

THE MIGRANT

Published by the Tennessee Ornithological Society
to Record and Encourage the Study of Birds in Tennessee.
Issued in March, June, September, and December.

VOL. 67

September 1996

NO. 3

The Migrant, 67 (3) 37-42, 1996.

REPORT OF THE TENNESSEE BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE FOR 1995

RICHARD L. KNIGHT
804 North Hills Drive
Johnson City, TN 37604

This report describes actions taken by the Bird Records Committee of the Tennessee Ornithological Society from 1993 into late 1995. Committee members and alternates who served during this period were Don L. Davidson, Gilbert A. Foster, Mark A. Greene, Richard L. Knight, Martha G. Waldron, and Terry J. Witt.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE

During the 1981 TOS Fall Symposium at Paris Landing State Park a proposal was presented concerning the preparation of an official list of Tennessee birds (Stallings 1981). A resolution was passed at the 1982 TOS Spring Meeting in Brentwood establishing the TOS Certification Committee to verify such a list (Stallings 1982). At that time the committee consisted of three voting members and three alternates, with the editor of *The Migrant* serving as chairperson *ex officio*. After much work "The Official List of Tennessee Birds" was prepared and published in 1983 (Nicholson 1983) with an addendum published five years later (Nicholson and Stedman 1988). An amended resolution governing the committee was passed at the 1988 TOS Fall Symposium at Land Between the Lakes (Robinson 1989). Only two significant changes came about with this resolution: (1) the name of the committee was changed to the Bird Records Committee, and (2) the committee would elect a chairperson (i.e., secretary) from among its own ranks. A change of the committee's structure to five voting members and one alternate came about with the passage of another amended resolution at the 1994 TOS Spring Meeting in Johnson City [*Tennessee Warbler* 16(2):10-13, Aug. 1994]. Further approved additions to the official state list were published recently (Knight 1993).

METHODS

Acceptance criteria have remained the same. A species is placed on the confirmed list based upon either (a) extant, verified specimen, photograph, or sound recording, each accompanied by written details or (b) satisfactory written details of three independent sight records. Lacking these levels of documentation, a species is placed on the provisional list based upon one or two sight records with satisfactory written details. Acceptance to either list requires a unanimous decision by the committee. Records that are not accepted may be appealed, preferably if new or previously

unreported details are available. The committee only acts upon potential first, second, or third state records of a species. As stated earlier, the purpose of the committee is the verification of an official list of birds for Tennessee, rather than the evaluation of any report of rare or unseasonal birds.

The non-acceptance of any report may be the result of vague or insufficient documentation rather than the committee's opinion that the bird was misidentified. Rigorous standards should be adhered to regarding the addition of data to the historic record. Excellent guidelines for proper documentation are provided by Stedman and Robinson (1987) or Dittmann and Lasley (1992).

In this account, the committee reports 24 accepted records of 18 species and six records of six species that were not accepted. Three species previously on the list are removed. As a result of committee action taken up to this point, the official list of Tennessee birds consists of 362 confirmed species and 20 provisional species for a total of 382 species.

Observers who submitted documentation to the committee are Clyde Blum, Mary Lynn Buttram, Robert Casey, Don Davidson, Lillian H. Dubke, Murray Gardler, Mark Greene, John Henderson, Gene and Shannon Knight, Richard L. Knight, Dollyann Myers, Dick Preston, Virginia Reynolds, Tommie Rogers, Robert and Martha Sargent, Damien Simbeck, Stephen J. Stedman, Ann Tarbell, Martha Waldron, Jeff R. Wilson, Terry J. Witt, Elizabeth Wolfe, Linda and John Zempel. The committee thanks these people for their cooperation. Furthermore, the committee encourages birders to write and publish full accounts of their observations, as these will become significant historic notes.

Records mentioned only in seasonal summaries in *The Migrant* or *Audubon Field Notes* (formerly *American Birds*) are cited in the text.

ACCEPTED RECORDS

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*): Written documentation, with a sketch, of a single bird seen at the mouth of the Big Sandy River (Pace Point area), Henry County, from 11-13 November 1994 (*Aud. Field Notes* 49:56, 1995) was accepted. Photographs and written documentation of a single bird seen at Woods Reservoir, Franklin County, on 26 December 1994 were also accepted. Both birds were compared to nearby Common Loons (*G. immer*). Details adequately eliminated Arctic Loon (*G. arctica*). These become the second and third state records and the species is moved up from the provisional list to the confirmed list.

Yellow-billed Loon (*G. adamsii*): Written documentation and a published photograph (*Aud. Field Notes* 49:155, 1995) of a single bird seen at Dale Hollow Lake, Clay County, from 18-21 February 1995 were accepted. This becomes the first state record and, with the photograph, the species is placed on the confirmed list.

Clark's Grebe (*Aechmophorus clarkii*): Written documentation of a single bird seen at Nickajack Lake, Marion County, from 18-21 March 1993 (*Am. Birds* 47:412, 1993) was accepted. The descriptions clearly eliminated Western Grebe (*A. occidentalis*). This becomes the first state record and the species is placed on the provisional list.

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*): Written documentation, with a sketch, of a single bird seen near Phillipy Pits, Lake County, on 13-14 August 1994 (*Aud. Field Notes* 49:57, 1995) was accepted. This becomes the second accepted state record, with the species already on the confirmed list.

Roseate Spoonbill (*Ajaia ajaja*): Written documentation and a photograph of a single bird seen in northern Lake County (and adjacent Fulton County, Kentucky)

from 12-17 September 1994 (*Aud. Field Notes* 49:57, 1995; Parker *et al.* 1995) were accepted. This becomes the third state record and the species is elevated from the provisional list to the confirmed list.

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*): The committee approved the addition of this non-native species to the official state list. Numerous Mute Swans are kept in captivity and some have been known to have escaped or been released in Tennessee. Despite this, several reports of this species seem to indicate a migratory movement with other waterfowl. The apparent source of these birds is the southwestern Great Lakes population, rather than the mid-Atlantic coast population. For example, Brewer *et al.* (1991) describe an expanding population in Michigan. Written documentation and a photograph of four Mute Swans in Washington County from 30 December 1983 until 11 February 1984 (*Am. Birds* 38:316, 1984) were accepted as a specific instance of migrant birds in Tennessee. While their point of origin could be debated, the committee felt that sufficient evidence of their natural occurrence existed. The photograph allows the species to be placed on the confirmed list. With the species thusly accepted, the committee chose not to review other reports, previous or subsequent.

Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*): Written documentation of a single bird seen flying over the Earth Complex, Shelby County, on 27 September 1993 (*Am. Birds* 48:118, 1994) was accepted. This becomes the third record for the state and the species is moved up from the provisional list to the confirmed list.

Little Gull (*Larus minutus*): Written documentation of a single bird seen at Chickamauga Lake, Hamilton County, from 20 January to 12 February 1994 (*Aud. Field Notes* 48:208, 1994) was accepted. This is the first state record and the species is placed on the provisional list; however, if any photos exist, this could be upgraded.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*): Written documentation of a single adult gull seen at Nickajack Lake, Marion County, from 27 February to 22 March 1993 (*Am. Birds* 47:257, 1993) was accepted. Written documentation of a single adult gull seen at Pace Point, Henry County, on 12 November 1994 (*Aud. Field Notes* 49:58, 1995) was also accepted. These become the third and fourth accepted state records, with the species already on the confirmed list. (Normally the committee acts on just the first three acceptable reports, but the Pace Point bird was reported and voted on before the Nickajack Lake bird.)

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*): Written documentation and photographs of up to five birds seen in Chattanooga, Hamilton County, from 24 October 1994 into 1995 (*Aud. Field Notes* 49:148, 1995) was accepted. Written documentation of a single bird seen near Trenton, Gibson County, on 28 October 1994 was also accepted. These become the first and second state records and the photographs allow the species to be placed on the confirmed list. However, another event "muddies the water" a bit. The occurrence, and eventual nesting, of this species in Memphis during the spring of 1994 was proven to be due to a release of captive collared-doves (M. Waldron *pers. comm.*; *Aud. Field Notes* 48:307, 1994). Thus, the origin of the birds were accepted above might be questioned. On the other hand, this species is expanding rapidly in Florida and along the coasts to Louisiana (*Aud. Field Notes* 48:952, 1994) and the Carolinas (*Aud. Field Notes* 48:935, 1994), and beyond. This species is relatively new to North America and, as such, is not well described, if at all, in American field guides. Smith (1987) provides the necessary identification details.

Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*): Written documentation and photographs of a single bird measured and banded at Nashville, Davidson County, on 6 January 1995 (*Aud. Field Notes* 49:157, 1995) were accepted. The bird was present for some weeks before and after the date of banding. This becomes the first state record and the species is placed on the confirmed list.

Allen's Hummingbird (*Selasphorus sasin*): Written documentation and photographs of a single bird measured and banded near Chattanooga, Hamilton County, on 27 December 1993 (*Aud. Field Notes* 48:208, 1994) were accepted. This becomes the first state record and the species is placed on the confirmed list. Interestingly, 13 days after being banded in Tennessee this bird was recaptured about 100 km to the south in Cartersville, Georgia (Swiderski 1994).

Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*): Written documentation of a single bird seen near Phillipy, Lake County, on 7 May 1994 (*Aud. Field Notes* 48:307, 1994) was accepted. Written documentation of a single bird seen near Halls, Lauderdale County, on 14 February 1995 (*Aud. Field Notes* 49:158, 1995) was also accepted. These become the second and third state records, with the species already on the confirmed list.

Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*): Written documentation of a single bird seen at Austin Springs, Washington County, on 27 March 1994 (*Aud. Field Notes* 48:298, 1994) was accepted. This becomes the first state record and the species is placed on the provisional list.

Townsend's Warbler (*Dendroica townsendi*): Written documentation of a single bird seen on Rich Mountain Road, Blount County, on 3 December 1994 (*Aud. Field Notes* 49:148, 1995) was accepted. Written documentation of a single bird seen at Pickwick Landing State Park, Hardin County, on 30 December 1994 (*Aud. Field Notes* 49:158, 1995) was also accepted. These become the first and second records in the state and the species is placed on the provisional list.

Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*): Written documentation of a single bird seen at Franklin, Williamson County, from 7 December 1992 into February 1993 (*Migrant* 64:49, 1993) was accepted. Written documentation of a single bird seen near Dyersburg, Dyer County, on 21 August 1994 (*Aud. Field Notes* 49:60, 1995) was also accepted. These become the second and third state records and the species is elevated to the confirmed list.

Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*): Written documentation and a photograph of a single male seen on President's Island, Shelby County, from 6-10 July 1995 (*Aud. Field Notes* 49:939, 1996) were accepted. This becomes the first state record and the photograph allows the species to be placed on the confirmed list. Smith and Sprunt (1987) describe the arrival of this species to the U.S. and provide identification details. This rapidly expanding species has since been found as far west as Texas (*Am. Birds* 44:465, 1990) and Oklahoma (Grzybowski and Fazio 1991) and as far north as New Brunswick (Benoit 1995). Thus, the appearance of Shiny Cowbird in Tennessee was not unexpected.

Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*): Written documentation and a photograph of a single male seen at Nashville, Davidson County, from 3 December 1994 into 1995 (*Aud. Field Notes* 49:158, 1995) were accepted. This becomes the first accepted record in the state and the photos allow the species to be placed on the confirmed list. A previous report (Witt 1986) has yet to be acted on by the committee. Bullock's Oriole had been lumped with Baltimore Oriole (*I. galbula*) until 1995 (A.O.U. 1995).

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

Garganey (*Anas querquedula*): Written documentation of a single eclipse-plumaged male seen at the Earth Complex, Shelby County, on 3 September 1994 (*Aud. Field Notes* 49:57, 1995) was not accepted (3-2 vote). While the identification appeared to be correct, origin was the prevailing point of contention. All records from interior North America have been from spring to early summer (Spear *et al.* 1988), including the previous accepted Tennessee record (*Am. Birds* 32:1018, 1978). The 1994 report does not fit the currently known pattern of vagrancy; however, it will be re-evaluated.

Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*): Written documentation of a single bird seen at Shelby Farms, Shelby County, from 16 June to 4 July 1995 (*Aud. Field Notes* 49:940, 1996) was not accepted (0-5 vote). The identification was judged to be correct, but the possibility of natural vagrancy was deemed highly unlikely. This species breeds from central Europe to central Asia and winters from Africa to India (Madge and Burn 1988). There are no records for North America (A.O.U. 1983). Additionally, this species is popular in waterfowl collections.

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*): Written documentation of a single bird seen flying over Hatchie NWR, Haywood County, on 28 April 1992 (*Am. Birds* 46:435, 1992) was not accepted (1-4 vote) due mainly to the brevity of the sighting.

California Gull (*Larus californicus*): Written documentation and photographs of a single immature gull seen at Pickwick Dam, Hardin County, on 8 December 1990 and 12 January 1991 (*Am. Birds* 45:284, 1991) was not accepted (0-5 vote). Gull experts from out-of-state were consulted. The above decision was based on the consensus of these consultants that the documentation was insufficient to eliminate other possibilities, especially Herring Gull (*L. argentatus*). Identification of the larger gulls in immature plumage can be quite vexing. That very competent observers were involved made the decision even more difficult.

Thayer's Gull (*L. thayeri*): Written documentation and photographs of a single immature gull seen at Pickwick Dam, Hardin County, on 28-29 December 1990 (*Am. Birds* 45:284, 1991) was not accepted (0-5 vote). Comments on the California Gull report apply to this report also.

Eurasian Collared-Dove: Written documentation of a single bird seen at Livingston, Overton County, on 26 February 1995 (*Aud. Field Notes* 49:157, 1995) was not accepted (1-4 vote) due to inadequate details to eliminate other possibilities.

SPECIES REMOVED FROM LIST

Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*): Despite numerous introduction attempts, this species has never become established anywhere in Tennessee. Recent sightings can be attributed to releases by local propagators. The committee felt that the historical and current status of this species does not justify its inclusion on the official state list.

Caribbean Coot (*Fulica caribaea*): The authenticity of all North American records and the status of this form as a valid species have been questioned (Roberson and Baptista 1988). This form has been removed from the American Birding Association's checklist (DeBenedictis 1992) as well.

Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*): Although this species has been reliably reported in the state (Robinson 1990), no established population exists here. The origin of birds seen in Tennessee is unknown. The dispersal patterns of this species

are little known as well. That the Tennessee occurrences were vagrants from established populations elsewhere in the U.S. seems unlikely. Although the status of Monk Parakeet in Tennessee is less clear-cut than that of the other two species in this category, the committee's decision was unanimous.

CORRIGENDA

A couple of typographical errors crept into the previous committee report (Knight 1993):

p. 56 — the second Varied Thrush record was in mid-February of 1992, not 1991.

p. 57 — Sargent 1993 was published in *Migrant* volume 64; Waldron 1989b was published in *Migrant* volume 60.

LITERATURE CITED

- AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION. 1983. Check-list of North American Birds, 6th ed. Allen Press, Lawrence, Kansas.
- AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION. 1995. Fortieth supplement to the A.O.U. check-list of North American birds. *Auk* 112:819-830.
- BENOIT, G. 1995. A day to remember: First Shiny Cowbird in Canada. *Birders Journal* 4:230-231.
- BREWER, R., G.A. McPEEK and R.J. ADAMS, JR. 1991. *The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Michigan*. Mich. St. Univ. Press, E. Lansing.
- DEBENEDICTIS, P. 1992. ABA checklist report, 1991. *Birding* 24:280-286.
- DIETMANN, D.L. and G.W. LASLEY. 1992. How to document rare birds. *Birding* 24:145-159.
- GRZYBOWSKI, J.A. and F.W. FAZIO, III. 1991. Shiny Cowbird reaches Oklahoma. *Am. Birds* 45:50-52.
- KNIGHT, R.L. 1993. Report of the Tennessee Bird Records Committee. *Migrant* 64:53-57.
- MADGE, S. and H. BURN. 1988. *Waterfowl: An Identification Guide to the Ducks, Geese, and Swans of the World*. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston.
- NICHOLSON, C.P. 1983. The official list of Tennessee birds. *Migrant* 54:2-5.
- NICHOLSON, C.P. and S.J. STEDMAN. 1988. The official list of Tennessee birds: Addendum I. *Migrant* 59:1-4.
- PARKER, D., J. ELMORE and B. PALMER-BALL, JR. 1995. Roseate Spoonbill in Fulton County. *Kentucky Warbler* 71:79.
- ROBERSON, D. and L.F. BAPTISTA. 1988. White-shielded coots in North America: A critical evaluation. *Am. Birds* 42:1241-1246.
- ROBINSON, J.C. 1989. Minutes of the fall 1988 TOS board of directors meeting and symposium. *Migrant* 60:10-12.
- ROBINSON, J.C. 1990. *An Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Tennessee*. Univ. of Tenn. Press, Knoxville.
- SMITH, P.W. 1987. The Eurasian Collared-Dove arrives in the Americas. *Am. Birds* 41:1370-1379.
- SMITH, P.W. and A. SPRUNT, IV. 1987. The Shiny Cowbird reaches the United States. *Am. Birds* 41:370-371.
- SPEAR, L.B., M.J. LEWIS, M.T. MYRES, and R.L. PYLE. 1988. The recent occurrence of Garganey in North America and the Hawaiian islands. *Am. Birds* 42:382-392.
- STALLINGS, P. 1981. Minutes of the 1981 fall meeting and symposium. *Migrant* 52:92-93.
- STALLINGS, P. 1982. Minutes of the annual board of directors and business meeting, 1982. *Migrant* 53:37-39.
- STEDMAN, S.J. and J.C. ROBINSON. 1987. Documentation and submission of bird records in Tennessee. *Migrant* 58:65-79.
- SWIDERSKI, J. 1994. Black-chinned and Allen's Hummingbirds banded in Bartow County. *Oriole* 59:18-19.
- WITT, T.J. 1986. A sight record of "Bullock's" Oriole in Tennessee. *Migrant* 57:47.