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Cover: *Thick-billed Murre (1997-423). February 26, 1995. Atlantic Ocean, east of Ocean City, Maryland. Photo by Mark L. Hoffman.*



## **SECOND REPORT OF THE MARYLAND/DC RECORDS COMMITTEE**

**MARK L. HOFFMAN AND PHIL DAVIS**

This is the second report of the Maryland/DC Records Committee (MD/DCRC), a committee of the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS). Peterjohn and Davis (1996) described in detail the history and function of the committee and provided a summary of all 303 committee decisions from its inception in 1982 through 1995. This article summarizes the 102 final decisions reached between 1996 and March 1998.

To briefly summarize, the purpose of the committee is to: (1) review reports of unusual sightings within its area of coverage; (2) determine the adequacy of documentation of such reports; (3) maintain a state list of birds for Maryland; (4) maintain a district list of birds for the District of Columbia; (5) publish periodic reports of its findings; and (6) maintain in a file accessible to interested persons the primary reports, the deliberations of the committee and, in some instances, opinions received from outside experts and/or copies of some of the relevant literature. By these steps the committee aims to convert reports of sightings into documented records that can be used for scientific studies of bird distribution and patterns of avian vagrancy.

The MD/DCRC consists of nine voting members, a chair and a non-voting secretary. Voting members serve three-year terms. The voting members review the documentation submitted for each report and assess whether or not this information adequately supports the claimed identification. Reports may receive multiple circulations among committee members depending upon the number of votes to "accept" or "not accept" a given record. The committee has a stated "Goals, Policies, Criteria for Acceptance, and Procedures" which is available from the Secretary and details the functions of the committee. Committee members during the final review of the records summarized here were Robert Dixon, Mary Gustafson, Mark Hoffman, Robert Hilton, David Holmes, Marshall Iliff, Ottavio Janni, Gail Mackiernan, Willem Maane, Harvey Mudd, Robert Norton, Michael O'Brien, Paul O'Brien, Bruce Peterjohn, Paul Pisano, Sue Ricciardi, and Mary Ann Todd. Bruce Peterjohn and Harvey Mudd were chairs of the committee during this time, and Phil Davis served as secretary.

Participation by the birding community is vital to the success of the MD/DCRC. Reports should be sent to Phil Davis, MD/DCRC Secretary, 2549 Vale Court, Davidsonville, MD 21035. The list of species reviewed is available from the Secretary or on the MOS website (<http://www.MDBirds.org>).

In the following accounts, abbreviations are used for Maryland's counties: ALGY, Allegany; ANAR, Anne Arundel; BALT, Baltimore; CLVT, Calvert; CRLN, Caroline; CARR, Carroll; CECL, Cecil; CHAS, Charles; DORC, Dorchester; FRDK, Frederick; GARR, Garrett; HARF, Harford; HWRD, Howard; KENT, Kent; MONT, Montgomery; PGEO, Prince George's; QUAN, Queen Anne's; STMA, St. Mary's; SMST, Somerset; TLBT, Talbot; WASH, Washington; WICO, Wicomico; WORC, Worcester. Additionally, \* indicates that photographs were submitted for a record; # indicates that audio recordings were submitted for a record; + indicates a record of a specimen. The committee reference number for each record is included in parentheses.

Observer abbreviations are also included within the parentheses. All individuals who provided written descriptions, photographs, or other documentation to the committee are cited for each record. The observer who provided the most thorough documentation for a record is generally cited first; this observer may or may not have initially discovered the bird. For many records, the person who discovered the bird may not have provided any documentation to the committee, while for some records, the identity of the discoverer is not even known to the committee. Our intention is not to deny recognition to observers who discover rare birds, but only to indicate those individuals who provided information to the committee. The term *et al.* is used for reports where multiple observers were known to have been present but only the cited individual(s) actually provided documentation to the committee.

In the following accounts, comments on identification, age, and sex are the responsibility of the authors, but are usually based on comments made by committee members during review of the report. All taxonomy follows the Seventh Edition of the AOU Check-list (1998). Information and comments from Peterjohn and Davis (1996) have been repeated where appropriate.

### CHANGES IN RECORD NUMBERING SYSTEM

After the first MD/DCRC report (Peterjohn and Davis, 1996), the committee converted its report and record numbering system to deal with the "Year 2000" automation problem. This problem focuses on the use of two-digit database fields to represent years and the ambiguity introduced by the year 2000, where the two-digit year "00" cannot be determined to uniquely represent either 1900 or 2000.

**Previous System:** Under the previous committee system, records and reports took one of the following two forms:

*Maryland Reports:* Maryland reports and records were represented by a control number format: "96-04," where:

96 = the year the report was placed into review in the MD/DCRC  
(i.e., 1996)

04 = a sequential number of the reports placed into circulation that year  
(i.e., this was the fourth report to circulate in 1996).

*District of Columbia Reports:* DC reports and records were represented by the example: "DC012," where "012" represents the 12th DC decision ever rendered by the MD/DCRC. DC reports and records did not carry a year of first circulation in the control number.

**New System:** Under the revised MD/DCRC numbering system, a consistent format is now used for both Maryland and DC items. Beginning in 1997, all reports received and record decisions now follow a consistent format, e.g., "1997-031."

**Year:** Under this format, the year (i.e., 1997) reflects the year in which the report was received by the MD/DCRC. All unnumbered reports in the committee's queue were assigned 1997 numbers. Previously, these reports carried an "XX" two-digit year field designation, meaning that they were waiting to begin review, at which time they would have been assigned a two-digit year designation under the old numbering system. Also in 1997, because of extensive research and efforts by several of the committee's members, the MD/DCRC officially "received" (i.e., logged-in) many old and historical reports gleaned from researching past issues of *Maryland Birdlife*, *American Birds*, *Audubon Naturalist*, etc.). These all were logged in with "1997" numbers.

**Sequence Number:** The last three digits of the control number now represent the sequential number of this report as received by the MD/DCRC within the specified year (in the example, 1997-031, this is the 31st report received by the committee in 1997).

**"State" Designation:** No distinction is now made in the nomenclature system to differentiate MD and DC reports, since this "state" information is already contained as a field within each record in the database. Reports and records are typically presented in a form where the jurisdiction (MD or DC) is appended to the front of the report or record, such as "MD/1997-031." As a second example, DC/1998-004 represents the 4th report submitted to the MD/DCRC in 1998, and in this case, it happens to be a DC report.

**Previous System to New System Translation:** Old MD/DCRC records, for example "96-04," can easily be directly translated into the new form "1996-004." The year is now presented as a full four-digit field and the sequence number is simply expanded from two to three digits. Note, that under the earlier system, DC records did not have years embedded in the ID field. Therefore, under the new system, DC reports placed into review prior to 1997 are shown in the form "DC/0000-012" (i.e., no year), corresponding to record number "DC012" under the old system.

### ACCEPTED RECORDS

This section includes all records accepted by the MD/DCRC between the publication of Peterjohn and Davis (1996) and March 1998.

#### **Western Grebe** *Aechmophorus occidentalis*

Assateague Island, WORC, MD, April 24, 1994–May 12, 1994 (\*MHo, \*GJ, et al.; MD1995-026); Eastern Neck NWR, KENT, MD, November 24, 1995–November 27, 1995 (\*MI, et al.; MD1996-029).

These are the third and fourth records of Western Grebe in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. Both individuals were photographed and the photos clearly eliminated the similar Clark's Grebe (*A. clarkii*).

All *Aechmophorus* grebes in Maryland should be carefully identified and documented to determine species. Critical examination of the head pattern and bill color must be made. Birds intermediate in plumage between Western and Clark's Grebes do occur (Storer and Nuechterlein 1985, 1992; Eckert 1993).

These records are consistent with the Western Grebe's status as a rare migrant/winter visitor to the eastern United States (Storer and Nuechterlein 1992).

**American White Pelican** *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*

Blackwater NWR, DORC, MD, February 28, 1970–April 9, 1970 (LRh, \*WJ, et al.; MD1995-004); Havre de Grace, HARF, MD, July 23, 1987–August 14, 1987 (\*AB; MD1996-001); Assateague Is, WORC, MD, September 12, 1992 (BO, et al.; MD1996-002); Jug Bay, PGE0/ANAR, MD, May 26, 1994–May 28, 1994 (\*GK; MD1996-003).

These are the first records of American White Pelican in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. In each instance, documentation was sufficient to eliminate other bird species, including non-native species of white pelicans. Photos of both the Blackwater (Rhodes 1970) and the Havre de Grace (Armistead 1987) birds have been published.

Throughout the world, there are six species of large white pelicans with varying degrees of black on the primaries and secondaries. At least one of these species, the Pink-backed Pelican (*P. rufescens*), has occurred in Maryland as a zoo escapee (Southworth and Southworth 1992a, 1992b). Any large white pelican discovered in Maryland needs to be critically examined, particularly the pattern of black on the flight feathers, to make a correct species identification. Harrison (1983 and 1987) provides good criteria for separating the white pelicans.

Despite its annual occurrence in nearby Virginia (Kain 1987), the American White Pelican remains a very rare species in Maryland.

**Anhinga** *Anhinga anhinga*

National Arboretum, DC, DC, August 11, 1960–August 14, 1960 (\*MD, et al.; DC1997-439); Lake Merle, FRDK, MD, April 9, 1995–April 25, 1995 (SSu, \*DH, \*SY, et al.; MD1995-028); Patuxent WRC – North Tract, ANAR, MD, May 27, 1996–May 29, 1996 (BP, MG, POs, et al.; MD1997-418); Town Hill, ALGY, MD, August 31, 1996 (JP, RKi; MD1997-447); Town Hill, ALGY, MD, September 10, 1996 (JP; MD1997-450).

Two prior records of Anhinga had been accepted by the MD/DCRC in Maryland and none in the District of Columbia. All of these records were well documented with photographs or sketches. The DC bird was photographed (Donnald 1961), while the Lake Merle individual was seen by scores of observers and photographs even appeared in local newspapers.

There has been a rash of Anhinga sightings in Maryland (and the northeast) since 1995 and additional reports are under review by the Committee. Other out-of-range records during the spring-summer of 1995 include an individual in Delaware (April 23, Boyle et al. 1995), two in Pennsylvania (June 6, Paxton et al. 1995) and multiple sightings in northern Illinois (late-April, Brock 1995). During 1996, other extralimital records in the northeast were made in New Jersey (four sightings, late April to June, Boyle et al. 1996,

Paxton et al. 1996), Pennsylvania (May 15, Boyle et al. 1996), Virginia (multiple sightings, Iliff 1996), and Connecticut (September 14, Ellison and Martin 1997).

**Magnificent Frigatebird** *Fregata magnificens*

Ocean City, WORC, MD, April 28, 1980 (\*RRO; MD1996-022).

This is the first record of Magnificent Frigatebird in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. Previously, two records of frigatebird (sp.) had been accepted by the MD/DCRC (one in Maryland and one in the District of Columbia). Interestingly, the prior Maryland record was on April 30th.

The color photographs accompanying this record show an immature frigatebird with features eliminating all other species of *Fregata*. The committee has not been willing to assume any vagrant frigatebird in Maryland is a Magnificent Frigatebird. Although this is perhaps the most likely species, there are records of vagrant Great Frigatebirds (*F. minor*) from North America. It was fortunate that this individual was well photographed and in immature plumage, as positive identification of many frigatebird plumages may not be possible under most circumstances. Future frigatebird records, which can be expected, should be critically studied and photographed if possible. See Howell (1994) and Harrison (1983 and 1987) for information on frigatebird identification.

**Roseate Spoonbill** *Ajaia ajaja*

Smith Island, SMST, MD, July 11, 1996–August 23, 1996 (\*MHrm, DJo, MHrr; MD1997-455).

This is the second record of Roseate Spoonbill in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. The prior record was from the exact same location in 1979 (Baugh 1979). The photos and description of this bird left no question as to its identity and a photo appeared in *Field Notes* (51:35). As noted by Peterjohn and Davis (1996), spoonbill populations have been slowly increasing and extralimital records have been noted north to the lower Great Lakes region.

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

Potts Point, CLVT, MD, June 6, 1993 (\*AMa; MD1995-036); Tuckahoe State Park, CRLN, MD, May 11, 1996 (\*PT, \*MMac; MD1996-024).

These are the first records of Black-bellied Whistling-Duck in Maryland. Both records were documented with excellent photographs, clearly eliminating any other species, including non-native or hybrid waterfowl. The committee considered the possibility that these birds may have been of non-wild origin, but no evidence supported this position. The Potts Point record involved a flock of 12 individuals. Such a large flock would be exceptional for captive-raised birds, but somewhat expected for a wild flock of this highly social and gregarious whistling-duck. The Tuckahoe State Park bird was a single unbanded individual. Although the lack of a band is not definitive for wild origin, it is supportive. The expanding breeding population and increased number of vagrant reports also suggest wild origin for these records and the expectation of future Maryland records.

Other extralimital records of Black-bellied Whistling-Duck during the summer of 1993 included a flock of ten in Quebec (June 6–12, Yank and Aubry 1993), and a flock of nine in Ontario (June 17–July 7, possibly same birds as in Quebec, Ridout 1993).

**Fulvous Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna bicolor*

West Ocean City, WORC, MD, July 19, 1961–December 2, 1961 (CHO, \*SD, et al.; MD1996-039); Berlin, WORC, MD, February 16, 1975 (LMA; MD1996-040); Remington Farms, KENT, MD, November 2, 1984 (\*JWhi; MD1996-041); Point Lookout, STMA, MD, November 11, 1985 (\*RW; MD1996-042); Nottingham, PGEO, MD, November 19, 1986 (+GK; MD1996-043).

Previously, the MD/DCRC had accepted two records of Fulvous Whistling-Duck in Maryland. Two of the current records involved large flocks, with 61 reported at Remington Farms and 25-30 at Point Lookout. The other records were of single individuals. Although this species is very erratic in its wanderings, there does seem to be a seasonal peak in late autumn, as demonstrated by the three November records. The two previously accepted records were in November as well. All these records were in different years, so multiple sightings of the same individuals were unlikely.

**Ross's Goose** *Chen rossii*

Blackwater NWR, DORC, MD, October 28, 1991 (\*MO; MD1992-035); Snow Hill, WORC, MD, October 20, 1992–November 27, 1992 (MO; MD1994-040).

As discussed by Peterjohn and Davis (1996), the field identification of Ross's Goose originally posed problems for the committee, as this species expanded from its largely western range to the East Coast (Ryder and Alisauskas 1995). It is now clear that small numbers of Ross's Geese winter in the large Snow Goose (*C. caeruleus*) flocks of the Delmarva Peninsula. The committee no longer reviews records of Ross's Goose from the Eastern Shore.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*

Bay Ridge, ANAR, MD, February 6, 1979–February 11, 1979 (\*MHrm, et al.; MD1996-014); Jefferson Patterson Park, CLVT, MD, March 18, 1997–March 20, 1997 (\*TB, PC, PO, \*MHo, et al.; MD1997-496).

These are the first Tufted Duck records in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. The 1979 individual was trapped and banded on 6 February 1979 during a waterfowl banding operation by U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel. It was also reported "in company with a female of the same species" (Ringler 1979), but no documentation was available for a second individual. Both accepted records were of photographed males.

The committee considered the potential that these individuals were not of wild origin, but their occurrence matches the pattern of vagrancy seen in this species in the northeastern United State (Mlodinow and O'Brien 1996). During the spring of 1997, there was an apparent influx of Tufted Ducks into eastern North America. In reference to the records from the Atlantic provinces of Canada, where the species is most regular in the northeast, Maybank (1997) commented that "oddly, there were many more Tufted Duck reports away from Newfoundland," where the species is most frequent. Reports came from Newfoundland (two birds), New Brunswick (four), and Nova Scotia (nine, where the species is "now almost routine"). Other Canadian records included Quebec (one, April 22, Bannon and David 1997) and Ontario (three, March 29–May 4, Ridout 1997). U.S. reports were from Massachusetts (one wintering, one April 15–16, Perkins 1997), Connecticut (one wintering, Perkins 1997), New York (two wintering, Boyle et al. 1997), and Kentucky (one, March and April, Brock 1997).



Additionally, hybrids between Tufted Ducks and other species of *Aythya* are known, and the committee considered this potential, but the observed characteristics of both individuals were believed to eliminate hybrid origin. Harris et al. (1989) and Madge and Burn (1988) should be consulted for a thorough review of the characteristics of Tufted Duck and its potential pairings with other waterfowl species. For males, close attention must be given to bill-tip pattern, bill-and-head shape, tuft shape and length, overall size and structure, eye color, back and flank color, and wingstripe (Harris et al. 1989).

### **Barrow's Goldeneye** *Bucephala islandica*

Patuxent Naval Air Station, STMA, MD, December 29, 1994 (+RZ, \*WM; MD1995-029); Patuxent River Naval Air Station, STMA, MD, February 28, 1996–March 3, 1996 (PC, KR, HM, PO, \*MHo, et al.; MD1996-045); Patuxent River Naval Air Station, STMA, MD, January 22, 1997–March 1, 1997 (\*PC, \*KR, et al.; MD1997-630); St. George's Island, STMA, MD, February 7, 1997–February 9, 1997 (PC, \*JS; MD1997-495).

These are the first records of Barrow's Goldeneye in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. The December 29, 1994 record consisted of the wing of a female donated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of their annual waterfowl harvest survey. Identified after-the-fact, follow-up research allowed determination of the exact location where the bird was shot. Carney (1983, 1992) provides invaluable information on species, sex and age determination of waterfowl wings. Identification of female goldeneyes, in particular, is very difficult (Tobish 1986, Madge and Burn 1988), and hybrids are known (Martin and DiLabio 1994).

Interestingly, the second and third record came from the same locality the next two winters. Documented by photos and written descriptions, the presence of at least one male Barrow's Goldeneye was conclusively demonstrated. Special thanks are due to the staff of Patuxent Naval Air Station for making arrangements to allow many birders to see this rare species on a restricted military base.

The combination of four records in Southern Maryland is unprecedented for this latitude in the eastern United States.

### **Masked Duck** *Nomonyx dominicus*

Elkton—Elk River Marshes, CECL, MD, Sept. 8, 1905 (+JCS, CHou, et al.; MD1997-492).

This is the only record of Masked Duck in Maryland; it was shot by a J. C. Smith while he was rail hunting on the "Elk River marshes" in 1905 (Houghton 1906). The Committee found the photographs of the specimen to be diagnostic of an adult male Masked Duck. Other reports and records of historical vagrancy to the northeast (Mlodinow and O'Brien



*Fig. 1. Barrow's Goldeneye (1997-630). February 23, 1997. Patuxent River Naval Air Station, St. Mary's Co., MD. Kyle Rambo.*

1996, Lockwood 1997) and the fact that this species is rarely known to be kept in captivity contributed to the conclusion that this was a wild bird.

**Swallow-tailed Kite** *Elanoides forficatus*

Blackwater NWR, DORC, MD, May 31, 1972–June 11, 1972 (WJ, \*PGD, et al.; MD1996-004); LaVale, ALGY, MD, August 17, 1974–September 19, 1974 (KH, \*JP, \*RJ, et al.; MD1996-005); Catonsville, BALT, MD, June 10, 1992 (EBo; MD1996-006); Laurel, PGEO, MD, April 24, 1993 (ABa, PSt; MD1996-008); Seneca Creek State Park, MONT, MD, May 14, 1993 (RNo; MD1996-009); Ft. Smallwood Park, ANAR, MD, April 22, 1995 (SR, RRin, COr; MD1996-010).

The MD/DCRC had previously accepted two records of American Swallow-tailed Kite from Maryland. These six additional records continue the pattern of late April–early June vagrancy in this species. The record from LaVale is particularly noteworthy for its location, time of year and duration of stay.

**Yellow Rail** *Coturnicops noveboracensis*

Potomac, MONT, MD, May 14, 1992 (JJ; MD1994-032).

This record was exceptional in that the bird was flushed from a tall patch of grass while the observer was mowing a somewhat overgrown suburban lawn. Despite the remarkable circumstances, the committee found the account clearly addressed all the critical field marks of a Yellow Rail (e.g. dark color of wings and mantle, white secondary patch, flight style) and specifically eliminated all other North American small rails. The true status of Yellow Rail in Maryland remains to be determined, due to the species' very secretive nature (Bookhout 1995).

**Sandhill Crane** *Grus canadensis*

Madonna, HARF, MD, April 11, 1982–April 12, 1982 (DK, \*JKi, et al.; MD1995-012).

Records of Sandhill Cranes have increased dramatically in the Mid-Atlantic region over the past 15 years, as the eastern population has increased and expanded its breeding range (Hoffman 1989, Tebbel and Ankeny 1982). The committee now reviews only those reports of Sandhill Cranes west of the Piedmont. This record was well documented with photographs.

**Long-tailed Jaeger** *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Baltimore Canyon, WORC, MD, August 18, 1996 (\*DC, \*MO, et al.; MD1997-448).

This is the second record of Long-tailed Jaeger in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC for Maryland. A bird in juvenile plumage, it was well documented by photographs, sketches and written details.

The true status of this species in Maryland remains to be determined. Despite the many pelagic trips out of Ocean City over the past 25 years, there are very few reports of Long-tailed Jaegers and only the two accepted records. To our south, in North Carolina, the species is much more regularly seen (Lee 1986, 1989). It is possible most Long-tailed Jaegers occur farther offshore, outside of the range of the normal day-long pelagic trips.

Jaeger identification, particularly from a moving boat, is challenging, but excellent new references, such as Olsen and Larsson (1997) provide guidance that was unavailable until recently.

**Little Gull** *Larus minutus*

Hains Point, DC, DC, April 5, 1996 (OJ; DC1997-414).

The committee felt that this record clearly documented DC's first confirmed Little Gull. Although regular along the Atlantic Coast, and at certain gull concentration points in the Chesapeake Bay region, the Little Gull is otherwise unknown as a vagrant on the Piedmont or farther west, except for this record and at Conowingo Dam in Harford and Cecil counties, Maryland.

**Mew (Common) Gull** *Larus canus canus*

Conowingo Dam, HARF/CECL, MD, January 22, 1994 (BP, et al.; MD1995-033).

This constitutes the first accepted record of Mew (Common) Gull in Maryland. The committee found the details of the report, particularly the tail pattern, sufficient to establish this as a first basic plumaged Mew (Common) Gull. In first basic plumage, the European form of the Mew Gull, *L. c. canus* (= Common Gull) is readily separable from the western U.S. form of the Mew Gull, *L. c. brachyrhynchus*. East coast records have pertained to both forms.

First winter Ring-billed and Mew (Common) Gulls present a considerable identification challenge, and detailed study of a suspected individual would be needed to confirm an identification. While the identification of these species has been discussed in considerable detail by Lauro and Spencer (1980), Grant (1986), Harris et al. (1999), Lewington et al. (1991), and Tove (1993), much remains to be learned about them. Unfortunately, much of the relevant literature has a distinct European bias, concentrating on how to differentiate a lone Ring-billed Gull from many Mew (Common) Gulls, the reverse of the situation faced on this side of the Atlantic.

**California Gull** *Larus californicus*

Georgetown Reservoir, DC, DC, January 15, 1993–January 16, 1993 (\*OJ; DC1997-091); Laytonsville Landfill, MONT, MD, January 23, 1993 (GM, et al.; MD1997-093); West Ocean City, WORC, MD, November 28, 1994 (\*MO; MD1997-249); Laytonsville Landfill, MONT, MD, January 12, 1995 (OJ; MD1997-295); Conowingo Dam, HARF/CECL, MD, January 28, 1995 (ESc, et al.; MD1997-285); Hart-Miller Island, BALT, MD, October 26, 1996 (ESc, RB; MD1997-456).

The MD/DCRC had previously accepted three records of California Gull in Maryland. The increased interest in "gull watching" in recent years has undoubtedly contributed to the increased number of records of this species. Additionally, better information is available to assist the patient observer in the criteria used to identify this western species (Grant 1986, Vanderpoel 1997). Any reports of California Gull should include a complete description of the bird and comparisons to individuals of the common species. Reports of this species in the eastern U.S. have increased in recent years, perhaps an artifact of observer interest and knowledge (Winkler 1996).

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*

Atlantic Ocean, WORC, MD, August 1, 1992 (MO, \*BPa, et al.; MD1994-026).

This is the first record of Arctic Tern in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. Although perhaps more likely as a spring migrant, it appears a small number of non-breeding birds (in first alternate plumage) may summer off the mid-Atlantic coast (M. Hoffman, pers. obs.). This record was well documented with photographs and written descriptions.

Convincing records of Arctic Tern have been difficult to obtain for Maryland (Peterjohn and Davis 1996). Many records from spring pelagic trips appear to lack any documentation and are not amenable to committee review. Excellent references on *Sterna* tern identification include Harris et al. (1989), Kaufman (1990), and Olsen and Larsson (1995).

**Common Murre** *Uria aalge*

Ocean City Inlet, WORC, MD, December 29, 1976–December 30, 1976 (\*RRo; MD1995-013); Atlantic Ocean, WORC, MD, January 16, 1977 (RRo; MD1997-236); Atlantic Ocean, WORC, MD, March 12, 1994 (\*GJ, PO, et al.; MD1997-180); Atlantic Ocean, WORC, MD, February 25, 1995 (MO; MD1997-422).

These are the first records of Common Murre in Maryland accepted by MD/DCRC. Despite the many winter pelagic trips out of Ocean City over the past 25 years, murre records have been difficult to document and identify to species. The first record, in 1976, was of a bird in the Ocean City Inlet and a photograph of this bird appeared on the cover of Maryland Birdlife (Rowlett 1977). The other records were of birds observed from boats on offshore trips. Given the numerous records of the Razorbill, and even the Atlantic Puffin, it certainly appears the Common Murre is quite rare at our latitude.

**Thick-billed Murre** *Uria lomvia*

Franklintown Road, BALT, MD, March 6, 1962–March 7, 1962 (HB, et al.; MD1995-006); Assateague Island, WORC, MD, January 9, 1977 (\*RRo, et al.; MD1997-237); Atlantic Ocean, WORC, MD, February 26, 1995 (\*MHo, \*JS, MO; MD1997-423); Atlantic Ocean, WORC, MD, February 26, 1995 (\*MHo, MO; MD1997-297).

These are the first records of Thick-billed Murre in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. The first record was of a storm-blown individual, found grounded on a Baltimore City street (Brackbill 1962). The 1977 individual was observed (and photographed) from the north end of Assateague Island (Rowlett 1977). The 1995 records were of two different birds observed and well photographed on a pelagic trip off Ocean City.

As noted above under Common Murre, despite the many winter pelagic trips out of Ocean City over the past 25 years, documented records of either murre species are very few. It is clear these species are quite rare off Maryland's coast.

**Groove-billed Ani** *Crotophaga sulcirostris*

Millington, KENT, MD, November 3, 1975 (+DL0, RD; MD1996-017).

This is the only record of Groove-billed Ani for Maryland. The bird was found dead and the specimen preserved. Groove-billed Ani has a considerable pattern of vagrancy throughout the United States, although there are extralimital records of the Smooth-billed Ani as well (Balch 1979, McLean et al. 1995). Identification of anis is not always straightforward, particularly with immature birds (e.g., immature Groove-billed Anis lack grooves on their bills). References such as Balch (1979) should be consulted.



*Fig. 2. Arctic Tern (1994-026). August 1, 1992. Atlantic Ocean, east of Ocean City, Maryland. Brian Patteson.*

**Red-cockaded Woodpecker** *Picoides borealis*

Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, PGEO, MD, May 11, 1974 (\*BMe, MPe; MD1996-018).

This exceptional record was documented with photographs (Meanley and Perry 1974). Well removed from the closest populations in southeastern Virginia, this species was formerly a rare resident of the Lower Eastern Shore (Stewart and Robbins 1958). Future claims of this species in Maryland must carefully exclude aberrant individuals of the two common *Dendrocopos* species.

**Ash-throated Flycatcher** *Myiarchus cinerascens*

Patuxent River Naval Air Station, STMA, MD, December 18, 1994–January 3, 1995 (\*KR, \*MI, \*JS, \*MHo, et al.; MD1996-013).

This is the second record of Ash-throated Flycatcher in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. Although the committee does not assume any small, pale, early winter *Myiarchus* in Maryland is an Ash-throated Flycatcher, the documentation with this record eliminated all other *Myiarchus* species, including Nutting's Flycatcher (see Howell and Webb 1995, Pyle 1997). Future records should be equally well documented, to eliminate several similar species. Detailed study of the wings and tail must be made.

Ash-throated Flycatcher shows a clear pattern of early winter occurrence along the East Coast (Murphy 1982).

**Bewick's Wren** *Thryomanes bewickii*

Violette's Lock, MONT, MD, May 1, 1993 (BP; MD1996-019).

Although the Bewick's Wren formerly was a fairly common breeder in western Maryland (Stewart and Robbins 1958), recent records of this species in Maryland have been exceptionally few (Robbins 1996). To promote adequate documentation of current reports, the MD/DCRC added this species to its review list.

The committee felt that this was an exceptional description that addressed all the salient field marks and clearly separated a Bewick's Wren from a dull juvenile Carolina Wren.



Fig. 3. Ash-throated Flycatcher (1996-013). December 28, 1994. Patuxent River Naval Air Station, St. Mary's Co., MD. Kyle Rambo.



Fig. 4. Townsend's Solitaire (1996-027). March 26, 1996. Street, Harford Co., MD. Mark L. Hoffman.

**Townsend's Solitaire** *Myadestes townsendi*

Street, HARF, MD, March 22, 1996–April 13, 1996 (DBow, \*GJ, \*MHo, et al.; MD1996-027).

This is the only record of Townsend's Solitaire in Maryland. Given the numerous records of this species in the northeastern United States and eastern Canada, the species was not unexpected.

The committee commends the observers for the diagnostic photographs and excellent written accounts (Bowers 1996). The hospitality of the landowner is gratefully acknowledged as well.

**Varied Thrush** *Ixoreus naevius*

Ashton, MONT, MD, December 31, 1965–January 20, 1966 (\*BG; MD1995-002).

Previously, the MD/DCRC had accepted two records of Varied Thrush from Maryland, although this record predates both of those. Photographs in the documentation for this record clearly substantiates the identification as a Varied Thrush. Despite this species' normal range in the Pacific Northwest and along the Pacific coast, it is a regular, albeit rare, visitor to New England, the upper Great Lakes, and southern Canada (Keith 1968). Records from the middle Atlantic Coast are much fewer. Like most records, including the prior two from Maryland, this bird was frequenting a suburban feeder (Getchell 1966).

**Sage Thrasher** *Oreoscoptes montanus*

Asstateague, WORC, MD, October 24, 1971 (\*RRo; MD1995-015).

This is the only record of Sage Thrasher in Maryland. The excellent detailed description (Rowlett 1971, 1972) and accompanying photograph establish this bird as a Sage Thrasher and eliminate all other thrasher species.

Sage Thrasher is one of the rarest western vagrants to the East Coast. Its main breeding ranges lies west of the Rocky Mountains, in the arid Great Basin region. East Coast records are clustered in October and this record is typical in that regard (Bull 1964, Kain 1987, Veit and Petersen 1993).

**Bohemian Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus*

National Arboretum, DC, January 14, 1972–March 4, 1972 (HBN, et al.; DC0000-012).

This well documented record covers all the critical field marks of a Bohemian Waxwing and clearly eliminates the possibility of a Cedar Waxwing. There are very few records of Bohemian Waxwing in the middle Atlantic States and this is the first record for the District of Columbia (Newman 1972).

**Western Tanager** *Piranga ludoviciana*

Ocean City, WORC, MD, October 21, 1962 (WSc, \*CRo, et al.; MD1995-007).

This is the first record of Western Tanager in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. The bird was captured at the former Ocean City banding station as part of "Operation Recovery" (Scudder 1962). Although the Western Tanager is known to occur as a rare fall migrant and winter visitor in states to our north (Bull 1964, Veit and Petersen 1993), Maryland reports have been difficult to confirm.

Identification of Western Tanagers in basic plumage must be accomplished using multiple characteristics. Some Scarlet Tanagers (*P. olivacea*) show relatively prominent wing bars, so this character is not a sufficient field mark for species identification. Any claimed sighting of this species should include a description of the wings, head, back, rump and if possible, underwing coverts. Davis (1972) and Pyle (1997) discuss the identification of *Piranga* species.

**Spotted Towhee** *Pipilo maculatus*

Derwood, MONT, MD, December 17, 1994 (BM, RGi; MD1996-021).

This is the first record of Spotted Towhee in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. Formerly considered a subspecies of the "Rufous-sided Towhee," the Spotted Towhee has been given species rank, as has the Eastern Towhee (*P. erythrophthalmus*), the former eastern form of the Rufous-sided Towhee. With this distinction, observers should take greater care in the observation of towhees in winter in the hopes of accumulating more records. There are a number of records of this species throughout eastern North American, from Quebec to Florida (Greenlaw 1996).

**Baird's Sparrow** *Ammodramus bairdii*

North Ocean City, WORC, MD, October 14, 1966 (+WV, GC; MD1996-047).

The immature individual was netted during the "Operation Recovery" banding operations and collected. It represents one of few Baird's Sparrows records for the eastern United States (AOU 1983) and Maryland's only record. Baird's Sparrow populations have declined on their midwestern prairie breeding grounds (Jones et al. 1998) and additional records may be unlikely. Additionally, Baird's Sparrow is a relatively short-distance migrant and more western in distribution, as compared to many of the more common western vagrants in Maryland (e.g., Lark Sparrow [*Chondestes grammacus*] and Clay-colored Sparrow [*Spizella pallida*]).



**Le Conte's Sparrow** *Ammodramus leconteii*

Ocean Pines, WORC, MD, December 27, 1974–February 8, 1975 (KK, \*CV, et al.; MD1995-011); Gray's Creek, WORC, MD, December 29, 1993–February 20, 1994 (\*MHo, \*MI, PO; MD1996-049).

These are the second and third records of Le Conte's Sparrow in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. Both were discovered on the Ocean City Christmas Bird Count and subsequently seen by a number of observers and documented with photographs. The 1974 individual was the first state record (Klimkiewicz 1975).

Le Conte's Sparrow is proving to be a rare, but regular, wintering species in southeastern Virginia (Kain 1987). Additional Maryland records are under review by the committee. The very elusive behavior of this poorly-known species (Lowther 1996) suggests it may be more frequent in Maryland than the few records would indicate.

**Harris' Sparrow** *Zonotrichia querula*

Ellicott City, HWRD, MD, January 23, 1965–March 1, 1965 (\*EB; MD1996-030); Ellicott City, HWRD, MD, January 23, 1965 (+EB; MD1996-031); Greenbelt, PGEO, MD, February 17, 1967–March 7, 1967 (JH; MD1996-032); Greenbelt, PGEO, MD, January 6, 1968–March 8, 1968 (JH; MD1996-033); Greenbelt, PGEO, MD, November 19, 1968–March 1, 1969 (JH; MD1996-034); Hagerstown, WASH, MD, January 15, 1988 (\*HBr; MD1996-037).

These are the first records of Harris' Sparrow in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. The Ellicott City records refer to two individuals, one of which was collected. The three Greenbelt records were of the same banded individual returning to the same location for three consecutive winters.

Harris' Sparrow is a rare wintering species throughout the eastern United States (Norment and Shackleton 1993). In the past twenty years, Maryland records have been very few, following a rash of sightings in the 1960s.

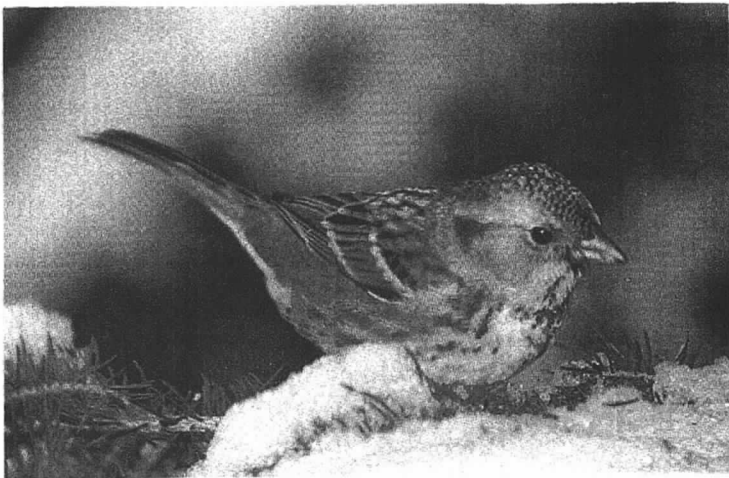


Fig. 5. Harris' Sparrow (1996-037). January 15, 1988. Hagerstown, Washington Co., MD. Hugh Brandenburg.

**Smith's Longspur** *Calcarius pictus*

Assateague Island, WORC, MD, November 27, 1976–January 16, 1977 (\*MHo, \*RRo, et al.; MD1996-028).

This is the only record of Smith's Longspur in Maryland. Two individuals were present on the north end of Assateague Island, associating with a large (50+) flock of Lapland Longspurs (*C. lapponicus*). Records of Smith's Longspur in the eastern United States are very few. Identification of out-of-range longspurs should be done with caution, using references such as Byers et al. (1995), Rising (1996) and Dunn and Beadle (1998).

**Chestnut-collared Longspur** *Calcarius ornatus*

Ocean City, WORC, MD, August 20, 1906 (+ALu, FK; MD1997-363).

This is the first record of Chestnut-collared Longspur in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. The bird was collected on a farm on the mainland opposite Ocean City (Kirkwood 1908). This species has an extensive pattern of vagrancy to the eastern U.S. (Hill and Gould 1997). Apparent contractions of this species' range and long-term population declines (Hill and Gould 1997) might reduce the likelihood of future occurrences in Maryland.

**Painted Bunting** *Passerina ciris*

Ocean City, WORC, MD, August 31, 1963 (EA, et al.; MD1995-008); Pendennis Mount, ANAR, MD, December 26, 1981–January 21, 1982 (HrW, et al.; MD1995-009); Hollywood, STMA, MD, February 8, 1993–April 4, 1993 (\*PC, et al.; MD1995-040); Elkton, CECL, MD, December 13, 1993–December 19, 1993 (\*GGr, \*RHa, et al.; MD1995-037); Berlin, WORC, MD, December 27, 1993–April 5, 1994 (\*GJ, et al.; MD1995-038); Berlin, WORC, MD, January 19, 1995–February 14, 1995 (\*MHo; MD1995-039).

The committee had previously accepted two records of Painted Bunting for Maryland. Except for the August record at Ocean City, these records were of male Painted Buntings at feeders (and documented with photographs). Painted Bunting occurrences seem to be increasing in Maryland and the mid-Atlantic states.

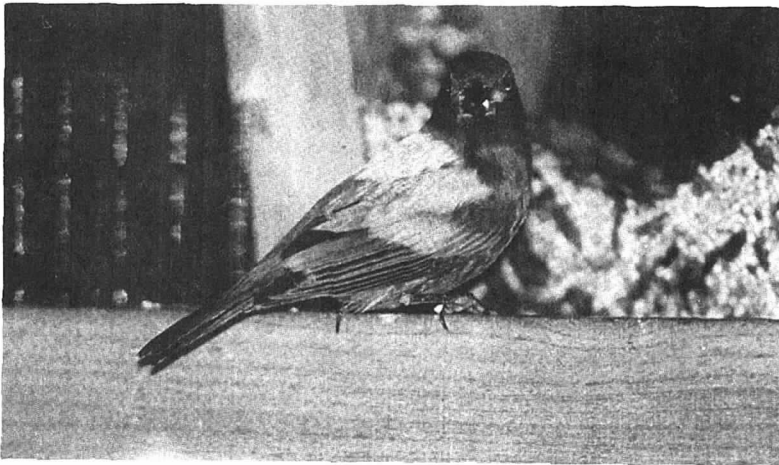


Fig. 6. Painted Bunting (1995-037). December 1993. Elkton, Cecil Co., MD. H. Ross Hawkins.

**Pine Grosbeak** *Pinicola enucleator*

Big Savage Mountain, GARR, MD, February 10, 1973 (\*RRo; MD1997-411); Cumberland, ALGY, MD, January 8, 1996 (JP; MD1997-379).

These are the first records of Pine Grosbeak accepted by the MD/DCRC. One of the rarest "winter finches" at our latitude, additional historical reports are under review by the committee, as this species was only recently added to the review list.

### IDENTIFICATION ACCEPTED, NATURAL OCCURRENCE QUESTIONABLE

Based on the information provided to the committee, the identification of the following records was judged to be correct. The committee felt, however, that their escape from captivity was the most likely explanation for their appearance in the area rather than a natural origin.

**European Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*

St. Michaels, TLBT, MD, January 12, 1996–February 25, 1996 (LW, \*SRi, JRe, et al.; MD1996-038).

Although this bird was clearly a European Goldfinch, the committee felt the evidence suggests it was not of wild origin. This species is an inexpensive cage bird that is frequently released into the wild. There is no known pattern of vagrancy that would support this as a record of a true European vagrant, or even a descendant from the ill-fated New York colony of years ago. Nonetheless, it is important to document such reports, in case a pattern were ever to be established. The committee compliments the observers on the detailed descriptions and photographs. Smith and Smith (1993) present a good rationale for the need to continually document such exotic species.

### REPORTS NOT ACCEPTED

This list contains reports that were not accepted by the committee. In the vast majority of these cases, the reports were not accepted because the evidence provided did not convince all (or all but one) of the committee members that the identifications were conclusively established. The identification may well have been correct; in only a very few cases was it felt that an identification was incorrect.

When submitting reports, observers are encouraged to provide a complete description of the bird (or birds) in question. Reports limited to "important characteristics" (as discussed in the following section) make evaluation more difficult. Often features that are not in themselves diagnostic prove to be highly supportive of an identification.

**Pacific Loon** (*Gavia pacifica*) Ocean City, WORC, MD, January 4, 1997 (MD1997-471). **White-tailed Kite** (*Elanus leucurus*) College Park, PGEO, MD, September 4, 1992 (MD1995-016). **Gyrfalcon** (*Falco rusticolus*) Chestertown, KENT, MD, January 19, 1997 (MD1997-473). **Mew Gull** (*Larus canus*) Ocean City Inlet, WORC, MD, October 26, 1990 (MD1995-030); **Mew (Common) Gull** (*Larus canus canus*) Conowingo Dam, HARF/CECL, MD, February 2, 1994–February 4, 1994 (MD1995-031); Conowingo Dam, HARF/CECL, MD, February 6, 1994 (MD1995-032). **Arctic Tern** (*Sterna paradisaea*) Atlantic Ocean, WORC,

MD, May 16, 1976 (MD1995-034); Ocean City—Fourth Street Flats, WORC, MD, July 2, 1991 (MD1993-005). **White-winged Tern** (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) Assateague, WORC, MD, August 6, 1994 (MD1995-019); Point Lookout, STMA, MD, August 14, 1994 (MD1995-020). **Vermilion Flycatcher** (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) Hollywood, STMA, MD, July 12, 1992 (MD1992-029). **Ash-throated Flycatcher** (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) Blackwater NWR, DORC, MD, December 9, 1994 (MD1996-012). **Common Raven** (*Corvus corax*) Brighton Dam, HWRD, MD, December 24, 1978 (MD1994-005). **Cave Swallow** (*Petrochelidon fulva*) North Beach, CLVT, MD, May 20, 1996 (MD1996-026). **Sprague's Pipit** (*Anthus spragueii*) Sandy Point, ANAR, MD, April 4, 1969 (MD1996-046). **Bullock's Oriole** (*Icterus bullockii*) Annapolis, ANAR, MD, Nov. 22, 1970-Jan. 30, 1971 (MD1995-041). **Pine Grosbeak** (*Pinicola enucleator*) Back River Sewage Treatment Plant, BALT, MD, May 4, 1996 (MD1997-465).

Additional comments are provided for some of the "Not Accepted" reports listed above. These comments include some information on patterns of vagrancy as an indication of when these species might be expected to appear in the Maryland/DC area. Identification information is also provided for some species to emphasize the level of information that may be needed to adequately document their occurrence in the area and the references relevant to the review. However, this information is not meant to specifically criticize the materials submitted for any of the "Not Accepted" reports.

**Pacific Loon:** Winter loon identification can be challenging, especially given the sometimes less than ideal viewing conditions. Reports of Pacific Loon should carefully detail the pattern of the head and neck, bill shape, and mantle color. Excellent references such as Kaufman (1990), Harris et al. (1989), and Jonsson (1993) should be consulted prior to going afield. Maryland still has no accepted records of this species.

**Gyrfalcon:** Separation of large falcons is very difficult considering the possibility of escaped European species (i.e., Saker [*F. cherrug*] or hybrids (Gantlett and Millington 1992). Falconers keep Gyrfalcons and other species in captivity, and they occasionally escape or are seen "wild" while being flown. The focus on providing large falcons through captive-breeding programs has resulted in many different combinations, of which field identification would prove to be quite a challenge. However, the relatively large number of Gyrfalcon records from adjacent states (e.g., 41 from Pennsylvania, Fingerhood 1984) suggests that this falcon is a likely candidate for vagrancy to Maryland. Another record is under review by the Committee.

**Mew Gull:** Reports of Mew Gulls from the Atlantic coast include individuals of the Common Gull (*Larus c. canus*), vagrants from Europe, and the Mew Gull (*L. c. brachyrhynchus*) which occurs in western North America. Claims of this species in Maryland should be sufficiently detailed to establish which form is involved, which may require very careful attention to the wing-tip pattern and other subtle characteristics. Grant (1986) remains the standard reference for identification information on these races. Lauro and Spencer (1980), Harris et al. (1989), Lewington et al. (1991), and Tove (1993) provide additional information.

The two reports at Conowingo were subsequent to an accepted record. Although these reports were not accepted, the observers are to be credited with providing reports to the committee. It is critical that subsequent sightings of rarities be equally well documented as the initial observation. It cannot be assumed that because the initial sighting may have been correct, that all subsequent claims of the species are as well. Such assumptions frequently present difficulties for the committee in determining the actual period of occurrence for a given record.

**White-winged Tern:** Although numerous well-documented records exist for Delaware and Virginia (Kain 1987), this species has been difficult to document in Maryland; there are no accepted records. The lack of coastal fresh-water impoundments (the preferred habitat in the other states) would appear to be the principal factor in Maryland's lack of records. Always found with the much more numerous Black Tern (*C. niger*), large concentrations of the latter species in coastal Maryland are ephemeral in nature.

Although the White-winged Tern is distinctive in breeding plumage, variations in lighting and viewing conditions can make identification difficult. Individuals molting into basic plumage or in basic plumage present an identification challenge. All reports of White-winged Terns in these plumages must include careful descriptions of the breast, upperwing, rump, and head. See Harris et al. (1989), Alstrom (1989), and Olsen and Larsson (1995) for information on the identification of the marsh terns.

**Cave Swallow:** In recent years, a number of records of Cave Swallow have accumulated along the eastern coast of the U.S. and Canada. Records exist for Nova Scotia, Ontario, New York, New Jersey, and North Carolina (West 1995). The increase in records may be attributable to the expansion of this species' range, or perhaps more efficient and knowledgeable coverage by birders (West 1995). Hence, this species is a likely candidate for addition to the Maryland list.

Cave Swallows in the middle Atlantic States could be of West Indian origin (*P. f. fulva*), which normally occurs in the Greater Antilles and S. Florida, or the population of the south-western United State and adjacent Mexico (*P. f. pallida*), or perhaps even one of the Middle or South American races (West 1995).

Cave Swallows are very similar to Cliff Swallows (*H. pyrrhonota*) in general appearance, and excellent documentation will be required to confirm this species in Maryland. Given the less than ideal viewing conditions often associated with fast-flying swallows, this may be difficult to obtain. Additionally, hybrids between Barn (*H. rustica*) and Cave Swallows have been reported, as well as mixed pairs with Cliff Swallows (West 1995), which would further complicate identification.

**Sprague's Pipit:** There are very few confirmed records of vagrant Sprague's Pipits from eastern North America. King (1981) describes its field identification in detail. This shy species has very specific habitat requirements, preferring upland fields with short but thick grassy cover. It would not be expected to occur in the more open wet habitats preferred by American Pipits (*Anthus rubescens*) or in a flock.

**Bullock's Oriole:** This species is a very rare but fairly regular vagrant to eastern North America (Bull 1964, Kain 1987, Veit and Petersen 1993). They are most likely to be discovered during late fall and winter, primarily as visitors to feeders.

The identification of vagrant Bullock's Orioles is complicated by variation exhibited by Baltimore Orioles (*I. galbula*); identification of females and young males requires caution (see Pyle 1997, Lee and Birch 1998a, 1998b). Detailed descriptions of the upperparts, wings, head pattern, and underpart coloration are important for claims of female or immature male Bullock's Orioles. Hybrids between these two species are regularly reported from the Great Plains (Sibley and Short 1964), and further complicate the field identification of extralimital individuals.

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## WINTER, DECEMBER 1, 1996–FEBRUARY 28, 1997

DANIEL R. SOUTHWORTH

Unlike last year, this winter was mild, with an increase in reports for some species like Wood Duck, Osprey, and Chipping Sparrow. There was no invasion of owls or northern finches.

*Observers:* Henry Armistead, Ann Bishop, Rick Blom, Bob Boxwell, John Churchill, Ian Cornelius, Patty Craig, Bill Dobbins, Sam Dyke, Darius Ecker, Ethel Engle (reporting for Caroline County), Jane Farrell, Sam Freiberg, Inez Glime, Mark Hoffman, Kye Jenkins, George Jett, Ellen Lawler, Nancy Magnusson, David Mozurkewich, Mariana Nuttle, Mike O'Brien, Peter Osenton, Paul Pisano, Elizabeth Pitney (reporting for Wicomico County), Kyle Rambo, Jan Reese, Sue Ricciardi, Bob Ringler, Gene Scarpulla, Stephen Simon, Connie Skipper, David Smith, Jo Solem (reporting for Howard County), Jim Stasz, Debbie Terry, David Walbeck, Mark Wallace, Dave Webb, Marcia Whitmyre.

*Abbreviations:* CBC – Christmas Bird Count, DC – District of Columbia, NWR – National Wildlife Refuge, PRNAS – Patuxent River Naval Air Station, PWRC – Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, SF – State Forest, SP – State Park, WMA – Wildlife Management Area.

*Locations:* Place names (with counties in parentheses) not in the index of the State highway map: Alpha Ridge (Howard), Assateague Island (Worcester), Back River Waste Water Treatment Plant (Baltimore), Blackwater NWR (Dorchester), Deal Island WMA (Somerset), Deep Creek Lake (Garrett), Eastern Neck NWR (Kent), Elliott Island (Dorchester), Hains Point (DC), Hart-Miller Island (Baltimore), Hughes Hollow (Montgomery), Loch Raven (Baltimore), PRNAS (St. Mary's), Patuxent River Park (Prince George's), PWRC (Prince George's unless noted otherwise), Piney Run Park (Carroll), Sandy Point SP (Anne Arundel), Schoolhouse Pond (Prince George's), Triadelphia Reservoir (Howard, unless noted otherwise).

*Loons, Grebes, Gannets, Pelicans, Cormorants.* The **Red-throated Loon** at the Tidal Basin in DC on Dec. 21 (Dobbins), and the 3 at Hooper Island on Feb. 23 (Armistead) were at interesting locations. The high for **Pied-billed Grebes** was 55 at Loch Raven on Dec. 10 and again on Feb. 2 (Simon), while **Horned Grebes** included 40 at PRNAS on Feb. 2 (Craig), and 20 at Hooper Island on Feb. 23 (Armistead). **Northern Gannet** sightings were primarily confined to the southern Bay in Virginia waters this winter as were **Brown Pelicans**. **Double-crested Cormorants** were numerous including 1 at Loch Raven on Dec. 4 and Dec. 30 (Simon), 3 at Choptank on Dec. 11 (D. Ford), 200 at the Harry W. Nice Bridge in Charles County on Jan. 20 (Jett), and 2 at Hart-Miller on Feb. 23 (Scarpulla). **Great Cormorants** included 6 at Wetipquin, Wicomico County on Dec. 22 (Dyke), and an immature at Conowingo on Jan. 19 (Stasz).

*Herons.* **Great Blue Herons** were very numerous in December including about 100 at Conowingo on Dec. 15 (Blom), 21 at Blackwater on Jan. 10 (Dyke), 1 at Back River on Jan. 18 (Blom), and over 40 at Federalsburg on Feb. 28 (Glime). Harry Armistead found 2 **Great Egrets** in Dorchester County on Jan. 26; one each at Hooper Island and Elliott Island. Dave Mozurkewich reported three Great Egrets at Deal Island WMA on Feb. 16. **Snowy Egrets** included 3 in Ocean City on Dec. 26 (O'Brien+), 3 in West Ocean City on Dec. 30 (Hoffman), and 1 in Ocean City on Jan. 4th and 7th (Ribauda, Messina). A **Little Blue Heron** lingered in West Ocean City until Jan. 18 (Dyke). Two **Tricolored Herons** were spotted in Ocean City from Jan. 4 (Ribauda) through Jan. 18 (Dyke), and another was at Deal Island WMA on Feb. 16 (Mozurkewich).

*Vultures.* Patty Craig noted 50 **Black Vultures** at White Point, St. Mary's County on Jan. 19. **Turkey Vultures** of interest included 184 in sight at one time at the Transquaking River bridge in Dorchester County on Jan. 26 (Armistead), and 4 at Oakland Sang-Run Road, Garrett County on Feb. 27 (Skipper).

*Geese, Swans.* From one to six **Greater White-fronted Geese** were reported at Blackwater from Dec. 26 through Jan. 11 (Dyke, O'Brien+), and there were single sightings off Route 144 in Howard County on Feb. 1 (Osenton), near Sandy Point on Feb. 17 (Mozurkewich), and at Pylesville on Feb. 22 (Larry Frye). Gene Scarpulla and party reported about 1200 flyover **Snow Geese**, including 7 of the blue race, at Conowingo on Jan. 25. From one to three **Ross's Geese** were seen at Blackwater from Dec. 26 through Jan. 26 (Dyke, Armistead+). The report of 24 **Mute Swans** on Feb. 2 at Scotland was not good news (Boxwell, Craig). Highs for **Tundra Swans** were 650 at Benedict on Feb. 1 (Jett), and 970 at Blackwater on Feb. 23 (Armistead).

*Puddle Ducks.* **Wood Ducks** were more numerous this winter, including 3 at the Aquatic Gardens in DC on Feb. 18 (Dobbins), and another at West Ocean City on Feb. 23 (Lawler). Scarpulla tallied 211 **Gadwalls** at Hart-Miller on Dec. 14, and 79 were checked off at Scotland on Feb. 1 (Craig, Bishop, Boxwell). Single drake **Eurasian Wigeons** were reported at Triadelphia on Dec. 21 (Rich Mason), at Schoolhouse Pond on Dec. 23 (Stasz), at Deal Island WMA on Jan. 12 (Dyke), and at Scotland on Feb. 2 and Feb. 22 (Craig+). Highs for **American Wigeon** were 250 at Loch Raven on Dec. 15 (Simon, Terry). The high for **American Black Ducks** inland at Loch Raven was 118 on Jan. 21 (Simon), and flocks of 115 and 155 were around the Triadelphia area on Feb. 16 (Farrell, Jo & Bob Solem). Four **Blue-winged Teal** were located at Deep Creek Lake on Dec. 15 (Gary Felton), and 2 were found at Elliott Island on Jan. 26 (Armistead). Jim Stasz noted 32 **Northern Shovelers** at Schoolhouse Pond on Jan. 21, and the high was 60 at Blackwater on Feb. 23 (Armistead). The high for **Northern Pintails** was 110 throughout southern Dorchester County on Jan. 26 (Armistead).

*Diving Ducks.* A nice count of 130 **Redheads** was made at Loch Raven on Jan. 31 (Simon, Harold Dunlop), and several flocks of 20–45 Redheads were reported at various locations in Howard County (Solem+). Steve Simon tallied 338 **Ring-necked Ducks** at Loch Raven for the season high on Jan. 4, 80 were at Beauvue on Feb. 19 (Rambo), and 20 were at Blackwater on Feb. 22 (Armistead). The high for **Greater Scaup** was 1292 at Hart-Miller on Feb. 23; 625 **Lesser Scaup** were there on Feb. 2 (Scarpulla). Two **King Eiders** frequented Point Lookout beginning on Dec. 29, and the last one was seen on Feb. 1 (Craig, Bishop, Boxwell+). It was a good winter at Ocean City for **Common Eiders** beginning with 9 there on Dec. 7 (Cornelius, Smith), ending with 2 there on Feb. 2 (Bart Hutchinson), with a high of 22 on Jan. 25 (Paul DuMont). Patty Craig also found a female **Harlequin Duck** at Point Lookout on Dec. 15.

Harlequins were reported at Ocean City throughout the season with 4 still spotted there on Feb. 2 (Hutchinson), and 3 there on Feb. 23 (Lawler). Scoter sightings were below average with scattered low-numbered reports. However, Patty Craig tallied 3000 **Surf Scoters** at Point Lookout on Jan. 2, 15 **White-winged Scoters** were at Tilghman Island on Dec. 8 (Reese, Levin Willey), and 15 **Black Scoters** were at Point Lookout on Feb. 1 (Craig, Bishop, Boxwell). Three inland **Oldsquaws** were found at Loch Raven on Jan. 7 and Jan. 21 (Simon, Jenkins). Gene Scarpulla and party checked off 180 **Buffleheads** at Conowingo on Jan. 25 (Scarpulla+). There were 250 **Common Goldeneyes** at Solomons Island on Dec. 16 (Reese), and 300 were at PRNAS from Jan. 30 to Feb. 2 (Craig, Tyler Bell, Jane Kostenko). At PRNAS on Jan. 22, Doug Lister notched a nice **Barrow's Goldeneye**, which was seen through March 1. Another was seen Feb. 7-9 at St. George Island (Craig, Stasz). Connie Skipper listed 78 **Hooded Mergansers** on Deep Creek Lake on Dec. 5, and Steve Simon notched 249 Hooded Mergansers at Loch Raven on Jan. 21. **Common Mergansers** included 58 at Blackwater on Jan. 26 (Armistead), a wonderful count of 2690 at Conowingo on Jan. 25 (Scarpulla+), and 220 at Triadelphia on Feb. 21 (Wallace). Stasz and Jett found 65 **Red-breasted Mergansers** at Buena Vista, Calvert County on Feb. 1 and tallied a nice count of 3000 **Ruddy Ducks** at St. Leonard Creek the same day.

*Exotics.* Sightings of a solo **Barnacle Goose** were made in Cecil County on Jan. 25 at Ridge Road (Griffin, Fogleman), and at Bethel WMA on Feb. 21 (Whitmyre). Three **Ruddy Shelducks** of unknown origin moved about Howard County beginning on Dec. 1, frequenting the Lake Elkhorn area (Ecker+). Two were at Fulton on Jan. 25 (Osenton).

*Diurnal Raptors.* An **Osprey** was at Hughes Hollow on Dec. 6 (Dick Homan); others of note included single sightings in Montgomery County near Old Anglers Inn on Jan. 25 (David Winer), at Blackwater on Feb. 21 (Rambo), at Mechanicsville on Feb. 22 (Shirley Wood), and at Denton on Feb. 26 (Nuttle). A nice count of 4 adult and 22 immature **Bald Eagles** was made at Conowingo on Dec. 22 (Blom), 4 adults and 2 immatures were noted at Allens Fresh on Jan. 20 (Jett), and a total of 13 were at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Harford County on Jan. 25 (Webb). Two **Northern Goshawks** were checked off this season with 1 near Roxbury Road, Howard County on Dec. 21 (Wallace), and another near New Hampshire Avenue in Montgomery County on Dec. 23 (Norm Saunders). A dark-phase **Rough-legged Hawk** was near Deep Creek Lake on Dec. 5 (Skipper), another frequented Alpha Ridge in February (Magnusson+), and 3 were at Elliott Island on Jan. 26 (Armistead). Sam Dyke witnessed 2 immature **Golden Eagles** sparring at Fork Neck Road, Dorchester County on Jan. 10, and at least 2 adult and 2 immature Goldeneyes wintered at Blackwater this season (Gregory Inskip+). **Merlins** included 1 at Route 85 in Frederick County on Dec. 8 (Chuck Welburn), 1 at Hains Point the same day (Pisano), a female at Hains Point on Dec. 18 (Dobbins), and 1 at PRNAS on Jan. 23 (Craig).

*Gallinaceous Birds, Rails, Coots, Sandhill Crane.* Ted Ravinus reported 2 **Ring-necked Pheasants** at Eastern Neck NWR on Jan. 16, and Harry Armistead spotted 3 **Wild Turkeys** at Elliott Island on Jan. 26. A nice count of 12 **Virginia Rails** was made at Hart-Miller on Feb. 2 (Scarpulla). About 536 **American Coots** were at Deep Creek Lake on Dec. 5 (Skipper), about 200 were there on Dec. 25 (Gary Felton), and the season high was about 1400 at Loch Raven from Dec. 30 through Feb. 16 (Simon, Terry). A **Sandhill Crane** was seen by many observers near North Franklinville Road in Frederick County from Dec. 28 (John Haley) through Jan. 1.

*Shorebirds.* The high for **Killdeer** was 400 at Compton on Dec. 28 (Rambo), and **Greater Yellowlegs** included 1 at Beauvue on Jan. 4 (Rambo), and 11 at Blackwater on Feb. 23 (Armistead). Among the **Lesser Yellowlegs** were 1 at Scotland on Dec. 15 (Craig), and 2 at

Blackwater on Feb. 23 (Armistead). A couple of **Spotted Sandpipers** lingered, with 1 at Woodmark Lake, Howard County on Dec. 8 (Mike & Grazina McClure), and 1 on the C&O Canal in Montgomery County on Dec. 19 (Jim Green) and Dec. 22 (Freiberg). A **Marbled Godwit** visited Ocean City from Dec. 23 (Churchill) through at least Dec. 30 (Hoffman). About 50 **Sanderlings** were noted at PRNAS on Feb. 6 (Craig), and 410 **Dunlins** were tallied at Hooper Island on Jan. 26 (Armistead). An **American Woodcock** was displaying at Waldorf on Feb. 9 (Jett).

*Gulls, Terns.* **Laughing Gulls** of note included 300 at Schoolhouse Pond on Dec. 12 (Stasz), 1 at Fulton on Dec. 14 (Solem), 30 at Hains Point on Dec. 15 (Dobbins), 2 at the Cecil County landfill on Dec. 21, 1 at Conowingo on Dec. 29, and 1 at Sandy Point SP on Jan. 5 (Scarpulla). A first-winter **Franklin's Gull** was identified at Schoolhouse Pond on Dec. 5 (Stasz), and a **Little Gull** was checked off at Ocean City on Dec. 26 (Hoffman, O'Brien). Fifty-five **Bonaparte's Gulls** were tallied at Conowingo on Dec. 8 (Blom, Scarpulla), and the high was 600 at the Ocean City inlet on Dec. 26 (Hoffman, O'Brien). Dobbins reported 89 in DC on Jan. 11. An incredible 20,000 **Ring-billed Gulls** were massed at Conowingo on Jan. 25 (Scarpulla+), and 3000 were at the Charles County landfill on Feb. 1 (Jett). Later Ring-billeds included about 390 at Lee's Lane, Frederick County on Feb. 23 (I. & S. Cornelius). Jim Stasz took photos of a nice find at Schoolhouse Pond on Dec. 16 — a third-winter **California Gull**. **Thayer's Gulls** visited the state this winter with an adult at the Cecil County landfill on Dec. 21 (Blom, Scarpulla), a first-winter and a third-winter bird at Schoolhouse Pond on Dec. 22 (Stasz), an adult at Alpha Ridge on Jan. 15 and a first-winter at Eastern Landfill, Baltimore County on Jan. 18 (Scarpulla+). A first-winter **Iceland Gull** was sorted out at Conowingo on Dec. 1, as was an adult that lingered into February (Scarpulla, Blom). Other solo Iceland Gulls, first-winters, as is often the case, were at Eastern Landfill, Baltimore County, on Jan. 18 (Scarpulla+), at Hains Point on Jan. 24 (Pisano), at Solomons Island on Feb. 1 (Jett, Stasz), and at Alpha Ridge on Feb. 1 (Scarpulla+). Winter sightings of **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** remain numerous. Some of the highlights included 1 at Leonardtown on Dec. 6 (Rambo), 1 at Scotland on Dec. 7 (Craig), 4 at the Cecil County landfill on Dec. 21 and 5 at Conowingo on Dec. 22 (Blom, Scarpulla), 5 in DC on Jan. 8 (Pisano) and on Jan. 26 (Dobbins), 1 at the Charles County landfill on Feb. 1 (Jett), 1 at Lake Artemesia, Prince George's County the same day (Mozurkewich), 4 at Alpha Ridge on Feb. 1 (Scarpulla+), and 1 at Liberty Lake in Carroll County on Feb. 4 (Ed Boyd). **Glaucous Gulls** were not to be left out this season with single sightings at Schoolhouse Pond on Dec. 21 (Pisano, Ringler), at Alpha Ridge on Feb. 22 (Magnusson+), at Salisbury on Jan. 17 (Dyke), and at PRNAS on Jan. 30 (Craig). **Great Black-backed Gulls** included 750 at Choptank on Dec. 28 (D. Ford), and 400 at Alpha Ridge Feb. 1 (Scarpulla+). Conowingo hosted a first-winter **Black-legged Kittiwake** from Dec. 1 through mid-January (Blom, Scarpulla+). One was also reported from Ocean City on Dec. 23 (Churchill), and on Dec. 26 (Hoffman, O'Brien). Patty Craig tallied 39 **Forster's Terns** at PRNAS on Dec. 10.

*Owls, Flycatchers, Vireos.* A **Great Horned Owl** was found on an old Osprey nest at Point Lookout on Feb. 23 (Sue Scheider), and a **Long-eared Owl** was at Back River on Jan. 18 (Blom). A few **Short-eared Owls** were present this winter, including 1 at Leonardtown on Jan. 8 (Rambo), 1 at Kent Narrows on Jan. 15 (Dyke), another at Abbey Point, Harford County on Jan. 25 (Webb), and 6 at Elliott Island on Jan. 26 (Armistead). There were several reports of **Eastern Phoebes** this winter including 1 at the PWRC North Tract, Anne Arundel County on Jan. 21 (Stan Arnold), 1 at Michaelsville on Jan. 25 (Webb), 1 at Centreville on Feb. 3 (Reese), and 1 at Keedysville on Feb. 28 (Steve Huy). Mark Hoffman reported a **Blue-headed Vireo** at Hickory Point Tract, Worcester County on Dec. 27.

*Corvids, Larks, Wrens, Gnatcatchers.* George Jett reported a large **American Crow** roost with over 3000 individuals at Waldorf on Jan. 20, and about 300 **Fish Crows** were noted at Dameron on Feb. 5 (Craig). A **Common Raven** was noted in the Hunt Valley area, an unusual location for this species, on Jan. 10 (Simon). The high for **Horned Larks** was 400 at Bohemia Church Road, Cecil County on Jan. 11 (Gary Griffith). A **House Wren** was at Back River on Jan. 18 (Blom), and two hard-to-find **Sedge Wrens** were reported during the Chincoteague CBC at E.A. Vaughn WMA on Dec. 29 (Hoffman). **Hardy Marsh Wrens** included 1 at West Ocean City on Dec. 30 (Hoffman), and 1 to 5 at Hart-Miller from Jan. 4 to Feb. 16 (Ricciardi+). A few **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** braved the season with single sightings at Oxon Run on Dec. 21 and at Seneca on Dec. 22 (Freiberg), at Stockton on Dec. 29-30 (Hoffman, O'Brien), and at Bowie on Feb. 2 (Fred & Jane Fallon).

*Thrushes, Mimids.* Patty Craig reported large flocks of **American Robins** in St. Mary's County with 300 on Jan. 20 and 500 on Feb. 4. As might be expected with the relatively mild conditions, several **Gray Catbirds** were reported including 1 at Loch Raven on Jan. 12 (Jenkins), 1 at Hurlock on Jan. 20 (Reese), and 1 at Romney Creek, Harford County on Jan. 25 (Webb). Several **Brown Thrashers** were also noted such as the single sightings at Centreville on Feb. 10 (Reese), at Greensboro on Feb. 13 (Marvin Hewitt), and at St. George Island on Feb. 16 (Craig, Bishop).

*Warblers.* Mark Hoffman found an **Orange-crowned Warbler** at Stockton on Dec. 29-30. A **Nashville Warbler** was at E.A. Vaughn WMA on Dec. 27 (Hoffman, O'Brien), and a **Northern Parula** lingered at Conowingo from Dec. 15 until Jan. 25 (Scarpulla+). Patty Craig reported the high for **Yellow-rumped Warblers** with about 345 at Point Lookout on Dec. 29 as well as two singing **Pine Warblers** at Dameron on Feb. 19. A **Palm Warbler** was found in Salisbury on Jan. 21 (Lawler), and a **Black-and-white Warbler** in Seneca Creek SP, Montgomery County on Dec. 22 (Freiberg). A **Common Yellowthroat** was listed at Centennial Park on Jan. 5 (Kurt Schwarz), another was in DC on Jan. 26 (Mike Milton+), and one was at Point Lookout on Feb. 2 (Craig, Boxwell).

*Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel.* A hardy **Indigo Bunting** was found at Conowingo on Dec. 29 (Scarpulla). A **Dickcissel** was listed during the Annapolis CBC on Jan. 5 (Hal Wierenga), and another was reported in Carroll County on Jan. 25 (Smith, Cornelius).

*Sparrows, Longspurs, Snow Buntings.* Dave Webb reported 47 **American Tree Sparrows** at Aberdeen on Jan. 25, and numerous **Chipping Sparrows**, from many locations, were reported throughout the period such as the one at the Aquatic Gardens in DC on Feb. 18 (Dobbins). Four **Lapland Longspurs** were near Lily Pons on Dec. 8 (Wilbur Hershberger), and 1 was listed during the Denton CBC on Dec. 21 (Ricciardi). **Snow Buntings** included 4 at Aberdeen Proving Ground on Dec. 12 (Walbeck), 300 at Hart-Miller on Jan. 4 (Ricciardi+), and 60 at Sandy Point SP on Jan. 5 (Scarpulla).

*Blackbirds, Orioles.* Nine **Rusty Blackbirds** were noted in Easton on Feb. 4 (Reese). **Common Grackles** were numerous and widespread including about 200,000 at the Cecil County landfill on Dec. 21 (Scarpulla+). Harry Armistead found 95 **Boat-tailed Grackles** in one flock at Elliott Island on Jan. 26. A female **Baltimore Oriole** frequented Salisbury from Dec. 22 through Feb. 6 (Lawler).

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