

2009 MINUTES OF THE MONTANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Date: 16 October 2009

Location: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Regional Office, Great Falls

Members present: Dan Casey (Chair), Chuck Carlson, John Carlson, Coburn Currier, Nate Kohler, Harriet Marble, Jeff Marks (Secretary), Bob Martinka, Fritz Prellwitz, Mike Schwitters, Dan Sullivan (no members absent)

Non-members present: Paul Hendricks, Alan Nelson

Approval of 2008 Minutes: 10:15

Evaluation of records: We reviewed 54 new reports in 2009, with Committee members submitting their votes via e-mail from three rounds of review to the Secretary in advance of the annual meeting (except for 052 to 054, which we evaluated at the meeting). Highlights were acceptance of two new state birds, **Lesser Black-backed Gull** and **Eastern Meadowlark** (plus a second record for the gull); the first record for **Ash-throated Flycatcher** in 13 years; the fourth record for **Golden-winged Warbler**; and the second for **Great-tailed Grackle**.

Review List: We approved the following changes to the Review List: **Mew Gull**, remove from list; **Glaucous-winged Gull**, no report needed for QLL 2D; **Band-tailed Pigeon**, remove from list; **Anna's Hummingbird**, no report needed west of 111°W; **Gray Flycatcher**, add QLL 46B to exception area; **Blue-headed Vireo**, no report needed for LL 12; **Black-throated Blue Warbler**, remove from list; **Swamp Sparrow**, remove from list. We also voted via e-mail on 20 November that no report be required for Cackling Goose sightings east of 109°W.

Old reports reconsidered: None.

Montana Bird Distribution database: Coburn circulated a list of 30 sightings of rare birds submitted to Tracker without Committee review. Eight reports were rejected on the spot, two were accepted owing to recent changes in review requirements, and the remainder will be evaluated next year if we succeed in getting the observers to submit rare bird reports.

Bylaws discussion: The archives are now housed at Montana Natural Heritage Program, and we will amend Parts III and IVD(c) of the Bylaws to reflect this fact.

Membership: Before the final round of voting in 2009, we voted to add Coburn Currier and Nate Kohler to the Committee. On 13 October 2009, former Chair and charter Committee member Terry McEaney submitted his resignation via e-mail. We wish Terry a speedy recovery from his heart ailment and thank him for many years of service to the Committee. On 20 November we voted by e-mail to add Ted Nordhagen to the Committee, which now stands at 12 members.

Election of Chair and Secretary: Dan Casey and Jeff Marks were unanimously re-elected as Chair and Secretary, respectively.

Action items: (1) Dan C. will track down and copy for the archives field notes of Rob Fergus for his sighting of a Black-throated Blue Warbler (2007-029); the notes should be in the archives at the Avian Science Center. (2) Harriet will contact Mary Griffith to request more information on her White-winged Dove sighting (2009-046). (3) Various committee members were assigned to contact observers for details for the batch of records submitted to Tracker via BBS, CBC, and eBird, consulting firms, etc. Within the next month, Committee members should send blank rare bird report forms to observers who agree to prepare reports, with instructions to return the reports to Jeff via e-mail. Please alert Coburn and Jeff about any observers you cannot contact and any who cannot (or will not) submit a rare bird report; in each such case, reports will be considered rejected by the Committee. (4) Dan S. will investigate rare bird sightings that were sent to Tracker via the BBS. (5) Coburn, Bob, and Dan S. will be sure that all the archival reports and supporting material will put together and held at the Montana Natural Heritage office in Helena. (6) Dan C. will investigate potential social network platforms to use as a central clearing house for photos and files reviewed during 2010. This would be a password-protected site that Committee members visit to review photos, reports, and files, as well as providing a format for discussion between meetings, without having to follow and reply to e-mail threads. (7) Jeff will contact all observers who submitted a report for the last round of voting and inform them of the outcome of our evaluation.

Adjournment: 15:05

Our next meeting is scheduled for Great Falls on 15 October 2010

Submitted by: Jeff Marks, 19 October 2009; amended 19 November 2009

2008 MINUTES OF THE MONTANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Date: 24 October 2008

Location: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Regional Office, Great Falls

Members present: Dan Casey (Chair), Chuck Carlson, John Carlson, Harriet Marble, Jeff Marks (Secretary), Bob Martinka, Fritz Prellwitz, Mike Schwitters, Dan Sullivan

Absent: Terry McEneaney

Non-members present: Coburn Currier, Paul Hendricks, John Nordrum

Approval of 2007 Minutes: 10:15

Evaluation of records: We reviewed 48 new reports and re-evaluated one old one in 2008, with Committee members submitting their votes to the Secretary via e-mail from two rounds of review before the annual meeting (aside from 046 to 048, which we evaluated at the meeting). Highlights included acceptance of a new

state bird, **Tufted Duck**, which now has two records owing to our re-evaluation of the April 1990 report by Schwitters (MBRC 1994-038); acceptance of the second record for **Iceland Gull**; acceptance of the third records for **Golden-winged Warbler** and **Prothonotary Warbler**; and acceptance of the fifth records for **Glossy Ibis** and **Northern Cardinal**. We also accepted the 22nd record of a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** and voted to remove it from the official list of "rare" species. [Note added in 2009: On 27 January 2009, Jeff proposed via e-mail to remove Thayer's Gull (now with 40 records) from the Review list. The committee voted unanimously to remove it.]

Old reports reconsidered: About two weeks before Jim Greaves and Lark Chadwick found a male **Tufted Duck** near Noxon, Marks read for the first time the report of a **Tufted Duck** Schwitters and another observer saw at Priest Butte Lake on 17 April 1990 (MBRC 1994-038). The report looked very good, and Marks mentioned to Martinka that it should be re-evaluated. Martinka later sent a pdf of the report and photographs to the Committee, who voted 8-1 to accept the record. Because some birders assumed that the Schwitters report was re-evaluated in response to the occurrence of the Noxon **Tufted Duck**, it is important to make clear for the record that this was not the case.

The Committee asked for additional information on the **Long-tailed Jaeger** reported last year by Leann and Charles Blem (MBRC 2007-054). Marks talked with Charles Blem this summer, but Blem did not provide more information. Therefore, the final vote for 2007-054 is B.

Montana Bird Distribution database: We continue to be concerned with the difficulties many birders have experienced when they try to enter new records into Tracker. We expect this has resulted in reduced participation by non-professionals and urge the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) to make Tracker easier to use. At the same time, we applaud efforts made by the MNHP to share information with Ebird and are grateful for the help they have provided in entering records into Tracker, alerting us about rare bird occurrences that have been submitted to Tracker via Ebird and the BBS, and correcting errors in the database. We also note that Coburn Currier's presence at the last two annual meetings has been very helpful.

Review and voting process: To reduce our workload during voting, Marks will circulate reports and other documentation to the Committee at least twice a year in batches of 20 or fewer reports per voting period. The first batch will be sent out as soon as 20 reports have been received, or six months after the last annual meeting, whichever comes first. Marks will continue to circulate reports in batches of 20 until one month before the next annual meeting, when the final batch will be sent to the Committee for voting.

Bylaws discussion: None.

Membership: We are concerned about the age distribution of our members, which

is heavily skewed toward the older end of the spectrum. Toward fixing this problem, Casey motioned that 16-year-old Josh Colvill be invited to participate in a mentoring relationship that would prepare him for future membership on the MBRC. The motion was seconded by Martinka and carried unanimously. Casey will ask Josh if he is interested in joining the Committee and undergoing mentorship training. If so, for the next two years Josh would serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member who would evaluate reports and cast votes that would not count in the official tally. We also recognize that the gender balance is less than ideal, with only one woman currently serving on the Committee, and urge members to consider adding another female to the MBRC.

Election of Chair and Secretary: This is an off-election year, so no voting was necessary.

Action items: (1) Dan C. will track down and copy for the archives field notes of Rob Fergus for his sighting of a Black-throated Blue Warbler (2007-029); the notes should be in the archives at the Avian Science Center. (2) Chuck will continue to search for photos of the possible Ivory Gull. (3) Jeff will check with James Burman for more info on the Lesser Goldfinch (2008-020). (4) Jeff will circulate John Nordrum's report (2008-048) for the pair of Black Scoters he found above Black Eagle Dam at noon on the day of the meeting. (5) Jeff will circulate the reports of rare birds from Ebird and provided a first cut as to which ones should be pursued for documentation by the observers. (6) Jeff will revise the contacts list and send to everyone, inform all observers who submitted reports for this round of the Committee's decisions on said reports, and post the minutes on the Montana Audubon Web site.

Adjournment: 14:15

Our next meeting is scheduled for Great Falls on 16 October 2009

Submitted by: Jeff Marks, 26 October 2008