarkii*)

2017-09-A/G One, Oswego, **Oswego**, 22 Feb-1 Mar (Kevin McGann, Doug Daniels, Greg D. Dashnau, Brent Bomkamp, Dennis Anderson, Jr., Kenneth M. McDermott, Bill Purcell, ph K. McGann, D. Daniels, G. Dashnau, B. Bomkamp, D. Anderson, Bruce Nott, Jr., B. Purcell). eBird 22-28 Feb, 1, 4-6 Mar

Oswego Harbor has garnered many fine records over the years and has another one with this first state record Clark's Grebe. Found by Gregg Dashnau on 22 Feb, the grebe lingered until 6 Mar and was enjoyed by dozens, perhaps hundreds, including many of New York's birders wishing to add it to their state lists. Clark's Grebe's congener, Western Grebe (*A. occidentalis*), has occurred about 30 times in the state since the first fully accepted record in 1978 and it had to be firmly ruled out in order for this record to be accepted. The two species are similar, somewhat variable, and they occasionally hybridize, creating identification challenges for birders and records committees alike. The visual appearance of this grebe was classic for this species, including these features: eye completely surrounded by white, bright orange-yellow bill, pale flanks, and narrow black stripe on the back of the neck (see Sibley 2014). The recorded call, on the other hand, was not, and there was disagreement about whether it was fine for Clark's, more like a Western, or intermediate between the two species. Experts familiar with the calls of both species differed in their opinions. In personal emails to a Committee member, Tony Leukering, Nathan Pieplow, and Steve Mlodinow all expressed strong reservations about two recordings of the Oswego Harbor grebe (eBird 2017a,b), which they considered to be much closer to Western Grebe vocalizations than to Clark's Grebe. However, Michael Hilchey, in a personal email to another Committee member, disagreed, indicating that vocalizations in the two species were quite varied and not conclusive for identification. The disagreement among the experts regarding the reliability of the recorded vocalizations for identification was enough for the Committee to place more weight on the appearance of the bird and accept the record.

The first fully accepted Western Grebe record in New York involved a bird at Tupper Lake in St. Lawrence County, found on 2 Jul 1978 and remaining in the area through early October (Bolsinger 2007). In 1985 the American Ornithological Union (AOU) split Western Grebe into the nominate "dark form" and the pale Clark's Grebe. After this, some people wondered if the Tupper Lake bird was actually a Clark's Grebe, mainly due to a photograph of the bird, taken by the late Tom Davis, and published in *The Kingbird* (see Delehanty 1978). The black and white reprint of the color photograph did not reproduce well and the grebe appeared to have a very pale bill and substantial white around the eye. The photo was published again in *The Kingbird*, this time in color, along with an article by Jeff Bolsinger, clarifying the record and the confusion surrounding the photo (see Bolsinger 2007). In this photograph, the features look quite different than in the black and white photo, and in all respects, the grebe appears to be a classic Western.

Clark's Grebe is an uncommon western North American species, regularly occurring from British Columbia east to Minnesota and south into Mexico. It is often found with Western Grebe, showing similar habits and habitat preferences (Sibley 2014). It remains extremely rare well east of the Mississippi River. Besides the Oswego record, eBird (Jun 2020) shows only four records in this area—from Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, and Maine. Interestingly, Clark's Grebe made it into the top twenty list of species most likely to be added to the New York State checklist in 2010 (Gochfeld 2010) but did not receive a single vote in 2016 (Gochfeld 2016)!

Inca Dove (*Columbina inca*)

2017-53-A One, Lakewood, **Chautauqua**, 4-12 Dec (Thomas Simmons, ph T. Simmons). eBird 8, 9 Dec

For people who take an interest in trying to predict the next new species to occur in New York, few gave much consideration to Inca Dove. In the last two compilations of prognostications for New York (Gochfeld 2010 and Gochfeld 2016) only one person chose

this species. On 4 Dec, Tom Simmons noticed a much smaller dove than the typical Mourning Doves he sees in the neighborhood, attracted to seed spilled on the ground beneath his feeder. To his amazement, he identified the bird as an Inca Dove, not only a first for New York State but one of very few records north of Georgia in the East. Knowing how significant the sighting was, and concerned about the neighbors' reactions to the many birders it could attract, Simmons decided against an open invitation to birders to come and see the bird. Only a lucky few were allowed to view it over the course of its nine-day stay. Inca Dove is a straightforward identification in North America. Compared to others of its genus, such as Common Ground-Dove (*C. passerina*), it has a much longer tail with extensive white on the sides and scaly dorsal plumage. It is familiar to most birders who live in or visit the southwest, as the forlorn bird of "no hope" because of its distinctive call.

In eBird (Jun 2020), this is the first record in North America north and east of Maryland and Ohio, respectively. Since 2000, but particularly since 2010, records have exploded in the southeastern United States. Mueller (2020) shows the range being from southeastern California to western Louisiana and south into Central America as far as the middle of Costa Rica. eBird (Jun 2020) shows the species range extending through Costa Rica with recent records in northernmost Panama. eBird also nicely shows the recent range expansion through Louisiana, Mississippi, southern Alabama, and into the western panhandle of Florida, as well as a handful of recent records in Georgia. As of this writing, there are only a half dozen records in eBird north of Georgia and well east of the Mississippi River but with the surge going on elsewhere, that appears likely to greatly change very soon. Although the range extension of the Inca Dove is well documented, the factors responsible for it remain poorly understood (Mueller 2020).

Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*)

2017-48-A One, Medina, **Orleans**, 20 Oct (Celeste Morien, ph C. Morien). eBird 20 Oct Having cleaned and put away her hummingbird feeders for the winter, Celeste Morien was not expecting any more of these little gems so late in the year. Her husband, Tom Morien, noticed an article that suggested you should keep the feeders up longer, just in case there is a lingering hummingbird in the neighborhood. So, out they came again. A week later, well after all the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds would likely have departed Western New York, Celeste suddenly had a dull hummer appear at her feeder. Understanding that Rufous Hummingbirds are known as vagrants during the fall in the Northeast, she studied the bird carefully but saw nothing to suggest that species and assumed that it must be just a late Ruby-throated. She completed her eBird checklist by including photos that she had taken. However, as soon as Jim Pawlicki saw the photos in the eBird checklist, he suspected that it was a female/immature Anna's Hummingbird. Subsequent study confirmed his initial thoughts. Word was put out to local birders who tried to see the bird that same day and the following but it was never seen again. This is only the third record in the state. The first was in Broome County in 1998 and the second in Sullivan County in 2007.

Corn Crane (*Crex crex*)

2017-37-A/C One, Cedar Beach, **Suffolk**, 7-8 Nov (Tim Healy, Anders Peltomaa, Ken Feustel, ph T. Healy, A. Peltomaa, K. Feustel). eBird 7-8 Nov

Even with high expectations for a late fall cold front that had come through, Corn Crane could not have been on the observers'—or any New Yorker's—minds on the morning of 7 Nov. The last of only six state records was in 1963, and the species has shown steep declines in much of its range since then (del Hoyo, *et al.* 1996). Thus, one can understand Ken and Sue Feustel's initial puzzlement and special care in teasing out the identification

of this bird, found foraging under the bushes along the Ocean Parkway, a busy commuter highway. Patricia Lindsay and Shai Mitra were summoned, and arrived within minutes to help with the identification. Phone calls back and forth from the cars confirmed something almost unimaginable—a juvenile Corn Crake. Its juvenile plumage differed in subtle ways from the depictions of breeding adults in field guides at hand, and the observers took care to search the internet for photos of juveniles. Ken describes how the experience unfolded in his entertaining article in *The Kingbird* (Feustel 2018).

A thorough examination of this species' occurrence in the Western Hemisphere, beginning with the first documented record, ca. 1833, appears in the same issue of *The Kingbird* (DeCandido and Allen 2018). This compilation shows that five of the six prior NYS records were from Long Island, and that four of five with known dates were from early November. Not only was this the first sight record of a living Corn Crake in New York, it is exceptional even at the hemispheric scale having been found by birders and observed by many. Indeed, hundreds of people were able to see this bird before its unfortunate demise; it was found dead on the morning of 9 Nov, having been hit by a car. The specimen resides at the American Museum of Natural History, Skin #841733, where it was confirmed to be a hatching year male. Feather samples were sent to the Smithsonian Institute for stable isotope analysis to try and determine its origin.

There are 180 eBird entries, many with stunning photos. As a matter of interest, it should be noted that the Feustels were already known rail magnets, having found not one but *three* Yellow Rails (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*) on the Captree CBC over the years, all at Oak Beach Marsh, not far from where this bird was found.

Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*)

2017-24-A One, Napeague, **Suffolk**, 14 May (Hannah Mirando, ph H. Mirando). eBird 14 May

2017-28-A One, Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, **Genesee**, 23 May (Kayo J. Roy, ph K. Roy). eBird 8, 11, 12, 23, 26 May, 17, 20 Jun

2017-29-A One, Cupsogue Beach County Park, **Suffolk**, 24 Jun (Brent Bomkamp, ph B. Bomkamp). eBird 24 Jun

2017 saw three records of Black-necked Stilt in the state, including one more from upstate, where the species is extremely rare. The downstate records were from Napeague, found by Hannah Mirando on 14 May, and Cupsogue Beach County Park, found by Brent Bomkamp and Brendan Fogarty on 24 Jun, both supported by clear photographs. The Iroquois NWR bird was found by Celeste Morien on 8 May and provided a first record for Genesee County and Kingbird Region One. Sightings of the latter were spread out over six weeks. eBird records show that the bird also spent time in the adjacent Tonawanda WMA.

Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*)

2017-18-A One, Timber Point County Park, **Suffolk**, 20, 21, 25 Apr (Brent Bomkamp, ph B. Bomkamp). eBird 20, 21, 25 Apr

Brent Bomkamp nicely documented this lovely black Ruff that was found by Ken Feustel. Timber Point has become renowned for the many great shorebirds that have been discovered there and it seems that this species is rather fond of the place, with four records from there and the adjacent Heckscher SP in a span of only six years, from 2013 to 2018 (eBird Jun 2020).

Common Murre (*Uria aalge*)

2017-03-A One, Manhattan Beach, **Kings**, 21 Jan (Jordan Spindel, ph J. Spindel)

This bird was found lying on the ground at Manhattan Beach in Brooklyn. It was picked up and taken to Wild Bird Fund, where it died shortly after. Jordan Spindel documented the bird for NYSARC with clear diagnostic photos. In pelagic areas offshore of New York, Common Murre is much more likely to be found than Thick-billed Murre (*U. lomvia*) but along the coast, the opposite is true, with many more occurrences of the latter. Indeed, eBird (Jan 2021) does not show any records of Common Murre for Brooklyn.

Ross's Gull (*Rhodostethia rosea*)

2017-04-A/C One, Tupper Lake, **Franklin**, 28, 30 Jan (Thomas Williams, Brent Bomkamp, Bill Purcell, ph T. Williams, John Gluth, Taylor Sturm, B. Purcell). eBird 28 Jan-2 Feb

Ross's Gull has always been a highly sought after species for birders. The most recent in the state was a first basic individual at Tupper Lake in the Adirondack Mountains, during mid winter. The story of this bird's discovery is a good one and it was recounted by Joan Collins (2017). Carpenters, working on the home of birder, Jack Delehanty, would ice-fish in front of the abode. One of them, Mike Thibodeau, noticed a gull eating the walleye eggs which were used as bait and left out on the ice. He pointed it out to Delehanty, who took photos of the gull. Delehanty emailed his photos to local birder, Larry Master, who immediately recognized the bird as a Ross's Gull in first-winter plumage! Word was put out and throngs of birders descended upon the area. The gull moved to a more accessible area closer to NY Route 30 and most of the birders who tried for the gull were successful in seeing it. Incredibly, this is now the tenth accepted record for the state with the first being found in 1986 (Andrle, *et al.* 1987). Although Ross's Gull is a great rarity anywhere in New York, the Adirondack Mountains, where the exceptionally cold climate allows for limited open water, would be considered one of the least likely locations for this species to show up in mid winter.

Franklin's Gull (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*)

2017-31-A One, Crab Meadow Beach, **Suffolk**, 18 Jun (Taylor Sturm, ph T. Sturm). eBird 18 Jun

2017-36-A One, Mount Sinai, **Suffolk**, 20 Sep (Aidan Perkins). eBird 20 Jun

Late on a summer day, Taylor Sturm found an adult Franklin's Gull at Crab Meadow, loafing on a sandbar with Laughing Gulls. This was a life-bird for Sturm so he studied it carefully and obtained some diagnostic photos, which rule out the superficially similar Laughing Gull (*Leucophaeus atricilla*). Birding his local patch, where he often sees Laughing Gulls, Aidan Perkins found a gull which he immediately realized was different. The bird's smaller size and puffer eye crescents made it stand out from the Laughing Gulls. He also noted white tips on the outer primaries when it was seen in flight, all of which helped him to identify the bird as a Franklin's Gull. Franklin's Gull is a review species for the downstate region only, mainly due to its semi-regular appearance on the Niagara River, negating the requirement for review in upstate regions.

Mew Gull (*Larus canus brachyrhynchus*)

2017-17-A One, Midland Beach, **Richmond**, 29 Mar (Brent Bomkamp, ph B. Bomkamp). eBird 29 Mar

This adult Mew Gull of the North American race (now assigned full species status as Short-billed Gull: Chesser *et al.* 2021) was discovered by Richard Veit and was only seen on the one day. Documentation submitted by Brent Bomkamp included photographs and a thorough description of the bird, as well a discussion of the pertinent details for

identifying the bird as this subspecies. Records of Mew Gull have been increasing in recent years, possibly due to an increased interest in gulls shown by birders. Nowhere has this been more apparent in the state than in New York City. For many years, the default assumption for the subspecies of Mew Gull in coastal areas was the nominate European race. However, keen gull-watchers have now documented multiple individuals of the North American race there.

Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*)

2017-15-A One, Goat Island, **Niagara**, 1 Jan (Christopher Kundl, ph C. Kundl, Dominic Sherony). eBird 1, 2, 6, 8, 14-17, 21, 22 Jan

The late Chris Kundl enjoyed studying large gulls and he visited Goat Island on the Niagara River, which is known for attracting many gulls, several times a week during the winter months. Although it was a life-bird for him, Chris knew what he had when he found this adult Slaty-backed Gull. The bird was enjoyed by many, as it often roosted in the shallow waters off Goat Island during the three weeks that it was in the area. Note that the eBird records for the 21 and 22 Jan dates listed above were on the upper Niagara River, near Goat Island, but on the Canadian side of the border. There were also eBird records on 9, 10, 13 Jan at Thorold, Ontario, about seven miles from Goat Island, that likely involved the same bird. In addition, Kundl helpfully pointed out in his report that sightings of a Slaty-backed Gull in Kitchener, Ontario on 28 Nov and 2 Dec 2016, about 75 miles from Goat Island, appeared to involve the same bird as well. And finally, a Slaty-backed Gull in Erie, Pennsylvania, off and on from 26 Jan to 6 Feb, shortly after the Niagara bird disappeared, may well have been this individual but photos were insufficient to be very confident of that. Landfills are known to be highly attractive to this species and there are large landfills in Niagara Falls, Thorold, Erie, and likely Kitchener, as well.

Bridled Tern (*Onychoprion anaethetus*)

2017-34-A One, Great Gull Island, **Suffolk**, 2, 3, 5 Sep (Joseph DiCostanzo, ph J. DiCostanzo). eBird 2, 3, 5 Sep

First detected by its distinctive calls, Joe DiCostanzo found this bird among the breeding Common Terns during the annual summer tern banding study on Great Gull Island, the second such discovery in two summers and very likely the same individual. Eight others involved with the study viewed it during the three days it was present, and DiCostanzo and Stefan Passlick documented it with superb photos. As noted in the 2016 annual NYSARC report, presumably this same adult bird would be detected for several subsequent years, and was also documented in 2018 and 2019. In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic forced suspension of the project and as of this writing, it is unknown if the bird returned for a fifth summer. An interesting side note mentioned in DiCostanzo's submission was the presence of an adult Bridled Tern (perhaps this same individual) on Falkner Island, off Guilford, CT in late July 2017, also the site of a major Common and Roseate Tern colony, 28 miles to the west of Great Gull Island, inside Long Island Sound.

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

2017-58-A One, Democrat Point, **Suffolk**, 20 Jun (Shai Mitra). eBird 20 Jun

2017-59-A One, Nickerson Beach, **Nassau**, 15 Jun (Shai Mitra, ph S. Mitra). eBird 15 Jun
Shai Mitra was counting shearwater carcasses on Democrat Point when he picked out a first-summer Arctic Tern by its distinctive flight, described in great detail based on his extensive experience with the species. He was able to photograph the first-summer bird at Nickerson Beach, proving it distinct from at least one adult bird found and photographed

there on 7 and 9 Jun by several observers. This species' review status was updated by the Committee in September of 2017 to N (everywhere in the state) except Cupsogue County Park/Moriches Inlet, where it had established a pattern of regular occurrence over the past decade, albeit with considerable inter-year variation. These two reports submitted by Mitra, the Arctic Tern "guru", included an analysis of this variability. He noted that occurrence was notably high in 2012 and 2013, then very low from 2014-2016, despite the efforts of more and better-prepared observers, and that numbers of first-summer/ second calendar year (SY) birds have been especially variable from year to year. An uptick in 2017 was driven by SY birds, as illustrated by these two reports, multiple eBird reports from Cupsogue May through July, and eBird reports from Old Inlet in Bellport (2 SYs on 17 Jun) and Dune Road near Shinnecock Inlet (SY, also on 17 Jun: eBird Jan 2021).

Sandwich Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*)

2017-56-A One, Moriches Inlet Flats, **Suffolk**, 29 Jun, 1 Jul (Shai Mitra, ph S. Mitra). eBird 29 Jun-1 Jul

The Moriches Inlet Flats, like other ocean inlets on Long Island where large flocks of terns regularly congregate, occasionally attract rare and uncommon terns. On 29 Jun, Shai Mitra found a second-year Sandwich Tern roosting among a large flock of mostly Common Terns, which also included Least, Roseate, Black, and Royal Terns. The bird continued until at least 1 Jul, when it was seen by many observers. Sandwich Tern has become a regular visitor to coastal Long Island, especially in June and July, and has since been removed from the review list for downstate. Upstate, of course, it remains an exceptionally rare vagrant and any reports from there should be carefully documented.

Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*)

2017-26-A One, Croton River at Hudson River, **Westchester**, 30 May (Anne Swaim, ph A. Swaim). eBird 30 May-1 Jun

Although a regular breeder on Long Island, it is very rare to see a Black Skimmer away from the coast in NY. Even records from Westchester County are quite scarce with most of the few occurrences there being during the summer months. This Westchester County bird was found by Anne Swaim where the Croton River empties into the Hudson River. The skimmer lingered for three days. This was actually the second record for this location, with the first occurring there on 30 Aug 1987 (Andrle, *et al.* 1987).

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)

2017-30-A/B One, Robert Moses State Park, **Suffolk**, 6 May (Taylor Sturm, Peter Morris). eBird 6 May

While there are numerous records of Pacific Loon in the state, particularly in late fall and winter, the past 10 years have seen an increasing number of records of birds migrating along the coast in the spring (eBird Aug 2020, NYSARC online database Aug 2020). These birds have been found with groups of Common and Red-throated Loons. On 6 May, Pete Morris and Taylor Sturm found another Pacific Loon in this context, while seawatching from Robert Moses State Park—an adult in alternate plumage, flying east with Red-throated Loons.

Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Thalassarche chlororhynchos*)

2017-22-A/B One, Robert Moses State Park, **Suffolk**, 6 May (Taylor Sturm, Peter Morris, video T. Sturm). eBird 6 May

Seawatching from Robert Moses SP under the right conditions always holds great potential, as proven once again by this amazing pick-up by Pete Morris and Taylor Sturm. Though veteran seawatcher Morris was the first to spy it, it was Sturm's swift reaction and consummate skill that succeeded in capturing digiscoped iPhone video as the bird flew by. Patricia Lindsay and Shai Mitra had just left the seawatch to explore further east when they were alerted to a Pacific Loon that had just passed the seawatch. This rarity (see above report) managed to hold bird-of-the-day distinction for less than five minutes, as another call followed that an albatross was heading east in its wake! Scrambling to the beach at Field 5, Lindsay and Mitra both managed to get on the loon, but the latter was denied the albatross as he went back for a second scope just before it flew by. Lindsay picked it up between deep troughs as it turned out to sea, getting a brief and very unsatisfying look at it. Back at the watch, the stunned Morris and Sturm relayed what detail they had seen to Lindsay and Mitra, and showed off the video, the end of which had captured Pete's classic, accented expletive as the bird disappeared behind the lifeguard shed.

The documentation for this record clearly shows that the bird was not a Black-browed Albatross (*T. melanophris*). The Committee also considered that this could have been a Gray-headed Albatross (*T. chrysostoma*), Northern Buller's Albatross (*T. platei*), or Southern Buller's Albatross (*T. bulleri*). With the complete lack of records of these latter three species in the north Atlantic, the Committee decided that the documentation was sufficient to accept the record. However, if the known distribution or vagrancy status of either of those species should change, this record may need to be re-examined.

There are quite a number of records of Yellow-nosed Albatross from the Western North Atlantic, as detailed in a comprehensive article by Phil Davis in *North American Birds* (2014). NYSARC has accepted two prior records of this species; in addition, the Committee accepted one report as *Thalassarche* sp. (NYSARC online database Jul 2020). There are a few other credible reports from the state as well, with varying levels of detail, collected by Davis (2014), and in an article in *The Kingbird* (Buckley and Schairer 2000).

Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*)

2017-38-A One, East Meredith, **Delaware**, 2 Oct (Doug Amadon, ph D. Amadon). eBird 2 Oct

In rural Delaware County, Doug Amadon was driving past a beaver dam when something large and white caught his eye. He turned around and drove back to investigate. Standing atop the beaver dam was a juvenile Wood Stork and Amadon soon started snapping photographs. This is the first record accepted by NYSARC since 2011, with two eBird records from 2016 and 2017, both in Erie County, still to be reviewed.

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*)

2017-27-A/B One, Nickerson Beach Park, **Nassau**, 17 Jun (Joshua Malbin, Shai Mitra ph J. Malbin, S. Mitra). eBird 17, 18 Jun

2017-42-A One, Lake Montauk, **Suffolk**, 4 Oct (Anders Peltomaa, ph A. Peltomaa). eBird 28 Sep–5 Nov

Until recently, this southern species has always been extremely rare in the state. However, records have been increasing considerably during the past decade or less. Many, and probably most of these sightings, are not associated with tropical storms. While inland sightings have gotten the most publicity, coastal records, such as the two discussed here, are increasing with even greater frequency. The Lake Montauk bird was reportedly discovered on 27 Sep by Peter Topping and it lingered until 5 Nov, providing an unusually long opportunity to reliably observe the species in New York. The booby at Nickerson

Beach was discovered by Joshua Malbin on 17 Jun and was only observed that day and early the next morning. Unfortunately, the bird was not well and apparently collapsed into the netting of a Piping Plover enclosure. Rehabilitators were unable to save the bird after retrieving it.

White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*)

2017-23-A One, Valley Stream State Park, **Nassau**, 28 Apr (Robert J. Berlingeri). eBird 28 Apr

2017-51-A Five, Town of Clinton, **Dutchess**, 15 Jul–1 Aug (Barbara Butler, ph Adrienne Popko)

2017 saw two more records of White Ibis in the state, as records of this southern wader continue to accumulate. The great majority of records in New York are from Long Island, as was the adult bird seen by Robert Berlingeri flying over Valley Stream State Park with a flock of Glossy Ibis on 28 Apr. The birds in Dutchess County furnished another rare inland record. The documentation provided by Barbara Butler included a helpful recounting of the story of these five juveniles. They were discovered by the owner of a cattle farm, Rebecca Osborne, on 15 Jul. The Waterman Bird Club was contacted on the 19th and Butler, along with Adrienne Popko, were able to visit the farm and document the ibises, which were using a manure pit on that day. Osborne reported that the five birds were seen again on 28 Jul, then only two on the 29th, and just one bird on 1 Aug, with no more sightings after that date. On 13, 16, and 17 Jul, up to five juvenile White Ibis were reported in Orange County (eBird Feb 2021). It would seem that these must be the same birds documented from Dutchess County but the overlapping dates of occurrence and the roughly 40 mile flight distance between the locations makes that less than certain. The latter reports will be reviewed by NYSARC in the near future.

Great Gray Owl (*Strix nebulosa*)

2017-08-A Two, Robert Moses State Park, **St. Lawrence**, 11 Feb (Bill Purcell, ph B. Purcell)

2017-10-A/B One, Fort Covington Township, **Franklin**, 11, 19 Feb (Gary Chapin, Derek H. Rogers, ph G. Chapin, D. Rogers)

2017-11-A One, Keene, **Essex**, 4 Mar (Gary Chapin, ph G. Chapin)

A Great Gray Owl incursion into NYS starting in late Jan (as first reported in local newspapers) provided many birders with the opportunity to see and enjoy this wonderful owl, though numbers were not as extensive as the invasions in the winters of 1978-79 (64 owls estimated) or 1983-84 (46 owls estimated: Andrle 1998), or perhaps even 1995-96 (25 owls estimated: Regional reports in *The Kingbird*, Vol. 48, Nos. 2 & 3). The four reports accepted by NYSARC detailed birds in the three known areas of occurrence in NY, as this event was primarily limited to the very northern reaches of the state along the south side of the St. Lawrence River, plus one very cooperative individual a little farther south in Keene. Southern Ontario, Canada hosted many more owls but none were found in New York west of Massena. The natural barrier of Lake Ontario presumably kept more from visiting our state.

A review of the 433 accepted eBird reports for this event determined that an even 300 involved birds around Robert Moses State Park and Barnhart Island north of Massena between 9 Feb and 1 Apr; the number of owls involved was not determined, but birds seen consistently at various separate locations indicate that several were present in that area. There were also 12 reports of birds both east and west of Fort Covington, likely involving a few different birds, and discussions concerning the abundance of appropriate habitat for

Great Grays from the Massena area east to Fort Covington, including mostly inaccessible St. Regis Indian Reservation lands, suggested that many more owls were present than actually observed. One Great Gray, well south of the St. Lawrence lowlands, was the subject of 121 eBird reports, this accommodating bird staying along Lime Kiln Road in Keene, in the heart of the Adirondacks, from day of discovery on 2 Mar through 29 Mar.

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*)

2017-54-A One, Beekmantown, **Clinton**, 13, 16, 17 Dec (Bill Krueger, ph Tara Fuller, Amy T Bedard)

This beautiful light-morph Gyr Falcon was nicely photographed by Tara Fuller and Amy Bedard and documented for NYSARC by Bill Kreuger.

Hammond's Flycatcher (*Empidonax hammondi*)

2017-47-A One, Central Park, **New York**, 2 Dec (Richard Guthrie, ph R. Guthrie). eBird 26 Nov–12 Dec

The third record for New York, this Hammond's Flycatcher was seen by many at heavily-birded Central Park. The bird was discovered by Linda LaBella and identified from photos taken by Deborah Allen and Ryan Zucker. The first two records for the state were in Nassau and Westchester Counties in fall 2001 and fall 2006, respectively.

Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*)

2017-39-A One, Wallkill River NWR, **Orange**, 21 Oct (Maria Loukeris, ph M. Loukeris). eBird 21 Oct

2017-55-A One, Heckscher State Park, **Suffolk**, 8 Nov (Patricia Lindsay, ph P. Lindsay). eBird 8 Nov

Maria Loukeris was very fortunate to see the Say's Phoebe at Wallkill River NWR, as it was only in view for ten seconds. However, she was also well-prepared, as she managed nice documentary photographs of the flycatcher atop a snag. Pat Lindsay was similarly fortunate with a bird at Heckscher State Park. She had it for less than a minute but that was enough time for this experienced observer to easily identify the bird and snap a few soft photos to supplement her description. There has been a recent surge in records of this species in the state, with these two being the ninth and tenth in a span of only seven years.

Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*)

2017-57-A/B One, Robert Moses State Park, **Suffolk**, 17-19, 26 Dec (Patricia Lindsay, Shai Mitra, ph P. Lindsay, S. Mitra). eBird 17-26 Dec

Patricia Lindsay spied this bird flying into a juniper patch with a small group of American Robins during the morning of the Captree CBC. She got her companions on it and called Shai Mitra, who was covering the thickly vegetated pine grove just to the east. He reported having just seen a bluebird-like bird flying over him in company with robins, and giving an unfamiliar call! The count surely suffered a disruption in effort after word spread among the participants and territories were abandoned, at least temporarily, for the chase. Many others got to see it as well during its ten day stay, despite persistent cold and brutal winds during much of that time. On 26 Dec, Lindsay was surprised to see the bird in the parking lot at Robert Moses SP roughly a mile west, and snapped some photos. The bird was subsequently seen back at the junipers, but disappeared after that day.

Close examination of photos of this individual revealed molt limits in the greater coverts, proving conclusively that it was a hatching-year bird. Several of the innermost greater coverts had been replaced, and were slightly longer and fresher with a bluish tinge and broader, neater, buffy edges compared to the adjacent outer coverts, retained juvenile

feathers that were smaller and more heavily worn. This feature can be seen in many of the photos posted to eBird. Pyle (1997) explains that Mountain Bluebirds undergo their first pre-basic (now termed pre-formative) molt on the summer grounds prior to fall migration, and that replacement of the greater coverts is partial in hatching-year birds versus complete in after hatching-year birds.

Fifteen prior records, from 1974 to 2011, are documented in *Bull's Birds of New York State* (Chamberlaine 1998) and in accepted NYSARC reports (NYSARC 2020). Whereas most passerine vagrants show a decided affinity for the coast, only five of fifteen prior Mountain Bluebirds in the state have been reported from Long Island, whereas six have been from the Hudson Valley, in Greene, Dutchess, Orange, and Westchester Counties.

Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*)

2017-01-A/B One, Southold, **Suffolk**, 6, 9 Jan (Aaron Virgin, Brent Bomkamp, ph B. Bomkamp). eBird 6-18, 21-23, 25, 31 Jan, 3, 4, 6-12, 14, 15, 17-21, 22-25, 27 Feb, 1, 3-6, 8-13, 16-18, 21, 23, 25, 27 Mar, 1-8 Apr

2017-52-A One, Tiffany Creek Preserve, **Nassau**, 20 Dec (Brent Bomkamp, ph B. Bomkamp). eBird 20, 27-31 Dec 2017, 1-3, 9, 10, 14, 18, 20 Jan 2018

Townsend's Solitaire seems to have increased in the state, with 16 records accepted by NYSARC since the turn of the century and only three prior to that (NYSARC online database Aug 2020). Most records are during the winter months when they are found in areas with good sources of berries, especially juniper (Bowen 2020). Aaron Virgin discovered the Townsend's Solitaire in Southold on the North Fork of Long Island on 6 Jan, in an area with many Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), where it stayed until at least 8 Apr, when it was last reported to eBird. The bird was seen by many, including Brent Bomkamp, who photographed the bird on 9 Jan. The following winter, Bomkamp found his own Townsend's Solitaire at the Tiffany Creek Preserve, in Nassau County, where he observed it feeding on bittersweet (*Celastrus* sp.) berries. This individual continued until at least 20 Jan 2018.

Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*)

2017-45-A One, Robert Moses State Park, **Suffolk**, 28-29 Sep (Brent Bomkamp). eBird 28, 29 Sep

According to Dyer (1998), between 1964 and 1978, Lark Bunting was almost annual, a significant increase in status from the years prior to that. Since then, however, it has returned to its status of earlier years, which could be classified as a rare vagrant to New York. This Lark Bunting was discovered by Brent Bomkamp at Robert Moses State Park, where it was loosely associating with Song Sparrows (*Melospiza melodia*), and it was enjoyed by many over the course of its two-day visit. This record fits into a pattern of vagrancy for the species; of 25 records in New York mentioned by Dyer (1998), most are from Long Island in September. Of the nine records reviewed and accepted by NYSARC, five have been from Long Island, and six have been during the month of September (NYSARC online database Aug 2020). A similar pattern can be seen from a perusal of records from coastal New England and the mid-Atlantic states (eBird Aug 2020).

LeConte's Sparrow (*Ammospiza leconteii*)

2017-40-A/C One, Pelham Bay Park, **Bronx**, 28 Oct (Jared Cole, Peter L. Reisfeld, Jeffrey Ritter, ph J. Cole, P. Reisfeld). eBird 28 Oct

This exciting rarity was discovered by Peter Reisfeld, Jared Cole, and four others who were birding at Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx. Unfortunately, the bird only stayed the one day.

Swainson's Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*)

2017-25-A One, Prospect Park, **Kings**, 24 May (Anders Peltomaa, ph A. Peltomaa). eBird 24-26 May

This Swainson's Warbler was heard singing and deftly identified, based solely on voice, by regular Prospect Park birder, Ed Crowne, in the Midwood section of the park on 24 May. Anders Peltomaa documented the bird for NYSARC. Over the course of three days, it entertained dozens of birders as it made its way around this dark woodland, typically staying hidden in the understory. However, most everyone who went to see the warbler did eventually lay eyes on it during its song-filled circuits. Many low-light photographs, some audio recordings, and at least one video, were taken during its stay, documenting the fourth record for Prospect Park, which has the highest bird list among New York City parks.

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

2017-05-A One, Jones Beach State Park, **Nassau**, 1 Jan (Peter Morris)

The western subspecies of Yellow-rumped Warbler, known as "Audubon's Warbler" or "Audubon's" Yellow rumped Warbler, is a very rare visitor to New York. It has in the past been considered a separate species from "Myrtle" Yellow-rumped Warbler, which of course, is a common to abundant migrant and winter visitant in eastern North America, as well as a breeder in northern parts, including New York. The two forms are relatively distinct by plumage and call. The Jones Beach warbler was discovered during the Southern Nassau County Christmas Bird Count (CBC) by Pete Morris and Taylor Sturm and, typically, it was closely associating with a group of "Myrtle" Yellow-rumped Warblers. There are only eight previously accepted records (NYSARC online database Aug 2020), with one of those also from coastal Nassau County, similarly found during the Southern Nassau County CBC.

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*)

2017-19-A One, Lakeview WMA, **Jefferson**, 2 May (Kevin McGann, ph K. McGann)

While Summer Tanager is a regular, though uncommon, spring migrant on Long Island and in the urban parks of New York City, it is much rarer upstate and particularly in the northern parts of the state (Salzman 1998). Kevin McGann found and photographed this female at Lakeview WMA along the Lake Ontario shore, a first record for Jefferson County. Less than two months later, a record of another individual in the county appeared in eBird (eBird Aug 2020), which the Committee will review at a later date.

Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*)

2017-44-A One, Alley Pond Park, **Queens**, 12 Nov (Ed Becher). eBird 12-28 Nov, 7 Dec–3 Jan 2018

This Western Tanager was discovered by Eric Miller on 12 Nov and lingered at Alley Pond Park until 28 Nov (eBird Feb 2021). It was documented for NYSARC by Ed Becher. Photos in eBird show a female/immature male. A similar-looking Western Tanager was discovered and photographed at nearby Crocheron Park on 7 Dec and lingered until 3 Jan 2018 (eBird Feb 2021). It is believed to be the same individual.

Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*)

2017-02-A One, Arden Beach, **Richmond**, 13 Jan (Maya Shikhman, ph M. Shikhman). eBird 13-27 Jan

Maya Shikhman found and photographed this female/immature male Painted Bunting on Staten Island. The bird stayed in the area for two weeks.

2017 Reports Accepted But Origins Unknown or Unnatural

Common Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*)

2017-33-A One, Champlain, **Clinton**, 9, 13, 14, 22 Aug, 6 Sep (Bill Krueger, ph B. Krueger)

This report involved a bird seen over a four-week period during the summer at the Chazy Riverlands on Lake Champlain. The duck was sometimes seen with or near Mallards, which were slightly smaller. As the bird tipped up to feed, as a typical dabbling duck would, the observer could clearly see that it was unbanded. This fact and also that there are other records of Common Shelduck in the northeast, including three the same year—in Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, and New Brunswick (eBird Jul 2020)—lends credence to the possibility that this was a wild bird. Unfortunately, the photos provided were less than ideal, with much of the head and the bill not showing in any of them. While the photos, combined with the description, were highly suggestive of this species, a minority of Committee members were not convinced that an unusual aberrant plumage of a more common species, or even a domestic duck, could be firmly ruled out. Nevertheless, most of the Committee believed the identification to be correct. The question of origin was discussed at length and while NYSARC recognizes that a wild origin is possible for this species, it is too early to state with much confidence that a pattern of vagrancy has been established. A review of records in eBird shows a cluster of sightings around Montreal, Quebec, from 1993, 1994, 2004, 2005, 2010, and 2014, with several of those occurring during the summer (eBird Jul 2020). There may be additional sightings that do not appear on the eBird map, simply because the eBird reviewer marked them as Introduced/Exotic. In the not-too-distant future, eBird is expected to change the way it handles sightings of possible exotics so that more of these reports will show up on the map. This will make it easier to see if a pattern of vagrancy exists. The bird at Chazy Riverlands, which is not far south of Montreal, was apparently molting body feathers at the very least, as a brown breast band was observed to nearly completely disappear during the course of its stay. In addition, this species is increasing and its range has expanded, with breeding becoming more frequent in northwest Europe (Carboneras and Kirwan 2020). All of this lends support to the idea that a wild Common Shelduck could show up in the state, perhaps as a post-breeding molt migrant.

2016 Report Previously Accepted—Addendum

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)

2016-54-A One, Greece, **Monroe**, 13 Dec (Robert P. Yunick)

The Committee is grateful to Robert Spahn for adding some missing details to this previously accepted record (see D'Anna, *et al.* 2020). Spahn (pers. comm.) indicates that the hummer had been present since October, making for a very lengthy stay! It was last seen by the homeowners on 17 Dec, unfortunately just one day shy of being recorded on the Rochester Christmas Bird Count, although at least it was recorded for the count-week.

2012 Report Previously Accepted

LeConte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*)

2012-77-B One, Floyd Bennett Field, **Kings**, 6 Oct (Rob Jett, ph Heydi Lopes). eBird 6 Oct 2012

This report supplements the documentation for a previously accepted record. NYSARC appreciates receiving as much documentation as possible for a record, no matter how long after the sighting. See Wilson, *et al.* (2014) for a full account of this record.

2017 Reports Not Accepted

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)

2017-20-A One, Lake Ronkonkoma, **Suffolk**, 7 May

The description provided indicated that this was a largish diving bird with a long neck, slender body, and long, sharp, pale gray bill. The plumage was described as being medium to dark gray on top of the head and body with an off white lower head and neck. Since a Western Grebe has a yellowish bill and is bright white on the lower head and neck, the description is at odds with that species. It seemed likely to the reviewers that this was a loon or possibly even a cormorant, perhaps in a plumage that was unfamiliar to the observers.

Franklin's Gull (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*)

2017-35-A One, National Gateway Park, **Richmond**, 13 Sep

This report was believed to be likely correct by some on the Committee, due to the long experience of the observer, but was voted down in the second round of review, based upon a very incomplete description that did not clearly rule out a Laughing Gull (*L. atricilla*). During a five-minute view of the bird in flight with Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*), the observer noted white in the primaries and a partial hood, concluding that this was an adult in basic plumage. White in the primaries can be a helpful distinction between adult Franklin's and Laughing Gulls but unfortunately, the pattern and extent of white was not clearly indicated. With so little other description to go on, the Committee decided that the record could not be supported.

Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis*)

2017-12-A Two, Iron Pier Beach, **Suffolk**, 19 Mar

Although the observer of these two gulls was not an experienced birder, in her own words, she was clearly a keen observer, as she picked up on these two "four-year gulls" with dull yellow legs and knew that this was not typical of Herring Gulls (*L. argentatus*), which show pinkish legs. Her excellent photos showed at least one of the birds, which very much resembled an adult Herring Gull. The bird had a clean unstreaked head, which is not unusual in March, by which time many adults have lost the head streaking sported during the winter months. And indeed, her photos clearly showed that the bird had yellow legs. However, the bird differed from an adult Yellow-legged Gull in having a mantle that was no darker than the adjacent Ring-billed Gulls (*L. delawarensis*) and primaries with less black. Committee members concluded that this was an example of a Herring Gull with yellow legs, which is occasionally seen in North America and more frequently observed in Europe. If the observer observed two such individuals, however, as she indicated, this would seem to be rather exceptional.

Kelp Gull (*Larus dominicanus*)

2017-14-A One, Iron Pier Beach, **Suffolk**, 19, 28 Mar

The excellent photos included with this report show a bird that resembles an adult Great Black-backed Gull (*L. marinus*) in terms of size, shape, and plumage. However, the legs on this individual were clearly yellow, though not bright yellow. Yellow legs are apparently

even more uncommon in Great Black-backed Gulls than they are in Herring Gulls. Seen at the same location and by the same observer who submitted 2017-12, Yellow-legged Gull, above, the Committee again could only conclude that this was a common species, Great Black-backed Gull, with an unusual leg color. This makes three adult gulls which typically have pinkish legs, showing yellow legs at this location around the same date, suggesting the possibility of an environmental factor as being the cause, though it cannot be ruled out that this was simply normal variation and that the observer was fortunate, or unlucky, depending on your viewpoint, to find all of these birds.

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)

2017-41-A One, Camp Hero State Park, **Suffolk**, 12 Nov

This was a report of a Pacific Loon flying past over the ocean at Montauk, seen by two experienced observers. The report was relatively thorough and discussed how the two expected loons in the region, Common (*G. immer*) and Red-throated (*G. stellata*), differed from the bird that was observed. However, Committee members felt that this was a very difficult identification and especially so with a bird in flight. Although some on the Committee believed that this was a good record, others were concerned about the difficulty of correctly assessing subtle characters under these conditions. In the end the report did not generate enough support after two rounds of review.

Great Gray Owl (*Strix nebulosa*)

2017-06-A One, Brasher Falls, **St. Lawrence**, 28 Jan

This Great Gray Owl submission came from St. Lawrence County, somewhat near where the species was photographed during the same winter. Unfortunately, there were no photographs submitted with this report and there was virtually no description provided, other than that the bird was large. The observers at first thought it was a Great Horned Owl but after looking it up in bird books, decided that it was this species. Although this is a distinctive species and this bird was seen during a winter when multiple Great Gray Owls were found in northern New York, without photos or even a description, the Committee had no option but to not accept the record.

Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*)

2017-32-A One, Pawling, **Dutchess**, 7 Aug

This bird was seen while hiking in a forest in Dutchess County during August. In researching afterwards the observer could not find any similar species of birds that are regular in New York State. Although the plumage pattern described was not at odds for a male of this species, the size and shape of the bird were not provided. In addition the forest habitat would not be typical for the species. Several Committee members concluded that the observer likely saw a male Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*).

Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*)

2017-21-A One, Poughquag, **Dutchess**, 10 May

This was a report of an entirely blue bird that appeared at the observer's thistle (niger) feeder for a couple of minutes during May. The observer was familiar with Eastern Bluebird (*S. sialis*) and she indicated that this bird was slender in comparison but did not indicate the bird's relative size or its shape. A Mountain Bluebird would be unlikely to visit a niger feeder and Committee members believed that this was probably an Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*).

Short-billed Gull and Common Gull

Recently, the American Ornithological Society (AOS) voted to split the Mew Gull, *Larus canus* (which formerly included subspecies *canus*, *heinei*, *kamtschatshensis*, and *brachyrhynchus*) into two species—a monotypic Short-billed Gull, *L. brachyrhynchus* and a polytypic Common Gull, *L. canus*, comprising the remaining three taxa (Chesser *et al.* 2021). Short-billed Gull breeds and winters in North America, whereas Common Gull breeds and winters in Europe and Asia. Both occur somewhat regularly in eastern North America and had occurred several times in New York before they were recognized as a separate species. Even before the split, NYSARC desired a better picture of the ratio of occurrence of the two forms (then subspecies), and decided to look at all previously accepted records of Mew Gull to see which, if any, could be identified to subspecies. While subspecies normally present significant identification challenges, the taxa in question are relatively well differentiated, and NYSARC's original reviews of several Mew Gull records had already been resolved to the subspecies level. The re-review thus focused on a set of eight records originally accepted as Mew Gulls, but not to subspecies, and was completed in 2019. Of these, six were accepted at the subspecies level, two involving *L. c. canus* and four involving *L. c. brachyrhynchus*. Following the split, the former two are now acceptable as Common Gull, and the latter four as Short-billed Gull. Of the three subspecies of Common Gull, the nominate race is, by far, the most likely to occur in the state but there are a few records of *L. c. kamtschatshensis* in the northeastern US and Canada (eBird Oct 2021), although not in New York. The other subspecies, *L. c. heinei*, is very similar to the nominate race, and there are no records in North America accepted in eBird as of Oct 2021.

Common Gull (*Larus canus*)

1992-30-A, one Robert Moses State Park, **St. Lawrence**, 27, 29 Dec 1992 (David Sibley)
1996-81-A/B, one Lewiston, **Niagara**, 17 Nov 1996 (Robert Curry, Richard Knapton)

Short-billed Gull (*Larus brachyrhynchus*)

1986-27-A, one Robert Moses State Park, **St. Lawrence**, 4, 5 Oct 1986 (Ian Jones)
1992-56-A/B, one Lewiston, **Niagara**, 29 Nov, 4 Dec 1992 (Alan Wormington, Richard Knapton)
1996-68-A, one Niagara Falls, **Niagara**, 10 Nov 1996 (Sharon Skelly, Brian Mongi)
1997-64-A, one Jamestown, **Chautauqua**, 21 Dec 1997 (Robert Sundell)

Common/Short-billed Gull (*Larus canus/brachyrhynchus*)

2008-64-A, one Lewiston, **Niagara**, 6 Dec 2008 (Willie D'Anna)
2009-4-A/B, one, Olcott, **Niagara**, 22 Feb 2009 (Jim Pawlicki, Willie D'Anna)
For both of these records, the observers attempted to make a subspecific identification but viewing conditions prevented a definitive conclusion.

CONTRIBUTORS

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