

Report of the North Carolina Bird Records Committee 1994

This report enumerates the decisions of the Carolina Bird Club's North Carolina Bird Records Committee during 1994.

Accepted as Valid. The reported identification is judged to be accurate and the bird is judged to be of wild origin. Photographs for all accepted species have been deposited at the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences.

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*). One was observed by Sam Cooper and Kevin Markham on the ocean near the south end of Wrightsville Beach on 19 February 1994. This is the second accepted record of Pacific Loon for the state. The species is already on the Official List, based on a bird photographed at Cape Hatteras on 15 May 1987 (Chat 53:8).

Pacific/Arctic Loon (*Gavia pacifica/arctica*). One individual of this complex was observed by Steve Dinsmore, Susan Grove, Pat Moore, Diane and Keith Andre, and Marcia Lyons in the ocean at Rodanthe on 5 February 1994. The bird was reported only to this complex; the Committee accepted this identification to the complex, but not to either individual species. Pacific Loon is already on the Official List (see above).

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*). One was observed at the tidal pond at Cape Hatteras Point from 8 November to 29 December 1993. Paul Lehman and party made the initial discovery, and it was photographed by Ken Hollinga. This is the second accepted record for the state, and acceptance of the photograph moves the species from the Provisional List to the Official List.

Western Grebe. Two grebes were seen at the Fort Fisher basin on 6 December 1993 by Greg Massey. This is the third accepted record for the species in North Carolina. As indicated above, the species is now on the Official List.

Cape Verde Petrel (*Pterodroma feae*). One was seen by Mike Tove, Todd Hass, Ned Brinkley, and about 18 other observers in the Gulf Stream, 48 miles southeast of Oregon Inlet, on 30 May 1994. Tove's written description and photographs of the bird were accepted by the Committee, to this taxon. The Cape Verde taxon is considered to be a full species by Sibley and Monroe (1990) and Clements (1991), based on a study of the Soft-plumaged Petrel complex by Bourne (1983), who considered that the complex consists of *P. feae* and two other species. This becomes the first accepted record of Cape Verde Petrel for North Carolina, as well as the first accepted record for North American waters. The Committee has previously accepted two sight records of the Soft-plumaged Petrel (*P. mollis*) complex; thus, this complex was on the Provisional List. A 1992 report, with photographs, was given an Unresolved vote by the Committee last year; this report likely will be voted on again on a second ballot. Acceptance of this 1994 record adds Cape Verde Petrel to the Official List, by replacing Soft-plumaged Petrel on the Provisional List. The Committee believes that all North Carolina reports of the Soft-plumaged Petrel complex refer to the Cape Verde Petrel species; however, not

all birds in North Carolina waters have been seen well enough or described thoroughly enough for Committee acceptance to Cape Verde Petrel.

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*). One, apparently a subadult, was seen and photographed in the Gulf Stream off Oregon Inlet on 9 July 1994. Several dozen birders, including Brian Patteson, Todd Hass, and Harry LeGrand, observed the individual at close range, and Patteson provided a photograph of the booby to the Committee. Acceptance of the photograph moves the species from the Provisional List to the Official List. There was one previously accepted sight record for the state.

Ross' Goose (*Chen rossii*). One was observed, and photographed, from 2 to at least 7 January 1994 along NC 191 in northwestern Henderson County. Simon Thompson and Marilyn Westphal provided written details, and Wayne Forsythe provided photographs. This is the first accepted record of Ross' Goose for a location away from the lower Coastal Plain of North Carolina. The species is already on the Official List, with many coastal and several tidewater records.

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*). An immature was seen at Pea Island on 4 October 1993 by Eric Dean, Steve Dinsmore, and Susan Grove. Dean and Dinsmore provided descriptions, and Dinsmore provided photographs. Because this is the third accepted record for Swainson's Hawk in the state, the species is moved from the Provisional List to the Official List. This also represents the first photographic documentation of the species for North Carolina.

Little Gull (*Larus minutus*). An immature was seen by Ricky Davis at Jordan Lake on 6 March 1994. The bird was seen on several more occasions later in the month. This is the first accepted record of Little Gull in the state from an inland site.

California Gull (*Larus californicus*). An adult was closely observed at Cape Hatteras Point on 27 December 1993 by John Wright, Mike Tove, Bob Lewis, Allen Bryan, and others. Lewis provided photographs for the Committee. This is the second accepted record of the species for North Carolina; the species was already on the Official List, based on an accepted photograph of a bird at the Newport landfill in January 1993.

California Gull. An adult was observed by Steve Dinsmore and Susan Grove on 5 and 6 February 1994 on the beach near Avon. It is possible that this is the same individual as that at Cape Hatteras Point (see above). However, as there were many thousands of gulls in the Cape Hatteras - Avon area during the winter of 1993-94, two birds could certainly have been involved. This is the third accepted record for North Carolina.

Atlantic Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*). One was seen in flight off Oregon Inlet on the remarkable date of 14 August 1993 by Ned Brinkley, Nathan Dias, and other observers. This is the first record of the species for North Carolina. Because the bird was not photographed, the species is placed on the Provisional List.

Band-tailed Pigeon (*Columba fasciata*). One was present for over a month in a residential section of Charlotte in late winter and early spring of 1994. David Wright, Taylor Piephoff, and other Charlotte area birders made the initial report.

The Committee accepted written details provided by Harry LeGrand, of an observation of the pigeon on 12 March. Acceptance of photos taken by Steve Dinsmore and Derb Carter moves the species from the Provisional List to the Official List. The Committee considered the possibility that the bird could have been an escaped individual; however, there were no Unaccepted Origin votes. There is a previously accepted sight record of a pigeon seen along the Blue Ridge Parkway in 1980 (Chat 44:106-107).

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*). One was observed perched on a telephone wire near Salvo on the Outer Banks on 31 July 1994 by Harry LeGrand, Merrill Lynch, and Derb Carter. Carter provided photographs of the bird for the Committee. A week later, on 5 August 1994, a dove appeared in Buxton, where it was observed and photographed by Ned Brinkley and B.J. Rose. The Committee considered that these two reports were likely of the same individual. The collective report, including photographs, was accepted. No Committee member felt that the individual might represent an escaped bird. This species is rapidly expanding its population in Florida and has been seen on numerous recent occasions in Georgia; thus, sightings in the Carolinas seemed inevitable. Acceptance of this first report of Eurasian Collared-Dove for North Carolina places the species on the Official List.

Black-whiskered Vireo (*Vireo altiloquus*). One bird, singing on territory, was seen repeatedly from 23 May into mid-summer 1994 at Cape Lookout in Carteret County. It was initially discovered by John Fussell and Bob Holmes. This is the third accepted record for the state; the species is already on the Official List.

Unaccepted Sighting. The bird is judged to be a species other than that reported, or the bird is insufficiently documented for identification to the species reported.

Black-chinned Hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*). One reported from a hummingbird feeder in southeastern North Carolina during January 1994 was not accepted. Though the bird was well described, with a sketch provided, and was probably a Black-chinned, identification of non-adult male hummingbirds is extremely tricky. The possibility of it being a Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*A. colubris*), which has been definitively found on several occasions in winter in the state, cannot be completely ruled out. It would be best for an accepted Black-chinned to be an adult male, or a female or immature that is captured and measured. Though it is likely that some or many of the female or immature hummingbirds that winter at feeders in the state are Black-chinneds, as Georgia now has many records for the species, there remains no accepted record of this species for North Carolina.

White-winged Tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*). One in basic plumage, reported from the southeastern coast in January 1994, was not accepted. The description of this bird was baffling, and no Committee member voted to accept the record. The species has probably not been convincingly reported from the United States in winter. There are no accepted records for North Carolina.

Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*). One reported at Chapel Hill on 9 May 1959 (Chat 23:89) was not accepted.

Sprague's Pipit. One reported in Wake County near Raleigh on 18 March 1972 (Chat 37:25) was not accepted.

Sprague's Pipit. A report of as many as 12 birds near Rocky Mount, from 5 January to 9 March 1975 (Chat 41:51), was not accepted.

Sprague's Pipit. A report of one at Jordan Reservoir on 12 April 1982 (Chat 46:121) was not accepted.

The Records Committee has taken a tough stance on reports of Sprague's Pipit in North Carolina. This is a difficult species to identify, in part because there are a number of other pipits, and even sparrows, that can be confused with it. The reports above could well have been of American Pipits, or even Vesper Sparrows. Pipits other than American were also not ruled out. Habitats of most of the above reports seemed unlikely for Sprague's, as did the behavior of the birds. Sprague's Pipits typically inhabit short to moderate grassy areas and are difficult to see until flushed, when they usually tower high into the air and then drop back into grasses. They are seldom found on bare ground of plowed fields, lake shores, and dirt roads.

In summary, there is only one accepted record of Sprague's Pipit for the state. A well-described bird was seen and heard at Roan Mountain on 27 October 1991.

Unresolved. Further consideration by the Committee is needed.

Bermuda Petrel (*Pterodroma cahow*). One was reported from the Gulf Stream off Oregon Inlet in the summer of 1993. This report received more than 50% Accepted Sighting votes but more than 25% Non-accepted votes, all of which were Abstain votes. The report will be sent for outside review. At the present time, Bermuda Petrel has not been officially documented (specimen, photograph, or even an accepted sight record) from North American waters.

Red-billed Tropicbird (*Phaethon aethereus*). An immature was reported from the Gulf Stream in July 1994. The written description received more than 50% Accepted Sighting votes but more than 25% Non-accepted votes. Such a report would normally be sent for outside review. However, a video of the bird was not viewed by the Committee because of lack of a video cassette recorder at a Committee meeting. Therefore, the report will be voted on again in 1995, following a viewing of the taped material. Red-billed Tropicbird is already on the Official List, with approximately five state records. However, this is the first report for the state in over ten years, despite an increasing abundance of pelagic trips being taken into North Carolina waters during this period.

Brown Booby. One seen, and photographed at a distance, along the Carteret County coast in summer 1993 received more than 50% Accepted Sighting votes but more than 25% Non-accepted votes. There seems little doubt that the bird was actually a Brown Booby, but the details were very skimpy and did not adequately rule out other sulids. The photographs did not document the record because of the small size of the bird in the photo. At the time of this report, there was just one accepted sight record of Brown Booby for the state. However, Brown Booby is now

on the Official List for North Carolina (see above).

Sprague's Pipit. One seen at Pea Island on 30 November 1965 (Occasional Papers of the North Carolina Biological Survey, 1986-11:48-49) received more than 50% Accepted Sighting votes but more than 25% Non-accepted votes. The report will be sent for outside review.

Prior to these voting results, the Official List for North Carolina stood at 402 species, and the Provisional List at 20 species (Chat 58:109-113). The voting results listed above yield an Official List of 408 species; added in 1994 are Western Grebe, Cape Verde Petrel, Brown Booby, Swainson's Hawk, Band-tailed Pigeon, and Eurasian Collared-Dove. The Provisional List has dropped to 16 species, as Western Grebe, Soft-plumaged Petrel complex (= Cape Verde Petrel), Brown Booby, Swainson's Hawk, and Band-tailed Pigeon have been moved to the Official List; and Atlantic Puffin has been added.

Persons interested in obtaining a copy of the "Regulations Governing the Operation of Bird Records Committees" should write to Harry LeGrand, the North Carolina committee Chairman, 331 Yadkin Drive, Raleigh, NC 27609.

Committee members: Harry E. LeGrand, Jr., Chairman
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LITERATURE CITED

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- Sibley, C.G., and B.L. Monroe, Jr. 1990. Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.

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The Records Committee completed action on 25 reports during 1994, and presently has an additional 11 (all received in November and December) under review. Two (2) reports were rejected, and twenty-three (23) accepted. The accepted reports led to the addition to the SC state list of 5 new species, and 1 additional